



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2009

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. With improving weather, it is time to dust down those trusty boots and join fellow Members for an interesting and exciting selection of outings. Please check your equipment and if you need any replacement or new items, take advantage of discounts available from various outlets mentioned below.

Annual General Meeting

Around eighteen attended the AGM on Tuesday 3 February 2009 in the Health Board Club, King Street. A familiar pattern of Officials and Committee Members were elected:

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

Treasurer Rosemary Kelly presented a healthy balance sheet for the year ended 31 December 2008, showing a small surplus on bus outings and an overall profit on general activities. Subscriptions remain £12 for adults and £6 for under-sixteens.

Bus costs for the new season have increased significantly, particularly on longer summer outings, but the program proposed by the outgoing Committee was accepted without change. Members were reminded to book early to ensure a seat, and to contact the Booking Secretary with any cancellations, so as to free up seats for anyone on the waiting list. We need to maximize attendances on outings to minimize fares.

The meeting approved affiliations to North East Mountain Trust and Ramblers' Association and voted

donations to Braemar Mountain Rescue Team and Mountain Rescue Association for Scotland.

Discounts

Discounts are available at the following on production of your 2009 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%
(also up to 25% with SYHA membership card)
Nevisport, 186 George Street 10% (selected lines)
Graham Tiso, 26 Netherkirkgate
Up to 25% on Tiso *club evenings only*, which are now held quarterly. Details will be circulated on buses.
Hilltrek, Aboyne 10%

Vince Heard

With great sadness we report the death on 10 March 2009 of former Committee Member Vince Heard, aged 82. Vince has not been on outings for some years, but during his time on the Committee, he played a large part in drawing up the Constitution. Vince attended Week's Hikes regularly, and as a Welshman, made significant contributions to Week's Hikes to Snowdonia in 1978 and 1989. Our condolences go to his family.

Dates for your diary:

Thursday 23 April 2009—Claik Night, 7.30pm at Health Board Club, King Street (stovies, tea & coffee and a quiz). Tickets from the Secretary or any Committee Member.

Saturday 23 to Sunday 31 May 2009—Week's Hike to Torridon (4 nights) and Glen Urquhart (4 nights). £110 for hostel accommodation and car transport costs.

October 2009—Informal meal and social event—full details later.

November 2009—Slide/video show of Club outings—
full details later.

Frank

Editor's Chat

We hope all enjoy this Newsletter, and if you've 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. Graham, Kris and the Internet supplied photoes.

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

Weather Forecasts

Met Office (Tayside) 09068 505323
Mountain Call East 09068 505324
Mountain Call West 09068 505325
Mountain Call Caithnes/Sutherland 09068 505326
AA Roadwatch 09003 444900
BBC1 about 6:58pm
Radio Scotland Mon - Fri 7:05pm
Sat 6:58am, 6:58pm
Sun 6:58am, 7:58pm

Mountain Weather Information Service

www.mwis.org.uk/areas.php

Midges www.midgeforecast.co.uk

Finally, if you have a good source, let us know.
krisbhoward@gmail.com

Ed.

Graham's Forecast Sources

(1)—Go into "GOOGLE" and bring up the "Met Office Weather" page. Click on "UK Weather" page. Scroll down to "Forecast" and click on "Mountain Area Forecasts". Click on "Scottish East Highlands." This will give you a comprehensive daily daylight forecast in our area for the next 2 days including "Hazards", "General Situation", "Weather", "Visibility", "Cloud Base", "Wind and Temperature at 900m" and "Freezing Level". This forecast is regularly updated. You are also given a further, but less comprehensive, following 3 day forecast.

(2)—Also, in "Google", you can access the "BBC Weather Centre" page and click on "UK Weather." This provides a UK radar weather picture. Click on "Scotland", "North East" and "GO" to zoom in. You can then advance the radar map forward (or back) to show either "All", "Cloud", "Rain", "Wind" etc. in one or three hour intervals. This is an extremely helpful and accurate web page, which I have used extensively over a number of years and can recommend its accuracy.

Graham

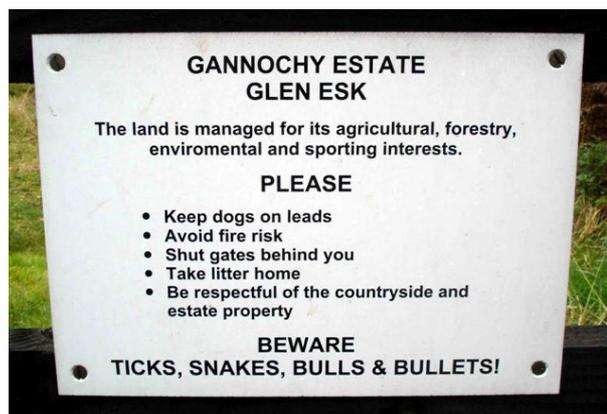
REPORTERS' NOTES

28 September 2008: Rocks of Solitude



Above Glen Esk

David was in charge of the bus. The turnout of nineteen was disappointing for such a popular through-route. Henry, the driver, dropped us off at Bridge of Dye at 9am sharp. Kris opted to start at Cairn o' Mount and the Stewarts with Andrea Grant and Martha went directly to Edzell to walk the Rocks of Solitude gorge only.

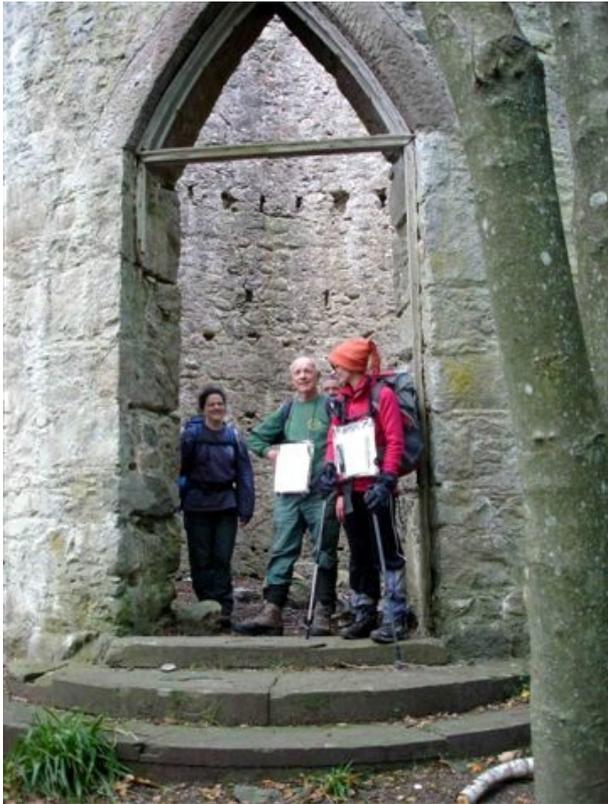


Welcome to Glen Esk!

It was lovely, clear and sunny all the way south to early elevenses at Charr Bothy. We climbed two high deer fences—no hassle—to lunch on Sturdy Hill, the highest point on the walk. Views were superb all around, including Lochnagar 40km (25 miles) west.

We descended to the North Esk where white water tumbled and frothed down the Rocks of Solitude. We visited the Doulie Tower above the gorge on our way along the river to the *blue door in the wall*. A lovely forest walk along the right bank of the river got us to the bus just before 4pm. After refreshments in Edzell's *Panmure Arms*, we left almost on time and were back in Aberdeen ahead of schedule. What a great day!

Graham



Doulie Tower

[We drew a blank when we searched the Internet for information on Doulie Tower. Ed.]



Rocks of Solitude

12 October: Lary to Boultenstone via Morven



Trap

Heather was in charge today. The turnout of 32 was pretty good. Vi had a great start before even reaching the bus at Telecom House—she found £2.50 in the gutter on Union Terrace. *"Fit's she like? She's got the luck o' the Irish!"*



Morven Summit Visitors' Book

We started from Lary Farm around 0945 in clear, dry conditions and soon found a good path all the way to Morven summit. A cold, brisk westerly kept our late elevenses/early lunch to a minimum with all deciding on a quick descent to a warmer break at Preas Whin bothy below the north side of Morven. It was then a leisurely stroll along Water of Deskry to the bus beyond Boultenstone. After our usual half-hour refreshment stop in Aboyne, and our driver had us

back in Aberdeen ahead of schedule, after a pretty good day with lovely views in all directions. Graham

[Walking from Lary to Morven, we had to cross the Lary (or Morven) Burn. Hoping for a footbridge, we spotted something upstream across the burn. Disappointingly, it turned out to be a pole with a spring trap inside a wire tunnel. There was something dead in the trap, but we couldn't tell what without getting our feet wet. The tunnel prevents the wrong prey getting trapped, for example the tunnel might be large enough to admit a mink, but too small to admit an otter.



Circular Butt

Morven has a large summit cairn. In the foot of the cairn, on the side nearest Loch Kinord, is a stout wooden cupboard, containing a waterproof plastic box, in which is a visitors' book entitled *Morven Summit Book* and dedicated to *John Gabb 1916-2007*. Google is ignorant of him, but there have been visitors' books here for a long time, and we speculate that he used to look after them. Along with the book there are postcards for sale and an honesty box. The cards are titled *Morven (871 metres)*, show an ink silhouette of Morven, and quote Byron.

And climbed thy steep summit, O Morven of snow.



By Preas Whin

Descending due north from the summit, I passed a series of exquisite circular butts in dry-stone diking capped with turfs. Inside one was a hare, which made several attempts to jump out before succeeding. I didn't get my camera ready in time.



Helen Dennerly's Property

In lower Glen Deskry, we passed Helen Dennerly's house on the other side of the glen. This artist welds scrap iron to construct sculptures, and around her property were examples of her work, including a life-size camel and crocodile. Ed.]

23 October: Royal Hotel Bar Supper



At the Royal Hotel

Once again, we had a great turnout for this annual get-together. As usual, the food was excellent, and the *claik* even better. Thanks go to Heather for organizing this popular event. Graham

26 October: Pannanich Hill



Cambus o May Bridge

With many regulars missing, the turnout of 39 was excellent. We started the main suggested walk near the old railway station at Cambus o May around 0930, but some decided to walk the Deeside line and others headed for the Turnerhall forestry track to Burn o Vat.



At Pannanich Summit

It was cloudless as we climbed the east ridge of Pannanich Hill. We saw large groups of red deer near the summit. [There was briefly enough rain for a rainbow, but this just added to the day.] A very stiff, cold breeze kept our stay on high ground to a minimum and we quickly descended north, with fabulous views over Lochs Kinord and Davan, and Deeside as far as Bennachie 25.5 miles away.



From Pannanich Hill

We dropped steeply into forest near Glascorrie, and lunched in a relatively windless situation at the edge of the trees. After climbing a high fence and crossing the South Deeside Road, we soon emerged onto a delightful path along the south bank of the Dee. We followed the river bend east with superb views of autumn colours in the forests opposite. The path took us to our bus at Cambus o May. A half-hour stop at Aboyne let Members unwind and reflect on a very beautiful outing. Gordon had us back in Aberdeen on schedule.

Graham



Bennachie and Rainbow from Pannanich

9 November: Glen Farquhar Lodge—Brig o Feugh



Pedestrian Brig o Feugh

With a favourable forecast, 32 of us looked forward to a good outing. After about a mile, the track shown on the OS map at Chapelton did not correspond with reality on the ground. After much debate, the owners of the nearby house/croft told us the road was re-routed after completion of their extensions. We therefore followed the new way-marked track to Feughside.

The weather was clear with a chilly breeze on our backs. Autumn colours in the forest were beautiful and we eventually lunched briefly, with views north-west to Scolty and east to the country round the Slug Road. We passed stone circles on our walk to

Rhindbuckie Forest. It stayed dry and clear through the forest and we eventually arrived at Gordon's bus parked at Bridge of Feugh car-park.



Falls o Feugh

Vi organized a half-hour refreshment stop in Banchory, and Gordon had us back in Aberdeen slightly ahead of schedule. It was a good outing, providing opportunities to challenge our navigational skills in the numerous (aye, and more than numerous—nae on the map) forest trails.

Graham

20 November: Photo & Video Show

Wow, what a turnout of Members and friends! Vi arranged this popular event on our social calendar, held once again in the Health Board Club. Graham convened the occasion and Martin and Heather gave technical support so that everything went like clockwork, starting at 7.30pm.

Alan and Fiona Wallace kicked off the evening with a spectacular digital photo show of their 2008 two-centre walking holiday in Switzerland. This was followed by some great pictures of France's Chamonix Valley by David Garwood and Stan Stewart. Graham Sangster was next with a video of climbing in the Vanoise National Park in France. Not to be outdone, Gilbert & Grace McCurdy came in with some terrific stuff on their walking holiday in the Jungfrau Region of Switzerland.

Vi stood in for the absent Frank Kelly, giving a lovely pictorial presentation of the 62-mile St Cuthbert's Way from Melrose to Lindisfarne. After all this, we still had time on our hands, and Graham had put together a digital picture show of AHWC walks and social events over the last decade or so. Going by the applause and post-evening vibes, I think we put together a pretty enjoyable event!

Graham

7 December: Easter Balmoral—Little Mill

Thirty hardy souls braved cold north-east weather for our first winter walk from Easter Balmoral to

Littlemill on the South Deeside road. The day was dry throughout, and though the scheduled walk was all on track and path, conditions underfoot were very icy and slippery. Some minor falls were reported but all returned safely to the bus. Views of Lochnagar were spectacular with clouds merging in the winter setting of snow on the cliffs and corries. All arrived at the bus early for a half-hour stop in Aboyne before returning to Aberdeen.

Frank



Ian, Graham & Hamish Check the Map

With four cancellations, four no-shows and quite a few regulars missing, the turnout of thirty was not bad. Our driver took us to Lochnagar Distillery, knocking about a mile off the intended walk. The path to Glen Gironck was covered in frozen slush and black ice, making walking tricky at times, so Ian Grassie, Dave Bruno, Hamish Clunas and myself struck off from the path to Bovaglie and headed through the forest on a good ice-free path towards Abergeldie and then on a lovely circular route through juniper- and heather-covered hills, eventually returning us to the badly ice-rutted path in Glen Gironck about a half-mile from Little Mill.

On the bus, many were quizzing each-other as to how often they had slipped on the ice, but thankfully no one was injured. It had been a cold, clear, dry day with good views of Lochnagar and the hills round Morven. We had our usual half-hour stop in Aboyne and were back in Aberdeen ahead of schedule.

Graham

11 January 2009: Cairn William & Paradise Woods

An excellent turnout of 35 set off to traverse Cairn William from Tilliefourie to Paradise Woods. The forecast said dry but windy on the tops with perhaps the odd shower, but it was dry all day with sunshine and blue skies. Most of the walk was on good tracks as we made use of recently upgraded cycle routes across Cairn William. Some followed the river bank track through Paradise Woods, while others emerged on to the unclassified road at Ord Mill before passing

Pitfichie Castle and the mile-long road walk into Monymusk.



Tap o Noth from Cairn William

Our customary New Year meal was booked at the Monymusk *Grant Arms*, but they let us down. Alec, our driver, pulled out all the stops and at very short notice arranged a meal at Oldmeldrum's *Meldrum Arms*. We all enjoyed this social gathering after a superb first hike of the New Year. **Frank**



David, Linda, & Alec at Pitfichie

With 35 on the bus and a favourable forecast, we anticipated a good outing. We walked through

Pitfichie Forest with a gusty wind at our backs, but the air was clear, giving lovely views over Aberdeenshire and Bennachie. With gale force winds, we did not hang around Cairn William summit.



Topiary Hedge at Ord Mill

A descent through deep heather took us north to Paradise Woods and on to Ord Mill with its red phone box, surely one of the remotest in Aberdeenshire. After passing Pitfichie Castle, we were soon at the coach in Monymusk. The bus took us to Oldmeldrum for our annual festive meal, this time at the *Meldrum Arms*. The meal was excellent, and we were back in Aberdeen ahead of schedule after a most enjoyable outing. **Graham**



The Oldmeldrum Sailor



Festive Meal at Meldrum Arms

1 February: Findochty to Portsoy



Bow-Fiddle Rock

This was a re-run of a May 2003 walk coinciding with the Week's Hike, when many missed out on the best and most varied Moray Firth coastal walk. With a good forecast, the 29 of us anticipated a pleasant outing.



Bow-Fiddle Rock

Views from Findochty across the Moray Firth to distant Sutherland hills were good and clear, and conditions were the same all day. At Portknockie, the Bow Fiddle Rock was covered in masses of screeching sea-birds, and after much photography, we went down

the cliffs by a series of steep constructed steps past Scar Nose Point to the beach west of Cullen.



Findlater Castle

A pleasant walk along sands took us past the Three Kings sea stacks into Cullen Seatown and on along the picturesque coast to Logie Head to watch rock climbers on the cliffs, where we lunched before ascending from the shore to view Findlater Castle's spectacular ruins.



On Sandend Beach

The weather stayed dry but breezy as we descended to quaint Sandend. Another pleasant traverse along Sandend beach, followed by a spectacular cliff-top walk, soon had us at our bus at Portsoy Harbour. Refreshments were taken at the Shore Inn before setting off for home almost an hour early. Everyone remarked on a thoroughly enjoyable and varied walk, definitely one of the better coastal walks. **Graham**

1 March: Hill o Fare

For our first outing of the 2009 program, we had 26 on the bus, with Kris in charge. It started dry but overcast, with the weather to improve by lunchtime. Henry our driver dropped us off at 0945. Most kept to the route sheet but Ian Grassie and I took the path to Meikle Tap with fine views south to Clachnaben and Kerloch. [OS spelling of Muckle Tap—a pint for anyone who explains why OS do this—Ed.]

We returned to the main path, continuing by Greymore and Blackyduds for lunch at the locked bothy west of Craigrath. We continued north to the 431m top and then bashed through some horrendously deep heather, eventually reaching Tornamean (458m). I must take machete and strimmer next time.



Walking Atop the Boundary Dike

A teetering walk atop a boundary dike let us traverse this area faster, before more deep heather-bashing eventually admitted us to Midmar Forest, to navigate its numerous paths to Craigshannoch Farm and beautiful Midmar Castle. All reached the bus on time for a welcome cuppa, with comments of *Faa suggested that route through waist-high heather?* but no-one owned up! Spirits were high as we travelled home.

Graham



Midmar Castle

[The substantial dike we walked atop marked the boundary of the old county of Mearns, before it was incorporated into Aberdeenshire. It's said that Mearns included land north of the Mounth to suit the Burnetts who owned both Muchals and Crathes estates. Midmar Inn and the Echt Hotel had each ceased trading, so the refreshment stop was cancelled, and we arrived home well ahead of schedule. Ed.]

15 March: Arbroath—Lunan Bay



The Deil's Heid

An excellent turnout of 36 attended this coastal walk providing very interesting cliff and shore scenery. An enthusiastic group set off from the north end of Arbroath Promenade to pick up the cliff-top Nature Trail and view the unusual sandstone cliff features such as the Needle's E'e natural arch, and the deep inlet of Dickmont's Den. Some areas along the cliff-tops had no path, and it was necessary to head inland along farm tracks to avoid dangerous cliffs.



The Needle's E'e

The final part of the walk took us along Lunan Bay sands to Red Castle and the beach car park beyond Lunan hamlet. The weather was dry with a moderating wind behind us. Had we done this walk a day earlier, we would have had severe gales. All arrived at the bus promptly, allowing a brief stop at Inverbervie on the way home. It was nice to see new

faces on the day, hopefully to join us on future outings.

Frank



Dickmont's Den

This repeated a popular Angus coastal walk from 2001 and 2004. Normally this walk is intimated as "Arbroath to Lunan Bay or reverse depending on wind direction". *There's nithin waar nor waaking heid down intae a gale o ween!* Today it was south to north, though winds were minimal. We had 43 booked on the bus, but seven were no-shows. Maybe this should be discussed by Committee, as, with a £10 bus fare, the Club lost £70, subsidized by those attending.



Coastguard Notice

The forecast for the day was favourable and we departed from Seaton Cliffs car park around 1030am. The path along the cliff-tops gave tremendous views of the eroded sandstone coastline within the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Bird Sanctuary. Many

unusual features such as The Needle's E'e, The Deil's Heid and Dickmont's Den were photographed. Bird-life was numerous, with Vi and Kris spotting a Peregrine along the path. Most lunched just north of Auchmithie at Rumness before continuing past Ethie Castle to Red Head and the ruins of St Murdoch's Chapel.



Gaylet Pot



Kayakers

Some of our more adventurous walkers abseiled down a steep grassy slope on a fixed rope to Ethie Haven village while the rest continued down a blackfly-infested cliff-top path to Corbie Knowe at the south end of Lunan Bay. A [brisk] 3km beach walk took us to Red Castle ruins. [Some sandstone blocks in the wall of Red Castle show a striking honeycomb erosion. The bus was parked some 500m beyond Lunan

crossroads, in the beach car-park immediately behind the dunes.] We took a welcome cuppa at our bus, and had a short refreshment stop at Inverbervie before Gordon drove us back to Aberdeen on time. A really bonnie and varied coastal walk. **Graham**



Unusual Stile



Layered Volcanic Cliff

[The path from St Ninian's Well to Carlingheugh Bay has been upgraded with a sealed surface. The Coastguards have improved the route with a series of numbered posts and explanatory noticeboards. (If someone gets into difficulties somewhere on the cliffs, phone 999, ask for Coastguard, and report the number of the nearest post.) Local place names also show signs of having been "improved" by the OS! e.g. by removing the non-standard "s" from *Needle's E'e*

and by inserting a *G* into *Carlinheugh*, thus turning a witch into lager!



St Murdoch's Chapel Ruin

The cliff-top path continues from Carlinheugh Bay to Coastguard cottages just south of Auchmithie, this time with a gritted surface. At the entry to this section, there is an unusual stile, perhaps to admit pedestrians but exclude horse-riders. However, the adjacent fence is trampled flat!



On Beach at Lunan Bay

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the walk is Gaylet Pot. Wave action has driven a cave some 120m inland, forced a vertical blow-hole, and then the blow-hole has widened till it is some 70m long and 25m wide. Thus, there is a big hole in the middle of a field. At the end nearest the sea, is a vertical cliff, with a cave at the foot, through which waves emerge.

At the other end is a slope which looks safe to walk down, but time hasn't let me try this just yet.



Redcastle

It's said that smokies were first made in Auchmithie before the process was moved to Arbroath. Beyond Auchmithie, noticeboards direct walkers inland for a distance, but suggest that a cliff-top route resumes north of Rumkemno. However, this section was difficult, frequently blocked with clumps of gorse. Soay sheep graze steep slopes on this section. There were two kayakers close to the shore.



Linda, Margaret & Wilma at Redcastle

At Kirk Loch, the remaining wall of St Murdoch's Chapel was remarkably thick. I put my hand on a wire fence and noticed a barely perceptible tingle. I made to sling my leg over the fence, but caught my heel on the top strand and fell backwards. Someone asked if the fence was electrified, and another replied on my

behalf *Of course, that's why he fell.* I said *Rubbish, it's barely perceptible,* and put my hand on the wire. This time I got the full force of the electric shock—which all goes to show what good insulators Vibram soles are when you aren't lying full length on damp ground!



Erosion on West Wall of Redcastle Keep

The rock in the cliffs changed from Old Red Sandstone to volcanic, showing alternating layers of lava flow and ash-fall. Ed.]

29 March: Lomond Hills (Balgedie—Freuchie)



Loch Leven from Bishop Hill

Gilbert was in charge and joined the party alighting at Wester Balgedie to bypass Bishop Hill. With 35 on this outing to Fife Regional Park, the forecast was for dry but slightly overcast conditions. However we started from Easter Balgedie under blue skies with a brisk south-westerly.



Glider over Bishop Hill

It was a strenuous pull from Lochlevenside to Bishop Hill summit for lovely clear views west to Castle

Island in Loch Leven and south-east to Isle of May and Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth, and North Berwick Law. After descending into Glen Vale to meet up with the other party, we ascended steeply in blustery conditions to West Lomond summit for lunch and to pick out the distant snowcapped peaks of Schiehallion and the Lawers group to the west.



Castle Island from Kinnesswood

A pleasant three-mile walk took us to conical East Lomond for good views of the ancient Royal Palace in Falkland village below the summit [and Real Tennis Court building, top left of photo]. We got to Gordon's bus in Freuchie after an 11.4 mile walk, for a welcome cup of tea or coffee. After brief refreshments at the hotel, Gordon drove back to Aberdeen via the Tay Bridge, arriving just 15 minutes late. However, all walkers agreed on a good but tiring day. Next day I had an email from Tork Mackenzie:

Graham, gotta say that was a great walk today—very similar to the superb outing to the Ochils last year—nice to get to other parts of the country—sure beats walking back from Derry Lodge for the umpteenth time in a year.

Graham

[It was great to see Willie Robb out for the first time after many months' illness.



Bass Rock & North Berwick Law from Bishop Hill

We plan these walks from OS maps. OS maps clearly show that access to Bishop Hill is from Easter Balgedie, and nothing on the main road (A911) suggested this was not the case. However, at the top end of the village, a notice was posted to the effect that for "Health and Safety reasons", access to the Bishop Hill through Balnethill farm steading was prohibited, and we should climb from Kinnesswood. "For Health and Safety Reasons", we decided against the half-mile walk along an A road, and ignored the sign. The map shows no path from Kinnesswood to Bishop Hill.



West Lomond & East Lomond from Bishop Hill



Graham Descends from Bishop Hill to Glen Vale

Whether the notice is in accord with the letter of the law, I'm not qualified to say, but it's certainly not in the spirit of the access legislation. Access to

hills commonly goes through steadings. (The farmer needs to go from the steading to the public road in one direction, and from his farm to the hills in the other.) If the farmer is unhappy about hikers tramping through his steading, he's expected to redirect walkers by field-margins round the steading, not send them on a mile-long detour involving an A-road.



Harperleas & Ballo Reservoirs

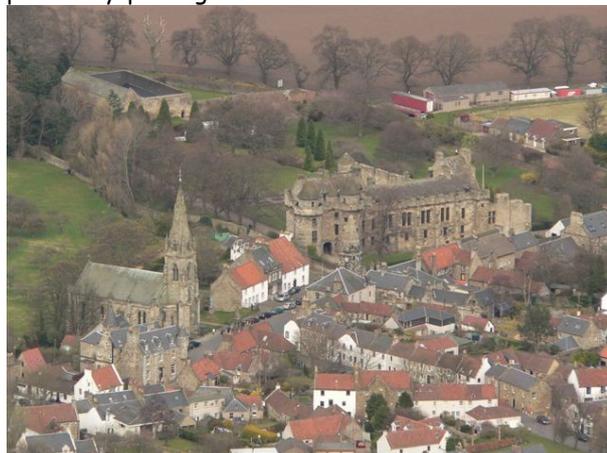
I figured that if I walked directly from the Bishop Hill-West Lomond col to Freuchie, this would save me enough time to look for fossils in Clatteringwells quarry spoil heaps (NGR NO 187 037) on Bishop Hill plateau. Soon after emerging onto the plateau, the track forks—everyone else took the left branch, I took the right, and after 500m, the quarry was on the right side of the track. Fossils weren't hard to find. They date from the lower Carboniferous—one can find bryozoans, brachiopods, crinoids, orthocone cephalopods and trilobites. I didn't find any trilobites, but I did get some of the others.



Substantial Lime Kiln on East Lomond

There was something of a swarm of gliders over Bishop Hill, more than a half-dozen, exploiting either a wave or a thermal, or possibly a combination. I hurried to Bishop Hill summit, then took a low-level route between West Lomond and the reservoirs. Approaching the West Lomond-East Lomond col, I

was concerned that I was well behind schedule, but was delighted to meet the B-party and half the A-party emerging from the car-park. Possibly I could have included East Lomond summit, but I stuck to my plan of by-passing it.



Real Tennis Court & Falkland Palace

At the relay transmitters car-park, there was an unmanned wooden kiosk. Was I the only Member to spot the stack of free tourist maps of Fife's Lomond Hills Regional Park? According to this map, access to Bishop Hill is not from Easter Balgedie or Kinnesswood, but from Scotlandwell.

Our estimated times were less accurate than usual. We were dropped off a half-hour late, caught the bus home an hour late, but arrived in Aberdeen only a quarter-hour late. (In the pub, I'd been about to make a facetious announcement to the effect that even my watch—still on GMT—said it was time to leave, but Gilbert forestalled me!) To summarize, Aberdeen to Easter Balgedie took a half-hour longer than expected, Easter Balgedie to Freuchie took a half-hour longer than expected, and Freuchie to Aberdeen took 45 minutes less than expected. **Ed.]**

Cambus o' May Suspension Bridge 26/10/2008 Walk



This is a fine example of a Victorian pedestrian suspension bridge. Its metalwork was cast in Aberdeen and built across the river in 1905. It was repaired off site in 1988. It lies at a graceful bend

in the River Dee [Camas is Gaelic for bay or river-bend]. Previously, there was a ferry a short distance upstream. Around 1866, a corner was chopped off the ferry building to let the Deeside Railway through—hence the modern name *Cutaway Cottage*.



Cutaway Cottage from Footbridge

Consider the words of local poet William Carnie:

*Ye may wander at will from the sea to Glen Lui,
The grey Silver City to heath-clad Braemar,
Seek shelter and silence on stern Ben Macdui,
Or woo the wild grandeur of Dark Lochnagar,
Yet ne'er in yer roaming,
From morn-break till gloaming,
Shall scene more endearing e'er lighten the way,
Than where the Dee gliding,
Through beauty abiding,
Salutes with soft murmur sweet Cammus o May.*

Graham

Deeside Railway 26/10/2008 Walk

The line from Aberdeen to Banchory opened on 7 September 1853, extended to Aboyne on 2 December 1859, and to Ballater on 17 October 1866. The line was planned to end at Braemar, but Queen Victoria was afraid her privacy at Balmoral would be disturbed by hordes of tourists, so she bought land along the route between Ballater and Braemar to prevent this. [Part of the economic justification for the Braemar line was to bring out timber from the clear-felling of Ballochbuie, but Victoria saved the forest by buying it from Invercauld.]

The original line was a single track with passing loops, but a double track was laid from Aberdeen to Park between 1884 and 1899 to enable a frequent suburban service, nicknamed *The Subbies*.

Initially, the line to Aboyne was operated by the Deeside Railway Company, and to Ballater by the Aboyne and Braemar Railway Company. These merged as the Great North of Scotland Railway in 1876.

Eventually, the line was operated by British Rail in 1948, and, like many other lines, was closed after the 1963 Beeching Report. The final passenger service ran from Ballater to Aberdeen on 28 February 1966 and freight services finished later the same year. Today, the disused track bed provides recreation for walkers and cyclists.

Graham

Pannanich Wells 26/10/2008 Walk

In 1760, a coaching inn was built beside this natural spring, as part of the hydropathic or spa boom. The inn encouraged and accommodated health seekers to take the waters of Pannanich Wells. The wells still run today, but the water is now bottled and sold worldwide as *Deeside Spring Water*. Since 1987, the former Inn has been run as a B&B by Val and Chris Norton.

Graham

Pitfichie Castle 11/01/2009 Walk

Pitfichie Castle was built around 1560 by the Hurry or Urrie family. The Urries had owned the lands of Pitfichie since the 14th century and one of the Urries of Pitfichie married Robert the Bruce's sister. The de Monimusk family, to whom the *Brec Bennoch* was sent for safe-keeping after Bannockburn in 1314, died out in the 14th century with two daughters. One married into the family at Castle Fraser and the other into the Urries at Pitfichie. Several generations after the Urries had left Pitfichie, a descendant became the famous Major General Sir John Hurry, beheaded in Edinburgh after the Civil War.

The castle passed between a number of different owners. In 1597, it was sold to John Cheyne of Fortrie, and in 1650, to the Forbes owners of Monymusk. When the Forbesees sold Monymusk to the Grants in 1712, they moved to Pitfichie Castle which they owned for a further sixty years but eventually sold to the Grants.

To save on taxes, the castle was unroofed in 1796 and consequently fell into ruin. In 1936, the whole east wall and south gable collapsed, and it was suggested that the rest of the building be bulldozed, but Dr Douglas Simpson succeeded in having it saved. [W Douglas Simpson was University Librarian, authored *The Ancient Stones of Scotland*, and gave evening classes on that subject attended by my parents. After the Wallace Tower was moved to Tillydrone, he was its first tenant.—Ed.]

The ruin was sold in 1978 to Aberdeen antique dealer Colin Wood of Insch, who lovingly restored the castle to its former glory. The work was carried out by

three masons, (1) Slessor Troup, Premnay, (2) Alec Killoh, Inch and (3) Les Henderson, Tough, and completed in 1996. The Castle is a private residence.

Graham

The Brec Bennoch



The Brec Bennoch was a reliquary, i.e. a casket for holding bits of a dead saint. The Brec Bennoch was such an important reliquary that it has been suggested that it contained relics of Columba. The Grants put it up for sale in 1933 to pay death duties on Monymusk. It is now in the National Museum of Scotland.

Ed.

Monymusk

11/01/2009 Walk

[According to an academic website:

*This parish appears to have derived its name from the two Gaelic words, *Monaugh*, "high or hilly," and *Mousick*, signifying "low and marshy ground," which denominations are descriptive of the general appearance of the land.*

There is, of course, no *K* in Gaelic, and *Mousick* disobeys the spelling rule. The website gives no references.

Ed.]

The place name *Monymusk* refers to the site of the present day House of Monymusk, where the Culdee Priory is thought to have been sited. The place name has always been understood to mean *Hill Between the Waters* as the house is surrounded by hills with a burn on one side and the Don on the other.

Around 1120, the spelling was '*Munimusc*' which changed to '*Monimusc*' and eventually '*Monymusk*' from the 15th century on. These early spellings give us a guide to the pronunciation, though local people still pronounce it *Munny-musk*.

Graham

[With so many words spelt with *O* but pronounced with *U*, particularly words starting with *MON*, a rather more general discussion might be helpful. **Ed.]**

Findlater Castle

01/02/2009 Walk

The surname originates from the place Findlater, first recorded in Exchequer Rolls of 1246. The name is Norse—*fyn* being *white* and *leitir* being *cliff*, because of quartz in the surrounding rock. [The website doesn't explain why Gaelic *finn leitir*, white slope, is rejected, and in both languages, the first element can be a personal name, meaning *Blondie*.] The Castle is on a tiny peninsula jutting out into the North Sea, with a fifty-foot sheer drop to rocks and sea.



In the early 1260s, Alexander III, anticipating an invasion by Haakon IV of Norway, ordered the royal castles of Aberdeen, Banff and Cullen and the baronial castles of Dunnottar, Slains, Dundarg, Boyne and Findlater to be inspected and repaired. Apparently, none of that original 13th century castle remains, as the Vikings took and occupied the site for some time.



Sir John Sinclair of Findlater, who died in 1411 at the Battle of Harlaw which ended the Earl of Ross's rebellion, is probably the builder of the present structure. The castle is clearly modelled on Roslyn Castle, the principal stronghold of the Sinclairs. Thus, the present Findlater Castle would date from the end of the 14th century, being built after Roslyn Castle, or possibly the mid 15th century when it passed to the Ogilvies.

In 1546, Sir Alexander Ogilvie disinherited his son and signed the property over to Sir John Gordon, son

of the Earl of Huntly. James Ogilvie, the disinherited son, was keen to get his lands back and used his influence as Steward to Mary Queen of Scots' household to try and settle the matter. When in 1562, Sir John refused to surrender the castle and grant entrance to the Queen, she sent a company of troops to seize it. They were defeated by Sir John, but he in turn was defeated at the Battle of Corrichie [on Hill o Fare] and beheaded at Aberdeen.



The castle was returned to the Ogilvies but they abandoned it soon after 1600 when they moved to a new home in Cullen. Over the following years, Findlater Castle then fell into ruins. The castle is now in a dangerous and ruinous state and is the property of the Earl of Seafield. **Graham**



Findlater Castle

Midmar Castle

01/03/2009 Walk



We passed Midmar Castle on our 1 March outing over Hill o Fare to Midmar Inn. A close-up view was discouraged by signposted warnings. Midmar is an A-listed building, one of the principal castles of Mar and the only one privately owned. Exactly who built the castle and when is not known but it is thought to be the first of the five great castles of Mar.



Midmar Castle dates from diverse eras, but it is accepted that the square tower dates from 1411 and

the main tower from 1565, with further renovations over subsequent years. It was likely built by the then Governor of Scotland, Sir William Wallace, as a hunting lodge for his friend Sir Thomas Lonsdale. The castle is built in the traditional Z-plan, based on three towers, one square and two circular, and includes some incredible features attributed to the famous and remarkable granite masons of the Mid-Mar school operating in the 16th century. Some of the decorative stonework is extremely fine.



Midmar Stag

These masons built a group of local castle masterpieces—Crathes, Fraser, Cluny, Cragievar and Midmar. More recently, Midmar Castle has undergone considerable restoration with the help of Historic Scotland to modernize the property without destroying any of its considerable charm.

It contains an extensive, and varied collection of antiques, arms, armour and bronze cannon, as well as some old masters. The estate is home to a world-famous *closed herd* of deer for breeding-stock and trophies. The farm has successfully exported deer all over the world, and in 2007 sold the record stag with 50 points to a Middle-East buyer. The castle and estate is the property of the Forbeses. Presently (February 2009) it is on the market for sale at £5 million. The property includes a barony, so that the owner becomes *Baron of Midmar*. A fuller history can be read in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities for Scotland*, 113 (1983), 594-619.

Graham

Ethie Castle

15/03/2009 Walk

On our walk north from Arbroath to Red Head and Ethie Haven, we saw the ramparts and tower of Ethie Castle to the west in the distance. Ethie Castle dates from around 1300 when a sandstone keep was built by Arbroath Abbey. After passing through the hands of the de Maxwell family, the lands reverted to the Abbot of Arbroath, who later became the Cardinal and Chancellor of Scotland. In about 1530,

the castle was remodelled around a courtyard in order to entertain King James V. After Cardinal Beaton's infamous murder in St. Andrews, it is reputed that the monks of Arbroath concealed their treasury of church vessels, plates and vestments within the walls of Ethie for safekeeping.



The castle was bought in 1665 by the Carnegies, who later became Earls of Northesk. It remained with them until 1928. The Seventh Earl was Vice Admiral with Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805. As a tribute, the Earl was entitled to incorporate Trafalgar in his coat of arms and it can still be seen in the dormer at Ethie. This Earl modernized the castle to form a substantial country residence and much of his influence is still found in the castle.



Sir Walter Scott was a friend of the Eighth Earl, and often stayed at Ethie. During one of his visits, he wrote *The Antiquary*, where Ethie is reputedly depicted as Knockwhinnock Castle, with the central character based on a neighbour of the time. In recent years the castle has been carefully restored and maintained to form a magnificent home of great character and historic importance. It is the home of the de Morgans and reputed to be Scotland's second oldest permanently inhabited castle.

Graham

Red Castle

15/03/2009 Walk

High on a grassy bluff overlooking Lunan Water and Lunan Bay is the ruin of Red Castle. Much of this castle was built in the 1100s to repel Vikings, with a keep added in the 1300s. William I, The Lion, took up residence while hunting. In 1194, William conferred the castle and Inverkeilor lands on Walter de Berkley, the Royal Chamberlain. It stayed in royal hands until Robert the Bruce gave it to the Earl of Ross in 1328. It had been officially called *Rubeum Castrum* (Red Castle) in deeds of 1286, referring to its red sandstone typical of the area.



In 1579, James, son of Lord Gray, married Lady Elizabeth Beaton, who owned the castle but fell in love with the daughter. After Lady Beaton threw him out, Gray (with his brother Andrew of Dunninald) laid siege to the castle for two years, ultimately burning the inhabitants out. It suffered from attacks by Covenanters in 1579, 1580 and 1581 and has long been disused. Thereafter, the castle slipped into decline and though it remained partially roofed until 1770, it was never again a residence of nobility. Its last inhabitant was the minister of Inverkeilor, one James Rait. Access to the castle is possible but parts of the ruin have collapsed within the last decade or so, and what remains should be approached carefully.

Graham

Falkland Palace

15/03/2009 Walk

We admired Falkland Palace from East Lomond summit. Falkland shot to importance in the 14th century when the Stewart monarchy acquired Falkland Castle from the Macduff Thane of Fife. Unlike the Picts who had built a fort on East Lomond for defensive purposes, the Stewarts were interested in Falkland for sport and recreation. The name of Falkland is associated with falconry which was one of the popular sports of the area, and the Howe of Fife with its vast forests was ideal for hawking as well as hunting deer and wild boar.

James II made Falkland a Royal Burgh in 1458 and the village prospered. Between 1453 and 1541, the old castle was transformed into a beautiful Royal Palace, one of the finest Renaissance Palaces in Britain. For all its splendour, the Palace was often cloaked in the intrigues of Scottish politics. In 1402, the Duke of Rothesay, son of Robert III, was imprisoned in the Palace by his uncle the Duke of Albany and eventually died a cruel death from neglect and starvation. In 1542, James V died at Falkland, having heard that his wife had given birth to a daughter—Mary Queen of Scots.

Falkland was a popular retreat for the Stewarts but in 1603 James VI took his court to London for the Union of the Crowns, signalling the end of an era for the Palace and the village. Though Charles I and II both visited Falkland, times had changed and later, Cromwell's troops torched the Palace, which quickly fell into ruin.

Restoration of the Palace started with its acquisition in 1887 by John Patrick Crichton Stuart, third Marquess of Bute. Though technically Crown property, the Crichton Stuarts continue to hold the offices of both Constable and Keeper of the Royal Palace of Falkland. It is the only Royal Palace in the care of the National Trust for Scotland, and houses among other interesting attractions, Britain's oldest Real Tennis Court, built in 1539.

Graham

Lochleven Castle

29/03/2009 Walk



Securely located on Castle Island in Loch Leven, the castle was important in Scottish history for over 300 years. For much of the 14th century, Lochleven Castle served as State Prison. John of Lorn, the Lord Admiral, was incarcerated there by Robert the Bruce after Bannockburn in 1314. In 1368, the Steward of Scotland (who later became King Robert II) and his son Alexander, the Wolf of Badenoch, were prisoners there. Other inmates included Archibald, Earl of Douglas and, some years later, Patrick Graham, the

first Archbishop of St Andrews. Yet, it is best remembered as Mary Queen of Scots' prison from June 1567 to May 1568 and the place where she was forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son James VI on July 1567.

Lochleven Castle dates back to about 1300 when it was either built or occupied by Edward I's troops until captured by William Wallace under cover of night. Wallace being less gallant than Mel Gibson, killed the 35 defenders and five womenfolk. This was probably just the last of a series of fortresses on the island stretching back at least as far as one built here by Pictish King Dongart around AD490. The island today occupies about 8 acres, about 4 times its size in ancient times, due to lowering the Loch's water level by 4 feet between 1826 and 1836. Until then, the water came up almost to the castle walls.

Graham

Skiing near The Vanoise

January 2009



View from Bellcote Glacier

After organizing an AHCW summer Alpine trekking holiday to France's Vanoise National Park in July 2004, it was always my wish to return to this area in winter to ski the wonderful pistes around Pralognan, Champagny and La Plagne. I eventually got the opportunity this year, and a friend and I flew from Glasgow to Geneva, hired a 4x4, and drove through the mountains to La Plagne, adjacent to the Vanoise National Park (no skiing facilities are allowed in the Park).

We stayed in Belle Plagne village at 2050m (6,800 ft), almost twice the height of Ben Macdui. Weather was superb all week, with daytime temperatures of around -5°C, keeping the snow in first class condition. After the busy Christmas and New Year season, I think the holidaymakers had all gone home, as the mountains were almost clear of people, letting us think we had the pistes to ourselves.



Graham & friend Neil, and Mt Blanc

The Vanoise was France's first National Park, and with its superb mountain scenery, we saw why it got this status. The La Plagne and Les Arcs ski area is nicknamed *Paradiski* [Italy's *Gran Paradiso* NP is nearby], together making up one of the world's largest ski areas with over 600km of marked ski trails and downhill ski runs of 3miles or more from their glaciers at 3,800m. From the Bellecote Glacier ski runs, above Belle Plagne at over 3500m (10,500 ft), you get tremendous views north to towering Mont Blanc (4807m), highest mountain in western Europe, and its surrounding 4000m peaks. This was a ski trip to remember forever! Skiing at Glenshee and The Lecht will never be the same!

Graham

Lochend Bothy, Loch Muick

NGR NO 302 838



Alistair Davidson, a friend of my brother, gave me the attached photo. Alistair, now in his 80's, was secretary of Hall Russell's (Aberdeen Shipbuilders) Climbing Club in the 1950's and early 1960's. In my early days of hillwalking and climbing, circa 1960, I remember staying at Lochend. It was a super refuge with a large open fireplace on the south-west gable end. I reckon it could accommodate at least twenty, if not more.

I emailed the Mountain Bothies Association's General Secretary (John Arnott), enquiring as to the history of the refuge. He replied within minutes with a PDF file saying that the Lochend Bothy (or cottage) was completely destroyed by fire around 1965/66—they

had no other information. I emailed him the photo, which he was "absolutely gob-smacked" to receive.

I also got an email from Stan Stewart:

Hi Graham—thanks for the Lochend Bothy photos—they bring back many fond memories. In the mid 1960s, I was coming down the Streak o Lightning, when I saw smoke above the trees at Lochend. At the bothy, I asked young Jock Robertson what happened and he said the estate had instructed him to torch the bothy as some idiots had started ripping out the beautiful yellow pine panelling interior for firewood. The stupid thing was that there was any amount of firewood in the trees behind the bothy.

Another sad story from our local hillwalking area. If any Members have information or pictures of the Lochend Bothy, I would be delighted to hear.

Graham

A Hostelling We Will Go

This was written by the late Vince Heard. He was a fun-loving, valued member of the Club, participating in numerous Week's Hikes. This was his good wishes for a Week he was unable to attend, twenty-odd years ago. How things have changed!

Vi

A Hostelling We Will Go

WHEN it rains in buckets in foreign parts,
And you can't get to sleep for the snores and starts,
Or for all the trotting throughout the night
By the ones who drank and got too tight;

WHEN you get up with the dawning
Heavy-eyed and yawning,
And you struggle to the loo
And you join the mile-long queue,
And you can't get a basin
To wash your face in;

WHEN you go to make your bed
And the bedpost hits your head
And your blanket's on the floor
And your pants are by the door
And you cannot find your gear
'Cos half of it ain't here;

WHEN you get down to the breakfast room,
Demoralized and full of gloom—
Table full, toast alight,
Not a frying pan in sight.
"Where's the bacon? Where's the tea?"
Chaos rules OK, you see.

WHEN you've polished brasses, swept the floors,
A little time might just be yours

To sort yourself out for the day—
But wait! "What's this?" I hear you say,
"Sandwiches? Well... Cheese or jam?
Some rotten bastard's pinched the ham."
"What about a Lawson's pie?"
"What a glorious way to die!"

WHEN you've tramped the hills and done your bit
And stagger back for more of it
And had your shower (Which took an hour)
And spivvied up And found a cup
For tea, and dinner's now in store—
You think that's it? There's more and more.

WHEN you've peeled the tatties, opened the cans,
Searched in vain for the unused pans,
Fought for the stove (which won't even light),
All in the name of a well earned bite.
Bolt it down, like a half-starved bear,
Wash up the dishes in a hell of a tear,
Clean down the table, put the grub away—
Have to get a move on if you want the pub today—
Brush your teeth, comb your mop
(Always assuming you've something on top),
Rush out the door in a photo-flash,
Up to the pub in a frenzied dash,
Get to the bar and begin to sup,
And Jim is roaring "TIME IS UP",
Gulp it down and hurry back,
Get your cocoa, have a snack,
Then the warden whips the chairs,
Sends you packing up the stairs,
And still it's only half past ten,
And then it all starts up again.

WHEN it rains in buckets in foreign parts,
And you can't get to sleep... **that's hostelling**
Vince Heard

What a load of rubbish rhyme,
written tongue in cheek.
Good weather and good hiking,
and **have a super week!**
Vi

The Puddock by J M Caie

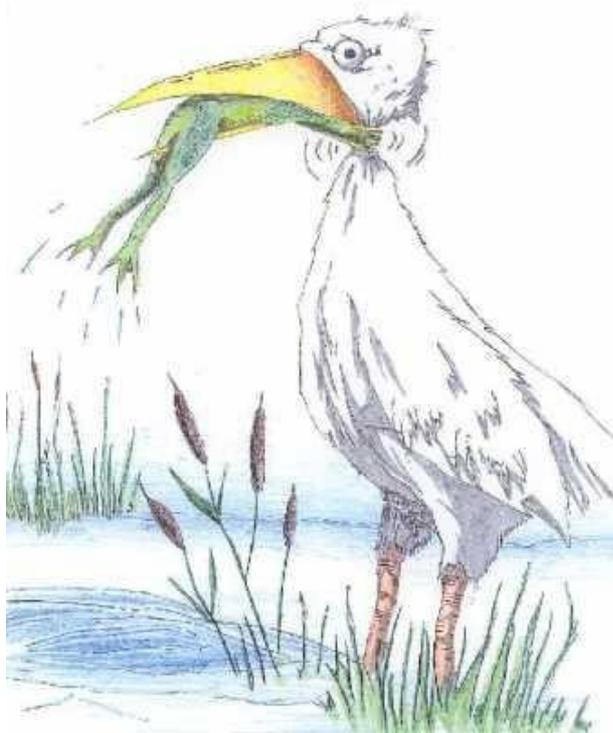
On our walks, we often see puddocks (frogs), but herons less frequently (apart from the one on the Dee under Craiginches). If you have visited Nevisport recently, you may have noticed this poem in the window of Square One next door.

The Puddock

A puddock sat by the lochan's brim,
An he thocht there was nivver a puddock like him.
He sat on his hurdies, he waggled his legs,

An cockit his heid as he glowrd throu' the seggs.
The bigsy wee craetur was feelin that prood,
He gaipit his mou an he croakit oot lood:
"Gin ye'd aa like tae see a richt puddock," quo he,
"Ye'll nivver, I'll sweer, get a better nor me.
I've femlies an wives an a weel-plenished hame,
Wi drink for my thrapple an meat for my wame.
The lasses aye thocht me a fine strappin chiel,
An I ken I'm a rael bonny singer as weel.
I'm nae gyaan tae blaa, but the truth I maan tell—
I believe I'm the verra MacPuddock himsel."

A heron was hungry an needin tae sup,
Sae he nabbit the puddock and gollupt him up;
Syne 'runkled his feathers: "A puir thing," quo he,
"But puddocks is nae fit they used tae be."



Caie Caricatured as the Heron

John Morrison Caie (1879-1949) was born in Fochabers. After lecturing in agriculture, he became a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. However he also wrote poetry and is best known nowadays for his humorous poem, *The Puddock*, one of several that he wrote in Doric. *The Puddock* reflects Scots' strong belief in the equality of man and dislike of airs and graces. Pride comes before a fall. **Ed.**

Helen Dennerly

12/10/2008 Walk

Probably her best-known work is a pair of giraffes in Edinburgh, popularly known as Martha and Gilbert.

Ed.



Martha & Gilbert

Oldmeldrum Sailor Statue

11/01/2009 Walk

The sailor statue in freestone, dating from early/mid-19th century, stands outside the hotel. The engaging, near life-size figure with large head is said to have been carved for a sailor's widow who came from Kingsford, near Alford. It was rescued from a rubbish dump near Craigievar by the collector Postie Lawson and moved with him to Oldmeldrum in 1938. Alternatively, the statue was taken from France in the 18th Century by a former owner of the *Meldrum Arms*, depending on which website we read! **Ed.**