

High
Society

2014-2015



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Editor's Foreword

Better late than never, here is this year's edition of High Society!

It's been another active year for the club as always – first time to Littondale, formal at Magdalene, a return to Capel Curig and regular trips to the Castle – and especially with regard to the impressive range of trips members have organised in those long Cambridge holidays. Included in this journal are tales of backpacking across the Exmoor Coast, the mountains of Bulgaria, the ridges of Skye and the wilds of Loch Monar. Within the pages are also a tale of adversity from Peter Kirkwood, a cryptic crossword from our puzzle writer, a collection of removable maps – to document your walks on club trips – and some invaluable ideas for ditching the car on the way to the hills (I'm sure you were expecting nothing more from this transport-enthused year's editor).

Editing this journal also concludes my last act as President – in many ways my time in the club – and the tales of trips sum up that one of the best things about the club is the people you meet within it, and the great experiences you can share in the outdoors. Whether it was on a club weekend trip in stunning weather to Patterdale (not very often) or in the pouring rain in the Ogden Valley (quite often), or on a remote Scottish expedition, thanks to everyone who has made my time in the club so enjoyable!

I hope you enjoy reading this journal, and many thanks to those who have kindly contributed photos, articles and ideas for this year's edition.

Tom Leach



David Hoyle

Beyond Borders: Exploring the Mountains of Bulgaria

An account of the adventures of Adrien Lefauve, Juliette Monquill, Camilla Penney and Andrew Williamson in August 2015

Juliette Monquill



Impressive view from the summit of Malyovitsa (2729 m), in the Rila mountains (AW)

Let's admit it. Cambridge hillwalkers are devoted to their beloved British hills. They return to the same areas year after year with an excitement that equals that of a fresher who climbs the first ever hill of his life. And – truth be told – they have every reason to. But Europe is home to more magnificent mountainous areas. Four brave hillwalkers therefore decided it was time to take the leap into the unknown and conquer a country in which CUHWC had set no foot yet. Nor walking boot. They hopped on an eastbound plane to explore the lesser-known but no less exquisite mountains of the Rila National Park in the heart of Bulgaria. Bulgaria? Yes indeed. Bulgaria.

Our arrival in Sofia – Bulgaria's capital – was a bit of a shock. A heat shock, that is. Not that all of us suffered from it. But still, disembarking a plane and immediately adjusting to a temperature that's more than twenty degrees higher than where we came from was a bit of a challenge. And not our only one. Our stay in Bulgaria started

with a three-day visit in Sofia itself and we soon found out that fitting in was a tiny bit more difficult than initially thought.

There's the language to start with. Our vocabulary didn't reach any further than 'Good day' and 'Thank you'. We managed – some better than others – to read Cyrillic and didn't get too mixed up with Bulgarians nodding their head for 'No' and shaking it for 'Yes'. So far so good, but not enough to prevent taxi drivers and waitresses to behave towards us in what we persistently experienced as a slightly rude way. No British politeness was able to change that and we remarked on a number of occasions that "this wouldn't happen at John's!" Until this day, it's a mystery what on Earth we did wrong... Though, in hind sight, we could make some sense of the exasperation of an elderly cashier at the metro station as Andrew handed over no fewer than thirty coins, drily remarking they added up to exactly one lev – which is even less than 35p in the UK.

Sofia is an interesting capital, in which clear remnants of the communistic era alternate with buildings from Bulgaria's glory days. We decided to join a guided walking tour to become slightly less ignorant about the city's turbulent history. We acquired knowledge that was Cambridge-student worthy and were introduced to Bulgaria's most famous writer Ivan Vazov – our new friend for the week. Not that some of us remember more about him than breathing his last in a rather compromising position, but that aside. We watched some builders renovating a facade and free climbing scaffoldings, which, we remarked, would give every self-respecting Safety Officer a heart attack. We were also surprised by Adrien who asked for his room keys, because he had "forgotten [his] lipstick" before going for dinner. Of course.

When hillwalkers stay in a city for too long they get restless, especially if that city's at the foot of a rather attractive-looking mountain. So for our last day in and around Sofia, we escaped the heat of the capital and headed for the nearby peak of Mount Vitosha. A relaxing cable car helped us ascending the mountain's obviously steep slope, during which Andrew intently stared at his altimeter watch and approvingly concluded that "it [looked] like we [were] gaining altitude". Well, it's always

reassuring to know your equipment actually does its job, isn't it?! A sunny walk then led us to an overpopulated summit, but a little scramble later we could enjoy the view of Sofia sizzling in the heat of the valley below.



Dolna Banya - rural Bulgaria at the foot of the Rila mountains (JM)

That evening we finally set direction for the main destination of our Bulgarian hillwalking adventure: Dolna Banya, the village from which we would explore the Rila National Park, an alpine-like mountainous area in the south-west of the country. After a couple of days on the country roads, we soon got used to both the potholes (one about every 25 metres) as well as the horse-drawn carriages that could turn up in front of us without warning.

On our first day, we decided to visit Bulgaria's most famous touristic site: the Rila Monastery. The way, however, was slightly more cumbersome than expected for a place that attracts hundreds of thousands of people every year. We got slightly lost and subsequently ignored both well-intended advice and a roadblock (and cries from an old Bulgarian woman that this was "not the way"!) to successfully reach our destination that indeed was an



The Rila Monastery, a spiritual retreat without tourists, founded in the 10th Century (JM)

architectural beauty with lots of gold and great frescos. Our visit couldn't have been complete without a walk on the slopes of the surrounding mountains, towards St Ivan's cave. Locals believe that anyone able to pass through the opening in this cave's roof has not sinned. To the surprise of some of us, we all succeeded without exception...

With a finally somewhat stable weather forecast for the following days, we left for a two-day circular trek starting from Malyovitsa the next morning, on the western side of the Rila mountains – in hind sight probably the best walk in the region. Despite a slight delay caused by Adrien forgetting to lock one of our rental cars – something he turned into a slightly worrying habit during the course of the week – we all set off for the Malyovitsa ridge. The British half of our group reached Malyovitsa's summit and, despite a quickly nearing thunderstorm, we all made it safely to Rila's most remote hut by the end of the day, named after... Ivan Vazov. With its 2300 metres altitude,

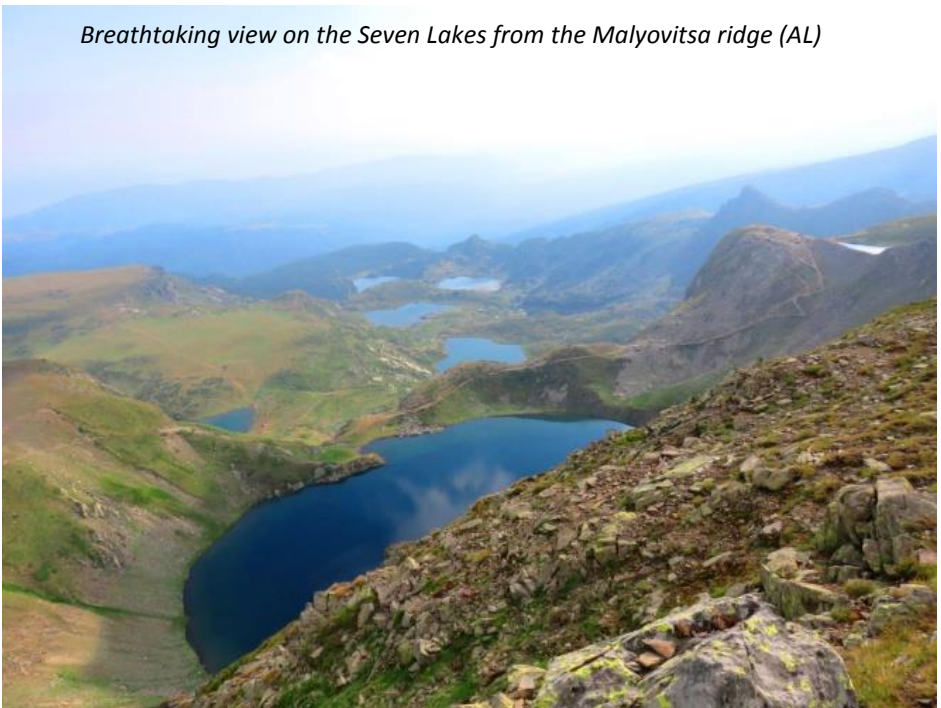


The Ivan Vazov hut from the path we were not supposed to take (AW)

it's also one of the highest in the Balkan Peninsula, being situated in a valley with small streams and several herds of horses (a refreshing change from the sheep we usually encounter in Britain), making it an idyllic place to stay overnight.

The next morning we set off in the direction of the nearest peak, thereby following the very path a Bulgarian lady had repeatedly warned us against taking the previous night. Whoever thinks that a bunch of CUHWC members can be stopped by a few missing markers definitely needs to get to know us better. The rather steep grassy slope reminded us of our good The Rila Monastery, which could indeed be old British hillwalks and we thereby did not feel particularly out of our depths. The summit and subsequent ridge walk treated us with stunning views on a good number of the Seven Lakes that laid blazing in the early morning sunlight. We were even honoured enough to witness the circling rituals of members of the Bulgarian White Brotherhood – “weird but harmless” – at the bank of one of the lakes.

Breathtaking view on the Seven Lakes from the Malyovitsa ridge (AL)



Once we completed the gentle descent towards and along the lakes, we rewarded ourselves with some relaxing paddling. Or that's what we planned to initially. Not all of us particularly enjoyed being surrounded by hundreds of tiny fish that nibbled our feet, or considered the rather cold water inviting enough to take a swim – only Adrien and the fish themselves seemed not to be too bothered. The previously mentioned Bulgarian lady had warned us that “after the lakes, [there is] nothing beautiful”, which made us slightly apprehensive towards our lengthy descent back to Malyovitsa. Luckily for us, we were of a different opinion and completed our two-day walk through interesting fields of dwarf pines and a beautiful wood under glorious weather.

After a cultural intermezzo in Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city, there was still one walk left that we were all quite excited about. From day one, the weather forecast for this highly-anticipated destination had been more than dubious, but by the end of the week it seemed good enough to give it a try: we would climb Musala, with its near 3000 metres, the highest peak of the entire Balkan Peninsula. One of us was particularly keen on completing this walk in view of his bagging addiction (see *High Society's* 2011 Edition for further details). We reached the summit together without difficulty and were treated to some more great views. To be fair, Musala is not exactly the most problematic of all peaks. Its ascent is highly facilitated by a cable car that brings you to within 600 m climb of the summit saving us five hours' walk in the forest. We thus did a relaxing and beautiful walk towards the Musala ridge with a brave paddling break in one of the – even colder – lakes on the way back; another memorable day for sure.

On our last day in the Rila National Park, we went for our final proper walk(s). Some began the day by visiting some rocks from which the secret police used to push people to their deaths in past times. The second walk was, historically at least, more appealing as it followed a nice serpentine nature trail alongside a river in the Beli Iskar valley. We learned that the seemingly interesting highest viewpoint was not worth visiting at all and that Camilla's fear of getting cloud-burned actually was a serious one. Hopping from stone to stone in the beautiful river bed and crossing

numerous bridges of debatable quality, this was a good way to depart from the mountains.

We left for Sofia the next morning, in order to leave Bulgaria – at least for now. Some of us were fortunate enough to visit a dried-up waterfall and remnants of a few ‘pyramids’ near the capital that didn’t exactly live up to their expectations, but these could hardly be called a downer on a memorable holiday – we’d let the downer instead be called the budget airline flight, which some appropriately termed the “worst flight ever”.

All in all, this was a holiday that opened our eyes to the unspoilt beauty of some of the least-known mountains of Europe; it certainly whetted our appetites for future exploratory ventures in other mountainous regions of the world that lay outside of our often frequented Alpine and Pyrenean summer retreats.



Musala (2925 m)! And even the dashing CUHWC fleeces made it up there



Pericles Pitch 2 - where Peter should have been ...
Courtesy UK Climbing

Falling for the Lake District

Peter Kirkwood

This article was first written in Addenbrooke's A & E between 1 and 2 am. I explained to the doctor that I was a civil engineer trying to write in full sentences. She immediately administered morphine to reduce the pain. The words began to flow like diarrhoea. So, don't expect beautiful, eloquent or even coherent prose ahead.

In early September there was a weekend with a good forecast in the Lake District! Phil was meeting friends near Patterdale while Becky and I wanted to make the most of the warm, dry conditions to climb in the Lake District for the first time. The drive from Cambridge was uneventful save for an emergency telephone call regarding a nauseous alpaca which Becky received near the Deli Llama cafe. Becky explained how to give the alpaca a blood test before we settled down to bivouac in a National Trust car park. The following morning we left early to avoid the parking warden. Phil went for a Great Dodder over Sheffield Pike to Patterdale while Becky and I drove to Coniston to climb Eliminate A on Dow Crag.

After leaving lunch at the base of the crag to save weight we made rapid progress and were soon on the summit enjoying looking out over the Lake District to Snowdonia, the Pennines, the Isle of Man and Galloway. The views were too good to be missed. We postponed lunch until dinner while we made a return trip to the northern end of the Coniston ridge. Our walk finished in the Walna Scar car park which was unexpectedly busy. The following day we discovered why. Coniston MRT were called to the car park during the night to deal with some bad trips (of the LSD variety) during an all-night rave.

On the Sunday Becky and I had planned to try a series of climbs at Eagle Crag in Grisedale. Eagle Crag consists of two tiers of rock about 30m high separated by a broad grassy ledge known as "the pasture". We warmed up on some easy routes before slowly increasing the difficulty. All went to plan until we arrived at the pasture for the third time. We had followed Pericles to the pasture but the description of the second pitch was difficult to follow.

"Follow the overhanging v-chimney with a quartz jug"

We discussed for some time which of several overhanging v-chimneys might contain a quartz jug. The answer is about 6m to the right of the one which we chose. Becky had the first attempt at leading this unknown pitch. It began with an easy slab for 2m leading to a v-chimney above which a crack opened offering good protection from about 5m. Becky was unable to find protection above the slab and wisely decided the risk was too high. We switched leads. I found a medium nut behind a small flake. It withstood a sharp tug and I continued towards the crack. Moving upwards I encountered an awkward hold. I reversed a move and tried again. This time my grip was worse.

"I'm off!"

I felt the rope pulling upwards at my waist. Relief! POP. I'm bouncing down the slab and across the pasture. I stop. I'm conscious. Looking up I see Becky limping towards me her foot bare and bloody. I have no recollection of what I said or did in the following moments.

I later found out that Becky was underneath me when I fell. She took some of the energy out of the fall before I hit the ground. The force with which I hit knocked her from the stance ripping off her climbing shoe in the process. She sustained a number of painful cuts to her exposed foot.

As my head cleared I realised Becky was asking if I was OK. I tried to stand, took two steps towards her before collapsing back to the ground.

"I just need a minute" I responded.

Becky shouted for help. No-one could hear.

After a few minutes I became fully alert again. Becky, after checking that I was not in any immediate danger, had left to get help. I was under instructions to wait while she descended a steep gully with a bare and bloody foot. When she did not reappear at the base of the crag I began to make my own



Courtesy Patterdale MRT

way down. Fortified by some choice words, two arms and one leg, I found Becky with our bags at the base of the crag. She had successfully alerted some walkers who were approaching from the path to Grisedale Tarn.

A helpful Canadian took my bag while some other walkers saw to Becky whose foot was now carefully wrapped in a bread bag. As we began to crawl back towards the valley we were informed that mountain rescue were on their way. Our protests that we didn't need a full callout, only a push (or quad) bike were ignored.

Within about 15 minutes 3 mountain rescue land rovers pulled up about 200m from us.

"Stay where you are" came a call from a man in a red jacket.

Shortly afterwards I was lying on a stretcher wearing a splint as I was gently carried down over scree and bog while Becky was helped to hobble down.

I made mistakes which led to hurting my climbing partner and breaking my ankle but members of the public and Patterdale Mountain Rescue were there to bring us home safely. They cannot be praised highly enough¹

Patterdale Mountain Rescue (<http://mountainrescue.org.uk/>) is a charitable organisation run by volunteers who dedicate significant time to training in order that they are able to respond when help is most needed. You can support them by donating online or buying a copy of the CUHWC cookbook (available at <http://www.cuhwc.org.uk/cookbook>).

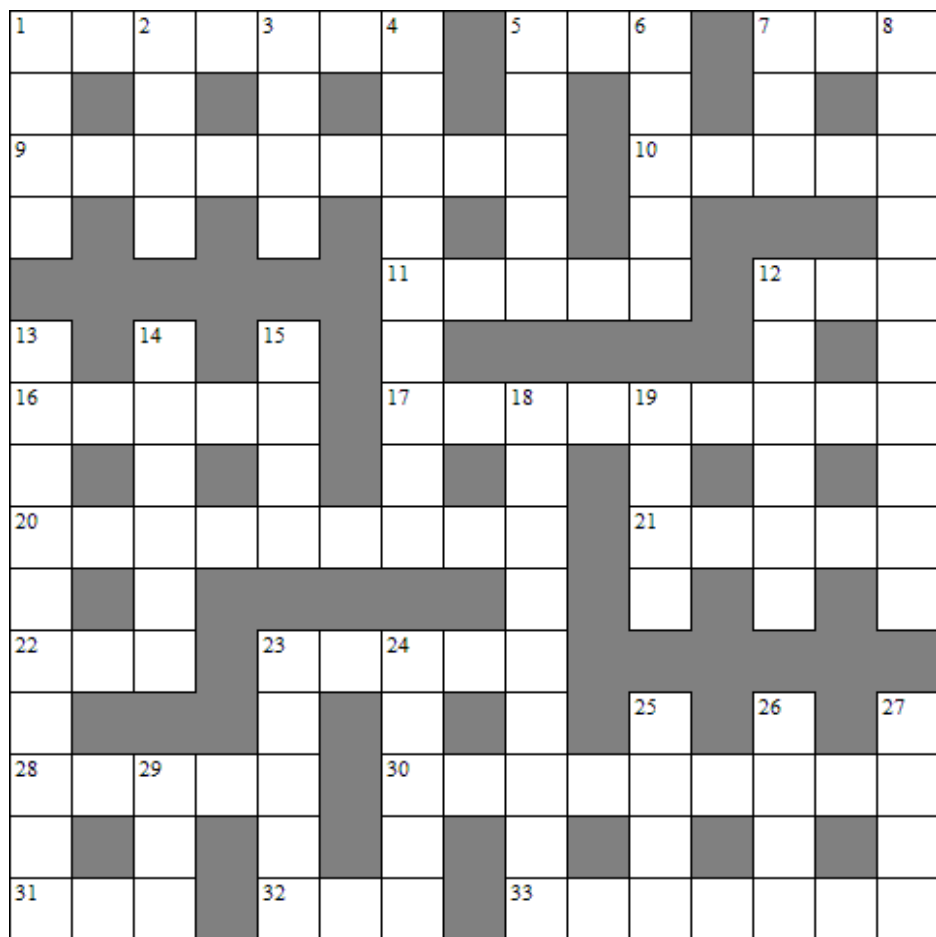


Courtesy Patterdale MRT

¹ I also owe a huge debt of thanks to Becky who used her body to reduce the impact of my fall in spite of the danger to herself and to Phil who drove us back to Cambridge and has not been able to get the smell of foot out of the car since.

Cryptic #4

by Cookie



Across		Down	
1	Drawer of arc or 20 25-33 7a (7)	1	see 13d
5	25-33 7a (but not 20 in summer) seen during lymphatitis (3)	2	Unwanted messages rising in 20 25-33 7a (4)
7	Drums for young 31 (3)	3	Black locks a green jumper mostly (4)
9	Morning for every smooth character appearing in G&S (9)	4	Western resort past eight (9)
10	Performer demands fish in rivers (5)	5	Beat the odds of hoards of technology (3,2)
11	Exit egg timer heading off roofing (5)	6	25-33 7a carried by Doctor Chakraborty (5)
12	My command from 10 (3)	7	Tease goat (3)
16	First bits of all routes extremely tough except Crib Goch (5)	8	Network with girl in Bob's quarter (10)
17	Miserly painter makes 33 difficult on this (9)	12	No score in G&S 20 25-33 7a (6)
20	Some oils in refineries sent: I allowed it (9)	13	1d 20 25-33 7a damaged or tore paw of cat (10,4)
21	Three points for The Rocket Park (5)	14	Animal rhymingly associated with pop art stand after Warhol's first (6)
22	Orbit around china plate (3)	15	Slender list (4)
23	Local rule by Lloyd George's successor (2-3)	18	Wife of one putting on 21 too much? (4,5)
28	Eclipse not in party (5)	19	Nation earmarked for sale (4)
30	Red blood to audience of G&S work (9)	23	Chemist 20 25-33 7a (5)
31	Deceive news channel (3)	24	West-coast airport protecting alternative 21 character from book for 7ds (5)
32	Big shot scoring seven at first then nine (3)	25	British racing driver suffering after introduction of handbrake (4)
33	Jazz bass style rising around middle of solos (7)	26	Folk, I heard, have more than one priority (and perhaps some cheap cars?) (4)
		27	Water bird nearly ascended ice block (4)
		29	Duty free iodine from airport manoeuvre (3)



Across Exmoor

Matt Hickford

Inspired by friends walking the GR20 and Cape Wrath trails (see 2013 and 2014 High Society editions), I researched long distance footpaths. I discovered the South West Coast Path and settled on the Exmoor section for being wilder but still meeting the key criterion of 'pubs at most one day apart'. I circled the week of Midsummer in my calendar, chosen to be poetic and to be precise. This was the first 'carry all your stuff' walk I'd planned since Duke of Edinburgh's expeditions as a teenager. I didn't invite company because I didn't know what to expect.

Preparation was simple: borrow a map, shortlist places to camp and check the bus still ran (or be prepared to walk back). I'd been collecting lightweight kit since Christmas. After repacking twice, I took: tent, sleeping bag, mat, waterproofs, two pairs of socks, two shirts, first aid kit, electronic book. I didn't take cooking equipment, trusting to the well-spaced pubs.



Day 1

I arrived at Minehead Sunday afternoon, laced my boots and set foot. Navigation was easy for the whole walk: 'keep the sea on your right'. The path starts up North Hill through woods; only at the top do you get the first vista of the coast—headlands and coves and cliffs and beaches. I made a friend Mark and we walked for an hour talking Tour de France. Arrived Porlock (of literary infamy *Coleridge interruptus*) about 7pm. Followed Scout rules: pitch your tent before you go to the pub. This was the most welcoming campsite 'pitch where you like, find us in the morning.' I talked to a schoolteacher (leading a Duke of Ed. trip) and a local who used to walk over the moors to school every day.

Day 2

It rained all night and all morning too. I went back to bed. At noon the sky cleared and you could see across Porlock Bay to Wales (and the Aberthaw power stations). Eventually departed 1pm, thankful in the expectation of a long summer day. All afternoon was taken walking through woods. I don't care for walking in woods—you can't see your progress or your destination. From Culbone to Countisbury didn't meet a soul. Eventually I emerged from the woods into a field of rampant rhododendrons — spectacular in bloom, but to the annihilation of other flora. You couldn't see out over the top.

Evening arrived with beautiful Foreland Point (an inviting bivvy spot), and I dined at the friendly Blue Ball Inn in Countisbury. Evening was spent camping in Lynmouth Valley – albeit with the midges.

Day 3

The Valley of the Rocks was spectacular. I was surprised to meet two gentlemen I'd met the day before in the woods, again walking the opposite direction to me. One cheerfully explained: 'our wives drop us off then we walk back to meet them'. By afternoon the sun was fiercely hot. Descending to sea-level to cross the river Heddon then climbing back up truly took it out of me. I ran low on water, so detoured inland to a campsite marked on the map. Alas the campsite was long bust but I found a tap on the farm. Arrived that evening at Combe Martin. The change on leaving the national park was saddening, with all the fields were littered with junk. Exmoor is commendably well kept. I dined at the House of Cards pub, watched the sunset on

the beach. Met two Russian travellers who'd wild-camped at Wringcliff Bay – a beautiful spot – but my jealousy washed away as I heard it was the unfortunate night of solid rain.

Day 4

Wet my feet in the sea then caught the trans-Exmoor bus back to Minehead. Three days walk undone in two hours. Spoke to someone else who'd done the same thing. I'd do similar again but invite company. Probably next midsummer.

Many thanks to the club and Ben Brunt for lending me kit, and Alex Howes for local knowledge. Alastair Humphreys' summer solstice microadventure challenge <http://www.alastairhumphreys.com/summer-solstice-microadventure-challenge-3/>



Castle Rock

Phil's Mountain Maps

Phil Withnall, in all his computery wisdom, has generated three pull-out maps of the Lake District, Snowdonia and the Yorkshire Dales with past bunkhouses CUHWC has stayed in circled. Trace out your routes to see just how much of our countryside you've explored, and tear them out for your bedroom wall:

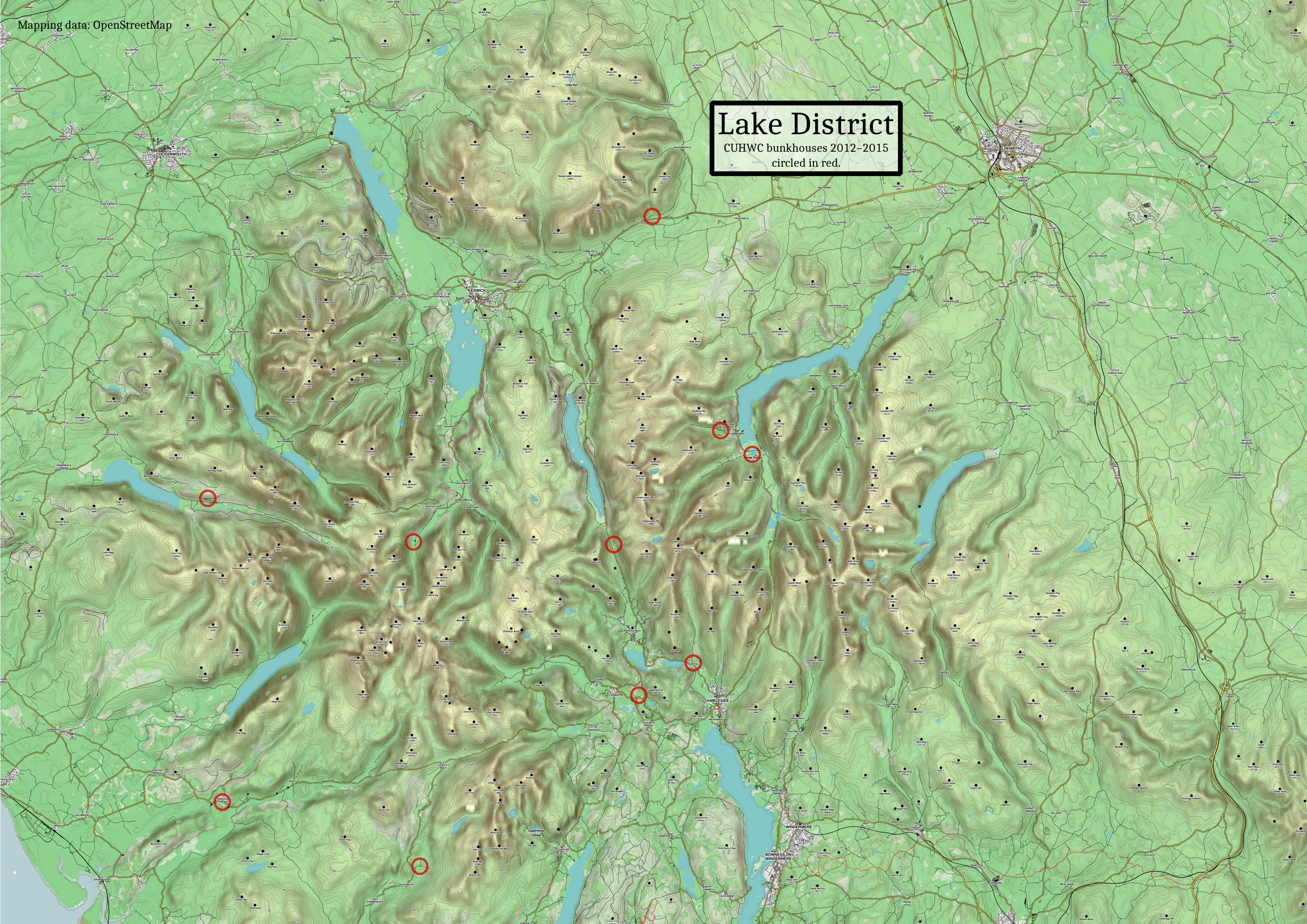
Credits

Map data is copyright OpenStreetMap contributors, available under the Open Database License (<http://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>).

Making the Maps

1. Export OSM data for the region you want (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/export>).
2. Import the data into Maperitive (<http://maperitive.net/>).
3. Select bounds for the map. Generate relief contours, hypsometric tinting, and hillshading (slopes)
4. Execute the command "export-svg compatibility=inkscape zoom=13" to get a detailed SVG output (rather than a non-detailed one)
5. Open the SVG in Inkscape. Save regularly while editing it because Inkscape will probably crash, violently and often
6. Create a rectangle of A4 proportions and scale it to the right size. In the Document Properties, change the page size to fit the rectangle, then delete the rectangle
7. Create a new layer for bunkhouse markers (so that the underlying map can be easily replaced if needed); add bunkhouse markers. Add other oddments to the map
8. Don't forget to include the OSM copyright statement (http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Legal_FAQ)
9. Export the page as a PNG.

Lake District
CUHWC bunkhouses 2012-2015
circled in red.





Snowdonia
CUHWC bunkhouses 2012–2015
circled in red.

Mapping data: OpenStreetMap



Yorkshire
CUHWC bunkhouses 2012-2015
circled in red.

Mapping data: OpenStreetMap

Kinder Scout in a Different Light

A focus on how the location of our annual Fresher's Trip played a critical role in the fight for Open Access on Britain's hills

Tom Leach

Today, the United Kingdom has some of the best access rights to the countryside of any country in the world. Since 2000, within England and Wales the “right to roam” gives hillwalkers access of open ‘mountain, moor, heather or down’; within Scotland, Scots law traditionally grants almost unhindered access to open countryside. While the outdoors community often takes such rights for granted, the reality is very different – access to open land especially within England and Wales has been contested – and in cases fought over – for hundreds of years, and the events on Kinder Scout in April 1932 arguably formed the start of a century-long battle for open access to England’s countryside.



On Sunday 24th, more than 400 ramblers set off from Bowden Bridge near Hayfield, and ascended up William Clough towards Kinder Scout, the highest point in the Peak District. Halfway up, the trespassers – less than one percent of the Peak District had public access, and there were only twelve ‘legal’ paths – scrambled up towards the plateau. Here they were met by the gamekeepers of the Duke of Devonshire, and joined by another group of Sheffield-based ramblers who had set off onto Kinder from Edale. One keeper was slightly injured in the violent scuffles that followed, and both groups retreated to Hayfield and Edale where six were arrested by police – five of whom were later found guilty of unlawful assembly and breach of the peace.

Organised by the Lancashire branch of the British Workers’ Sport Federation, largely made up of Communist Party members and supporters, the ramblers were frustrated by the lack of public access onto the fells. Kinder Scout, together with much of the Peak District, consisted of poor farming land used to hold grouse for local landowners, and only worked twelve days a year. Walkers were banned the rest of the time, with the land deserted, but more fundamentally, the protest linked into wider political questions – who really had the right to the land at Kinder?

Ramblers were largely working class, viewing the ownership of the land by a select few as a fundamental injustice. If they were to wander off the twelve ‘legal’ paths, they could be chased by gamekeepers with dogs and guns; land represented one facet of the wider class conflicts of the time. ‘Official’ rambling organisations had failed to make any progress towards a ‘right to roam’; in any case, they were far from working-class organisations. Within their ranks were dukes and patrons, who assuming they applied for permission could often walk wherever they wanted, and hence criticised the trespass, expressing their ‘utter disgust’ at such ‘organised hooliganism’. Such organisations



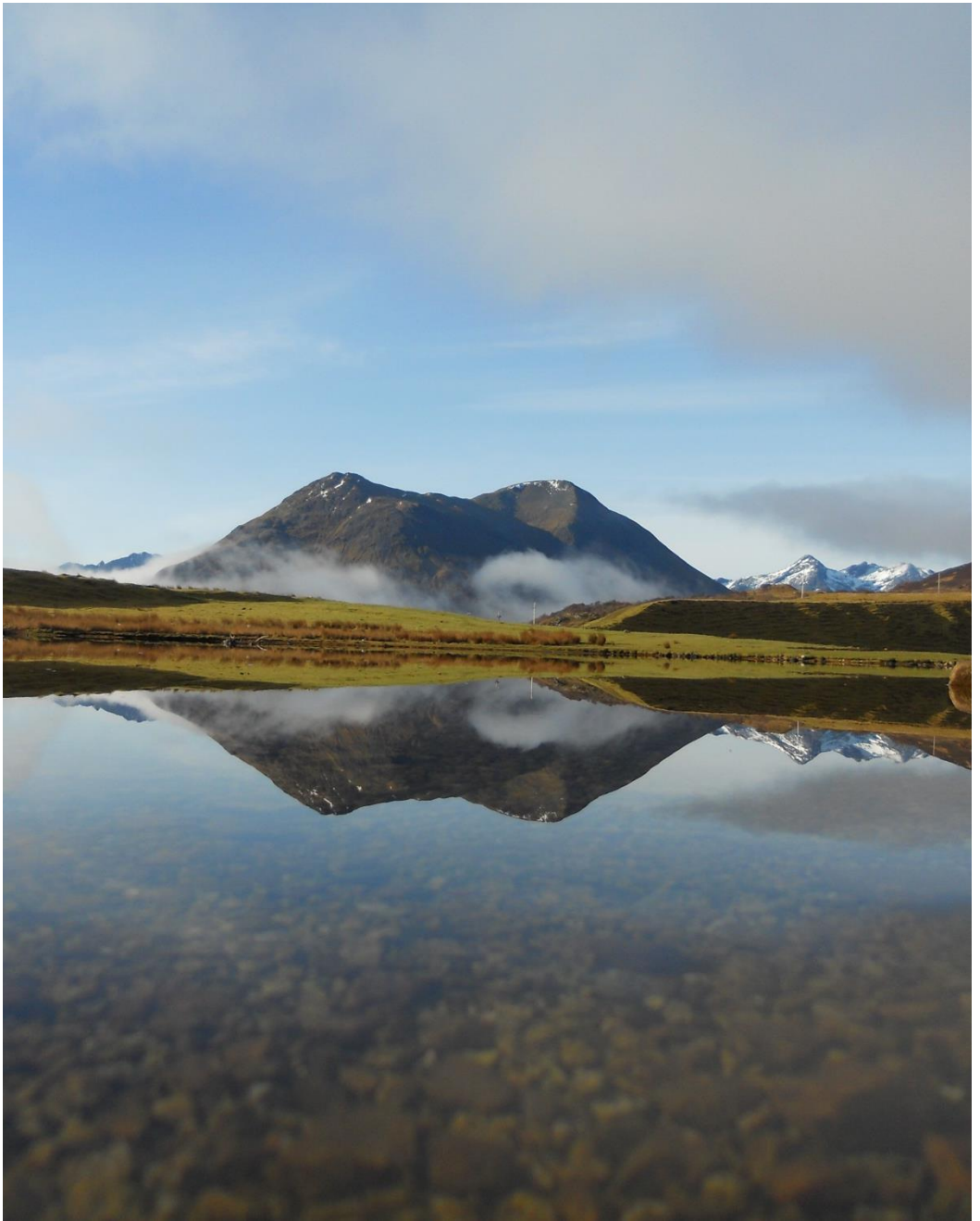
inevitably failed to represent young, often unemployment working class ramblers, who favoured more militant tactics. Benny Rothman, one of the leaders of the Trespass and a twenty-year-old socialist activist, argued at his trial:

“We ramblers, after a hard week's work in smoky towns and cities, go out rambling for relaxation, a breath of fresh air, a little sunshine. But we find when we go out that the finest rambling country is closed to us, just because certain individuals wish to shoot for about ten days a year”.

The events at Kinder acted as a catalyst for further pressure for improved access; far from deterring the trespassers, arrest and imprisonment united their cause. 10,000 ramblers – the largest number in history – assembled at the Whinnats Pass a few weeks later, intensifying the pressure for greater access. Despite this, it was to be almost twenty years before the emergence of the first national parks, and the negotiation of access agreements to the former ‘battlefields’ of Kinder Scout and Bleaklow. Complete ‘right to roam’ across England’s moorland only became a reality after the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, and its final implementation five years later.

Many thanks to the detailed resources available on the Kinder Visitor Centre Group website, without which this article would not have been possible.

All photos courtesy of the Kinder Visitor Centre



Skye Trail

Josh Abrahams

Day 1: Broadford – Torrinn

The expedition begun with an overnight haul on the sleeper train from London to Inverness, followed by a slightly more amenable foray over to Broadford on the CityLink Bus. The antics and rantings of seemingly-disgruntled coach-drivers provided ample entertainment to compensate for any feelings of sleep deprivation left over from the previous night's train journey!

Phil had actually spent the week beforehand working in Scotland; so, when Ben, Andy and myself met up with him at Broadford, we unexpectedly found him in a state of frustration and panic (well, as close to panic as you're likely to ever see Phil)! It had transpired that 24-hour-max luggage lockers are apparently a thing, and a very annoying and unhelpful thing at that when you need somewhere safe and secure to keep your work laptop for a week! Post Office to the rescue

Anyway, with the logistical trials behind us, we enjoyed a pleasant rest-of-the-day walking (if you overlook the dog marking its territory on Andy's leg!), and eventually pitched tents for the night just beyond the small village of Torrinn.

Day 2: Torrinn – Camasunary

The next day entailed an enjoyable trek round the southern peninsula of Elgol, which would have offered up some fairly spectacular views over the inlet bays of the Atlantic Ocean and Southern Isles, were it not for the persistent cloud! Heading northwards to Camasunary, we encountered collapsed pathways, enduring rainfall and a good amount of interesting scrambling, before finally winding up at the bothy at the end of the day. We found the Camasunary bothy standing prodigiously in its position at the head of the bay, protecting the lower slopes of the mighty Bla Bheinn from the onslaught of the crashing Atlantic waves.

The bothy's idyllic location was not all that it had to offer, however: we soon became acquainted with the group of party-goers from next door, one of whom was apparently so high that he was unable to decide whether Josh, inside his sleeping bag, was in fact a person or not! Late-night disco-music of eclectic, and often

questionable, taste promptly ensued. An impressive and (mostly) flawless rendition of Don McLean’s American Pie was one of the items to feature, enjoyed greatly by those who were still sufficiently awake at that time to realise what was happening, or recall even half of the lyrics!

Day 3: Camasunary – Sligachan

The third day of our trek started off with a wonderful walk past the Cuillin, which eventually led us through the village of Sligachan before eventually finishing up a short way beyond the mouth of Loch Sligachan, at a small but very picturesque coastal peninsula. With the cloud starting to clear, this offered up some great views over the Isle of Raasay to the east, Ben Tianavaig to the north, and Glamaig to the south, all of which had some very impressive sea cliffs to display! A small tarn just inland of the peninsula created an almost-perfect mirror reflection of the skyline in the clear, unbroken water.

With a beautifully clear and sunny evening to enjoy, as we pitched tents and tucked into yet another round of rice and beans, the only shame was the feud that seemed to be escalating between Ben and the local wildlife (namely, the “bloody oyster catchers!”) – the feelings of animosity between the two parties were almost certainly mutual!

Day 4: Sligachan – The Storr

From there we headed north along the coast, passing through Portree for a highly-anticipated restock of food. The much-improved weather conditions gave fantastic opportunity to admire the spectacular sea cliffs that followed. We were kept on our toes the whole day by the terrain, as benign and seemingly-dull, marshy plateaus rolled calmly towards the sea, before suddenly taking a dramatic plunge over jagged cliffs and exposed rock outcrops, with tufts of grass teetering over the edge, clinging on for dear life, before disappearing into the turquoise blue of the Sound of Raasay below. Ahead lay The Storr (An Stòr, in Gaelic) – in plain view all afternoon, it made an impressive (and reasonably ostentatious) landmark, with its tall, imposing cliffs and rugged skyline beckoning us on towards our campsite for the end of the day.

By the evening, the cloud had almost entirely cleared; all that remained by sun-down were the occasional wisps of glowing pink and orange – carried by the gentle breeze and sinking currents of slowly-cooling air, they flowed smoothly and gracefully, like rivers of colour, over the undulating contours of the landscape. They laid a fine blanket over the top of The Storr, gently stroking its rugged tops, as if putting it to bed for the night. At one point, the vortex-shedding taking place off the down-wind side of the summit made it look like an over-ambitious wind tunnel experiment!



Day 5: The Storr – The Quiraing

The previous day had simply been the good old-fashioned ‘calm before the storm’, it seemed, as the weather on Day 5 took something of a nose dive

Climbing up the side of the Storr gave views of some really quite bizarre geology – the intricate rock sculptures that characterise this mountain are tall and spiky, owing to both the hardness its rock, and the process of landslip. They give the landscape an eerie and almost terrifying atmosphere that rather explains Ridley Scott’s decision to film there for the production of his 2012 film, Prometheus.

The subsequent walk over the Trotternish Ridge was plagued by thick cloud, persistent rain, and strong winds, not to mention the slightly-frightening moment when we lost Ben! On the approach to The Quiraing at the end of the day, Andy had become increasingly bemused by the unexpectedly large presence of German tourists seen throughout the course of much of the trip so far – in desperation, he cried, “why are you here?!” Nothing xenophobic about that, of course

Day 6: The Quiraing – The Lookout

With the weather slightly improved, there was a chance in the morning to admire the distinctive rock formations of the Quiraing, such as The Needle, The Table and The Prison. Regrettably, Ben’s vendetta against the wildlife of Skye had not been reconciled by this point, so in need of some form of distraction he took to developing the art of “That’s What She Said” jokes, which, in the interests of decency, shall not be repeated here!

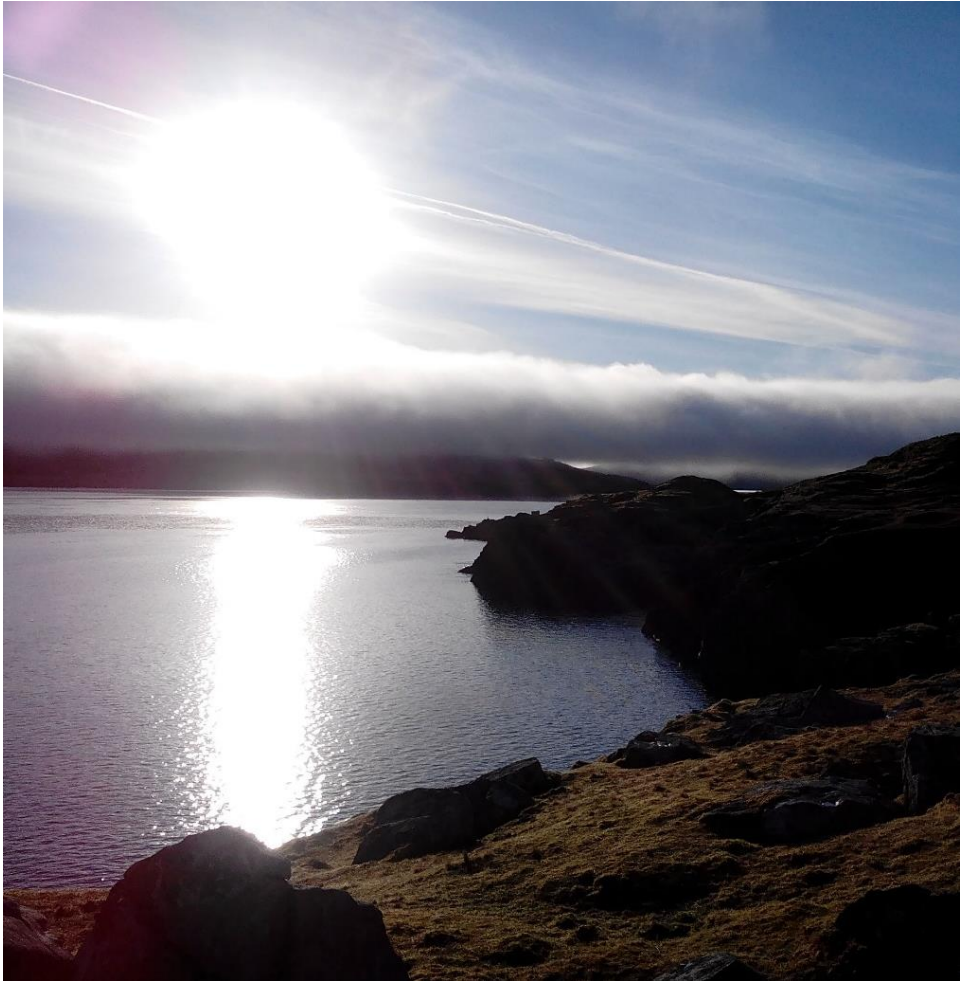
This short day culminated at The Lookout bothy, located at the very northernmost tip of Skye. This was a quaint little hut with fine views over the sea, and the Isle of Lewis could just about be seen, very faintly, on the far horizon. The sunset that evening was also pretty nice!

Over dinner, whilst I sat looking in vain for Minke whales, Phil and Andy debated the merits of baked beans versus cous cous (I know, profound, right?), and Ben proudly announced, “I like sleeves.” I would love to be able to explain the context behind this quote, I really would, but I can’t remember, so I shall leave you to speculate instead

...

Day 7: The Lookout – Uig

The final day of the expedition entailed a coastal walk from The Lookout bothy down to the village of Uig, which incorporated a number of ruined castles and impressive coastal stacks. The bus journey back at the end of the day, along roads that were often narrow and winding, over steep drops to the sea below, also proved a fairly exciting experience!



Sunset over the Lookout

Alternative Ways to the Hills

Tom Leach

Half of the adventure is the journey there, so the saying goes, so why would one want to start their trip to the tranquillity of Britain's hills with a long, tiring car journey up a congested motorway? Instead, this article will outline six 'alternative' routes to the hills, hoping to show that there are better, more unique and exciting ways of starting one's weekend away than jumping in the car* ..

Caledonian Sleeper to Rannoch Station

Every evening except Saturday, the Caledonian Sleeper leaves London bound for the Scottish Highlands, splitting at Edinburgh for sections to Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William respectively. The 'Fort William' train – nicknamed the Deerstalker – has frequently been voted the best train journeys in the world. Leaving Euston at 2115, one can settle into their one or two-man berth, before heading to the lounge car for



The Sleeper crossing Rannoch Moor

Courtesy The Scotsman

a late evening meal of haggis, neeps and tatties, followed by a Scottish cheeseboard and a selection of Scottish whisky. Head back to your berth at midnight for a good night's sleep, waking up as the train escapes the Glasgow suburbs and winds along the shores of Loch Lomond. It's then all-stops to Fort William – there's plenty of time to gaze at the Highland scenery as the train takes more than four hours to cover the 120-mile journey from Glasgow.

Awesome walks are available along much of the route – Ben More can be climbed from Crianlarich, together with the Tyndrum Hills and obviously Ben Nevis from Fort William itself. Arguably the best option, however, involves alighting at lonely Corroul, the most inaccessible station in Britain, if not Western Europe. Located in the heart of Rannoch Moor, with the nearest road ten miles away, it offers a great start to a cross-country backpack. Catch the sleeper at 9ish, arriving at Corroul twelve hours later after a full Scottish breakfast, then head east towards Ben Alder, perhaps via Carn Dearg and Stor Gaibhre, before an evening in the bothy at Ben Alder Cottage. Ascend Ben Alder early the next morning for unrivalled views out to the Cairngorms and the wilds of Rannoch Moor, before returning to Dalwhinnie for the train back home, arriving early the next morning.

Megabus Gold to Scotland

Whilst the idea of an overnight coach journey may be one that fills members with dread, the 'luxury' Megabus Gold coaches form another excellent way of reaching the Scottish mountains. Leaving London at 11pm – and arriving early morning – ensures that as little walking time as possible is wasted, and each coach is equipped with flat beds, enabling one to get a proper night's rest on the journey up to Scotland, fully prepared for a full day on the hills on arrival.

Aviemore – at the foot of the Cairngorm plateau – can be reached directly overnight, while much of the Western Highlands can be reached by late morning with a connection in Glasgow or Inverness. Prices start from under £20 each way, and are often available at short notice – allowing a spur-of-the-moment trip if the weather looks good. If that breaks the bank, however, normal overnight Megabus services are also available for less than £5 – but with a seat no wider than school bus, don't expect quite such a good night's sleep.

* this article does not make any guarantees for the quality or convenience of public transport in the United Kingdom. Rural transport can be unreliable, expensive, and incomprehensible to plan without professional advice

Settle – Carlisle Line via DalesRail

The Settle-Carlisle Line, running through the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, offers endless opportunities for the car-less hillwalker, together with perhaps the most scenic railway journey in England. Horton-in-Ribblesdale and Ribbleshead stations are ideal for an attempt of any or all of the Yorkshire Three Peaks of Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-Ghent; Dent station – the highest in England – is convenient for the wilds of Blea Moor and Widdale Fell.

Services run approximately two-hourly between Leeds and Carlisle, with special ‘DalesRail’ services – designed specifically to link Preston and Manchester to the Dales for the benefit of hillwalkers – operating on summer Sundays. Indeed, the success of the line in linking the Dales with the towns and cities of Yorkshire and Lancashire was critical in saving the line in the 1980s.



Evening sky at Ribbleshead Viaduct

Royal Mail Postbus

Fancy a ride in Postman Pat's van? Well thanks to a little-known public transport service, you can by Postbus. Originally established to provide transport links to remote communities unserved by normal buses, postbuses provide one or two services a day to remote villages by taking passengers on the postman's morning run. Unfortunately, while as recently as 2006 more than 200 services were operated daily, now only 10 remain, in the Scottish Highlands, Outer Hebrides, North Yorkshire and (oddly) one route in Leicestershire.

Probably the most promising routes for the hillwalker link Lairg to Tongue, in the far north Scottish Highlands, passing beneath Ben Loyal, an isolated peak with four distinctive summits with fantastic views out to xxx and xx. Elsewhere, for a more leisurely stroll a morning service links the station at Malton with the Ryedale Wolds, a series of picturesque low-lying hills in North Yorkshire.



Morning Postbus at Achnasheen, early 80s

Tiger, Geograph, CC BY-SA 2.0

Western Isles via Barra Airport

While I'll admit there aren't too many hills in the Western Isles – the highest point on the island of Barra of Sheabhal is a mere 383m tall – it's still a stunning place to visit for the outdoors enthusiast. Fantastic sandy beaches line the western coast of South Uist; nothing lies to the west before Canada. Rocky mountains, such as Beinn Mhor, rise from the otherwise entirely flat landscape – often pathless but presenting stunning views out across the Hebrides chain, across the Atlantic, and out to Skye. One long road runs along the length of the islands, ideal for a three-day cycling break.

Furthermore, the journey to Barra – the second southernmost inhabited island of the Outer Hebrides – is a little different to say the least. While normally I'm not a fan of flying, Barra Airport remains the only airport in the world where a scheduled flight – operated by a conventional airline – takes off and lands on a (public) beach. Flights are timed to fit in with the tides – at high tides the runways are underwater – and operated by 19-seater Twin Otters. Two daily flights each way connect Barra with Glasgow International daily; the island can be reached in less than 3½ hours from London Heathrow.



A DHC-6 Twin Otter lands at Barra

Sue Jackson, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0



Ferry at Inverie

Courtesy Murray Barnes

Mallaig – Knoydart Ferry

Knoydart isn't easy to reach by any stretch of the imagination – the journey in either involves at least a days' walk in from either Glenfinnan or Kinloch Hourn (itself at the end of a 22-mile single track dead-end from the A87), or alternatively a short half-hour ferry over from Mallaig, perhaps better known as the origin point for the remaining ferries to Skye.

Travelling into the 'rough bounds of Knoydart' by ferry is undoubtedly the best approach, immediately reinforcing the feeling that one is escaping the outside world and entering one of the most remote places in Britain. Used extensively for commando training during World War Two, and the wettest place in Britain, it is ideal for those after a good challenge. Ladhar Bheinn, one of Knoydart's Munros, offers views out to Skye and Loch Quoich; the bothies at Barisdale Bay and Sourlies grant basic shelter for the night. The Old Forge at Inverie – the destination of the ferry and the most remote pub in Britain – is ideal for a well-earned pint at the end of a Knoydart adventure.



Above Loch Mhoicean

Kintail to Attadale, Monar to Strathcarron

Based on the explorations of David Hoyle, Alex Ross, Jamie Cranston, Tom Leach, Anthony Cooper and Fingal Loh in the remote region north of the Cluanie Inn and south of Achnasheen in the Scottish Highlands

Text by Tom Leach, Photos by David Hoyle

Arriving at Inverness Bus Station after the sleeper from London and Crewe, while waiting for the coach to take us over to Cluanie, we got chatting to a 'friendly' local Scotsman about our plans. Obviously – as mostly naïve Southerners – we must be either mad or incredibly foolish to be heading off into the wilds of the Scottish Highlands over Easter, especially in the unseasonably cold weather. He recalled an unfortunate tale about the previous 'Southern lads' he'd come across who'd apparently set out ill-equipped for such adventures. Despite being well equipped with car batteries (!) for their film camera, they had apparently overlooked such essentials as warm clothes and enough food. After a little persuasion that a) we knew Scotland was cold and b) we had a map, we were on our way on the almost deserted coach heading towards Loch Ness. As the coach winded along the shores of the loch, and began to climb up Glen Moriston to the Cluanie Dam, the scale of the Easter snowfall became clear. Everything above 300m was covered, with the tips of the Five Sisters of Kintail barely visible under a dense white cloud. Alighting the coach at Ault a'Chruinn – and after a brief kit faff in a small bus shelter, originally chosen by Fingal as a bivvying spot but thankfully decided against – we ascended up Gleann Lichd away from the road, underneath the imposing Five Sisters.

Arrival at the bothy at Camban for the night revealed few had had been brave enough to visit over the past winter months; as the sun set it immediately became apparent why, as the bitter cold rolled in with the temperature falling well below freezing. The evening was spent huddled in our winter sleeping bags, wondering a little where this was such a sensible idea after all.

Next morning, the cloud lifted, with a bright blue sky revealing the stunning landscape of Kintail under a thick white blanket of snow. We continued east towards Loch Affric, passing the closed youth hostel at Alltbeithe, and began ascending towards the Bealach Coire Ghaidheil. Marching through the now three-foot deep snow, we gazed down into the stunning setting of Glen Affric from the bealach with not a footprint in sight, and descending down Gleann a' Choilich, camping in the flat ground at the mouth of Loch Mullardoch. Just like on Cape Wrath eight months before, our first night camping got off to a challenging start. Of the three tents, a combination of the cold and apparent corrosion on one of the tent poles led to it snapping, and hence one of tents becoming as good as useless. Four therefore shared David's three-man, making for a cosy but at least warm night. Notably, the late cold spell had appeared to have taken a toll in the deer population, as we passed more than two dozen across the trip that had apparently fallen victim to

hypothermia. While a certain anonymous group member may have been keen on cooking a recently deceased one for dinner, the lack of anything other than a penknife – together with a vague sense that it probably wasn't the best idea – led to a more simple meal of rice with satay sauce instead.

Good Friday brought a return to the low cloud, as we plodded up Allt na Criche towards Loch Mhoicean, and descended down Allt Coire nan Each towards the bothy at Maol-bhuidhe. One obstacle obstructed our path, however – the outlet from Loch Mhoicean, presumably fed by the snowmelt. While the crossing was far from impossible, our efforts to find an optimum crossing point appeared to achieve little more than giving the river time to rise further. While Anthony braved a deeper albeit flatter section to avoid the need to soak his boots, the rest of the party went for a group wedge across a shallower but more uneven section. Strong swearing inevitably followed as the river was crossed, and the group continued to Maol-bhuidhe albeit with boots now soaked through.

Evening was spent playing cards in the attic, and chatting over the options for the next few days. Maol-bhuidhe consisted of little more than two small stone rooms and



the (newly refurbished) attic space above; it was difficult to think that in the early 1900s, the building was home to a large family, with sufficient supplies to last three months through the winter. Little of our route had been decided in advance; our only limitation was our train back and the wild Scottish weather, and hence a plan was forged to continue to Pait Lodge the next morning and onto to the bothy at Bearnais. Progress was swift along the 4x4 track to Pait – weather ruled out the summit – and a lunch of bagels with frozen Nutella was enjoyed. It was decided to continue to Bearnais off-path, via the shore of Loch Monar. Although rough-going, it was stunning simply to feel so remote and in the wilderness, a world away from Cambridge; by a loch-side which in all likelihood only a handful of people would have visited that year, the shore entirely untouched by human activity. Climbing over Bealach an Sgoltaidh into the cloud, the weather deteriorated with the now-heavy rainfall funnelled into a dense network of tributaries and streams.

Descending towards Bearnais was the first time our navigation had been tested: following the stream to a steepening in the contours, then taking a straight bearing across the rough ground and aiming off the river neighbouring the bothy. We wondered if we'd overshot a distinct steepening in the terrain shown in the map



contours – pacing was difficult in the rough ground – before an impressive twenty-metre waterfall in full flow, unmarked on the map, took us by complete surprise. Shortly after, we arrived at Bearnais, a single wood-panelled room parked below the might of Sgurr na Feartaig.



Chillin' at Bearnais

Easter Sunday brought the best weather of the trip; without a cloud in the sky, and with much the snow gone, we left our backpacking kit in the bothy and ascending up Sgurr na Feartaig to stunning views of Torridon and out to the Applecross Peninsula. On the summit, we met the first person since the coach four days ago – initially a little perplexed with our lightweight kit in the form of bum bags and ice axes – and continued on an out-and-back up Sgurr Choinnich, offering views out to Loch Monar and into the wilderness. By mid-afternoon, we'd descended back to the bothy, spending the rest of day relaxing in the Scottish sun and swimming in the neighbouring Abhainn Bhearnais.

Monday was time to leave Bearnais and head back towards Achnashellach, Strathcarron and with it the Kyle railway and our journey home. Retracing our steps to the north, we then descended into the Achnashellach Forest via Carn Mòr, and were faced with a tricky choice. The nearest bridge across the River Carron was more than three kilometres upsteam – leaving a lengthy six kilometre trek just to return to the opposite side of the river we were little more than two hundred metres from. Hence – considering the recent good weather – we broke off-path through the forest, and forded the river at an opportune spot, enjoying lunch on the pebble banks.

Unfortunately, while our map indicated the road was simply a few hundred metres away across open ground, this land was now home to a number of new houses, blocking our way forward. Skirting around them brought us to the railway line, with little in the way of a proper crossing. Faced with either continuing through some front gardens, or crawling through a small tunnel underneath the line, we chose the latter more adventurous option, clambering out onto the verge of the Strathcarron road, careful to avoid any suspicion. We continued onwards to the bothy at Coire Fionnaraich, collecting deadwood for a warm evening by the fire. Tuesday brought a short walk back to the Strathcarron Hotel for that slice of cake and 11am whisky, before the 1252 back to Inverness. Scotland had, as always, provided a fitting escape from the work and stresses of Cambridge; a perfect exploration into the tranquillity of the wilderness.



