

## **GLENMORE LODGE – CAIRNGORM – BEN MACDUI AND RETURN. 1980.**

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Following a successful attempt on the 'Four Peaks' record in 1979 (reported in CCJ Vol. 19. No. 98), I began to look for another challenge in the Cairngorms and decided that although I could find no trace of a recorded run to Ben Macdui and back, an attempt on the route would at least set a standard for others to beat.

I reckoned that this and all other attempts should, like the Four Peaks Peaks run, start and finish at the back door to Glenmore Lodge. This would result in a distance of 18 miles and a total climb of 1,447.8m (4750 feet). The background to the attempt had been a full summer of hill racing and the date of the run was Saturday, 13 September 1980. The week before, I decided to undergo a modified version of the controversial long distance runner's carbohydrate loading diet, whereby one tries to boost the glycogen in one's leg muscles, prior to a hard effort of over two hours duration in order to delay glycogen depletion, or in layman's terms 'running out of gas'. On the Sunday before the Ben Macdui run, I had a fairly hard 16 mile run with four colleagues, then embarked on a 55 hours spell, during which I reduced my intake of carbohydrates (which is fairly high) to around 30% of normal and concentrated on fats and proteins. Through the week, I did 6 to 8 mile runs, with 3 miles slowly on Thursday and Friday and from Tuesday evening I ate Mars Bars etc. until everything tasted like Mars Bars.

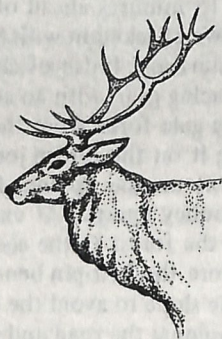
Saturday dawned cool and windy, which was fairly promising and just after 09.00, my training companion Dave Armitage, who had so ably assisted on the Four Peaks run, my wife Karen and I, set off on the drive to Glenmore Lodge. We arrived just before 12.30 and it was agreed that Dave would set off exactly 15 minutes ahead of me and act as pacemaker on the Ben Macdui plateau. We checked in with Susan Smith, Bursar at the Lodge, who witnessed the start and finish of the run and at 13.05, Dave set off. I donned my full racing gear, with an additional long sleeved top, as the wind was approaching gale force from the north-west and I did not relish the thought of facing it on the return journey in only a vest. Some loosening exercises were next on the agenda, followed by easy jogging, after which I felt full of bouncy energy. At exactly 13.20 I was off and running quite hard through the forest to the access road to Cairngorm, up the hill to the car park before the hair-pin bend and feeling good. At this point, I headed south up the slope to avoid the hair-pin detour and had to scale a high fence before rejoining the road and starting up Windy Ridge. I managed to run all the way up to the Ptarmigan Restaurant, with the strong wind behind me and as I slogged up the slabs to the summit, I saw Dave ahead of me.



The summit was reached in 49 minutes and after shouting to Dave that this was a good time, I followed him down the stony descent to the path above Coire an t-Sneachda. The path was in good shape and around Lochan Buidhe and the March Burn, I began to feel very good and took the lead from Dave on the ascent to the south top of Ben Macdui (1 hour 25 mts).

We turned and Dave took the lead over the boulder section before Lochan Buidhe, where I lost a bit of ground. It was now that I realised that the wind, which had been moderating and was slightly on our faces at the top of Ben Macdui, was now light and behind us! As I hit the stretch of path at Lochan Buidhe, I caught Dave and began to feel very fresh, so started pushing away. On the climb up Coire Domhain, I went a little too far east, but soon picked up the path again and ran all the way up Cairngorm in 7 minutes, thus getting my revenge for feeling dreadful on the same section in the Four Peaks run.

The elapsed time was 2 hours 15 seconds. I lost a bit of concentration coming down to the Ptarmigan Restaurant, but ran very hard from there, following the route of the annual Cairngorm Hill Race via the gravel path to the White Lady Shieling, then down the road to the large car park (2 hours 15 minutes). Again I cut down the hillside to the spot where the Chalamain Gap hits the access road and was beginning to feel a little weary, although still trying to break 2 hours 30 minutes. I broke into the forest and was definitely tired by now, then over the ford with about 600 metres to go and pushed for the finish, only to encounter a large group of walkers on the narrow short hill before the Lodge came into sight. A final sprint to the back door, where Kareen and Susan were waiting – 2 hours 30 minutes 53 seconds.





## ELAPSED AND SPLIT TIMES

	ELAPSED	SPLIT
Cairngorm	49 mts	
Ben Macdui	1hr. 25 mts.	36 mts.
Cairngorm	2hrs 00mts 15sec	35mts 15sec.
Glenmore Lodge	2hrs 30mts 53sec	30mts 38sec.

Dave took it easily down Cairngorm and trotted in, feeling ravenous and set to on the sandwiches. My stomach was a little more delicate and I left my replenishment until a Chinese restaurant, in Aberdeen.

The run went very well and was much less painful than the Four Peaks run. The pre-race diet experiment was, I feel, the reason why tiredness did not set in until the final ten minutes or so (plus of course, plenty of training). I ran 22 miles during the following four days and was then fully recovered, to the extent that ten days after the run, I was able to produce my fastest time for a number of years, in a 3000 metres race (9 minutes 10 seconds).

The local charity, Family Aid, received £50 towards a Childrens' Christmas Party, as a result of the run.

*Footnote – The Author refers to the carbohydrate loading diet and in the next article, Hazel Coubrough describes the diet in detail and explains the reasoning behind the diet – Editor.*

