



Photo by

William Garden

FASARINEN PINNACLES OF LIATHACH
EASTER, 1910

THE
Cairngorm Club Journal.

Vol. VIII.

JULY, 1914.

No. 43

THE TORRIDON HILLS:

BEINN EIGHE, LIATHACH, AND AN TEALLACH.

THE district around Kinlochewe is one of remarkable beauty, and as a climbing centre is one of the finest on the mainland of Scotland. Mountain, loch and tree are grouped in such a way as to compose scenery of singular richness and variety.

The presence of water everywhere, and the proximity of the sea and islands, lend a great charm to the landscape. The hills stand apart, each with a distinct individuality, and yet not in complete isolation. The pearl-grey of the quartz-crowned hills at sunrise, and the ruddy towers of sandstone, mirrored in the crimson-dyed lochs at sunset, together with the steep terraced moorland, split by deep set torrents, have a fascination peculiarly their own.

The quiet manners of the Gaelic-speaking western folk, and the musical softness of their voices, bring with them a kind of mystery, which is unusual yet pleasant to the stranger.

The Ross-shire hills are probably well known to members of the Club, still perhaps their description, and the stating of their position, together with the rendering in English of some of the Gaelic hill-names, may possess new interest, and allure fresh attention to hills, which have attractions both for the walker and the climber.

A ridge walk either on Eighe, Liathach, or the Teallachs, is a thing to be remembered, and the rock-climbing, owing to certain peculiarities of sandstone, is of a very high standard, while snow conditions produce first class climbing.

It should be noted, however, that as this district is strictly private in August and September, the earlier months should be chosen to visit these hills.

BEINN EIGHE (*Ben Eay*, file peak, from its serrated outline) is the feature of the view from Kinlochewe.¹ The upstanding rocks which form the teeth of the file are called Bodaich Dhubh Beinn Eighe (the black Carls of Beinn Eighe). The sides of this wild mountain are masses of shingly screes, ever slipping. Whence it is said:—

“ Si mo run Beinn Eighe.
Dh' fhalbhadh i leam is dh' thalbhainn leatha.”
My love is Beinn Eighe
She with me and I with her would go.

A good stalking track leading to the hill starts from the road half a mile north of the village. This path is left as the Allt na Doire-daraich (stream of the oak plantation) is neared, and one makes for the foot of the steep ridge leading to the summit of (1) CREAG DUBH, 3000 feet contour, which can be easily attained in two and a half hours.

To the west is (5) RUADH STAC BHIG (*roo-stac-vick*, the little red stack), 2750 feet contour, and on the north is Meall a Ghiubhais (*mel-a-yeooz*, hill of the fir trees), 2882 feet. The ridge of pinnacles terminating in (2) SGURR AN FHIR DUIBHE (*skoor-an-ear-doowe*; peak of the black men), 3160 feet, though not exactly easy, will not be found difficult if one is familiar with rock. The

¹ Kinlochewe is from *cinn-loch-ewe*, the head of the water lake. Loch Maree was known as Loch Ewe till towards the end of the seventh century, when it got its present name after St. Malrube, who settled at Abercrossain, now Applecross, and Christianised the neighbourhood.

There is a good hotel at Kinlochewe, but if desired a party of two could be put up at Mrs. Cameron's cottage, at 5/- a day.



Photo by

William Garden

SGURR FIONA OF AN TEALLACH FROM
BIDEIN A GHLAS THUILL
JULY, 1909

edge of the ridge, however, may be left, and the pinacles can be skirted on the east side.

The low peak overlooking the village is (3) SGURR A CONGHAIR (*skoor-a-conaver*, the point of the low antler), 2250 feet contour.

The ridge leading to the quartz peak of (4) SGURR BAN (white peak), 3188 feet, is a pleasant walk, and overlooks the pretty wooded glen of Lochs Clair and Coulin on the south, while the glen and head waters of Allt Toll a Ghiubhais are on the north.

The next peak on the ridge is (6) SPIDEAN COIRE NAN CLACH (peak of the corrie of the stones), 3220 feet, and directly south, and stretching into Glen Torridon, is (7) STAC COIRE AN LAOIGH (*stac-currie-an-lui*, peak of the calves' corrie) 2750 feet contour. On the green shoulder of the latter rises an excellent spring. Westward the stones disappear, and one ascends the wide green slopes, covering the soft limestone of the peak (8) COINNEACH MHOR (the big mossy place), 3130 feet. This peak carries fine sandstone buttresses dropping on the north (A) COIRE MHIC FHEARCHAIR (*currie-vickerracher*, corrie of Farquhar's son). The ridge on the east of the above corrie culminates in (9) RUADH STAC MOR, 3309 feet, the highest peak of Beinn Eighe. With the exception of the abrupt drop on the north this peak is not very interesting, but it provides a fine view of the corrie.

To the north, rising from the apparently flat moorland, sparkling with lochans, is the isolated peak of Beinn a Chearcaill (*ben-a-hearkl*, the circular hill), 2576 feet.

The ridge leading to (10) SAIL MOR (the big heel), 3217 feet, makes an abrupt descent of about 300 feet previous to its curling north to the summit. This descent is called (x) CEIM GRANDA (the ugly step), and though rough, and rather steep in places, there is no real difficulty, if the ridge is free from mist.

Sail Mor is best descended by the west, as the east side of the hill falls in a steep rock wall to the corrie.

This end of the Eighe ridge commands an excellent view of Liathach.

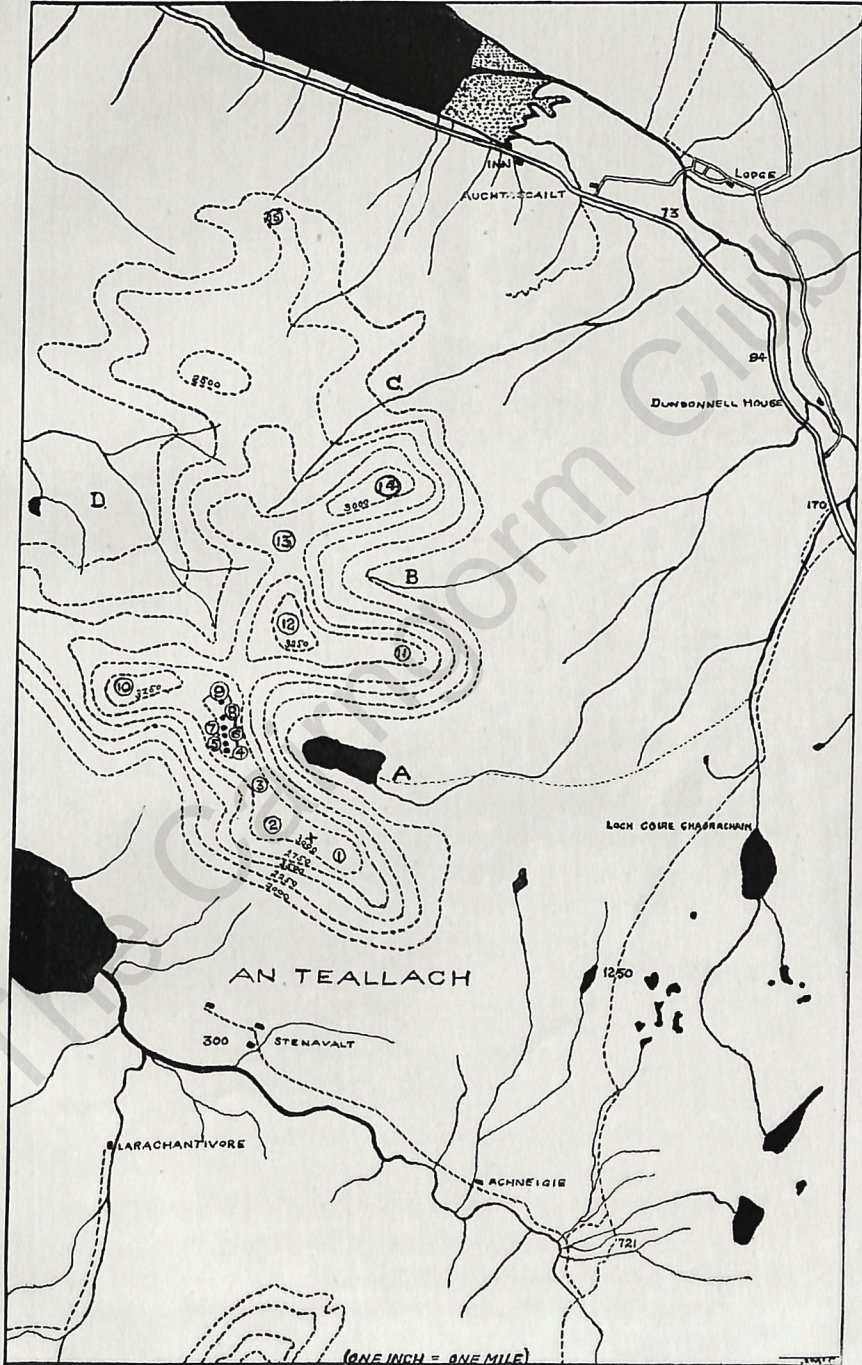
LIATHACH (*Leagach*, the hoary place)—the name is more appropriately applied to Beinn Eighe, which except for the deep gash of the Allt a Choire Dhuibh Mhoir (*alt-a-horrie-ghoo-vor*), separating the two mountains, is a continuation of Liathach, and enveloped in hoary screes—forms a striking contrast to the ruddy tiers and buttresses of its neighbour. The view of it from Glen Torridon, from which it springs abruptly in precipitous tiers of sandstone, is most impressive, and the climbing it affords is first class. Mr. C. E. Benson in his book, "British Mountaineering," says of Liathach, "This mountain is not for beginners, and most certainly not for solitary rambles; the difficulty is very often so much in getting to the summit as in getting down."

The east end of the ridge is best attained by the *col* between the first two peaks. The road should be left one mile west of the bridge at the keeper's house, on the west of the Allt Gharaidh Dubh (the stream of the black den.)

Another route starts directly west of the black buttress (4) CREAG DHU A CHOIRE LEITH, 3000 feet contour, and on the east of a precipitous and deep set torrent. This route entails the climbing of the numerous bluffs which give the mountain its precipitous character.

The long shoot from Torridon to (6) MULLACH AN RATHAIN (*moolach-an-raan*, ridge of the horns), 3358 feet, and the more gradual ascent over (9) SGOR A CHADAIL (*skur-a-hadal*, scar of sleep), 2287 feet, bring one most readily to the west end of the ridge. There is a more sporting route from the north, *via* (8) MEALL DEARG (*mel-jerrack*) 3150 feet, and (7) THE NORTHERN PINNACLES,¹ six in number, including Mullach an Rathain. Their ascent is of a more difficult nature,

¹ For descriptive sketch of these pinnacles see "Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal," Vol. III., p. 132.



THE PEAKS OF AN TEALLACH.

with numerous obstacles occurring *en route*, the most notable being the unstable condition of the rock, and the almost vertical thirty feet on the second pinnacle, which however may be turned on the west side. Then there is a gap of three feet between the third and fourth pinnacles, and the steep angle of the latter to negotiate.

The corrie to the west of Meall Dearg is Glas Tholl a Bhothain (grey hollow of the bothies) and the upper part is known as Corrach Dearg (red and precipitous).

The most easterly peak (1) STUC A CHOIRE DHUIBH BHIG (*stuc-a-horrie-ghoo-vick*, peak of the little black corrie), 3000 feet app., is a sharp cone, connected by a narrow ridge to (2) BIDEAN TOLL A MHUIC (peak of the sow's hollow), 3200 feet. Grand views are obtained from the ridge leading to (3) SPIDEAN A CHOIRE LEITH (*spitean-a-horrie-lea*, peak of the grey corrie), 3456 feet.

More than 3000 feet below is the white ribbon-like line of the glen road, along which one looks to the brown stretch of seaweed on the beach at Upper Loch Torridon.

To the south are the imposing hills of Achnashellach and Applecross, and beyond the rugged coast-line stretches the dark saw-like ridge of the Cuchullin, while on the horizon can be seen the Outer Hebrides. In front of one is (5) SPIDEANAN NAM FASARINEN (*spiteanan-nam-fasarin*, pinnacles of the increasing point), 3050 feet, a beautiful range of pinnacles on the main *arete* at the head of (B) COIRE NA CAIME (*currie-na-hraim*, the crooked corrie).

Seen from here the three Rathains of Alligin appear as one, which doubtless gave reason for the saying:—

“Liathach's a mac air a muin.”

Liathach with her son on her back.

More than thirty of these fine peaks can be counted from the roadway between Poolewe and Aultbea, giving perhaps the finest view of cone-shaped hills from any roadway in Scotland.

AN TEALLACH (*the Challich*, the forge). When the setting sun turns ruddy, the range of An Teallach presents a fiery or forge-like appearance.

Seen from Gruinard Bay, or on the road from Garve, the castle-like battlements of the weird peaks which circle the Toll an Lochan assume a grandeur all their own, and to the true climber it creates the irresistible longing to make a closer acquaintance with their manifold beauties.

The easiest route to the high ground from Dundonnell Inn,¹ consists in following the stalker's track opposite Auchtascait (field of the bald places), a square of houses which include the post office. This path is best pursued till the (C) ALLT A MHUILINN (the mill stream) can be attained above the deep gorge in which it descends. The stream skirts the base of the imposing mass of (14) GLAS MHEALL MOR (the big grey hill), 3176 feet, and followed to its source it leads to the high ground directly north of the (13) UNNAMED 3001 FOOT PEAK. The Unnamed and Glas Mheall Mor overlook (B) COIRE A GHLAS THUILL,² and the serrated ridge leading to the quartzite cone of (11) GLAS MHEALL LIATH (pale-grey hill), 3080 feet. The gullies and buttresses of this ridge are the feature of the corrie.

Over the high moorland terminating in (15) MAC US MATHAIR (mother and son), 2293 feet, one is attracted by a fascinating group of islands spread out over the sea at the entrance to Loch Broom.

The massive bulk of Suilven and Beinn More Assynt stand out prominently midst an array of peaks to the north-east.

The ascent from the Col to (12) BIDEIN A GHLAS THUILL (peak of the green hollow), 3483 feet, though appearing a steep grind is really a pleasant scramble, and the view from its summit embraces (9) SGURR

¹ This hotel is good, and has the advantage of being at the foot of the hills, but only small parties can be put up.

² For a description of the various climbs accomplished in this, and other corries referred to, see the vols. of the S.M.C.J.

FIONA, (wine peak) 3474 feet, and the magnificent peaks which send their flanks to (A) LOCH TOLL AN LOCHAN,¹ more than 1700 feet below. To the north-west of the Bidein-Fiona Col in the wide expanse of (D) COIRE AIRDEASAIH (*currie-ardessie*, corrie of the fall stream) lies the little mountain tarn Lochan Diabhaidh,² (*loch-an-davie*, lochlet of shrinking or dying).

The interesting scramble on the edge of the ridge to Fiona gives impressive and ever changing views of the Toll an Lochan, and from its rocky top the imposing precipice of (8) LORD BERKELEY'S SEAT, 3325 feet, and the four peaks of Corrag Bhuidhe (*Corrag voowe*, the yellow finger) call for special admiration.

A subsidiary ridge leading due west, culminates in (10) SGURR CREAG AN EICH (peak and crag of the horse), 3350 feet.

The hills of Kinlochewe and Skye appear amongst countless others of the mainland—

The names of which take the mind by storm,
As Mhaighdean, the maiden of Loch Mor Gorm,
Eighe, Beinn Dearg Mhor—which few can par,—
Liathach, Slioch, and Beinn Airidh Charr
That cluster around and stretch afar.

(7) THE NORTH TOP OF CORRAG BHUIDHE, 3425 feet, is the highest, (6) THE SECOND TOP is 3400 feet, and PEAK (5) AND (4) are a few feet lower. The traverse of these summits is by no means easy, and care should be exercised in handling the brittle flakes of rock, and the unstable giant biscuit-like formation of the sandstone. The unreliable character of this rock as compared with gabbro is nowhere more noticeable than on these peaks.

On the other side of Loch na Sheallag (loch of the hunts) rises the twin symmetrical ridges of Beinn Dearg Mhor (*ben-ferrack-vor*, the big red hill), 2974 feet, embracing Coire nan Clach, like the wings of a huge vulture.

¹ This fine corrie is well illustrated in the photo by Mr. W. Lamond Howie, S.M.C.J., vol. xi., p. 164.

² O.S.M., Lochan Ruadh.

At the tip of the southern wing can be seen a little green patch, an oasis marking the lonely sheiling Larachantivore (site of the big house.)

A scramble over (3) CORRAG BHUIDHE BUTTRESS, 3050 feet, brings one to the rounded slopes of the (2) TOP ABOVE CADHA GOBHLACH, 3100 feet, and the (x) CADHA GOBHLACH (the forked pass),¹ a little under 3000 feet, where an easy descent may be made to the corrie.

A steep slope composed of loose stones leads from the pass to the quartzite cap of (1) SAIL LIATH (grey heel), 3100 feet.

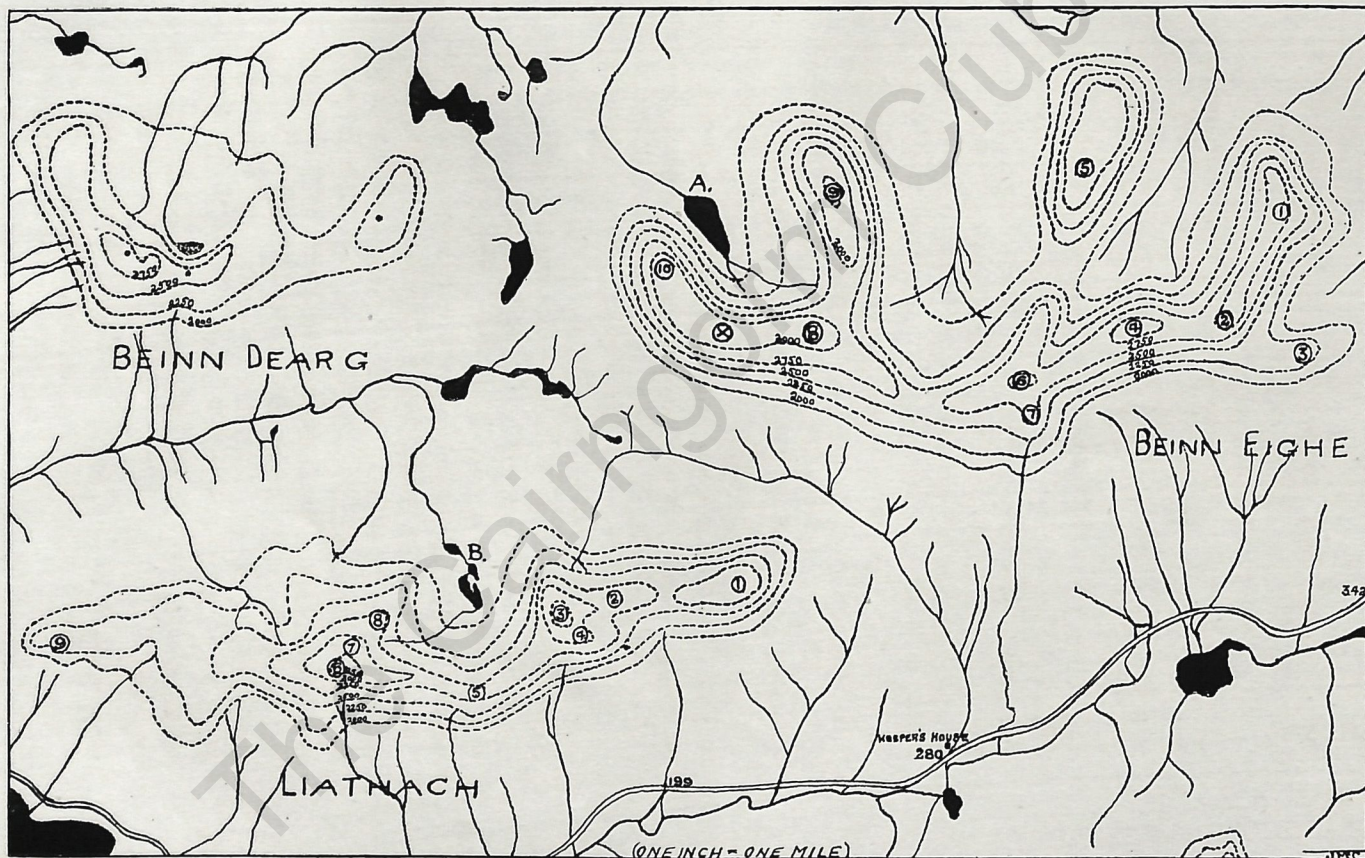
The easiest route of descent consists in scrambling down the rounded ridge, and crossing the moor directly in line with Loch Coire Chaorachain (loch of the corrie of the place of mountain torrents) to a gap in the long white cliff-wall, flanking Coir' Ghiubhsachain on the east. This brings one, before the loch is reached, to the path leading from the sheiling Achneigie, (field of the place of wood).² This track crosses the Allt Gleann Chaorachain, and follows it through the woods to the main road at Corryhallie (corrie of fatness, from its good pasture). A short cut is to cross the stream on stepping stones, and arrive on the road to the west of the burn.

On the east of the glen, the wooded slopes of Carn a Bhreabadair (the weaver's cairn) form a pleasing contrast to the bare peaks of the neighbourhood.

Regarding the bird life on these peaks, I may say, in conclusion, that eagles are far more numerous here than on the Cairngorms. This however cannot be said about ptarmigan. Although they appear on Eighe and Liathach, their absence is conspicuous on An Teallach.

¹ The pass is pronged at the head, being divided by a large mass of protruding rock.

² Though devoid of wood now, within living memory alder and birch trees grew near Achneigie.



THE PEAKS OF LIATHACH AND BEINN EIGHE.