

**CORBETT CLIMBING CONTINUED***BRIAN DAVEY*

As mentioned in a previous article, (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 112, p. 338) a consequence of the 500ft, 152m drop in height separating Corbetts, is that there are few places where more than two Corbetts can be climbed in a single day's traverse. However, the area around Tyndrum provides this rare opportunity, which I tackled one fine September weekend.

Four Corbetts were chosen for a two day Aberdeen holiday break, namely Beinn Udlaidh, (the Dark or Gloomy Hill, 840m) plus Beinn Breac Liath, (the Speckled Grey Hill, 802m) for day one, with Beinn a'Chaisteil, (the Castle Hill, 886m) and Beinn nan Fuaran, (the Hill of the Springs, 806m) for the following day. On this occasion a nice accommodating ridge of high pressure over Scotland gave clear blue skies, light winds and excellent visibility.

A 10 km drive from Tyndrum up Glen Orchy took me to the start of my first walk. Starting in the nearby forest, a short distance away from the Invergaunan entrance, to avoid contact with farm buildings, I made the mistake of trying to follow a faint rough track through the woods along the Allt Ghamhain burn. I soon realised the best route was to cross the burn eastwards, away from the forest, and heather bash with considerable effort 1.5 km up the left bank of the burn until a point was reached above the forest. This took me to the foot of a remarkable line of white quartz rock which is a very prominent feature that can be clearly seen from many miles away on the main A82 road to Glen Coe above Loch Tulla. On past journeys along his road I have mistaken this line of white quartz as snow, even in summer!

Why this mountain, Beinn Udlaidh, has been named the Dark or Gloomy Hill by our Celtic forbears is beyond me since I think it should have been called the Streak of White or the Gaelic equivalent! Beyond this streak of white quartz, the stony north ridge is an easy climb while the ever-improving tremendous views to the north soon lead to the relatively flat summit and cairn at 840m. There I enjoyed a relaxing lunch in the warm September sunshine while viewing the breath-taking panorama of mountains to the south. (Fig 1 next page).

After lunch an increasingly steep descent with a short hands-on rocky stretch down the East ridge of Beinn Udlaidh took me to a flat, half kilometre wide, peaty bealach, at around the 600m contour. Then a very steep ascent heading north-east eventually relaxed to a more gradual gradient, taking me to my second fairly flat Corbett peak of the day, Beinn Breac-liath. (Fig 2 below).



*Fig 1. Ben Cruachan from Beinn Udlaidh. Photo Brian Davey*



*Fig 2. Beinn a'Chasteil from Beinn Bhreac Liath. Photo Brian Davey*

Having admired the view and taken a few photographs I decided that instead of returning to my starting point at Invergaunan a more interesting and probably more difficult return to Tyndrum could be achieved by heading down Coire Chalein to the A82 road, then

following the West Highland Way back to the hostel. It was here in Coire Chalein that four red deer sprang up from a steep gully in front of me. One was a rare white albino red deer, (what a contradiction) but before I could extract my camera from my rucksack they were gone from view, disappearing over the distant landscape at great speed. A rare picture unfortunately missed but offset perhaps, by my surprise welcome meeting with some members of the Westhill Walkers on the West Highland Way, a few kilometres from Tyndrum! This of course facilitated the lift back to my car later that day.

The next day dawned bonny, sunny and clear: a perfect day for Corbett climbing. Beinn a' Chaisteil, the Castle Hill at 886m and Beinn nam Fuaran, the Hill of the Springs at 806m form a compact group with 3 other Corbetts, which, despite a great deal of ascent and descent, make a traverse of them all possible in a single day. In fact, it is the only straight forward combination of Corbetts that allow a hillwalker to tick off "five in a day". It almost sounds like a healthy eating exercise instead of a strenuous walking exercise. For the present, two in a day along with such glorious weather was quite sufficient to provide a perfect day, alone with my thoughts and nature in a stunning wild landscape. Again, the walk was without contact with another living human being although I did briefly see another hill walker on an adjacent mountain top some, 3km away.

My walk-in this time was from the A82 on an excellent 4 km single track tarmac road which deteriorated into a rougher land-rover track past Auch Farm, which is "The West Highland Way" passing under the spectacular Auch Gleann Railway Viaduct. From this point the track becomes steeper along Glen Coralan until a small dam, at that time still under construction, was reached. Then taking to the very steep heathery hillside, a strenuous climb brought me to the south ridge and eventually to the summit cairn of the Castle Hill, suitably named since it is well fortified by sheer rocky cliffs and crags on three sides. Here it is possible to gaze across the deep Auch Gleann to the nearby summit of Munro Beinn Dorain (1076m), less than 3 km away, and peer down at the Auch Gleann and Glen Coralan Viaducts nearly 600m below. As luck would have it a train appeared on the West Highland Railway line while I relaxed at the summit and some photos were taken as the train rattled over the two viaducts. Other pictures were taken of the

surrounding hills while I enjoyed the bright sunshine and a lingering lunch (Fig 3 &4).



*Fig 3. Auch Glenn Viaduct/West Highland Line. Photo Brian Davey*



*Fig 4. Glen Coralan Viaduct/West Highland Line. Photo Brian Davey*

From Beinn a' Chaisteil a steep but easy descending north-east ridge leads to a flat bealach of peat hags below before a very steep ascent provided a moderate scramble. This brought me, sweating, to my next Corbett, Beinn nam Furan, the Hill of the Springs. Below its summit and stretching far to the north-east were the blue waters of Loch Lyon, now a hydro-electric dam and part of the North of Scotland Hydro-electric Breadalbane scheme. Spectacular mountain vistas were

savoured on all sides and more photos taken. Then a route of descent was decided, running parallel along the Allt a' Mhaim burn to the flat grassy watershed at the source of the Allt Coralan. From here a strenuous heather bash along the contours above this burn eventually brought me to the more familiar landscape of my first ascent of that day. Easygoing, mainly downhill walking from the new dam then under construction in Glen Coralan soon returned me in less than an hour to my car and some welcome liquid refreshment.

It was the completion of another perfect Corbett Climbing Day. However unfortunately our changeable Scottish Climate does not always provide such favourable weather conditions especially in Winter or even late Spring.

Creag Uchdag (the Crag of the Hollows or Slopes), 879m, (OS Sheet 51; NN708323) was one of my chosen Corbetts for a Spring Holiday weekend based at the Combruih Bunkhouse in Comrie Perthshire, May2-4, 2015. Given the inclement weather conditions of that weekend I have decided to rename this mountain Creag Ouch-Jag to remind me of the "Ouches" I uttered as I was repeatedly jagged in the eyes by the snow pellets which bounced off my glasses driven by gale force winds. For me this was supposed to be the easier option of that weekend with most of the weekend-walkers tackling the nearby Munro Ben Chonzie at 931m above sea level.

However, an easier option this was NOT TO BE, as I soon discovered when I saw the NO VEHICLES BEYOND THIS POINT sign at Invergeldie-Coishavachan junction in Lednock Glen. The SMC Corbett guidebook had stated that it was possible to park your car at the Loch Lednock Dam, so this sign in effect lengthened the route by 4 km and entailed another 100m of ascent up to the Reservoir Wall. Nevertheless, the walk-in to the dam was relatively pleasant with the south-easterly wind on my back as it funneled up the Glen. The magnificent surrounding scenery included the spectacular Sput Rolla waterfall. Since this was sheep country the nearby fields were full of very young lambs bleating for their mother's milk and huddling close for her warmth and shelter from the strong winds (Figs 5&6 next page).

After reaching the Loch Lednock Dam, my slow ascent began along a faint path on the north shore of the loch for about a 1km before the steady slog up the steep gradient to an intermediate hill at around 800m

unnamed on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map. Meanwhile I was buffeted by the frequent wintry showers and the strong gusty winds while the descending cloud base and hill fog tested my rusty compass



*Fig5. Sput Rolla Waterfall, Glen Lednock. Photo Brian Davey*



*Fig 6. Loch Lednock Reservoir. Photo Brian Davey*

navigation skills

On attaining this unnamed intermediate peak, thankfully the cloud base lifted and suddenly my Ouch-Jag Corbett appeared just like magic. The final 1km climb to the summit was relatively easy given the encouraging sight of the distant 879m concrete triangulation point. Soon I was standing in the shelter of this concrete plinth reading zero degrees Celsius on my map case thermometer in the gale force winds. With damp gloves, the extreme wind chill had even penetrated to my numb thumbs. Naturally I did not linger long at the summit before I

made a triumphant rapid descent to lower altitudes where I found a sheltered spot along the deeply cut valley of a mountain burn where I was able to enjoy a leisurely lunch (Fig 7&8 below).



*Fig 7. Creag Uchdag.*

*Photo Brian Davey*



*Fig 8. Sheltered spot for Lunch.*

*Photo Brian Davey*

The remainder of the walk back out to my car parked at Invergeldie was also leisurely. Just below the Dam I met the first person I had seen in the 6 hours the expedition had taken. This isolation is typical for Corbett bashers. Meanwhile my Munro bashing friends had encountered numerous walkers on their successful though testing ascent of the nearby Ben Chonzie.

In summary this had not been my most difficult expedition ever undertaken, but it was well up the difficulty stakes in the given weather conditions, memorable for the challenge, sense of satisfaction and achievement when back in the cosy comfort of the Comrie Combruth bunkhouse, reunited with my warm-hearted fellow Club members while comparing hill walking notes of the day.

The following morning unenthusiastic for more cold, wet-weather punishment, the lower level option was to set off and explore the enchanting pretty Perthshire village of Comrie, the Deil's Cauldron and the Melville Monument. Nevertheless, despite the inclement weather it was another very enjoyable Corbett Climbing weekend.