

## *COSMIC BULLSHEET*

The Bulletin News-Sheet  
of Cosmic Hillbashers

ISSUE No 39  
QUARTER 3 - 2004

Editorial

Phill Thompson

Well this edition is dominated by Cosmic Holiday Capers, with similar articles to come in the next edition. Unfortunately the continuing problem of photocopying ruining the quality of photos persists so I will get Peter F's article put on the web site so you can experience it in all its colourfull glory!

Sadly our West Highland Way escapade was the last significant Cosmic event that Ron Pratt took part in. On our way down to the start I gently chided Ron that he really hadn't done all the WHW because he had previously started from Drymen. This prompted him to change his plans and start the next day with us, completing the bit he hadn't done, at a brisk walking pace with Stuart H.

Ron was a Cosmic who I kept bumping into in the oddest of places! Last year we both did the Buckie 10k and after the race, as we had our tea and cake, Ron spoke about how he grew up in Buckie. We were to return to this theme during the WHW, but this time over a beer or two. Coincidentally, last night I was at a Celtic gig in the Fisherman's Hall in Buckie and was reminded of Ron's tales of how he played there in the "rock" band he was part of long long ago.

Most of us have a close circle of friends and family who we keep in regular contact with. If we are lucky we have a wider circle of friends who we meet up with every so often and who enrich our life. Ron was certainly one of those people and as has been said before, his company certainly enriched our WHW trip. While he will be sadly missed it is nice to think that his last Cosmic adventure was to complete the WHW with us.

Phill

# What We Did In Our Holidays by Peter Ferguson

## Day One

It was Katy's fault as usual! 'Boot Camp' Boocock wanted an adventure that would also serve as some training for our Transalp race in July. And as usual we fell for it. 'It' being what looked like a relaxed but scenic cycle tour from Lochaber, through Mull and back via Oban, Glen Etive and Glencoe. A bit off road and mostly on road. What could be a more straightforward way of spending our Easter hols.



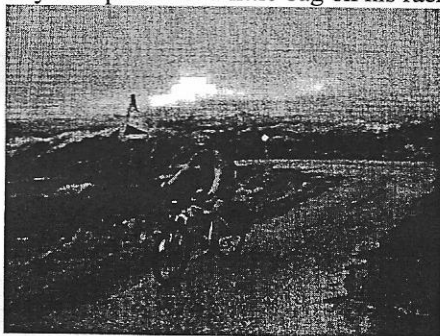
So it was that Ms B, me, Jane and Ian set off from Glenfinnan on a dull but dry Good Friday morning to head down Loch Sheil on the first stage of our trip. A rainbow over the loch seemed a good omen and the track was only mildly undulating. We made good progress down a quiet but scenic route. Legs were warmed and lungs were filled as the first ten miles whirled by in double time.

Our pre lunch stop was at Pollack, a hamlet with some forest walks and a 'help yourself' craft shop that was completely unattended. We did not help ourselves, except to some of our sarnies on the bench outside and contemplated the road out to Strontian at the base of the Ardnamurchan Peninsula. It's always nice to think that you're entering fresh country and I had not been here before. The sun was trying to make an appearance and all was right with the world.



A short climb on the road and it was lunch at some coffee shop on the Ardnamurchan tourist trail.

Unfortunately, this 'short' section turned out to be a climb of considerable proportions! The single track road started along a glen but soon took a very sharp upward turn with several parts over 20%. Laden down with panniers (I had of course continued to pack mine with all kinds of unnecessary kit until full, whilst Ian completed four days with a tiny backpack and a little bag on his rack!) my legs were soon burning as



I tried to keep up with Ms B. I was honking in bottom gear on a couple of occasions and keeping my balance at 2mph became a concern. As usual there was the false summit as we came out of the trees and the obligatory sting in the tail before the crest was reached.

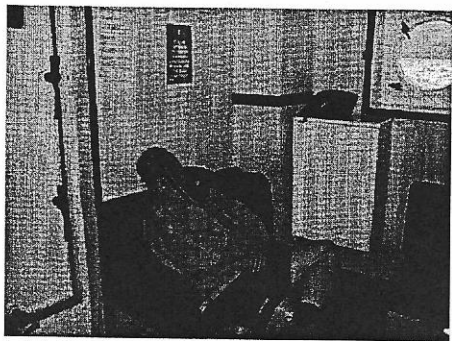
Once regrouped, the pay-off was a fine whizz back down to sea level at Strontian where we turned west towards our goal of Kilchoan and the ferry to Mull. This is a road of constant interest as there is not a yard that is flat. It is a switchback ride along a beautiful coast with views over the narrow kyle to Morvern. We were surprised at the dearth of eating possibilities and it was not until we hit Salen that the bar of a hotel beckoned. It was a welcome stop as the going had been hard and a bowl of soup was warming as well as necessary fuel.

From Salen to Kilchoan is a really delightful stretch of road, narrow and undulating. A pig to drive but a cyclist's dream. It is a sheltered spot and the gardens of the crofts and houses were awash with spring flowers in full bloom.



Go in May or June and the Rhododendrons line the road in profusion. Our gentle rhythm is broken by the final climb round Been Hiant passed the quaintly named Loch Mudle where we are rewarded by stunning views west to Eigg, Rhum and Skye.

It's tempting to carry on to the lovely beach at Sanna or to visit the lighthouse at Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly place on the British mainland, but we have a ferry to catch so we whizz again down to see level and the little harbour at Kilchoan. It's only a short wait for the ferry but the breeze soon chills us now that we've stopped working.

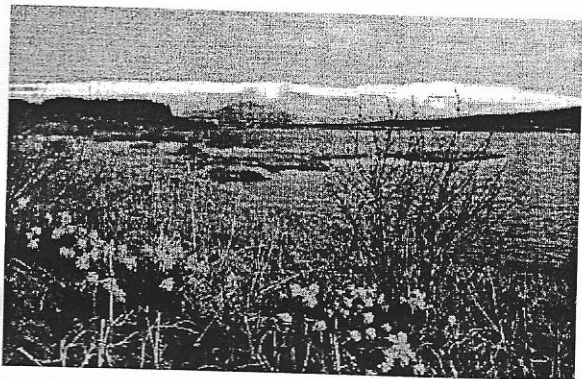


The ferry is on time and payment of only £6 or so buys us a ticket to Tobermory that's also valid for our exit next day to Oban. The ferry is small and although the heater isn't working, we are glad of the shelter in the 'lounge'.

Unfortunately, although it's a pretty journey past the lighthouse, you kind of sneak up to Tobermory from the west and put in without a clear view of the famous multi-coloured houses on the shoreline. Nevertheless, we're glad to be at journey's end for the day and look forward to a shower and some hot grub. It must be said that unless you are paying top whack, the grub on offer is not great. My long held desire to taste what reputedly are the best fish and chips in the land served from the caravan on the pier is quashed by my colleagues who plump for a sit down meal. This turns out to be a dismal affair but at least the pub along the street serves a good pint and has a bit of life with a few jaunty yachting types wetting their whistles.

## **Day Two**

Next morning the sun is shining and we turn west for an abbreviated trip round Mull. We've chosen to circumnavigate the north west part of the island as this seems to be quieter and is said to be pretty. It certainly is and after the initial climb the laid back atmosphere of the island seeps in as we pass cottages and houses beautifully built or restored.



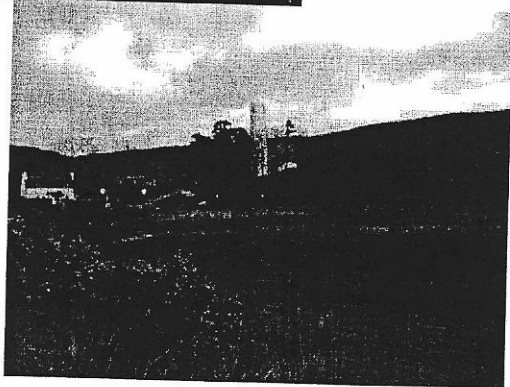
This is not an area of rural deprivation, more like Cornwall without the traffic. The white pencil spire of the church at Dervaig

is said to be Irish in design but it also gives the feeling of an Alpine village (Which is odd as it's on the sea!).



Then over to Calgary for a stop at a lovely café and gallery where we devour some splendid cakes and coffee whilst admiring the many paintings that we cannot pack in our panniers. This is the life, we think.

Plenty more where this came from. Next stop lunch! Quite a busy beach in the bay and another climb to take us over towards the south facing coast of Loch Tuath with the island of Ulva beyond. A glance over our shoulders reveals more stunning views of the Inner Hebrides.



The plunge down to the coast makes us very happy that we have done this leg anti-clockwise! There doesn't seem to be anywhere to eat and our early optimism is waning until Ian spots a sign, declaring Fresh Oysters at Ulva Ferry. Way to go!

We hammer down the little side road to the ferry and there the restaurant is, on the other side of the ferry! The ferry that doesn't run on a Saturday and even if it did, would cost you £6 for 200 yards!



Oh well, looks like another muesli bar then. Never mind, it's only a few easy miles back round to Salen and a late lunch. We press on and as the terrain flattens we get into a higher rhythm passed the glowering flanks of Ben More, as usual shrouded in cloud. Soon we are powering down to Salen in high expectation. We arrive at the main road but not to the expected throng of eateries. We enquire of a group of locals where we can get some grub and they say that 'If we're lucky' the hotel up the road may still be serving. They have a kind of smirk on their faces and I have a bad feeling..... We get to the hotel at five past two and the barman looks aghast as we ask if lunch is still on. Why no, they stop serving at two....No he can't do a sandwich. Wait a minute, isn't this Easter weekend and isn't Mull booked solid? In desperation we throw down a lemonade and a packet of crisps and head of towards Craignure. The road is flat and we resort to time trialling to make haste. Eureka.....a few miles away a garden centre has a café and we descend upon it with relish (and all their other condiments). Suitably refuelled, we cruise to Craignure and lie in the weak sun to await our ferry to Oban.

A proper big boat this one, but it soon fills to capacity with day trippers and coach parties. Ian yet again shows is cunning by finding us seats in an undiscovered tea room in the bows whilst others crowd the gangways. We are soon pulling in to Oban and our B&B is thankfully close to the terminal. Oban is heaving and getting a place to eat is difficult. The two new restaurants at the harbour look really good but are fully booked. As is often the case, after a complete tour of the town we end up back at the first place we passed. With no great expectation, we enter just in time to be served and are pleasantly surprised by an excellent meal. A fine end to a great day.

(Next Bullsheat : What we did on Day 3 & 4 Including a nasty mishap)

You can blame those West Highland Wayers. Or, more accurately, Mandy Crowe and her CD of their exploits. It set me thinking about what "*Cosmics – The Movie*" would be like if anyone decided to make such a film and, more to the point, who would play the starring roles? Have you ever compared any of your Cosmic chums to a Hollywood heartthrob or an all action hero? As unlikely as it may seem, it was quite easy to think of several options relatively quickly and over the past couple of weeks a few more have come to mind. They have been chosen for image, style and *Je ne sais quoi* as much as looks although some may be more obvious than others. They are, in no particular order:

Lee Marvin as Ewan Rennie - Yes, I know he's dead but it's too good a likeness to let such a small detail get in the way and the obvious choice to lead this "*Dirty Dozen*"

Danial Day Lewis – Arnie Mouat (Gangs of Balmedie)

Ewan McGregor – Dan Whitehead (choose life)

Julia Roberts – Clare Whitehead (don't touch the water)

Sir Ian McKellen – Phill (the white) Thompson

Jody Foster - Elaine Stewart (enjoys having old friends for lunch)

Orlando Bloom - Martin Snodgrass (watch out for Achilles)

Uma Thurman - Lois Noble (don't touch those feet)

Al Pacino - Greame Marks (will make you an offer you can't refuse)

Rule Lenska – Ann (Rock Follies) Anderson

Jack Palance – Tim (The Bad) Griffin

Sean Connery - Willie Watson (will leave you shaken and stirred)

Do these selections make any sense? Is it time I found myself a job? Do you fancy your chances on the Cosmic casting couch? Suggestions, comments, litigation etc to my usual address.

The only other one I could think of will not mean much to anyone who hasn't been to Toulouse recently, but there is a guy there who makes a living by going round the tables of cafés and bars and entertaining the natives with tunes on his accordian. He looks like he's fallen on hard times but I reckon with a wash and brush up he would be the spitting image of Steve Prior. Come to think of it – has anyone seen Prior lately....



**Cosmic Social Events – Quarter 3 Year 2004**  
**Social Secretary – Elaine Stewart**

**Social Retrospective**

**April**

The 95 miles of the West Highland Way were run by 8 Cosmics, Colin Larmour, Gary Gutteridge, Roman Halenko, Phill Thompson, Stuart Hunter, Jon Crowe, Keith Varney and Elaine Stewart.

With many thanks to Ron Pratt and Mandy Gilbert for being backup. See reports by Jon Crowe & Gary Gutteridge.

**May**

Thanks to Jon and Mandy for inviting us to their farewell party. Jon has now found employment down south in Newton-Le-Willows halfway between Liverpool and Manchester, with a biotech company called Micap. We'll be sorry to see them go.

**June**

Margaret Stafford provided us with a lovely BBQ to thank all those who were part of the 'Rescue Party', who helped to save her and Marie from a bitter night out in the cold. They had already decided to bed down for the night in some shooting butt before they heard the sweet sound of Gary and Dennis's shouts echoing through the mist. Margaret has now been given a safety device from Ewen so that this will never happen again...

**Forthcoming Features**

**July**

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April**

The Old Waterwheel Inn for refreshments after the Krunce.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>**

Gary Gutteridge is celebrating his 70th birthday. Should it be a nice day then it will be a BBQ at Gary's house in the afternoon, otherwise come in the evening, take your own drink and food accordingly.

Address: 46 Bernham Avenue, Stonehaven

Tel: 01569 765234

**Weekend 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>**

Cosmic jolly weekend away to Skye for the Glamaig Hill Race. The race starts at 3:00pm, its 4.5 miles 2400ft and the entry fee is £3. For that you





get 2 free drinks of your choice and a hot meal. There are still places available at the Sligichan bunkhouse.

### **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>**

After the run at Hackley Bay there will be a BBQ down on the beach. Take a rucksack along to carry your food, drink and change of clothes.

### **August**

#### **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup>**

The Old Waterwheel Inn, North Deeside Road for food and drink after the Krunce.

#### **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>**

Peter Larkin has very kindly, after much persuasion, decided to have a house warming party. To help out, could people please bring along a dish of some sort (preferably with food in it) and your own drink.

Address: 37M King's Gate

Aberdeen

Tel: 638511

Time: 07:30 – 08:00

The Tap O' North hill race, Rhynie is also on that day, its 7 miles, 140ft and the entry fee is £3, race starts at 2:00pm, entry on the day. Also provides good entertainment as Saturday is Gala day, Lonach Pipe Band, Tap O Noth Hill Race, dancing displays, flower, vegetable etc competitions and lots more. All happening from the Rhynie playing fields.

### **September**

#### **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup>**

The Old WaterWheel Inn, North Deeside Road for refreshments after the final Krunce. Prizegiving to follow.

### **Carmine's Night**

**Mar Lodge weekend...** dates yet to be decided.

### **DON'T FORGET..... TUESDAY NIGHT IS PUB NIGHT**

It would be nice to see some more faces turning up at the pub for the social get-together.

## *Cosmics West Highland Way challenge – Jon Crowe*

The West Highland Way challenge started off as 'one of those ideas in the pub' and then, somehow, refused to go away. This was partly to do with the mad light of enthusiasm in Colin Lamour's eyes and partly to do with the general Cosmic outlook that if something sounds like a daft idea then it must be worth pursuing. The proposition was to run the 96 miles of the West Highland way over three or four days, stopping at B&Bs or bunkhouses overnight, with a support team ferrying gear between stops. In the end there were eight runners and walkers and two support volunteers; Ron Pratt (sadly no longer with us) and my own fragrant spouse Mandy Gilbert. I say 'runners and walkers' because a number of injuries had accrued (possibly due to overzealous training in some cases) in the weeks leading up to the event, but the general level of bloody-mindedness did not allow for outright dropping out! My own level of training was fairly meagre; a few ninety minute to two-hour road-runs was about it, and I had no expectations beyond a desire to last the first day.

We started off from a B&B used by the real WHW champions, the mad buggers who run the whole thing in one sitting, and whose photos we were fondly shown by the B&B proprietor (between stories of bed-wetting RAF officers). We set off in good spirits, with many group photos by the starting obelisk, and then had to settle down to putting some distance on the map. I was outdistanced pretty quickly by everyone except Colin Lamour, taking it easy on a dodgy knee (see above!). We both jogged along, taking it pretty easy, and gradually the miles fell away. The weather threatened a couple of times but never came to more than drizzle. The signage was pretty good, apart from a little confusion on a short road section near Drymen. We had to skirt south of Conic Hill due to lambing, I felt a mixture of disappointment at missing what looked like a nice section of track, and relief at being spared the climb. We met Loch

Lomond at Balmaha after a rather dull road section and started making our way along the 'bonny banks'. I had my camera out a fair few times; the combination of still water, misty shores and low cloud made for atmospheric scenery. However, the steady exertion made it's mark and Colin and I both began to tire on the last section to Rowardennan, where some short, stiff climbs in the lochside woods hit me hard. I was glad to see the hotel at the end, and even gladder to hear of Gary's tales of woe at getting lost in trackless woodland on the last section. Ah, schadenfreude! Accommodation for Mandy and I that night was at Anchorage Cottage B&B; other folk were at Cashell Farm B&B nearby.

The next day I was surprised to find myself in reasonable shape, and accompanied Elaine and Phil in a loose group of three for the first section up to Inversnaid, which was good jogging on wide, gravelly tracks. After this I got the bit between my teeth and enjoyed a bit of a blast up the lochside, a sign that I'd developed a bit more confidence in my ability to last out the course. The last couple of miles of lochside path became progressively trickier, with roots, boulders and scrambles over outcrops cutting into my pace until I was almost overtaken by a walker! Everyone found this section tough; I was particularly frustrated because I'd been enjoying my running. Elaine caught me again as the path peeled away from the lochside and we stuck together from then on. There were a couple of climbs heading up Glen Falloch and I started to tire and lose heart a bit, hitting a low at Derrydarroch farmhouse. Soon after we hit some muddy, fouled farm tracks near Keilator farm and now it was my turn to try and cheer Elaine up as we squelched through churned-up manure. We passed the turn-off for Crianlarich and entered a forest section with some steady climbs and steep descents, which left us both grimly hanging on for the final, relatively flat section into Tyndrum. We passed a barbeque in full swing at Kirkton Farm and looked longingly at

the sight of beer, food and relaxed people chatting in the afternoon sun...what exactly were we putting ourselves through this for, anyway? Our answer came as we staggered into the Green Welly stop at Tyndrum and experienced the taste of hard-earned tea and cake and the camaraderie of people who'd been through the same day we had.

Day Three dawned sunny and warm. There was a ragged start from outside the Tyndrum Hotel, difficult to know who'd gone and who was still putting their shoes on. Gary and I started off together, with Roman not far behind us. Gary had a few aches and pains, blisters and shinsplints, but we set a good pace up the valley with Beinn Dorain a spectacular, cloud-flagged peak ahead of us. Roman passed us fairly quickly, then we passed Stuart and Colin walking. I kept up with Gary's pace until Bridge of Orchy, when he put some distance between us on the Mam Carraigh climb, although I managed to catch him again at the top of the ridge, where we took in a view across Loch Tulla. At Victoria Bridge we encountered the hard, stony surface of Telford's military road, and Gary finally took his leave of me as I slowed down again on the climb. The next section up past Ba Bridge was through wild, exposed and beautiful landscape, a truly uplifting sight despite the feeling that the easiest running of the day was behind me. I caught up with Phill on the downhill to the Kingshouse Hotel; we chatted for a while and filled our water bottles from the tap at the back. Buachaille Etive Mor stood craggy above us, with facets of stone glinting in the strong sun. After the hotel I pushed on ahead of Phill, making for Altnafeadh and the 'Devil's staircase' climb. Just before Altnafeadh I bashed my shin crossing a stile and this, combined with creeping tiredness, gave me a few moments of shaky morale as I started on the climb. I pulled myself together as I realised that this dauntingly-named section wasn't as big an obstacle as I'd feared and a steady walking pace with a couple of snacks put me at

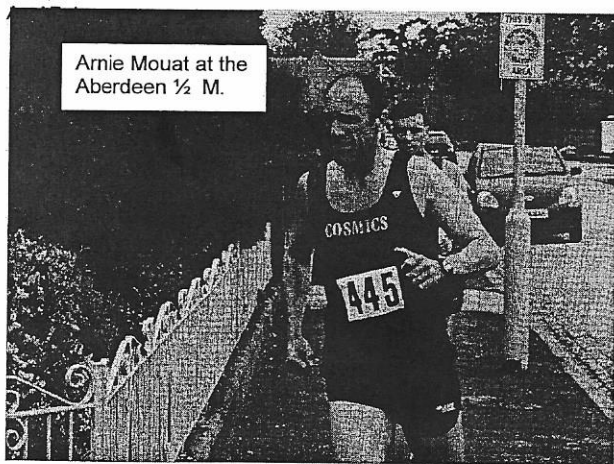
the top sooner than I'd hoped. However, the devil was lying in wait on the way down...a pounding, stone-clattering descent shook every bone and joint but was worth it for the adrenaline kick. The descent into Kinlochleven just seemed to go on and on, hairpin on hairpin until I was stumbling round the town trying to remember how to find the meeting point and staring stupidly at my map. I arrived at the spectacular climbing centre in a poor state, the joints and muscles I'd abused on the descent had had enough. I staggered across to join the other Cosmics eating soup and drinking tea while climbers scaled the surrounding walls. To add insult to injury, I soon found out I'd got sunburned calves! I regenerated that evening with a long soak in the bath, supping a tinnie that Roman had generously donated and basking in the knowledge that the toughest section was behind me.

The last day's run of fourteen miles or so was a substantial distance, but still seemed almost a formality after the previous three days. There was a sharp climb out of Kinlochleven and a fine view of the town before the trail entered a long, exposed westward valley. Gary caught up with me and we kept each other company for a while before he broke away. The trail swung north into patches of woodland and I kept on seeing Gary's figure in the distance for the next half-hour, never quite making up the gap. There were some steep descents as I entered the Nevis woodland and saw glimpses of the Ben between the trees. The trail opened up to a landrover track and a few final hairpins before Glen Nevis opened up on my right and I knew I was on the home straight. Pounding down the track was a bit hard on my joints and I didn't rush things, finally passing a field with a horse (liable to bite, according to the sign) and getting onto the road. With hedges blocking my view ahead, I expected to see the finishing line at every bend. After what seemed forever, but was probably

ten minutes, I finally turned a corner to see the End of the Way sign and a motley Cosmic crew cheering me on...

All in all it was a great adventure, full of Cosmic camaraderie, competition and bickering. A few of us rounded it off by a trip to Colin Lamour's favourite local pub on the way back to Aberdeen (not quite to Gary's taste, but warmly approved of by Roman, Mandy and myself, who enjoy the smell of old men and incontinent dogs). After a couple of beers Colin was emboldened to honk the car horn at some of the sturdy local maidens, but we were off down the road before any misunderstandings (or understandings) could develop.

Postscript: I didn't mean to write another monster piece; it just sort of happened! As many of you will know, I've now moved off the Cosmic's patch and have taken a job in Newton-le-Willows on Merseyside (email [jcrowe@micap.co.uk](mailto:jcrowe@micap.co.uk)). I'm hoping to make the odd guest appearance at future Cosmic events and time will tell what running connections I make down here. Finally, and sadly, I'd like to dedicate this piece to the late Ron Pratt who helped make the WHW challenge happen and was a fine Cosmic companion (even if he made a lousy drag queen).



Arnie Mouat at the  
Aberdeen ½ M.

## RACES and Saturday runs

I've avoided organising a run over the school holidays if there is a local race and indicated known local races.

- Sat. 3<sup>rd</sup> July      Bennachie from Rowan Tree – Hazlehead 9-15am or 9-45am NJ691224
- Sat. 10<sup>th</sup> July      GREEN HILL – Hazlehead 9-15 or 9-45 NJ654132
- Sat. 17<sup>th</sup> July      HILL OF FARE Hazlehead 9-15am or 9-45 NJ743039  
Glamaig HR (not local but usual trip)
- Sat. 24<sup>th</sup> July      KERLOCH – Duthie Park 9-15am or 9-45 NO699917
- Sat. 31st July      Ben Rinnes 5 Tops – Dufftown – Noon
- Sat. 7<sup>th</sup> Aug.      Aboyne HG Hill Race 4pm
- Thur. 12<sup>th</sup> Aug.      Ballater HG Hill Race – 3pm.
- Sat. 14<sup>th</sup> Aug.      GLEN TANAR at 10am – NO479964  
Remember £1 for parking
- Sat. 21st Aug.      Tap O'Noth Hill Race 2pm
- Sat. 28th Aug.      Lonach HG Hill Race or  
CARN MON EARN – NO768924
- Sat. 4<sup>th</sup> Sept.      Braemar HR (or Ben Nevis Hill Race)
- Sat. 11<sup>th</sup> Sept.      Cairn William HR – 3pm
- Sat. 18th Sept.      Morven Hill Race – 1pm
- Sat. 25th Sept.      BENNACHIE Preview from Rowan Tree  
– meet Hazlehead 9-15am
- Sun. 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. Bennachie HR – 2pm.



### Late Summer Tuesdays

Meet at Hazlehead at 6-15pm or venue for 6-45pm approx.(depending on distance from Aberdeen). For Krunces go straight to venue (GR-NJ851055 – remember 50p)

6 <sup>th</sup> July	KRUNCE 4	GR-NJ851055	Roo's Leap
13th July	KERLOCH	GR -NO768924	Old Mill Inn
20 <sup>th</sup> July	CAIRN WILLIAM	NJ683152	Grant Arms
27th July	FORVIE SANDS	GR-NK003270	Barbecue at Hackley Bay
3 <sup>rd</sup> August	KRUNCE 5	Remember your 50p and number	Roo's Leap
10 <sup>th</sup> August	DURRIS	GR-N0762916	Old Mill Inn
17th August	SCOLTY	GR-NO691949	Barbecue?
24 <sup>th</sup> August	MILLSTONE	GR-NJ672190	Grant Arms
31 <sup>st</sup> August	KERLOCH	GR-NO768924	Old Mill Inn
7th Sept.	KRUNCE 6	Remember your 50p and number	Presentation - Roo's Leap
14 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	DURRIS	GR-N0762916	Old Mill Inn
21 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	NE KIRKHILL	GR-NJ845116	Bucksburn Manor
28th Sept.	COUNTESSWELLS	from Riding Stables Car Park at Countesswells/ Kingswells	
	Grid reference		
		810045	