

FINISHING THE THREE THOUSANDERS  
IN THE CAIRNGORMS.

BY RONALD BURN.

YOU will remember, gentle reader, the excellent Jubilee Number of this Journal, and the all too short article by the late Sir Hugh Munro, in which he states that he had only three more "tops" in Scotland over 3000 ft. to climb in order to have ascended all the 538 points in his classic Tables. These three were Càrn an Fhìdhleir Feisidh (3276), Càrn Cloich Mhuilinn and the Inaccessible of Skye. His ambition was also mine, and to my great satisfaction I have achieved it and a little more. (See *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, Oct. 1923, p. 329, where it is stated that I have done every point tabled over 3000 ft., i.e. not only every point in Munro's original Tables which was Munro's ambition, but also all those added (20) to the revised Tables lately published by the S.M.C. (543 in all)—as well, of course, as those excluded (15) from the revised Tables but given in Munro's original edition). I think that I am the first and only one to have completed all the 3000 ft. points—558 in all.

Alas! Yes deliberately I write alas. For glad though I was to have accomplished a long dreamed-over project, I would far sooner dear old Munro had not died with three undone so that he might have been the first to do all in his own Tables and also to revise his Tables and then do all the peaks he had added. He was revising (fitfully) his Tables a little before his death, and in January 1919, three months before he passed away, I had the great privilege of spending two nights at Lindertis and of copying into my maps all the notes in his.

But this would give me no right to trespass on another club's journal (of which I have a complete set, by rare

luck). So perforce I shelter myself behind the Editor, who himself asked me for an article on my experiences in doing the tops "with more especial reference to the Cairngorms." Well, I have few experiences except kindness and hospitality unbounded from very many keeper friends, in most parts of Gàidhealtachd, and no startling adventures that I remember of during June and July 1923. So, being given a large tract of country to write about, I will try to pick out expeditions that included some of the out-of-the-way and little-climbed tops that within this range I had yet to do that summer, just in case by any chance there may be one single Cairngormer who has not been there. My narrative must be confined to those done in 1923, for memory soon fades.

First, then on Wednesday, June 27th, I did that little group above and east of the railway at Dalnaspidal, seldom climbed and yet very accessible, and comprising Glas Meall Mor (3037), Meall a' Chaorruinn (3004), A' Bhuidheannaich Mhor (3046) and Càrn na Caim (3087).

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Could the Railway Company not work up Dalnaspidal into a mountaineering Strathpeffer for Easter and Christmas meets, providing a runabout car for the Ben Alder range? This would open up a country at present almost unexplored. Or are winter sportsmen forever to go to Switzerland, and interesting hills to be made inaccessible to those who love them most?

Next day I did Meall na Cuaich, (leaving Truimbank Hotel at 10.55 and reaching the summit, 3120, at 12.10, and descended to Bhran Cottage in Glen Tromie, whence I tramped by Ruthven and Kingussie to Insh (I thought it was never going to come into view) where Mrs. Cameron of Rose Cottage (once the inn) made me exceedingly comfortable. Her husband was most interesting and gave me several words and meanings not in the Gaelic dictionaries for my collection, which at the time of writing has reached its 2100th. It is a great pity that Insh is not nearer the hills (or that the Camerons have not bought Derry Lodge!)

Next day I went to Kincaig for letters and then back along the Feshie to climb on the Monadh Ruadh and ended it by finishing all the points on the Braeriach massif that I had not done, by visiting every top from the 4149 cairn to Sròn-na-Làirig and back over several. But this day includes only well-known peaks and will not be detailed.

Next day I started at about 9.30 from Tolvah in Glen Feshie where I had slept, and once more took the Allt Fheàrnachan path. There are two tracks after one gets well beyond the bridge and wood.\* The map marks a cart road going N. and then ceasing. Actually it turns E. uphill till past Glaic na Mèirlich (on the ridge ending at Càrn Bàn Beag). This is not to be used. It looks the better and quicker way as reaching high ground sooner but its conspicuousness is due to streams having used it and made it their bed. This track avoids (by keeping higher up) the bridge over the Allt Fheàrnachan, whereas to get the good footpath marked on the map one goes to the bridge (not of course crossing it) crosses the wee burn from Coir' Arcain and then up and close to its left bank as in map. The old track does not cross this little stream till E. of where the map makes it end. By gentle uniform slopes this gravelly footpath lands one on the 3000 contour (or even 3250?) opposite the big snow patch called Ciste Marad (not Mairearaid). Further on is a broken pony shelter where lies a sheet of corrugated iron. It would now have been no exertion to bag Càrn Bàn Mór 3443. But I had done it some years ago and had to get as far as Cairntoul and the Devil's Point † that day. Yesterday, in order to avoid the awful ground drained by the head streams of the Eideart, knolls and dips and knolls again (also water), I had headed well towards Loch Einich. But all in vain: if I missed hags I gained upsy downy knowes and stones. This bad bit cannot be avoided and there is no

\* Name of wood is Badan Mosach.

† Gaelic name is Bodan Deamhain. Other names are Bod an Diabhoil, Pìoc (peak) an Donais, Creag Bhiorach (sharp) Gleann Giùthsachain.

comfortable route. To-day I kept the continuation of Ross' path on the right bank of the A. na Sgòrnaich (gullet) and so amid moraine heaps (best tackled by circumvention) with several pools and snow patches at their foot I toiled on past S. end of Loch nan Cnapan, crossed the Glais Fhéith (bog-stream) Inbhir Fheisidh (Feshie) or Fhaisidh, the left head stream of the A. Luinneag (little purler—a beautiful and very true name for this liling burn). I now kept up the corrie of the other stream (Glais, Théith Luinneag) till near its top when I crossed it and mounted a snow patch and then stones and so gained the smallish cairn of Sgòr an Lochain Uaine \* (1.49). It is a great pity that the contours of "Parker's new map" seem here ambiguous, as one would like to know within 50 feet the height of a peak made 4095 ap. by Hinxman's aneroid (given with no ap. caution in Bartholomew). Corner made it less high than Cairngorm, someone else 4205 approximate.

Having previously done Cairntoul I did not ascend it, leaving it for the return journey if time should allow. I almost missed the Coir' an t-Saighdeir (soldier) top 3989 and its rudimentary cairn (or are the stones there natural?) The way down to the wettish sandy col (An Diollaid, the saddle) between Cairntoul and the Devil's Point was very stony. I reached the cairn of Bod an Deamhain (3303) at 3.16. Looking down the cliffs on the east side I felt sure (as I had long before on looking up at them from below) that their reputation for unclimbableness starting direct from the Dee is exaggerated. Those down to the Giùthsachan side seem also feasible. Opposite loomed the huge and impossible boiler-plates of Beinn Bhrodain shining with water. The day had been misty with sharp showers soaking me from knees downward. On my way back I skirted lower down on Cairntoul to just under the 3975 ap. col to Sgòr an Lochain Uaine in order to cut across to (cairned) 3705 top on the march over a

\* Called Pìoc an Donais by one informant, but he belongs to the younger generation who are less reliable. My two old authorities assure me that this name belongs to the Devil's Point alone.

mile N. by E. of Lochan na Stùirteig (black-headed gull).

On Monday the whole Beinn Bhrodain massif was completed and more besides.

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Having crammed two days' work into yesterday I had only Druim nam Bó to do on my way to Inverey, and so finish all that I had not done of the Cairngorms which were baggable from Glen Feshie side. There is nothing to say about this seldom-ascended mere shoulder except that having started at 11.1 I reached the top 3005 about 1.30. This consists of stones leant one overlapping the other somewhat like what would be the result if an earthquake tipped up at a gentle angle the floor as panto chorus girls were dancing by holding each others' shoulders in Indian file. The granite was red and flat as though schistose.

The rest of Monday was spent in getting to Inverey and Tuesday to Spital of Glen Shee, for I had missed in the Monadh Minigeig range Meall Odhar Mór feeling sure it could not be on the Tables, and Glas Meall Beag because I simply didn't see it and had forgotten its existence. Having accomplished these I returned to Miss Gruer's at Inverey. Friday July 6th was spent in doing 11 tops on Beinn a' Bhùird and Beinn Athfhinn ("Avon") that I had not done (including one or two duplicates). But as this ground is quite familiar I need detail nothing. I would however suggest to anyone who contemplates climbing Beinn a' Bhùird from Glen Quoich, that after crossing the Dubh Gleann burn (there is a wooden bridge—none across Clais na Feàrna burn), one should keep well up above the wood and not attempt the purgatorial task of following the Quoich. I have read somewhere that there was once a path along it right up to that from Slugan Lodge, but there is no trace of it and the fallen trees and brushwood and long heather are beyond the limit. (Curious figure cut on grass of lower slopes of Carn "Elrig" Mór depicting a Highlander playing the pipes, visible from road).

Next day though heavier was pleasanter and is worth detailing if my space will allow. I had 14 tops, all new, to polish off, starting from the right bank of the Derry and so round to the right bank of the "Luibeg."

I started from Inverey at 10.20. Once in Glen Derry with the bridge in sight I headed to the left and began to climb just before the river's slow big elbow and thence into a corrie that led me to near the top of Càrn Gorm Beag na Doire (now called Little Cairn Gorm of Derry) (3375 ap.) cairnless (2.0). The dip to N.N.W. is short but well stoned (3325 ap.) as also the slope up to the main peak (3788) whose name must surely refer to its blue look when seen from a distance. It is not a particularly green hill except for a little on the glen side, but it is a handsome cone and has a bonny conical cairn to deck it (2.19). The dip to N.E. was long and made deeper by my not following the col ridge further to left. More stones and then Sgòr an Lochain Uaine (3175 ap.) This is a good top. Col from Derry C. G. is 3325 ap. but I went direct W. by N. to Creagan a' Choir' Àiteachain\* and the dip is 3125 ap. The hill 3529 is cairnless (3.15). I now headed for Beinn Mheadhoin, and, using the path for as long as I could, descended to Loch "Etchachan" and crossed it at its E. end.

My next move was, I think, a mistake. I ought to have taken the 3750 top to N.E. second or third in order, but on descent to the Loch I had thought it more direct to climb it at once. The ascent was over boulders and steepish, and it was not conquered till 3.50 (no cairn) —hardly I think worth including in the Tables as a top, and it was queried by Munro in his annotated copy. Then followed a longish descent (3525 ap.) over stones to the handsome 3551 cone which is much more of a real mountain—cairn, 4.7. Then over grass and a burn missing the 3725 ap. col between S.W. 3750 top and main peak, and so gained the massive B. Mheadhoin (3883).

\* True spelling of name and Loch "Etchachan" (3075) ap. has same name. It means juniper place. So Ruigh-Aiteachan in Glen Feshie.

I had time to scramble up only the barn that supports the cairn, 4.20. The usual stones lay on the way down to (cairnless) Stacan Dubha (3330 ap., 5.0) from which there was a good view over lonely Loch Avon. I had little time to absorb it, but picked out the Shelter Stone. Bumpy ground followed a short descent and then I was under the slabby cliffs of Càrn Àiteachain (3673). I got a fairly easy way up its steep side and reached the cairn 5.44. Then came a long ridge of stones (col 3625 ap.) on which I cut out the 3926 point as being unimportant. At length I reached the top over Coire Sputan Dearg, 4095 (no cairn—6.44). It had been conspicuous most of the day, which though sunny was close. It is a handsome peak. A shelter nestles on the top. The 3811 point above Lochan Uaine had not to be done and I cut it to go lower and escape the stones and so reached Sròn Riabhach (3534) cairned (7.4). It looks more conspicuous from 4095, but on Càrn a' Mhàim it shows itself no top and the dip from 3811 to it is almost invisible, whereas between 4095 and 3811 there is a fairish drop, (comparatively) but 3811 to 3534 is really only a gently falling ridge: see "Parker." I now had but one more hill to crown my day and descended sidelong among those eternal stones to reach the grassy col of Càrn a' Mhàim (2625 ap.) The ridge was bumpy and long but at last I gained the top (3375 ap.) no cairn (8.3). This is the real summit, but the Sappers' one has a cairn, 3329 (col 3310 ap.) (8.15). Then once past a stone-belt I hurried down on goodish going moss with stones far enough apart to let one step out quickly. At about the 2750 contour stands a (guide?) cairn. I reached Luibeg at 9.5 and Linn of Dee at 10.30.

Next day I did 10 tops between Sròn Riabhach of Ben Macdhui and Cairngorm in the thunderstorm of July, that carried away the four bridges on the railway near Carr Bridge. There is a crowd of useless cairns on Ben Macdhui round the main one and the Club would do a useful deed in demolishing all but those pointing N.E. S. and W. Such are a few days of a wonderful holiday.