



*Photo by*

*R. T. Sellar.*

THE NORTH BARN OF BEN BYNAC.

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THE BARNES OF BYNAC. IN A DAY.

BY JAMES MCCOSS AND R. T. SELLAR.

ON 6th August last we had the pleasure of being in a party arranged by C. P. Robb to ascend Ben Bynac. C. P. Robb, his brother M. J. Robb, and McCoss, all very enthusiastic, arrived at Huntly by motor from Aberdeen at 8 a.m., and were there joined by Sellar. We left immediately for Aberlour, where we were to breakfast. Our road followed the valley of the Deveron for the first few miles, and then led across the moors to Dufftown. Here we expected to get a glimpse of Ben Rinnes, but it was still well shrouded in mist, and even on the road we had the curious experience of shooting from brilliant sunshine into great banks of dense mist, to emerge again in half a mile into the sunshine. The rays of the sun were breaking up the mist in all directions, and some fine effects of ground mist crawling through the birch trees on the hillsides were obtained.

We reached Nethy Bridge shortly after 11 o'clock, and consulted Parker's famous map, and then a very pleasant run of four miles on a good road through Abernethy Forest brought us to Forest Lodge, where we stopped to change a tyre, and collect information about the condition of the road to Rynettin. We were told the road would require careful driving as it was narrow and rough, but, thanks to the driving skill of Marshall Robb, we had no difficulty in reaching Rynettin.

Mr. Carr, the keeper at Rynettin, was most hospitable and gave us all the information he could about the road, etc. It was most cheering to know that we could take the car another three miles to Ryvoan, which we reached at 12.30 p.m.

Ryvoan is composed of a stable and a living-room, in which latter were three young climbers from Edinburgh. The other half of the building is roofless. From Ryvoan the road makes a sharp elbow towards the picturesque pass to Loch Morlich. It is nearer, however, to cut this corner out and take to the heather, and make for the road again near Loch a Gharbh-choire, and thence to the bothy at the river Nethy. The door of the bothy was inside, and looked as if it had been used as a bed. A little beyond the hut we struck the Lairig an Laoigh path, and we followed it till we were up on the plateau.

We stopped to lunch at 1.30 p.m. at the altitude of 2325 feet by the side of a good well, close to the path, and marked by a small slab with a rounded top. The well is the source of a stream that runs to the Nethy. While seated at the well we had time to survey the surrounding country. To the north we had an excellent view of the extensive Forest of Abernethy and a glimpse of Speyside. Below us to the south was wild and lonely Strath Nethy and the steep glittering rock face of Sron a Chano.

A short climb of easy gradient brought us on to the extensive plateau due north of Ben Bynac. The guiding line over this wide upland is the north ridge of Bynac. This rocky rib runs up to the summit to a height of a little over 900 feet, and if the edge is kept it gives quite a good scramble. During our ascent of the ridge we had a good view of the south corrie of Mam Suim, Coire Stac na h-Iolaire, (the eagle's corrie). On its northerly side are three or four rocky ribs about 300 feet high, with deep-set gullies between. These gullies look a good proposition for a winter snow-climb. We reached the summit at 3 o'clock, but, unfortunately, thick mist hung on the high hills to the west, and Cairngorm

was seldom clear of it. Just below us on the eastern side of the mountain lay the valleys of Caiplich and the Avon; the latter could be followed to Inchroy, some eight miles and a half distant. Across the Avon were the very familiar summits of Beinn a' Bhuid and Beinn Avon, reminding one of many pleasant excursions. Almost due south were the Dubh Lochans, and the Lairig an Laoigh leading up to the saddle between Beinn Mheadoin and Beinn a' Chaoruinn. To the south-west we caught a glimpse of the Shelter Stone Crag, and a narrow slit of snow to the left, marking the Castlegates Gully. The snow on the Feith Buidhe was also visible.

We could willingly have spent a little more time on the summit, but we intended to visit the Barns, which are about half-a-mile south-east, and 400 feet below the summit. The top of the largest Barn can just be seen from a few yards east of the cairn, and if one is not careful the three points of rock forming the south backbone of the mountain may easily be mistaken for them. Viewed from a distance, the Barns appear to be three large boulders, and would certainly not attract much attention from the average visitor. On closer inspection, however, they proved to be rocks of considerable size, and presented plenty of scope for the rock-climber. As these rocks had apparently never been climbed we were quite anxious to have a look at them.

The smallest and most northerly Barn was the first to receive attention. It is a square tower, about 25 feet high on the shortest side, and after a brief inspection a route was found on this side. The other sides were manifestly impossible. The route starts up some blocks at the right-hand side, from the top of which there is a rather exposed step to the left, entailing some risk. The risk was obviated by threading the rope in advance through a deep slit about an inch wide behind an upright flake of rock, the rope being held from below, thus attaining complete safety. To reach the flake required a slight swing, and most of the staying-on is done by hugging it, as the foothold is not a good one. On the

other side of the flake there is a good foothold, and from there the rope was reversed in the slit giving a safeguard beyond, where there is another step leading up to a short gully and the summit. The accompanying illustration shows the rope being reversed on the flake. In the descent the flake was closely hugged, and the help of two men was necessary to get the descending man off it.

We next went to the south and largest Barn. (See illustration, *C.C.J.*, 1, 137.) The north-west face is the shortest, being some 50 feet in height. It is split by two vertical chimneys, both of which were tried, but they would not go. We then went to the south-west face, and Marshall Robb led up a long green crack in fine style. It finished with back and foot work. The top of this crack brought us to the bottom of a narrow through-chimney on our left, about 12 feet high. The head of this chimney took us to the summit ridge. At each end of this short arête there is a very rounded mass of rock about 10 feet high, which forms the summit. The standing-room on the arête is very small, and even with a back up it does not look as if the summit could be attained as it is completely holdless and round. We descended by the easier hollowed-out gully on the south-east side.

The middle Barn has a sphinx-like shape, being undercut and rounded at the foot, and looks as if it were built of feather-beds and sofa cushions. There are a few narrow chimneys and cracks of unequal width of very rounded and weathered granite, which an expert and thin climber might be able to overcome. We had not the time to try this Barn—besides, we are not all thin.

A pleasant walk to Ryvoan and the car brought our walking to an end. With a stop at Rynettin, we ran right through to Huntly, where Sellar left the car at 10 p.m. The others reached Aberdeen at midnight.