

# Scotland Meet – Alex MacIntyre hut, Ballachuilish February 5<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> 2013

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It was a bit surprising to cross the border en route to Glencoe and find Scotland still visible. For a week previously the forecast on the 'Beeb' had been giving us storms of biblical intensity - when I travelled up on Wednesday I expected a level snowfield, starting at Gretna and lashed by blizzards. So it was a bonus to enjoy a fine, sunny, evening t'other side of Glasgow, with the snow level about 2000ft and grass showing through even higher up. The Ballachulish hut was as luxurious as ever, and even had a resident Warden.



The only beneficiaries of all this good weather were Mike and Kris who defied the Derbyshire snow and travelled up on Tuesday, but they got involved in a mountain rescue on Sgurr na h-Ulaidh - famous hill – on the Wednesday and never made the summit.

So Thursday - grey, cold but dry - saw everybody on the hill but quickly realising that days of multiple Munro bagging were out, since the snow varied from deep powder to semi-solid crust, usually in the space of one stride. Normal Scottish winter, in other words - and bloody hard work. Mike and Kris climbed Na Gruagaichean in the Mamores; Colin and Jamie went round to the Aonachs. There was an unfortunate incident when they refused to leave the Gondola at the top station on the grounds that they wanted it to



go to the summit, and anyway, where was the Italian who should have been poling it along and singing to them? And all the windows were steamed up. They were ejected into the snow, but managed both Aonachs in some distress. Me, I wandered up Buachaille Etive Beg to where it got a bit icy on the ridge at 2800ft, and went for my ice-axe, which wasn't there. Turned back, and it was 10 yards from the car park where it had fallen off my rucksack. Pillock! Too late to re-ascend, so potted up the Devil's Staircase and the bits of hills at the top. Heavy snow up there later, raining back in the glen. Pete and Laura arrived but Roger didn't - car trouble, but he turned up Friday evening.



Friday was back to grey, cold and dry - little sign of yesterday's snow. Colin and Jamie went round to Glen Nevis to do Sgurr Choinneach Mor. We sent the Hut Warden round to look after them: a young fellow of 68 - but he went too fast and had to keep waiting.

Mike and Kris drove round to Fersit and, after upsetting the locals, did Stob Coire Sgriodan and the finely named Chno Dearg, which probably translates as the Red Sneeze. I climbed Beinn na Cailleach, the imposing hill on the north side of Loch Leven - not sure why, except it looks good - but it's only a Corbett. Pete and Laura went climbing on Stob Coire nan Lochan but were doing Dorsal Arête when a body passed them going rapidly downwards. Very upsetting, but when last



heard of it was still alive and standing, so it might have been worse. Must be a busy lot, the Glencoe MRT.



The weather then turned to custard; cloud level 500ft on Saturday, drizzle, and freezing point above the tops, heavy snow forecast for Sunday. So Mike, Kris and meself got out while the going was good. Colin, Jamie and Roger climbed Beinn Vair - I'm resorting to the anglicised version - but were repulsed by the nasty little crag at the top, iced of course. We may have to remind Jamie of this at his Final Munro party - and, of course, the Gondola. They drove home afterwards in view of the apocalyptic forecast. Pete and Laura did Sgurr a Mhaim and the Devil's Ridge, which must feel a bit out of doors when banked up with snow.

Which just left Sunday and its alleged snow, which – surprise, surprise - didn't turn out to be half as bad as forecast, and Pete and Laura snatched a Corbett, Sgurr nan Each, on the way home.

So, another fine meet. Not as sociable as some, since most people were knackered and went to bed earlyish, and some - well one anyway - got up late. And we didn't go to the pub. Surely a record.