



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2008

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

There is no getting away from the fact that today we live in a hi-tech world, and like it or not, our lives are dominated by new technology such as computers, email, the World-Wide Web, mobile phones, and HD digital TV and radio, to name but a few.

As hillwalkers, we are not immune from such developments, and some of us feel we have to move with the times and embrace new developments, such as GPS (Global Positioning System), allowing us to navigate precisely to specific locations on foot using hand-held units.

Of late, many of us have acquired GPS units, raising the question as to whether we are all comfortable with them. Hence, we are grateful to Graham for organizing outdoor practicals with a dozen attending each, and instructing the group in correct techniques. Manuals are all very well but can be confusing, and these sessions have proved invaluable. Graham has the patience of a saint!

All new ideas and products have positive and negative aspects. In the case of GPS, there are the benefits of navigation—knowing exactly where you are, the elevation, distance travelled, time taken, and so on—but on the other hand, you have to ensure that the batteries are fully charged or new, and that you can receive satellite signals.

Progress is inevitable, but we should not lose sight of the basics of navigation—how to use map and compass. What happens when you lose GPS signals, or your batteries give out? How many can read a map, identify grid references or set a compass? We should all be familiar with these basics.

If there is sufficient interest, let us organize training in the basics of map and compass reading, and encourage folk to develop expertise in all forms of navigation.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was on Wednesday 6 February 2008 in the Health Board Club, King Street, with around twenty present to discuss Club business for the coming year.

The AGM elected the following Committee—

President Frank Kelly
Vice President Jim Henderson
Secretary Heather Eddie
Treasurer Rosemary Kelly
Booking Secretary Gilbert McCurdy
Committee Members ... Colin Chapman, Hamish Clunas,
David Garwood, Kris Howard, Bill Marr,
Graham Sangster, Vi Walker, Alan Wallace

Auditors Marjory McLeod, Fiona Wallace

The AGM approved the program of walks for 2008-09 tabled by the outgoing Committee. It includes a variety of through and circular walks, with shorter alternatives to suit all.

Treasurer Rosemary Kelly reported on another successful year, which made a small surplus on bus outings and on the overall running of the Club. There was no recommendation to increase subscriptions, which remain good value at £12 for adults and £6 for under-sixteens.

Bus costs for the new season have increased significantly due to rising fuel prices and new drivers' regulations, but we hope to mitigate higher costs by using a 33-seater to ensure a full bus on most outings. Hence, it is important to book early to ensure a seat, and if you have to cancel, it is equally important to contact the Booking Secretary as soon as possible, to free up seats for those on the waiting list. Alex Joiner held this post seventeen years and now feels it time to stand down. Hearty thanks are due to Alex for hard work over many years. Phone our new Booking Secretary, Gilbert McCurdy, on 01224 484361 between 7:00 and 8:00pm, or email gilbertmccurdy@hotmail.co.uk, but use the phone for

anything urgent, as Gilbert does not check email every day.

The AGM adopted the Committee recommendation to change the Club name from *Aberdeen Telephones Hillwalking Club* to *Aberdeen Hillwalking Club*. This may not seem significant, but we no longer have ties to British Telecom, and our name may have put off potential new Members who thought only BT staff were entitled to join. Hopefully, with a new name, we can attract additional Members to boost numbers and maintain the Club's success.

Finally, donations were approved for Braemar Mountain Rescue Team and the Mountain Rescue Association of Scotland, and our affiliation to North East Mountain Trust and Ramblers Association were continued. Overall, the Club is in a healthy state for the new season.

Discounts

Now may be the time to check out and renew or replace equipment. Discounts are available at the following on production of your 2008-09 Membership Card, which you receive on paying your annual subscription.

- Blacks, George Street 10%
- Craigdon Sports, 5 St Andrew Street 10%
- Millets, Union Street 10%
- Nevisport, 186 George Street 10% (selected lines)
- Graham Tiso, 26 Netherkirkgate ... Up to 25% on Tiso club nights only, which are now quarterly, starting with Tuesday 4 March. Details circulate on buses.

Geldie Bridge

Since our report in the Autumn 2007 Newsletter, we have heard from the National Trust for Scotland that they are now minded to reinstate the bridge over the Geldie. Surveyors will prepare drawings necessary in seeking consents for the work. This will take time, but matters are moving and the Committee are delighted. However, we will continue pressuring NTS by canvassing support from other clubs and like-minded groups. Watch this space for further developments.

Frank

EDITOR'S CHAT

There are two ways of using GPS. Hitherto, your editor has taken the minimalist approach. After a cursory glance at the manual, the unit was stowed away in the bottom of the rucksack, and only taken out when there was some doubt as to location on the map. Graham's tutorials have been a revelation!

Weel-kent Member, Willie Robb, has been in hospital, but is now home. Willie hopes to be out on hikes soon, and we hope so too.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter, and if you have any interesting articles or stories with a hillwalking theme, please send details to Editor Kris Howard or Secretary Heather Eddie for the next issue. We thank all contributors to this edition. Gilbert, Graham, Jim and Kris supplied photoes.

For brevity, we reserve the right to edit submitted texts, but every effort is made to retain the author's meaning.

The Club has available a copy of the *Accommodation Guide* of the Ramblers' Association, listing B&Bs all round the UK.

Weather Forecasts

- BBC1 about 6:58pm
- Radio Scotland Mon - Fri 7:12pm
Sat 6:58am, 6:58pm
Sun 6:58am, 7:58pm
- Mountain Call East 09068500442
- Mountain Call West 09068500441
- AA Roadwatch 09003444900
- Mountain Weather Information Service
<http://www.mwis.org.uk/forecasts.php>

Finally, if you have a good source, let us know
kris.howard@btinternet.com

REPORTERS' NOTES

7 October: Auchallater Circular



Loch Callater from Tolmount

With a great forecast, the 27 on the bus were about equally divided between the Tolmount and Creag nan Gabhar walks, but Stan Stewart opted for Loch "Patrick" and the McCurdys for Carn an Tuirc. Our group took the superb new Jock's Road as far as Knaps of Fafernie, where path renovation abruptly

gave out—disappointing as it was reported complete in May 2006. [UDAT meant they had completed the section they planned to renovate—Ed.]

Lovely weather kept our spirits high, and we lunched on Tolmount. After skirting peat hags west and north of this Munro, we reached the lip of spectacular Corrie Kander and descended steeply to its beautiful lochan under towering cliffs, surely one of the most idyllic spots in all the Grampians. A pleasant walk down Glen Callater returned us to the bus—fifteen minutes late—but what a day! Others talked of similarly superb walks. Taking a quick refreshment and toilet stop in the Braemar Fife Arms, we arrived home twenty minutes late after, arguably, the best outing of the year, weather-wise. Graham

21 October: Tomintoul to Glenlivet



Carn Daimh Summit

David was in charge of the bus, and with a fair forecast, the 28 out today anticipated a good walk. From just north of Tomintoul, we followed Speyside Way markers over many styles and gates by way of Carn Daimh to Glenlivet, where the bus awaited. Refreshments were taken at Dufftown on the drive home. Graham

25 October: Social Night at Royal Hotel



Marie in Social Mood

We had an excellent turnout for our annual supper, once again at the Bath Street Royal Hotel. The food was to its usual high standard and the *claik* even better—pity about Graham's jokes! Thanks are due once again to Heather for organizing a most popular event. Graham

4 November: Peter Hill



At Summit of Peter Hill

With a new Polish driver on the bus, there was a slight delay at Duthie Park. Jim asked *Who's in charge of the bus? Somebody should tell the driver to move off!* The driver was duly informed and we set off for Forest of Birse. Once again there was a slight communication issue, and the bus sped past our start point at the sawmill. However, our driver reversed and soon had the bus back to the starting point.

[The driver's three-point turn in a restricted situation was *interesting*, as the Chinese say—normally, I am stolid in such circumstances, but in this case, the sound of somebody panicking behind me was disturbing! Ed.]

The day was dry, sunny and warm, and before we knew it, we were at the top of Peter Hill, where we

had elevenses. Then we were off downhill through peat hags, squelchy bogs and, of course, the ever present heather. [No disrespect to our Secretary—Ed.] Reaching the top of Baudnacauner, we looked back and saw Jim walking in the wrong direction. We found out later he had left his walking poles at the top of Peter Hill, and, due to the delay, had to revise his route off the hill. Gilbert



Peter Hill Summit

With quite a few regulars missing, the turnout of 28 was not bad. It was a lovely, windless day as we commenced our walk from Haughend Sawmill to Peter Hill. Views from the summit were superb, all over Aberdeenshire and west to Ben Avon 32 miles away on the horizon. We traversed hefty peat hags on our way west to Cock Hill, and there were complaints of *Faa suggested this route?* As we descended to Forest of Birse, the sun was quite warm for November. We took a short pub and chipper stop in Banchory, and arrived home on time. Graham

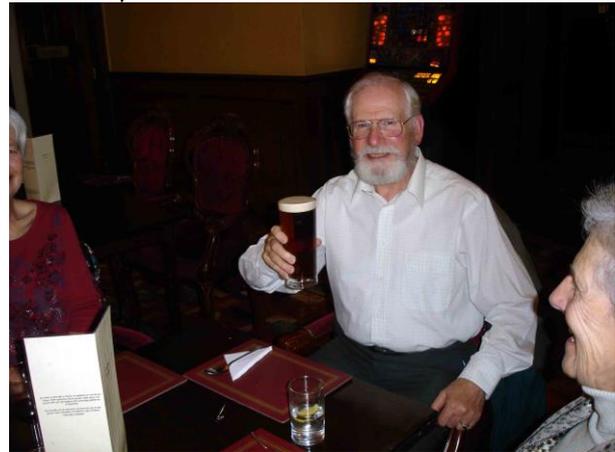
21 November: Presentations at Health Board Club
Despite a very wet evening, 34 attended. President Frank Kelly welcomed Members and introduced the speakers. Moira West gave a superb presentation of digital stills of her April 2007 walking holiday in Bhutan, followed by Graham Sangster's digital movie of the Walkers' Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt in August 2007. Both were applauded for a thoroughly enjoyable evening, and once again, thanks are due to Vi for organizing the venue and stovies. Graham

9 December: Inverbervie to St. Cyrus
Turnout was 33, though many regulars were missing. The original walk was St. Cyrus north to 'Bervie, but the forecast was for rain on north-easterly winds, so we reversed the walk, from 'Bervie southwest to St. Cyrus. The day was reasonably good with several blustery showers, but overall, it was an enjoyable coastal walk with elevenses at the Narrows, then

along cliffs overlooking Kaim of Mathers ruined castle. At St. Cyrus Hotel, we took refreshments celebrating Alan Wallace's birthday, while Fiona stroked her pussy (the beautiful hotel cat). We were home ahead of schedule after a most enjoyable day. Graham

[I must have been on a different walk! It was pouring when we started off, and I was glad to abandon the walk halfway at Johnshaven, where Gordon had kindly waited with the bus. Ed.]

13 January 2008: Millstone Hill & Bennachie



David Enjoys his Pint

Frank was in charge. Margaret Leslie met up with the 34 of us on Gordon's coach at Donview Carpark. Weather was overcast but dry as we commenced, with some heading up Millstone Hill, and others skirting east of Millstone to Mither Tap. Forest tracks were extremely icy in places, making walkers hug heathery edges to maintain footing. The Bennachie group found Mither Tap shrouded in mist, and contoured over the plateau to Oxen Craig. Some went for the summit cairn, and others skirted the Craig to the West Gordon Way before descending through forest to the bus. All were aboard by 3:45pm to depart for our annual festive dinner at the Monymusk *Grant Arms*. It was a wonderful meal supported by various refreshments, and Gordon had us home on time after a great outing. Graham

[Today's walk started from the Donview Carpark (or Osprey-view Carpark—from parts of the carpark, an osprey nest is visible at the top of a tall tree in a remote part of Paradise Woods across the Don). Low cloud, intermittent rain, and ice on the carpark dissuaded me from climbing over-familiar hills, and I turned attention to the riverbanks, and Paradise Woods across the river, where I might look for the elusive osprey tree.

Many riverbanks are public places. Anyone in possession of a fishing permit expects to traverse the waterside, and the rest of us who do not want to catch fish are free to follow, but access to the Don is rather restricted hereabouts. I followed the road downstream to NGR 682 173, where a *Public Footpath* sign directed me to the riverbank. Across the river was a similar track and signpost, suggestive of a bridleway involving a ford—but, lacking a horse, I was not tempted.

The road-bridge was not far downstream along the riverbank, but just short of the bridge, a substantial drainage ditch blocked progress. Maps show a footbridge upstream at NGR 678 178 connecting Ramstone Mill with Ord Mill, but not only was there no sign of a footbridge, but no sign of where a footbridge might have been sometime in the past. A little further on, countryside merged into the garden of Ramstone Mill, blocking further progress along the riverbank, but I escaped to the road via their private driveway.

Though anything but a big day, I'd seen various interesting things—a red squirrel crossing the road; a brown (field) hare; a salmon jumping out of the water for no apparent reason (just for the fun of it?); in Ramstone garden, a miniature door and doorway fitted to the foot of a tree, looking like something out of *Wind in the Willows*, or Beatrix Potter; and an impressive gate consisting of two yetts of interlaced wrought iron at Place of Tillyfourie. Ed.]

3 February: Corsedarder to Scolty Carpark



John, David & Wallaces at Scolty Indicator

Only 25 were on our last walk of the 2007 program. It was dry but windy as we started up through forest from Corsedarder. There were great views from Tom's Cairn (310m, the highest point on our walk)—north over Deeside, south to Feughside and west to snowy Cairngorms. We met quite a few walkers on Scolty summit enjoying a pleasant Sunday, and

noticed that this is one of the few places in Aberdeenshire where you cannot see Bennachie, as it is hidden behind Hill o Fare. Many of us left our packs in the bus at Scolty Carpark, and walked into Banchory for refreshments. We were home on time after a lovely outing. Graham



Refreshments in Banchory

2 March: Dunnottar to Inverbervie



Ian, Tracy, Graham & Linda

We had 28 on our first walk of the 2008 program. Weather was exceptionally good for the time of year, and we set off from Dunnottar carpark at 9:40am in warm sunshine. Views back to cliff-girt Dunnottar Castle were spectacular as we walked south to Fowlsheugh RSPB reserve at Crawton. The downside of the day was that we had to climb over numerous barbed-wire fences on our route, but Alan Wallace had an anti-rip device in his kit to allow free movement over these hazards.

Spirits continued high in glorious weather and scenery, and our group relaxed in sunshine for lunch below Todhead Lighthouse. Our route south continued truly scenic as we passed Kinneff Church and the remains of Whistleberry Castle. This was not an easy coastal walk, but one that most enjoyed

due to the bonnie day and spectacular coastline. At 'Bervie, we had a wee dram at the hostelry to reflect on and discuss a strenuous but great day. Graham

[Although in the past, there would have been a footpath the length of this route to facilitate customs officers in their duties, and it is planned to revive this footpath, in the meantime, a route outside field boundaries was frequently impractical, due to barbed wire fences against precipitous drops. Many fields were ploughed up to the fences, but the soil was dry, at least. Crossing barbed wire fences between one field and the next was difficult until it occurred to me to use my sit mats in double thickness, but by this time, I had punctured both my trousers and skin. Consequently, many will be disinclined to repeat this walk in the near future, but there was plenty to see—too bad I did not have my camera with me!—and I for one am keen to do the reverse walk, 'Bervie to Dunnottar.

Looking rather out of place at Fowlsheugh, there was a flock of a dozen jackdaws, but Jim was more interested in groups of birds sitting on the water out at sea, which he said were rafts of Guillemots returning to nest. There are Devonian lava flows among the pudding stone at Crawton, where you can look for geodes (but of course, anything worth souveniring has long since been souveniried!).

In the vicinity of Whistleberry, there were castle remains, but a Web search raised doubt as to whether it was Whistleberry, Adam or Cadden—all a mere hundred or two paces from each other—or Kinneff, not much further off. In places, there were snowdrops in profusion, and celandines. Pauline had a nasty nosebleed, and someone was unkind enough to advise her to stop sniffing cocaine.

A couple of brassica fields were covered with monofilament net curtaining, which Jim said was agricultural fleece to keep off some insect pest. The gateposts of some brassica fields had EU notices announcing *Hordium vulgare*—barley, presumably last year's crop rotation. In the corner of one pasture, a flock of sheep stampeded at me from the far side, abruptly halted five metres away, briefly hesitated, then turned, and fled back where they came from.

Most reached the bus before the forecast rain. For future reference, the end of the walk runs through a gully under Craig David, high on Bervie Brow (the hill with a mast). There a gate and track lead to Kinghornie Farm, where one can descend directly to a footbridge over the Bervie Water.

It always strikes me on coastal walks that the seawater is now much more turbid (cloudy) than when I was small. A recent survey of the World's oceans noted that the North Sea off Scotland is in a particularly degraded state. Ed.]

16 March: Forest of Birse to Aboyne



GPS Tutorial

On a reasonable day, 29 started out from the Feughside road-end, giving Birse Castle a wide berth. We ascended to the memorial on Carnferg and admired the view. Graham gave GPS training to those who remembered to bring their units. The walk finished in Aboyne after a very pleasant day. Jim



Elevenses

Eleven participated in Graham's GPS tutorial, including instruction in the basics of GPS navigation, and what the unit can and cannot do. Members were shown how to insert an NGR waypoint manually, and how to navigate to that grid reference using the *GO TO* facility. All were quick on the uptake, though some problems were encountered, but these were there to be analysed, sorted and remembered for future reference. From vibes after the walk, all enjoyed the course and learned a lot about the unit's capabilities and limitations. Further tutorials can be organized if desired. Graham

[In Victoria's time, the Aboyne side of the hill belonged to William Cunliffe Brooks, a Manchester banker with chapel tendencies and a penchant for littering the countryside with rocks inscribed with such "uplifting" texts as *Oh ye Mountains, Oh ye Waters, Praise ye the Lord* and...



...The Fear of the Lord is a Fountain of Life.

Between the *Huntly Arms* barmaid taking an age to draw a pint, and Jim announcing a 15 minutes early bus departure, what proved to be a disgustingly warm pint of Guinness was decidedly rushed, causing me to regret walking past the *Boat Inn*, which the card said was the end of the walk anyway! It took a conspiracy of three to spoil a Guinness, so congratulations are due all round! Ed.]

30 March: Ordgarff to Gairnshiel Lodge



A Wade Bridge

In spite of a poor forecast, 30 walkers enjoyed a lovely day. The hills stood out with snow and good visibility. The old military road, built in the 18th Century before John MacAdam, is still in good nick, with no potholes in the little bit we could see.

Most paths were full of soft snow, good for the leg muscles, but progress was slow and we left an hour and a half late. However, knowing that conditions

caused the delay rather than anything unforeseen, tea was enjoyed at *Gairnshiel*, a charming beauty spot. After recent GPS tuition, there was a real buzz among the enthusiasts discussing their input and exchanging info gathered on the walk. I wonder what General Wade would think? Vi

Following the success of Graham's first GPS tutorial on the previous walk, he emailed all participants a list of waypoints prior to today's walk. This allowed Members to input the relevant data to their GPS units, and gave them a personal challenge at leisure to show what they did, or did not, learn on the initial course. All users had little problem inputting the data, and were ready at the start of today's walk. Throughout the walk, all were competent in using their navigators and, overall, it was a very worthwhile tutorial. Continued use of GPS will further enhance competence. Graham



Twa Puddocks in Flagrante Delicto

[Everyone must have stepped over them. Ed.]

13 April: Spittal o Glenmuick circular



Broad Cairn and Loch Muick

[Of the 27 on the bus, some set off for the Dubh Loch, some for Sandy Hillocks and the Broad Cairn, and a hardy pair for Lochnagar. There was plenty

snow up at Dubh Loch, but it was clear down at Loch Muick. Ed.]



Dubh Loch

Sally's Last Journey (28 July 2007)



Sally's Grandchildren

Sally's wishes were that her ashes be placed on Ilkley Moor, where she said it all began. I set off with her ashes in July and stayed with friends in Manchester, where we lived seventeen years and all the kids were born. They persuaded me I should bury rather than scatter the ashes, and I obtained a spade from their shed. The following day we set off for Ilkley Moor to meet up with all the family. Halfway there I realized I had forgotten the spade [Sally was not there to remind Jim!], so we agreed to go to the *Cow and Calf*, where we were to dine after burying the ashes, and ask to borrow a spade.

The barman said he had never had such an unusual request, but it was all right, provided we were not going to bury anyone! I was sure Sally would have appreciated the humour of the situation. We proceeded up to the plateau, at about 1400 feet, and looked for a suitable location. We found a nice dry spot with bilberry, dug a small trench, and poured in the ashes. Duncan went off to some nearby rocks to

take a photograph, and shouted across that one of the rocks had Sally's name on it. No one had any idea it was there. Jim

Kaim of Mathers (9 December walk)



Kaim of Mathers

This forbidding old ruined castle stands on a precipice overlooking the sea, just north of Woodston Fishing Station, St. Cyrus. All through the centuries, the waves have pounded the rocks below, and wintry ice has ripped at the cliff. More and more has gone crashing down, carrying bits of castle into the sea, until only a fragment of tower and a small piece of wall remain. David Barclay, courtier and man of action in the reign of James I of Scotland, built it in the 15th Century. Barclay was one of several Mearns lairds who detested the local sheriff, James Melville of Glenberrie. They complained to the king about his high-handed deeds so often that at last in exasperation, he made the unkingly reply that for all he cared, they could go and make soup of their sheriff and sup him.

It sounded rather a good idea. Barclay called the angry young men of the Mearns to a meeting to discuss details. Since they lived round windy Garvock Hill—Barclay and Straton on the south, Pittarrow and Halkerton on the west, and Arbuthnott on the north—they decided to do the deed there in a picturesque gully, now bridged by the Fordoun-Johnshaven road. Having invited the unsuspecting sheriff to join them in a day's hunting, they filled a cauldron with water from the stream and brought it to the boil. Having led the sheriff to the spot, they threw him in and one by one had a sup of the broth. To this day, the gully is called the *Sheriff's Kettle*.

If the grisly lairds expected the king to thank them for a job well done, they were cruelly mistaken. Refusing to admit that it was his idea, the king denounced them all as outlaws, and swore a solemn

oath that David Barclay would get peace to live neither on land nor at sea, for the rest of his life.

If you searched the world for a place answering that description, it would be hard to better Kaim of Mathers, an almost inaccessible eyrie poised between land and sea on the cliff top near St. Cyrus. There the cannibal laird defended himself and spent the rest of his life enjoying a more normal diet—here, he was safe enough. Two centuries ago the Kaim was almost inaccessible as today, and probably even in his time, a clear head, a sure foot and a friendly host were needed to get you safe across the narrow ridge from the mainland to the Kaim [comb or ridge].

Graham

[The current laird, Humphrey Barclay of Ury and Mathers, was on the radio on 10 April, talking about his induction as a chieftain of the Ashanti in Ghana!

Ed.]

Scolty Tower (3 February walk)

Banchory's landmark was built in memory of local man General William Burnett, who fought under Wellington in the Napoleonic Wars. His friends and tenants erected it in 1842, but it fell into ruin over succeeding years. The tower was recently restored with finance from Banchory businesses. A local engineering company constructed the steel spiral staircase to allow access from the doorway to the top of the tower. It was lowered complete into the tower by helicopter. Views from the top are superb in every direction, east down Deeside to Aberdeen and the sea, west to Morven, Mount Keen and Lochnagar, north to Hill o' Fare and south to Kerloch, Clachnaben and Mount Battock.

Graham

Dunnottar Castle (2 March walk)



Dunnottar Castle

The site has been inhabited since Pictish times (before 700 AD). *Dunnottar* stems from the Celtic word *Dun*, meaning hill fort or place of strength. The

rock on which Dunnottar Castle stands might have been specially designed for the most impregnable fortress in Scotland. Sheer 160-foot cliffs surround a flat area of over three acres. A narrow fin once joined the rock to the mainland, but even this was carved away to prevent easy access,

St. Ninian, bringing Christianity to the Picts in the 9th Century, chose Dunnottar as a site for a church. During that century, Donald II died vainly defending Dunnottar from Vikings, who sacked the castle.

The first stone chapel at Dunnottar was consecrated in 1276, and according to Blind Harry (the 15th Century poet whose epic was the inspiration for *Braveheart*), William Wallace torched this chapel with an English garrison inside. The current chapel was built in the 16th Century.

In 1649, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector—the usual title of a regent in England—executed Charles I, King of England, Scotland and Ireland. Hitherto, the Scots had been allied with the English Parliamentarians, but they took a dim view of the execution of their king without their permission.

In 1650, his young son, Charles II, arrived at Kingston on the Moray Firth, and stayed a night in Dunnottar on his way south to give battle for the three kingdoms. Cromwell ordered his New Model Army north. Charles II was hastily crowned at Scone, but the *Honours of Scotland*—the crown, sword, mace and other regalia—could not be returned to Edinburgh Castle as Cromwell's army had taken it.

Since Cromwell had already broken up the English Crown Jewels, the Honours of Scotland were the most potent icon of monarchy extant, and as such, were next on his list. With the New Model Army fast approaching, Charles ordered the Earl Marischal to secure the Honours at Dunnottar, and soon after, Dunnottar was under siege. The garrison held out for eight months until heavy cannon arrived. Dunnottar surrendered after ten days of heavy fire, but not before the Honours were smuggled out of the castle under a woman's skirts, taken to Kinneff and hidden under the church floor. They remained safe for eleven years, until the Restoration, when they returned to Edinburgh Castle.

In 1715, George Keith, tenth Earl Marischal, was convicted of treason for his part in the Jacobite rising, and his lands, including Dunnottar, forfeit. The castle was left to ruin until the Cowdrays purchased it in 1925 and embarked on a systematic

repair program. The Castle remains in the family, maintained by Dunecht Estate and open to the public.

Graham

Fowlsheugh Nature Reserve (2 March walk)

In spring and summer, 160,000 breeding seabirds pack the spectacular 160-foot sea cliffs. Guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes breed in large numbers, with smaller numbers of fulmars, herring gulls, puffins and shags. The reserve is open to the public at all times.

Graham

Todhead Lighthouse (2 March walk)



Todhead Lighthouse

As there is a reference to Fox Head in 1170, *Tod* is likely from the old Scots word for fox. Designed and built in 1897 by David A. Stevenson at a cost of £10,300, it is listed as a building of historic and architectural interest. It stands 41m in height, initially with a light output power of 3 million candelas (3 million times as powerful as a candle) and a range of 18 miles, and has 48 steps to the top of the tower. In 1973, the original light was changed to a large wattage electric lamp, and an electric foghorn was installed, controlled by an automatic detector. The foghorn was discontinued in 1987, and the light became fully automated in 1988. The Authorities for Maritime Navigation discontinued Todhead Light from 11 July 2007 as it served only as a waypoint light, rather than to mark a specific hazard. Graham

The Fungle (16 March walk)

This is a 13th Century Drove Road from Aberdeenshire to Brechin market. Both the Fungle and the Firmouth link Deeside with Glen Esk, and historians are unsure which was older or more important.

Graham

[Part of the Fungle is sunken, a common feature in the south of England, but unusual hereabouts, and possibly evidence of centuries of heavy use. Ed.]

Forest of Birse (16 March walk)

The Fungle passes through an area called Forest of Birse whose eastern boundaries are marked by the Finlets and Laird's Burns, two minor tributaries of the Feugh (itself a tributary of the Dee). It has been a hunting area as far back as 8000 years ago in Mesolithic times but the first evidence of settlement comes from the Bronze Age, about 3000 years ago. By the 10th Century, it was Kenneth III's Royal Hunting Forest, but later it passed to the Bishops of Aberdeen, and over the centuries, the estate has been through the hands of many landowners, including Joseph Robert Heaven, whose memorial cairn is by the trig point at Carnferg summit. Graham

Birse Castle (16 March walk)



Birse Castle from East

Built by William Gordon of Cluny in 1610, it was originally a simple square 3-storey tower with a round tower top. However, after falling into debt, the Gordons of Cluny sold the area to William Douglas of Glenbervie in 1636, and in 1640, the other landowners in Birse burnt down Birse Castle.



Birse Castle from South

In 1850, G B Mitchell rebuilt the castle in L-plan style for J R Heaven. After Heaven's death in 1911, the Cowdrays bought Birse Estate, and it became part of Dunecht Estate. A historic agreement in 1999 now allows Birse Community Trust to manage 500 hectares of woodland. Ballogie and Dunecht

Estates continue to manage the remainder, primarily for shooting grouse. The Castle is open to those with deep pockets for holiday rental, with self-catering and fully catered options available. Graham



Birse Castle from West

Gairnshiel Lodge (30 March walk)
Built in 1746, the original structure was extended in Victorian times until it was suitable for use as a hunting lodge. On the banks of the Gairn in Royal Deeside, it enjoys beautiful views of Ben Avon and beyond. George V shot game here during the 1920's, as did the Duke and Duchess of York (subsequently George VI and the Queen Mother).

During the late 1930s, the Lodge fell into disrepair. Invercauld Estate sold it in 1951, and it was sold on again in 2006 to the Buchanan family. Today Gairnshiel Lodge is available for exclusive rental to small private parties, and the owners may also cater for small weddings. Graham

Tullochmacarrick Bridge (30 March walk)
Stan Stewart remarked on the Bailey bridge at NGR 276 013, near Tullochmacarrick, 2km west of Gairnshiel. He told me he helped build it in 1947 while serving with the Royal Engineers at their Ballater barracks. The bridge gave George VI access over the Gairn to shoot grouse on the moors to the north. Graham

WHA'S LIKE US?

While walking my dogs in the Cairngorms recently, I met a group of English walkers who remarked that they had not been to Scotland before, and found the scenery tremendous—as a Scot, I should be proud of my country. I agreed and thanked them for their kind remarks, but then thought—hmmm—Scotland has had more to offer than just scenery. Consider the following—

WHA'S LIKE US?

The average Englishman in the home he calls his castle slips into his national costume, a shabby raincoat patented by chemist Charles Macintosh from Glasgow, Scotland.

En route to his office, he travels along the English lane, surfaced by John Macadam of Ayr, Scotland.

He drives a car fitted with tyres invented by John Boyd Dunlop, of Dreghorn, Scotland.

At the office, he receives mail bearing adhesive stamps invented by John Chalmers, Bookseller and Printer of Dundee, Scotland.

During the day, he uses the telephone invented by Alexander Graham Bell, born in Edinburgh, Scotland.

At home in the evening, his daughter pedals her bicycle invented by Kirkpatrick Macmillan, Blacksmith of Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, Scotland.

He watches the news on television, an invention of John Logie Baird of Helensburgh, Scotland and hears an item about the U.S. Navy founded by John Paul Jones of Kirkbean, Scotland.

Nowhere can he turn to escape the ingenuity of the Scots. In desperation, he picks up the Bible, only to find that the first man mentioned in the good book is a Scot, James VI, who authorized the translation.

He could take to drink but Scots make the best in the world.

He could take a rifle to end it all, but Captain Patrick Ferguson of Pitfours, Scotland invented the breech-loading rifle.

If he escaped death, he could find himself on an operating table injected with penicillin, discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming of Darvel, Scotland and given chloroform, the anæsthetic discovered by Sir James Young Simpson, obstetrician and gynæcologist of Bathgate, Scotland.

Out of the anæsthetic, he would find no comfort in learning that he was safe as the Bank of England, founded by William Paterson of Dumfries, Scotland.

Perhaps his only remaining hope would be to get a complete transfusion of *Guid Scots Bluid*, which would entitle him to ask—

WHA'S LIKE US?

Graham

[Well, that seems to cover everyone short of Lord Reith and Admiral Cochrane. I suppose it would be mean to point out that the Baird television was a dead end, that Fleming failed to isolate penicillin and that you would not want treatment in a hospital still using chloroform. Come to think of it, John Paul Jones (Welsh surname—Jones the Navy? Jones the Boats?) was a decidedly less talented commander than Cochrane, and responsible for the founding of rather fewer navies. Ed.]

Solution to Graham's Autumn Newsletter Teaser

1	C	A	I	R	N	B	A	N	N	O	C	H
2			B	R	A	I	R	I	A	C	H	
3		C	O	R	R	I	E	F	E	E		
4		C	A	I	R	N	W	E	L	L		
5		L	O	C	H	N	A	G	A	R		
6			M	O	N	A	G	O	W	A	N	
7	M	O	U	N	T	B	A	T	T	O	C	K
8			I	N	C	H	R	O	R	Y		
9	T	O	L	M	O	U	N	T				
10			M	I	N	I	G	A	I	G		
11	L	A	D	D	E	R	H	I	L	L	S	
12	B	E	I	N	N	D	E	A	R	G		

1. This Munro lies NW of Broad Cairn.
2. Third highest Munro in Scotland.
3. Rock-climbing area of The Mayar.
4. Common name for An Carn Bhalg or *The Hill of Blisters*.
5. Byron wrote about its *steep frowning glories*.
6. This hill lies about 3km north of Morven Lodge.
7. This shapely domed hill stands high over Feughside and Glen Dye.
8. A beautiful lodge near Linn of Avon.
9. Perched on the edge of the upper corrie of Glen Callater.
10. This old track goes from Blair Athol to Glen Tromie and Kingussie.
11. Hills between Bellabeg and Glen Livet.
12. This *Red Hill* lies NE of Bruar Lodge.