



## **No4 SUMMER 2023**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES:** Andrew Thacker, Chairman (chair.northofscotland@ldwa.org.uk); Graham Smith, Secretary and Newsletter Editor (n.scot.ldwa@gmail.com); John Henderson, Walks Secretary (johnhenderson628@btinternet.com); Treasurer Lorna Sproates (lornasproates@hotmail.com); Julie Cribb, Speyside 100 organiser (julie.cribb99@gmail.com); Margo Forbes (margoforbes@btinternet.com); Bea Jefferson (bea\_jefferson@hotmail.com); Jan Adamson (jan\_adamson@hotmail.co.uk); Pete Mitchell (petem.nwglldwa@btinternet.com).

## **SUMMER GROUP WALKS**

OUR group website is regularly updated, so always check this for further details of the walks listed below, any last minute changes to walks and information about new walks listed after the newsletter has been emailed. Go to **[www.ldwa.org.uk/North West Grampian](http://www.ldwa.org.uk/North West Grampian)**

### **Saturday June 3 - Via Regia Canter Loop**

20 miles, starting at 9.30am from the Dava Snow Plough Shed on the A940. The walk takes moorland tracks and the Castle Grant parklands to Grantown-on-Spey for lunch, returning on part of the Dava Way. Contact leader Pete Mitchell (tel: 07881462217 - please text).

### **Sunday June 18 – Grantown North Circular**

14 miles, starting at 9am from the museum car park car park behind the Grant Arms Hotel in Grantown. The route heads NW to Dreggie and then towards Lochindorb before crossing the A939 near to the Jesus Saves stone, returning via the Dava Way. Contact Mary Atkinson (email sandal.farm@btinternet.com).

### **Sunday July 16 – Kingussie Summit Walk**

10 miles, starting at 9.30am from the car park in Kingussie which is on the left as you drive

up the minor road to the golf course, just before the hotel. This circular walk heads up via the golf course to the summits of Beinn Bhreac (843m) and Carn na Fhreiceadain (878m) on good wide tracks. Contact leader Dave Galloway (email dave17galloway@gmail.com).

### **Sunday July 23 – Meall Mor, Meall Beg and Loch Glass**

15 miles, meeting at 9.30am in the car park opposite the Co-op in Evanton to arrange cars as parking is limited at the start of the walk. Meall Mor is a 2421ft Graham. Spectacular walk where paths are generally good, but there will be some heather bashing. Contact Graham Smith (mobile 07815 453324, email n.scot.ldwa@gmail.com)

### **Sunday July 30 - Haughs of Cromdale**

18 miles, starting at 9am from public car park to the left of the A95, just past the bridge in Cromdale, if approaching from Grantown. Circular walk taking in the summit of Creagan a' Chaise (722m) before dropping to Ballcorach and returning on a section of the Speyside 100m route via the Speyside Way. Contact Roger Boston (email rogerboston0@gmail.com).

**Saturday-Sunday August 19-20 – Joint Weekend with Heart of Scotland Group, based in the Ballater-Braemar area.** See story below for details.

### **Sunday August 27 – Glen Einich**

18 miles, starting at 9am from Inverdrurie car park, on the right just past the tennis courts on the B970 Coylumbridge road. This out and back route heads south via Whitewell on good wide paths to the beautiful and remote setting of Loch Einich. To book, contact leader John Henderson (email johnhenderson628@btinternet.com).

## **DOGS ON OUR WALKS**



**Skye, a border collie belonging to new members Karen and Dave Mickle, who live in Brora, on the To The Lighthouse walk on April 30.**

AS explained in an email to all members last month, the North of Scotland LDWA committee has changed group policy on dogs coming on our walks.

For the last two years, group policy has been that there should be a maximum number of two dogs on any walk. Since then, we have had some new members join the group who like to walk with their dogs. These dogs have been very well behaved - always under close control when the walks have passed near livestock - and there have not been any issues on the walks.

So the committee has decided to change our policy, which is now that dogs come on our walks at the discretion of the walk leader. This means that there may be walks where more than two dogs come along, or there may still be a maximum of two dogs, or there may be no dogs, if the walk leader feels that the terrain is unsuitable. The decision will be with the walk leader.

Group members who are dog owners should always contact the walk leader in advance to ask if their dog can come on a walk. Below is the LDWA national group policy about dogs on walks.

*It is recognised that, for some dog owners, it is important they can bring their dogs along on walks. Local groups have different approaches in this area; there is no standard national policy. Local groups and walk leaders can decide on the most appropriate approach for their group/walk based on local circumstances and times of year. Ultimately the decision to allow dogs on walks rests with the walk leader or walk organiser, though if no dogs are allowed this must be made clear prior to the walk. Assistance dogs are normally allowed on LDWA walks. The walk leader can insist on dogs being on leads, and in particular dogs must be kept on leads anywhere where there is a possibility of livestock. Owners must provide verbal confirmation to the walk leader that their dog is covered by pet owners' liability insurance before the walk.*

## **SPEYSIDE 100: JUST A YEAR TO GO**



A LOT has been happening with the Speyside 100 in recent weeks, and the organising group is on course to make next year's LDWA flagship event a huge success. The event takes place over the weekend of May 25-27, with the marshals' walk scheduled for the weekend of May 4-6, and will be based at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre, five miles from Aviemore. The route will visit many of the towns and villages in the Spey Valley including Kinraig, Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Nethy Bridge, Grantown-on-Spey and Cromdale, and then across to Glenlivet and Tomintoul. Much of the route has been on some of our social walks.

John Henderson is putting the final touches to the route, and as this newsletter was being produced, we were waiting for formal acknowledgement from the RSPB and Forestry Land Scotland that the route is acceptable to them. We do not anticipate that this will be a problem. There was a very good face to face meeting of the organising group on April 15, held in Aviemore. Those attending were able to visit several checkpoints and locations to get a real feel for the route.

Graham Smith has taken on the job of checkpoint coordinator and is now working closely with John, as well as contacting groups and individuals throughout the LDWA to get checkpoints manned. There are 14 checkpoints on the route and so far, 12 of them have been filled. We are waiting for confirmation from groups who have expressed an interest in taking on the remaining two.

In the last month or so, the priority for the organising group has been to get the Speyside 100 website content developed so that it can go live after the Elephant, Bear & Bull 100 was over on May 27-29. Sandra Davison has prepared an excellent mock-up of how it will look and everyone who is responsible for generating the content for the different areas has been busy





working away in the background. After the EBB, progress on the event is being stepped up. The Speyside 100 is, of course, a massive event for our group. It will be very prestigious for North of Scotland LDWA, as it will enable us to showcase our wonderful area to several hundred walkers, helpers and their friends and family. So we are going to need as much help, and from as many people, as we can possibly get. There are going to be so many jobs to do – helping at checkpoints, helping in the kitchen, car park duty, marshalling on the route – the list goes on. Many group members have already offered their services, and if you have not yet been approached – then you are almost certainly going to be! Anyone offering to help is asked to contact Graham Smith (email [n.s.scot.ldwa@gmail.com](mailto:n.s.scot.ldwa@gmail.com))

And a very important job which will need doing is double checking the route description, which John Henderson has been working very hard on over the last few months. Bea Jefferson has kindly offered to walk the route to check the route description, but it will need to be double checked before the event. This would involve getting a copy of the route description from John and walking sections of it to double check its accuracy. If anyone is interested in doing this, please email John on [johnhenderson628@btinternet.com](mailto:johnhenderson628@btinternet.com)



**ABOVE: The path going up to the 2657ft Corbett Meall a' Bhuachaille – the main climb on the Speyside 100 route - with Loch Morlich in the background.**

**LEFT: Near Nethy Bridge, where Checkpoint 8 will be situated.**

# **LAICH O'MORAY 50: MONTHS TO GO**

ENTRIES are coming in for our group's 51 mile challenge event, which takes place over the weekend of October 7-8. Once again, it will be based at Forres and will start from the cricket pavilion in Grant Park.

The route will be the same as it has been for the past two years – going clockwise out of Forres to Findhorn, followed by that delightful stretch of coast to Lossiemouth, before turning inland to Elgin and back to the start via the upland forested area of Heldon Hill and a section of the Dava Way, with six checkpoints. Entrants will again have 24 hours to complete the walk.

We have decided to put on a marshals' walk if there is sufficient interest in having one, and this will be held over the weekend of September 9-10. Entry details for the event are in Strider.

Anyone interested in helping on the event, or in taking part in the marshals' walk, is asked to contact Graham Smith (email address is above).

## **JOINT WEEKEND IN BALLATER**

THE joint weekend with our neighbouring LDWA group, Heart of Scotland, will be over the weekend of August 19-20, and it will be based in Ballater, as there is a hostel in the town and pubs for social activities.

This follows a successful joint weekend last year, based at Blair Atholl, when there was a most enjoyable two days of walking and socialising.

Dave Galloway has kindly offered to lead walks on both days. They will be hill walks but if the weather turns bad (as it may!) then Dave will organise lower level walks instead. Dave says: "I haven't chosen any specific routes as we will be spoilt for choice. Lochnagar is an obvious choice but Glenshee and the Cairnwell group are easy and accessible. So is the southern Cairngorms, so I was waiting to see what people wanted to do. There are lesser hills (Brown Cow Hill, Morven) etc for shorter days."

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

THE group's AGM will be at Edinkillie Community Hall, Dumphail, on Sunday September 24. The AGM will be preceded by walk of approximately 12 miles. The walk will start at 9am and the AGM will begin at 1pm.

So do come along. The AGM is your opportunity to have your say on the running of our group. There are vacancies on the committee – so you may even find yourself elected! All group members are welcome.

Further news about the AGM will appear on the website in due course.

## **LOGO CHANGE**

AS group members may recall, the name of our group changed from North West Grampian to North of Scotland two years ago. This was to reflect the huge geographical area that we cover. Many of you will also recall that Rachel Mitchell, the daughter of our members Pete and Angela, designed our logo – which some people in the LDWA have said is the most attractive of all the 42 group logos in the association.

Sadly, our group website still says North West Grampian, and shows our old logo. But we

can tell you that Richard May, the new national IT Officer for the LDWA, informs us that the issue is on the IT work list, as well as being on his personal 'to do' list. We can only apologise to our members for the delay, and say that this is out of your committee's hands. We await developments, and we will keep members informed.

## GOLSPIE 3 PEAKS CHALLENGE

A COUPLE of our members were among more than 100 people who enjoyed the Golspie 3 Peaks Challenge, held on April 29. Organised by Golspie Rowing Club, it involved a 13 mile walk going up Ben Horn (1706ft), Ben Bhraggie (1303ft) and Silver Rock (870ft). It's much like LDWA events, with a mass start (walkers are taken by bus to the foot of Ben Horn), marshals, food and drink at the start and finish – and even a round of applause for finishers. Entry fee was £20, which goes to rowing club funds.

It was a fabulous route, with wonderful views from the peaks, and we did it in glorious sunshine. The toughest ascent was actually the shortest and last one, Silver Rock, which involved a wee bit of steep heather bashing.

It was the second time the Golspie 3 Peaks Challenge had been organised, and it will be held again next year. The organisers have not yet got a date for next year's event but – so that members of North of Scotland LDWA can take part – they have been asked to avoid the dates of our Speyside 100 and SP100 marshals' walk. When it has been announced, the date of the event will go on our group website and in our newsletter.



**TOP: The view from the top of Ben Horn.**

**LEFT: The view from Ben Bhraggie.**

**BOTTOM: The view from Silver Rock.**





**Graham by the Pools of Dee, near the summit of the Lairig Ghru.**

## **LAIRIG GHRU ADVENTURE**

**By Graham Smith**

ON May 15-17, I enjoyed a memorable three days backpacking the Lairig Ghru – the famous mountain pass going through the Cairngorms – with my friend Peter Aylmer, from Essex & Herts LDWA.

Peter usually comes up to Scotland in May, and last year I walked the Speyside Way with him. This year his trip north of the border involved the Great Glen Way and then a walk from

Aviemore to Blair Atholl which included the Lairig Ghru.

The Lairig Ghru, as most NoS LDWA members may be aware, is probably the most famous mountain pass in Scotland. It is a truly spectacular route which reaches 2,740 feet at its highest point. It passes between three of the four highest Munros of them all – with Ben Macdui (4295ft) on



**Peter on the moorland near Glen Tilt.**

one side, and Braeriach (4252ft) and Cairn Toul (4236ft) on the other.

Peter finished the Great Glen Way at its Inverness terminal and then travelled to Aviemore, where I met him on the Monday morning after travelling from my home in Tain.

That day we walked 13-14 miles, going from Aviemore to where the Lairig Ghru route starts at Coylumbridge. The first couple of miles go through pleasant woodland before the trees disappear as the Lairig Ghru itself gets closer and the path narrows. As you gain height, the path narrows and we had to negotiate many flat slabs of rock, but there were no difficulties. And although we were getting higher, it never felt like we were actually above 2,000 feet because we were walking among the hills and not over them.

It is a great walk and it was fantastic to reach the summit of the Lairig Ghru, with views across to Deeside in front of us. We reached our day's target, Corrour Bothy, shortly after 6pm. We were backpacking and were planning to camp, but we had endured some showers and it looked like there would be more, plus we were more than 2,000 feet up – so we decided to try the bothy for our night's rest, if there was room. Fortunately there was, and we had a very pleasant evening chatting with a New Zealander called Hal and two pals called Kieran (who lives in Burghead) and James (from Dundee).

The following morning was quite dreich, with rain (fortunately light) and low cloud. Peter and I set off just after 9am, and we certainly didn't envy our bothy friends, who were all planning Munro walks. Shortly after Corrour Bothy, the Lairig Ghru path forks, heading left for Glen Luibeg and, finally, Braemar. We headed straight on to Glen Dee, later swinging left to White Bridge, where our path took a sharp right. By now clouds were being replaced – slowly but surely – by blue sky and sunshine, and the showers were getting fewer.

A mile and a half later, we stopped for lunch at the Red House - a pristine, very impressive new bothy which can accommodate a good 20 people. Shortly after that, we had to ford three small burns before reaching a delightful rising path across the moorland. When we reached Glen Tilt, the path narrowed but it was still most enjoyable walking – particularly as, by now, we were in constant sunshine.

We stopped alongside Glen Tilt, having done 17-18 miles that day, and found a nice spot to pitch our tents. And although conditions were dry, the night was pretty cold.



**Graham on the summit of Carn a'Chlamain.**

We awoke to nice morning sunshine, and packed up our tents to ascend the 3159ft Munro Carn a'Chlamain. We followed a nice zig-zag path to the summit plateau before striding across to the cairn at the top. It was the first time I had scaled a Munro with a full pack since I was in my 30s, and I don't mind admitting I found it pretty

tough going. We then had a delightful walk around the summit plateau before taking a nice



grassy path down to Glen Tilt. After stopping to have our lunch, we followed the track, which got progressively wider and eventually became a minor road, to Blair Atholl and the railway station, where Peter got the train south and I headed north. We had walked about 13 miles that day, so we had done 44-46 miles over the three days. It had been a wonderful trip.

**NoS LDWA members wishing to walk the Lairig Ghru will be able to do so on September 17, as Moray Mountaineering Club is organising a traverse as one of its Bus Meets, on which members of our group are welcome. The walk starts from Linn of Dee, near Braemar. Details will appear on our group website.**



**ABOVE: The cairn and the magnificent view from the summit of Carn a'Chlamain.**

**LEFT: Peter crossing Bedford Memorial Bridge by Glen Tilt. The bridge has a plaque which reads: 'This bridge was erected in 1886 with funds contributed by his friends and others and by the Scottish Rights of Way Society Ltd to commemorate the death of Francis John Bedford aged 18 who was drowned near here on 25th August 1879.'**



# SNAPSHOTS FROM SOCIAL WALKS



***SPURRED ON:*** These pictures were taken on the Speyside Way Tomintoul Spur walk on April 13.

There were five group members, plus two dogs, and (pictured above) on the summit of the 1801ft Carn Daimh, we met Neil and Louise Rawlins, from South of Scotland LDWA, who were up here walking the Speyside Way.

The 15 mile Tomintoul Spur the best part of the Speyside Way, and Carn Daimh is the highest point on the entire trail, and a great viewpoint.







**WHALE OF A TIME:** These photos were taken on the To The Lighthouse walk on April 30. We had 11 walkers – eight humans and three dogs – on the 18 mile route from Inver to Tarbat Ness, where they enjoyed wonderful views across Dornoch and Moray Firths. The top photo shows a whalebone near Portmahomack, and the bottom photo shows some of the group at Tarbat Ness – just after the rain had started.







**STRIDERS:** This photo was taken on the Whisky Stride Out Loop on April 2. Led by Pete Mitchell, it involved a 16 mile loop from Aberlour, with a lunch stop at the railway sidings in Dufftown before an easy stride back to Aberlour on the Speyside Way.



**THE B TEAM:** The group walk on May 14 was going to be the 2050ft Graham Scaraben, in Caithness. But on the day there was wind and low cloud, so that was postponed. New members Karen and Dave Mickle came to the rescue, with a lovely alternative walk going to Loch Brora – near where they live – and visiting three lochans and Sputie Burn, plus a nice stretch of beach. The walk, which the walkers called Plan B, is likely to go on the programme next year. Many thanks, Karen and Dave.





***COASTAL CLASSIC:***

**These three photos were taken on the Bow, Bin and Castles Walk, led by Bea Jefferson on March 25. Starting from Portknockie at the wonderful Bow Fiddle rock viewpoint – pictured above – the 19 mile route included Cullen Castle and the 320m Bin of Cullen, Findlater Castle and some enjoyable beach bashing.**





***HAPPY AND  
GLORIOUS:***

These photos were taken on the King's Way Way Coronation Loop, led by Pete Mitchell on May 7 – the day after King Charles III was crowned. The 15 mile route took in parts of the King's Way and the Dava Way, with tea and cakes afterwards in Edinkillie Hall. As the middle photo shows, there was a water feature!



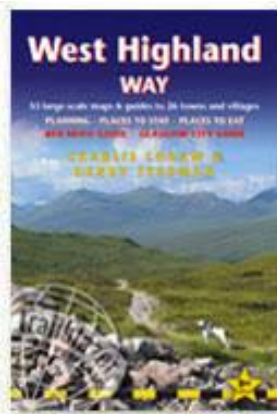




**EXPLORERS:** The Inverness Explorer walk, on May 27, was led by Jan Adamson and was part of the Inverness Walking & Wheeling Festival programme. Jan's route took the group out of the city alongside the Caledonian Canal, before ascending the hillside - giving fine views – to head back to Inverness along the Great Glen Way. The walk was 15 miles and there were 14 human walkers and three canines. The humans included some new members and a guest from London LDWA, Judith Griffiths. A couple of the new members were very interested in our Laich O'Moray 50 on October 7-8 (see story above) so we are hoping they will enter. The Inverness Walking & Wheeling Festival will be repeated next year, and we are likely to put on another walk for the event.



# BOOK REVIEW



**WEST HIGHLAND WAY (8<sup>th</sup> edition)**

**By Charlie Loram and Henry Stedman**

**Published by Trailblazer; ISBN 978-1912716296; 220pp £12.99**

OPENED in 1980, the West Highland Way is the first official long distance footpath in Scotland, and is now one of Scotland's Great Trails.

It is 96 miles long and goes from Milngavie (pronounced Mulguy), just outside Glasgow, to Fort William. It is reckoned to be one of - if not the - the most popular of all the UK's National Trails, with an estimated 36,000 walkers completing the entire trail each year, and

about 120,000 people walking parts of it.

And this excellent guide book from Trailblazer - produced in the usual compact size which fits neatly into rucksacks and pockets - gives you just about all the information you need to tackle it.

In the thorough style for which Trailblazer guides are known, there are suggested itineraries (whether walking at Relaxed, Medium or Fast pace – and the latter probably appeals to most LDWA members), with information on places to stay, what to see en route, where to eat and drink, equipment to take, getting to and from the WHW and advice on walking the route with a dog.

As the official start is only 10 miles from Glasgow, the guide has details of a route which can be taken from Scotland's largest city to Milngavie. This is very useful as Glasgow has great transport connections and many walkers would wish to start the trail from there.

I found the most helpful part of this guide book the route maps, produced on a scale of 1:20,000 (8cm or just over three inches to the mile), pinpointing tricky junctions, potential hazards, the places to stay and eat and points of interest. The 53 route maps include the Glasgow-Milngavie section.

The book also includes descriptions for side trips to ascend popular mountains like Ben Lomond, Buchaille Etive Mor and Ben Nevis, which are all close to the route. The latter is particularly handy as many walkers (like me when I walked the WHW back in 1987) choose to go up Britain's biggest mountain, at 4,408ft - as a grand finale at the end of the trail.

**Graham Smith**

## PLEASE SEND IN YOUR STORIES

THE newsletter editor and his colleagues on North of Scotland LDWA committee hope you are enjoying these group newsletters. More stories and pictures are always needed, so please send in your contributions – maybe a story about a walk you have done with one or two photos, or just a photo, maybe your views about an issue you feel may be of interest to our members, or a poem like the one below. Just email your contributions to Graham Smith at [n.scot.ldwa@gmail.com](mailto:n.scot.ldwa@gmail.com) – they will all be gratefully received.



# HILLWALKERS

A poem by Tom McKay from Brechin (sent to the newsletter by John Henderson)

Hillwalkers are a funny breed,  
For starters, they're off the heid,  
They shy at walking up the town,  
Yet roam the hills without a frown.

They say the High Street's far too steep,  
Yet climb Munros without a cheap,  
And carry a heavy pack,  
Up places like Mount Keen and back.

Through swirling mist they walk for 'oors,  
O'er heather hills and grassy moors,  
Half the time they don't know whether,  
They're on the path or in the heather.

Occasionally they get some cheer,  
Maybe see a herd o' deer,  
Other times wet and wabbit,  
They dinno even see a rabbit.

They hobble on wi' blistered feet,  
Through freezing cold and searing heat,  
Some may think this proves they've guts,  
Others think they're just plain nuts.

When they stagger home, dead beat,  
First thing they do is steep their feet,  
They'll fall asleep just where they sit,  
Too tired to sort out their kit.

Next morning, all stiff and sore,  
They swear their walking days are o'er,  
But come next week, they're off again,  
Oblivious of last week's pain.

## ***A HILLWALKERS' FAVOURITE:***

**Suilven in Sutherland – right - is one of the best known and easily identifiable peaks in Scotland. At 2398ft, it is not even a Corbett, but scaling it involves a long walk-in and then a steep climb to the saddle. The main route to the summit means some easy scrambling.**



