

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Dear Editor

Further to Douglas Williamson's article *Murder in Torridon? A True Tale of the Mountains* (Cairngorm Club Journal 108, 2007); I was at Craig Youth Hostel the night Ian Fraser Simpson stayed at Easter 1962 while he was on the run between his murders of George Green by the A9 and Hans Gimmi near Dumfries. I am 'the mathematics student from a London College' mentioned in the article. The night in question was certainly memorable, made more so by the reports of Simpson's arrest in the national press in May. Until recently, when I came across Douglas Williamson's article, I had known almost nothing about the events after Simpson's arrest. Indeed, I had not seen any references to his night at Craig anywhere and began to think that I might never get corroboration of the story of that night at Craig.

Many of my recollections of that night are clear and agree with much of what is described in *Murder*. However, missing is the presence of another person at Craig that night. *Murder* confuses me with that person. Here is my story.

I had first visited Craig in summer 1961. It was a long way (for me anyway) north to the next hostel, and I ended up staying at Craig for the remainder of my walking holiday. Interested in returning the next summer, and Craig being a long way from a shop, I arranged with Bridget, the Warden, to meet at Easter in order to sow some vegetable seeds.

So, at the start of the Easter vacation 1962 I travelled by train and local bus from London to Diabaig and walked to Craig, spending at least the first night alone. A day or so later Bridget arrived with a colleague. Sometime later, maybe the next day, much to our surprise two men appeared, walking to the hostel down the path from Diabaig. They were

Simpson and Steve, who said he was at school in Oxford, and had hitchhiked. Douglas Williamson's article confuses me and Steve.

I recall a few things about the discussions that night, conducted in the light of an elegant paraffin lamp with a tall glass. Simpson dominated the wide-ranging conversation. I don't remember a discussion about morality, but Simpson did talk about the A9 murder, which was much in the news, and, oddly, claimed that Phoenician remains had been found near Loch Shin. This last, Bridget, knew to be false. He claimed to be working for the Beinn Eighe conservation agency. Eventually we retired, the three men upstairs to the men's dormitory. The next morning, I woke to see Simpson furling around in his rucksack. He said he was leaving and soon departed on his own. Steve did not go with him, and he may have carried on to Red Point. Ann Ross, a resident of Diabaig, whose father was a special constable in the 1960s was told of this visit to Craig, confirming the presence of Simpson's accompanying hitchhiker. It was thought in Diabaig that this visit to Craig contributed to the hunt for the A9 murderer, but there is no mention of such a visit in the published accounts of the investigation.

In 1963 I returned to Craig as Warden for the summer months: Bridget having married the colleague who gave us a lift back to Glasgow after Easter 1962. One of my hostellers was a doctor who stayed a few days. We walked the Liathach ridge from East to West, in good weather with strong winds on the long walk down into Torridon. Another day we climbed Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair. He was an excellent companion, and I am pleased in retrospect to have known nothing of Simpson's behaviour on Beinn Alligin and Liathach.

Yours sincerely,

John Williamson