



“Mountain Thyme”

Summer 2021



Mountain Thyme is published by

Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club.

The editor welcomes comments and contributions from all members.

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PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Ian Cameron

As our Club cautiously returns to a format we were accustomed to, pre-2020, we are still not quite back to the “old normal”. Caution is still the watchword, and the new buzzword is “vaccination”. The age demographic of the Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club membership, means that most, if not all, members will now have been offered an opportunity to be vaccinated and further increase our own chances of avoiding serious illness.

Clubs and groups can now hold organised activities/meets (with COVID officer and measures in place) for up to 500 people from any number of households, however Government guidelines still advise limiting groups to smaller sizes to make them easier to manage. From 19 July, we will not need to physically distance outside within our social grouping of up to 15 people at level 0, but we do need to continue to maintain at least 1 metre from all others outside.

Away from the Pandemic and looking forward, we have one day meets planned up to September 2021 and a weekend meet on 17th-19th September at Gairloch. A further programme will be issued shortly which will take us up to spring 2022. Numbers have fallen away over the last few walks and although we had an initial good response to car meets in September/October last year, this is not the case with attendance now averaging 12-15 members on any one walk. We hope to return to coach travel from October 2021 and perhaps this may encourage more members to stick on your walking boots and return to the hills.

On a more positive note, we have had enquiries from several potential new members and hopefully this can lead to a steady increase in numbers. The committee is looking at a media drive in September publicising the Club and again this will be aimed at attracting new members as well as kindling a renewed interest from lapsed members.

On the Social side, we had a “Zoom” quiz which was enjoyed by all who took part, and the result was that Mr and Mrs Bruce Henderson’s team were crowned Zoom Quiz Champions.

On Saturday, 7th August we are looking forward to the Club BBQ, which this year is being hosted jointly by Evelyn and Kerry at Dunkeld. Our grateful thanks to these ladies of the Club and to Kerry’s mother who has kindly allowed us access to her garden and facilities to hold the BBQ. A

good turnout is hoped for and walks prior to the BBQ will start at the North carpark in Dunkeld at 1:00pm.

It is noted with great sadness at the passing recently of Chris Campbell, a former member, who will be fondly remembered by all who knew him. Chris always had a smile on his face and could brighten up the dullest of days. We should all think of his cheeky grin the next time we are out in the hills.

In the meantime, do take care, and do go out and enjoy our beautiful mountains.

CLUB WALKS IN 2021

As restrictions eased the Club held some walks and reports of these outings with photos are available on the blog section of the website. www.bdhc.org.uk

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOOKING AFTER YOUR FEET

Madeleine McIntosh Registered Foot-Health Practitioner

These boots were made for walking we have all heard this but sometimes forget that our feet were made for walking too and should consider the lifetime of service that we expect from them.

With over 66 joints, 214 ligaments, 52 bones and 38 muscles, our feet are a marvel of engineering and if looked after they can and will provide the service we require for our working life, our physical activities and contribute immensely to our quality of life.

Quality of life is key to our ability to be independent and carry out activities of daily living, going walking, shopping, visiting family and friends, working, partaking in physical hobbies and our interests. With sore feet it all becomes a mere chore rather than a pleasure.

Whether you have a sedentary job or lifestyle, sit at a computer all day, or spend most of your day walking or standing, the consequences can lead to poor circulation, swollen feet and ankles and pain in other parts of our body including our back, hips, knees and neck which can become a major

issue for so many, leading to long term problems which become very debilitating for so many.

We already know the benefits of physical activity to your overall health and happiness, especially as we get older but many people with foot issues and health problems are less likely to engage in even a minimal amount. The less you do, the less you will be able to do and over time this introduces a higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cognitive decline, also leading to the loss of muscle and muscle strength.

Taking regular care of our feet can go a long way to help prevent many of these issues and as the saying goes Prevention Is Often Better Than The Cure.

Taking just ten minutes a week to cut and file your nails should be sufficient for most people, along with daily washing and drying properly, especially between your toes. Filing down hard and callused skin, regular use of a foot cream to aid moisturisation and prevent the skin from drying out and cracking and the correct use of foot sprays for deodorising sweaty hot feet can reap rewards and will help us participate in some of our favourite pastimes and hobbies.

Being out and about in the hills and mountains is a pastime that hundreds of thousands of people enjoy and healthy hike ready feet need boots that fit, not too wide or too narrow but just right.

Wearing properly fitted boots that are suitable for the level of walking and weather conditions goes a long way to preventing untold misery when you still have another six miles to go, and your feet are aching for various reasons



Choose your boots wisely, basically you want a boot that holds your foot but leaves your toes free, tight enough that blisters don't start and roomy enough that you won't destroy your toenails as you hike downhill. Many a toe and its nail have turned black from ill-fitting boots. The correct use of a properly fitted insole / orthotic in your boots can give your feet that added support, especially for people with high or fallen arches and flat feet. They also help greatly with realigning your body from the ankles up through your hips and spine to your neck. Always carry dry socks in your

rucksack. Wet socks and feet don't mix well and can leave you with athletes' foot and blisters. So, a packet of blister pads won't go amiss in the rucksack either.

Always break your boots in, especially the stiffer more hardwearing ones which take longer to mould to your feet. Wear them round the house with your walking socks and gradually build up to shorter walks and hikes before using them for a full day on the hills.

Little steps can go a long way to that lifetime of foot service.

Happy Hillwalking.

KERRY'S LATEST ADVENTURES

Kerry Lindsay

Walking out of Lockdown

After the challenge of 20 Munros in 2020 and the prolonged snowy winter, the hills were calling wanting their novice walker back to laugh at! Evelyn tried to avoid me and go in to hiding so I wouldn't appear with a new list of hills to conquer in 2021. However, after spending a few months peeking through her curtains before answering the door, I eventually cornered her.

The list was set, the snow mostly gone, and lockdown restrictions mainly lifted so off we went. First up this year was Tolmount and Tom Buidhe. Well. We knew the weather forecast wasn't the best but the word horrendous just about covers it.

We took Robert with us, and I don't know who wanted to kill me more. Especially as Robert was convinced by me that it would be a good opportunity to start with the school of navigation, I had managed to coax him in to.



We set off from Glen Doll and off in the direction of Jocks Road. The higher we got the worse the weather got. We had snow, wind, hail, we got it all. We didn't even realise we were on the top of Tom Buidhe until the compass came out. Needless to say, we never saw another soul. A good lesson however was had – if you need to stop for a toilet break make sure your valve on your platypus isn't dangling anywhere near your body parts...!

Next up the weather was shining brightly and we headed for Creag Leacach so I could finish my round of those Munros. The Robert School of Navigation was once again in session – however while trying to hold my compass I forgot to hold my phone, a smashed iPhone is never good.

I was looking forward hugely to Braeriach, Mrs Menzies did very well to pretend she was happy about doing this monster of a Munro and I think had a little stage 2 fun it didn't quite reach stage 3 fun.

Once again, we set off in lovely weather but by God that Chalamain Gap is not something I fancy going over again – the image of an elephant trying to get over a quarry while in their own mind they are a Giselle springs to mind. Not long after the first part of the climb the mist came down and never rose again.

It was a long long hike missing out on Scotland's best scenery. But 10 hours later we were back at the car and feeling pretty happy with ourselves.



I have developed a strange fascination with the Cairngorms and can't wait to explore their mystique further.



While wondering if my fitness was getting better, or I was getting faster I came across a great quote from John Muir that made me realise sauntering through those might hills at your own pace is the only way to go.

“Hiking – I don’t like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains – not hike! Do you know the origin of that word ‘saunter’? It’s a beautiful word. A way back in the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, ‘A la sainte terre,’ ‘To the Holy Land’. And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not ‘hike’ through them.” – John Muir

WALKING IN FIFE (PART I BRUCE'S WALKS DURING LOCKDOWN)

Bruce Henderson

If there have been any benefits to the constraints dictated by the pandemic over the past year, one has to be the need for us to explore more local walks during lockdown, and while most of you have been able to enjoy the hills and glens of Perthshire and Angus, I was restricted to walks around North East Fife.

I am not complaining because this has been a bit of an eye-opener as to what is on my doorstep, and the coast and countryside have different attractions to the high hills.

I thought that I would share three of the many walks I have been covering over the past year which may be of interest to those looking for some gentle walking. There are many more, and I am happy to share my (limited) knowledge with anyone who would like to venture south of the Tay.

Wormit to Balmerino

This walk offers excellent views over the Tay towards Dundee.

Start at the car park in Wormit Bay (NO392259) and follow the Fife Coastal Path (FCP) to Balmerino. A higher-level return takes you past the cemetery to Kirkton of Balmerino and back past Kilburns and Peacehill farms to the start. An extension loop can be added by following the FCP west to Birkhill House and back by Thornton and Byres.

Norman's Law

Park beside the village hall in Luthrie (NO332196) then take the minor road past Lower Luthrie farm then the track to the South of Emily Hill, through Carphin farm and then the track up to the top of Norman's Law (the site of an ancient fort), which offers outstanding views up and down the Tay. Once again, this walk can be extended by returning via Aytounhill.

Boarhills to Cambo

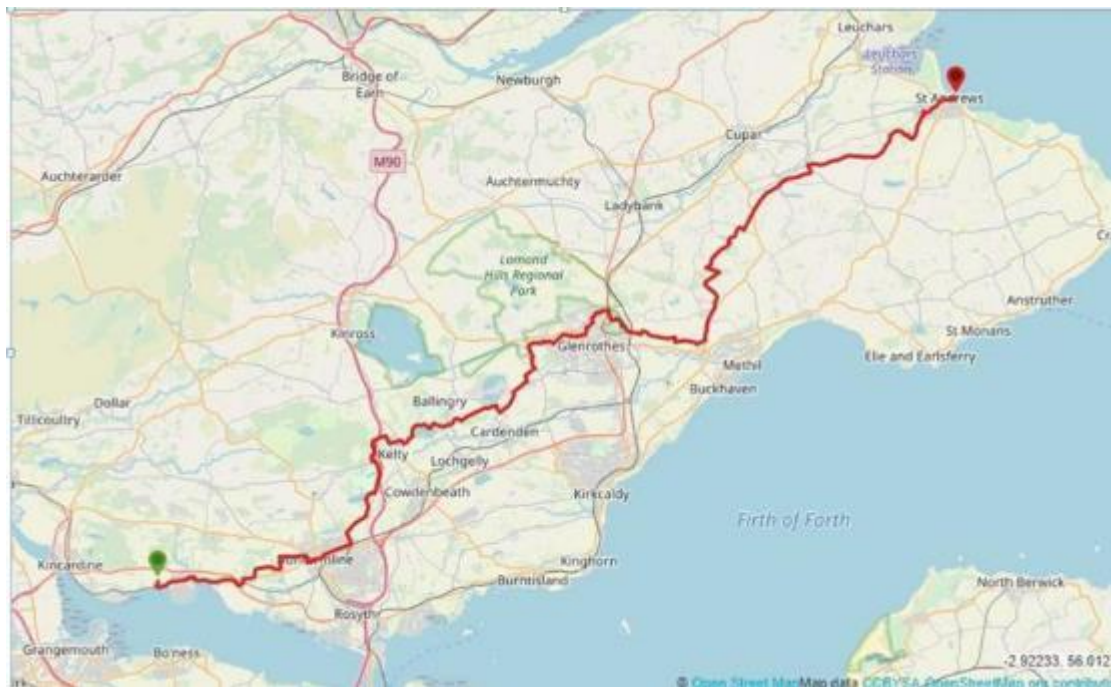
I have used public transport on this one to avoid returning by the same route. Start in Boarhills (NO565141) and head towards Chesterhill Farm turning East just past the restored doo'cot on the FCP. Continue to Burnside Farm and follow the Kenly Burn down to the coast before heading East along the FCP to Cambo Sands where there are toilets and refreshments.

This walk can be extended to Fife Ness or on to Crail if you feel suitably energetic.

WALKING IN FIFE (PART 2 FINISHING THE FIFE PILGRIM WAY)

Jane Clark

When living in Edinburgh pre Covid 19, I walked most of the newest, Scottish long-distance path, the Fife Pilgrim Way. This long-distance route links the Firth of Forth with the Firth of Tay and for the most part was used by pilgrims in 11th-16th centuries.



With two fellow “pilgrims” from Edinburgh, we had walked from Culross to Ceres and, when restrictions eased slightly, we covered the alternative start point from North Queensferry to Dunfermline. By mid-2020, we had covered 58 miles leaving the remaining 11 miles from Ceres to St Andrews. We reached the start points and travelled from the finish venues by public transport. We wished to continue using public transport and respect all COVID restrictions. Once the latest lockdown eased, we found a suitable date to complete the walk. However, I

introduced an added complication by moving out of Edinburgh to Blairgowrie.

Somewhat surprisingly meeting up was easy – with the help of the “Traveline App” www.travelinescotland.com . I met my two friends in Ceres – I travelled by bus to Dundee, changed to a Fife bus and arrived in Ceres 10 minutes before my friends who had come by train and bus from Edinburgh. Easy journeys for all and very few people on the busses. We seemed to pick days with heavy showers, but it was good to be in the company of old friends who came prepared for rain.



Fife Pilgrims Way – The finishers 25th May 2021

The route is well signposted – once you “get your eye in” to spot the markers (about the size of car tax discs) on posts. Some sections undulate but most are flat and not strenuous or challenging. Quite a few sections on minor roads or on farmland tracks. Perhaps not as scenic as the Fife Coastal Path but the route follows in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims and, on good days, you can get views of the coast and Lomond Hills. The route has many points of historical interest and encouraged me to visit places I had not explored – such as Culross, Dunfermline Abbey, Ceres, and St Andrews. There are also opportunities to learn about more modern industrial areas and marching with miners.

To follow the route, we used a map published by www.fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk. There is a detailed guidebook *The Fife Pilgrim Way* by Ian Bradley – he does not recommend carrying it as it is far too heavy and, in his words, does not tell you useful things like where the bus stops or public toilets are located. I recommend it to those interested in history, seeing parts of the countryside at a slow pace that you would normally drive past without stopping and who folk like me who enjoy working out the logistics of getting to and back from deepest Fife.

DISCOVERING PITMIDDLE

Brian Ruffhead

In the last few months, like many people, Jean and I have had great delight in exploring the not-too-distant countryside and one our finds was the deserted village of Pitmiddle.

We read about it in David Dorward's book "The Sidlaw Hills" and in an article in the Courier by Blair Dingwall and first visited it in February. We did not see the village at first as the undergrowth and trees completely hid it and we passed it. On turning back there it was, the ruins of an old dwelling and in front a carpet of snowdrops.

Pitmiddle apparently dates from Pictish times and was a farming community in the Carse of Gowrie.



It had up to between 300 and 400 inhabitants at its height, but the population declined from various causes such as younger villagers seeking new life in the cities and the clear-felling of trees in the First

world War which damaged access roads and water courses. Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century there were only 32 people left and the last inhabitant left in 1938. In its heyday, the village had a blacksmith, a shoemaker who taught the children, a tailor, a butcher and even a pub. Originally the villagers mainly grew bere and oats and then later, neaps, tatties, peas and beans.

It is a very sad place now and we spent some time there looking at the old houses and the bridge which still stands. The local History Society at Abernyte is interested in stopping further deterioration.

Visits to the village (grid reference 244297) can be included in various circular walks including starting from the Abernyte Kinnaird road or the B953, the Balbeggie Abernyte road.

TRIBUTES TO ERIC DRUMMOND AND MIKE ASSENTI (TAYSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE)

Tayside Mountain Rescue Team

It is with great sadness that we have to report of the passing of retired Chief Inspector Eric Drummond QPM, on Wednesday 19 May 2021. That day, Eric had been out doing what he loved, walking in the Glens and enjoying familiar surroundings.

Eric joined Perth and Kinross Constabulary in 1970, and because of his interest in hill walking, he became an early member of the Tayside Police Mountain Rescue Team in 1975 when the Angus Constabulary Mountain Rescue Team merged with Officers in Perthshire to create the newly formed Tayside Police Mountain Rescue Team. Two years later, it was renamed Tayside Police Search and Rescue Unit to reflect a broader remit beyond the mountain searches.



In 1995 he was appointed co-ordinator for the Police Team’s activities throughout Tayside, and on 12 June 1999 he was awarded the Queen’s Police Medal.

After retiring from the Force, Eric returned to Chair the Association, raising funds to continue the lifesaving work that both the Civilian and Police Teams undertake. Eric was the driving force to find and fund Tayside MRT’s Base at Blairgowrie, which he did with determination and enthusiasm despite many setbacks.

Eric then became the first “Ambassador” for Tayside MRT, delivering numerous talks, helping out with the Glen Clova Duathlon, and generally promoting the Team at every opportunity. He was always on hand to offer help, guidance and support to the current Association Board.

He was selfless, kind and always showed great humility.

Eric will be sorely missed.

Mike Assenti

We were also sad to hear of Mike Assenti's death on June 29, after a short illness. Mike was born in Blairgowrie and known to many club members.

For more than 30 years, Mike had been at the centre of all things Tayside Mountain Rescue, both in the Police and Civilian Operational Teams, as well as being a stalwart of the Association.

He was the most decent and honest guy you could ever meet, as well as a dedicated member of the Mountain Rescue family.

He was the driving force behind the funding and sourcing of the Incident Command Vehicle; as well as being involved in the organisation of The Glen Clova Duathlon; loved the Bank Bar "Bandathon"; was an inspiration to Team Members; and carried on being involved in all aspects of the Team, despite his illness.

His passing will leave a huge hole in many hearts.

"I will go up to the highest mountain tops, I'll see the sun rise once again, and gaze upon the promised land"

The Club is very grateful to all members of Tayside Mountain Rescue Team for their work and expertise and sends our condolences to the Drummond and Assenti families.

PIC FROM THE PAST

Rob Robertson



This photo from our 35th year was the start of the anniversary walk

CAPTION COMPETITION



Ian and Graeme getting ready for walking in Torridon

Please send captions to the Editor

A LOCAL WALK WITH HISTORY

Rob Robertson

A few years ago, the Club ventured to the North of England for a Club Weekend. The target was to investigate Hadrian's Wall and part of the interest would be to learn a bit of Roman History. Well, there is no need to travel that far when there is a Roman archaeological site on our doorstep! I refer, of course, to Inchtuthill Roman Fortress which is shown on the OS Map on the Delvine Estate near Spittalfield.

I had been keen to go and see this location for some time and discovered that it could be included in a circular walk from Spittalfield that was just the right length for my aging legs!

The walk starts at the Walk-In Café on the village green at Spittalfield. The Café can provide a laminated map showing various walks in the area. From The Green the walk goes east along the A 984 with the first few hundred yards at the side of the road with only a narrow "pavement" for some of the way so walk carefully to avoid the traffic! Having passed through the impressive gates the route continues along the tree-lined drive until the signed path turns left. Ignore this and go straight on past fine gardens to a junction.



The Tay from near Delvine Gardens

Keep straight on by the path less travelled (the other path leads to Delvine House) and you will come to a gate overlooking a large field. This is it! At first sight there is nothing to suggest a major Roman site. Careful examination will reveal the slightly raised banks shown on the OS Map which enclose a vast area – very nearly half a kilometre square. There are several mature trees and lots of wildflowers in the luxuriant grass.

The internet

(http://www.rampantscotland.com/visit/blvisit_inchtuthill_fort.htm)

reveals that Inchtuthill was built by Agricola as a base to subdue the “Fierce red haired long-limbed Caledonians”, and was to be one of the largest forts ever built in Britain.



Inchtuthill Roman Camp Site

Never entirely completed, the fort was abandoned in or about AD87. It is thought that the XXth Legion was based at Inchtuthill. This would have comprised 4200 infantry, 200 cavalry and 1000 horses and mules. The camp had space for a 64-ward hospital, six granaries, all weather indoor and cavalry training schools, centurion’s houses and barrack blocks, baths, stabling and a Fabrica. The Fabrica was a Roman metalwork factory which would have produced arms, armour, door latches,

horseshoes and iron nails. When the camp was abandoned, it was dismantled to prevent the Picts finding anything that they could use against the retreating army and useful goods sent back to Rome. The only major find was the ten tons of Roman nails found buried 6 feet deep in a corner of the field in 1960.

The walk continues on the far side past Delvine Gardens where a sign points to the Riverside Walk which makes a pleasant wander west along the Tay. There is plenty of bird life and abundant wildflowers as the path passes a fisherman's hut and after about 2 km turns north and heads for Easter Caputh farm and back to Spittalfield where The Walk-In Café provides excellent coffee and cakes or soup and sandwiches for the flagging walker. (The Café is currently open Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.)

This walk was 4.7 miles long but there are plenty of other walks round Spittalfield of varying lengths and a diversion from this walk could investigate the hill fort shown on the OS Map at NO 115 393.

CLOSING REMARKS

Jane Clark editor

The club is preparing a new programme of walks and the meet secretary, Bruce Henderson, welcomes ideas for walks – hopefully supported by coach. Please forward ideas to any committee member.

As ever, I am indebted to everyone who rallied to my call for articles and photographs. Thank you for the variety and interesting pieces and for meeting my deadlines. Together we have produced another good read showing that, even in these strange times, we appreciate our wonderful countryside and the friendship found in the Club. Thank you to the committee who found ways for members to enjoy club walks. Please give me some feedback about the content and presentation.