

The BMC visit Skye

Twelve members of our Club made the long journey north to Skye, and were duly rewarded for their effort with a week of sunshine, clear blue skies and the sort of scenery people pay vast sums of money for and all for £5 per night. Marie who had travelled up with us on the Friday opted for a visit to the Isle of Raasay.

I along with Sheila Greenwood, Peter Higgin, Mark Martland, Joe McNamee and Victor Marcinkiewicz made an early start on Saturday to climb the Pinnacle Ridge on Sgurr nan Gillian a 964m Munro.

This is graded a moderate climb on account of the exposure and 80ft abseil that's involved, on reaching the summit after about 4 hours of delightful rock we then descended by the west ridge, quite tricky and exposed with a final awkward 50ft abseil down a rather constricted chimney pitch.

This landed us on the approach ridge to Am Basteir another 954ft Munro, Sheila and I having previously topped it started back down towards the Sligachan Inn leaving the other four to bag the munro.

It had been along hard day so it was good to relax in the pub before driving to the Glen Brittle hut to meet up with Dotti Heaton, Keith Harrison, Paul Darcy, Steve Caton and eventually Brian Baker.

Sunday

While the rest opted for an easier day, Joe, Peter, Sheila, Paul, Steve and I set off on the long uphill trudge leading to the great stone chute, just before the top Sheila and I waited while the others climbed up to bag Sgurr Alasdeir the highest point on Skye at 992m another Munro.

They rejoined us to do the tricky grade 3 scramble up to the start of Collies ledge the airy traverse across the flank of Sgurr Mhic Choinnich , this joins the main Cuillin ridge for a Kilometre of quite serious scrambling, Paul and Steve opted for the route around the An Stac scree and up to the summit of Sgurr Dearg.

Sheila, Peter, Joe, Mark and I climbed the eastern buttress of An Stac 954, but not a Munro and after a short scramble we were at the start of the inaccessible Pinnacle, Sheila, Peter and I made up a team of three to climb this delightful Slender fin of rock, it's a easy climb really but the exposure gets to those climbing it for the first time, a quick abseil off the end and we were lying in the afternoon sunshine watching Mark and Joe climb, it was Joe's first ever lead, and what an historic place to do it on, Magic !! well done Joe, It was wonderful to be at the tops of these magnificent mountains when the sky was so clear with the sun shining down, and we could see the Torridons, and even Ben Nevis nearly 100 miles away.

We returned to the Glen Brittle hut after another 10 hour day of satisfying but very hard work,

Monday

We decided to have a rest day, so drove over to Tallisker bay, I stayed on the beach all day, everyone else did a circular walk from the bay to Fiskavaig and seeing a basking shark from the cliffs, it was very hot and the midges were a problem so we retired to the pub at Carbost.

Tuesday

This was the start of our two day walk/scramble over some tough terrain, I personally had been eagerly looking forwards to this, I along with Marie, Victor, Paul, Steve, Joe and Brian walked in bright sunshine past the beautiful fairy falls to the start of the scramble up water pipe buttress a grade 3 scramble with more serious options.

The route takes you up to the summit of Sgurr an Fheadain 688m, the scramble along the top ridge is quite sustained with one particular tricky move eventually you reach the main Cuillin ridge near to the western top of Bidein drum nan Ramh 847m and stopped for lunch.

The plan was to traverse an exposed ledge route to reach the ridge leading down to the Coriusk hut, but having missed the ledge start we opted for a ghastly descent down some scree to reach some lower ledges, And then climb back up a 70ft loose chimney to reach the ridge proper and the easy walk down to meet up with Keith and Dotti who had sailed on the boat from Elgol to reach the hut at Coriusk.

This is a stunning way to approach the hut, the scenery and majestic mountains of the Cuilins opening up before you, after our meal in this simple basic mountain hut (but it does have gas lighting, heating and a flush toilet) we went down to the coast to do the infamous bad step, nice and easy in the dry but iffy when wet and slippery.

Wednesday

Marie, Dorothy and Keith decided to do the hard walk around the coast back to Elgol, a walk I can heartily recommend from experience.

The rest of us set off to some hard scrambling up the Dubh slabs, the hardest part is near the start and there were some serious expressions on several faces of those not used to steep friction climbing.

The scrambling goes on for over 3,000 ft and eventually leads to more serious rock on the Dubh ridge, I think we were all glad to reach the summit, everyone agreed it had been an exciting experience, the descent down past an Castile into Corrie a Grunda is knee shattering followed by the dreaded scree and a long trudge back across the moor 6 kilometres in all after two 10 hour days.... Phew.

Meanwhile Peter and Sheila had gone to the Isle of Raasay, and the next day they repeated the route that Dorothy and Keith had done on the boat, and the walk back.

Thursday

We all had an easy day, well apart from Brian and I doing a 10 miler around the coast to where the Vikings used to haul their boats up from the sea to an inland loch, we sat watching gannets plummeting from a great height into the sea, amazing birds.

Paul and Steve bagged sgurr na Banachdich, the midges were a real problem that day.

Friday

Keith went off to visit the Tallisker distillery, Victor went back up to coire Lagan again, while Dorothy and Marie walk around the headland to Einort and back a lovely walk with stunning views.

Mark, Joe and I set off to climb on Stron na Ciche, this is a superb thousand foot wide chunk of mountain with scores of climbs from easy to deadly serious stuff, we first climbed little gully supposedly an easy route which at one stage goes up through a hole in a cave roof, not easy for short guys like me, but Joe showed us how.

Next we went on to the Cioch slabs and a climb I'd been looking forwards to doing for years the v/difficult Arrow route with an unprotected 45 metre run out, however I was too far left and finished doing a route up even steeper rock, but it all worked out.

Of course then we had to bag the 650m Cioch, scene of the famous sword fight in the film Highlander, after some complicated rope work we did the 150ft abseil off near the top and scrambled back to the descent path and the Hut.

The whole week went to plan and the weather was wonderful, the hut is not too clever I know, but the 12 people on the trip got on fine and everyone enjoyed the experience and the magic of the Cuillins.

Roy Haythornthwaite.