

Date: Mon, 5 Mar 2007 03:14:22 +0000
From: Richard Stonehouse <richard@rstonehouse.co.uk>
To: darchibald@btinternet.com, dave@davemaclaren.me.uk,
JoshReynolds@Tiscali.co.uk, larry_cable@yahoo.com,
val@valsharp.co.uk
Subject: [kmckinlay@mac.com: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago]

Folks,

I received the attached from Ken the other day - may be of interest.
Can you think of anyone else who might like to see it?

(I've removed the thumbnails to save bandwidth - the real pictures
are up on the web).

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Richard

From: K McKinlay <kmckinlay@mac.com>
Subject: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago
Date: Sun, 11 Feb 2007 19:00:45 +0000

Hi guys,

Maybe you remember a trip to Glen Shiel, between 25 and 30 years ago,
when I was working in Germany and had come back for a holiday, to
include a hill-walking trip in Kintail. If I had to guess, I'd say
Alan and I camped somewhere near, or at, Shiel Bridge, while Richard
and others were at a hostel near Ratagan.

The first day we did the Five Sisters, starting from the west. I
remember that I didn't like the snow, firm on one side of the peaks,
and soft and unconsolidated on the lee side. Everyone just told me to
stop whingeing. You'd all been out lots that winter, and often
experienced these wind-caused conditions. Well, we made it, and I
guess the drivers had arranged something so that we didn't all have
to walk back down the road. Afterwards, when I found out that just
further along from where we descended was another hill over 3000 ft,
I remember thinking that if I'd known that, well, I'd have gone on.
It's the sort of thing I would have said once I was down, but given
what happened the next day, even I find this memory suspect. Since we
were in the clouds and mist all day, I don't have any record of this
outing.

The next day of course was the South Glen Shiel ridge, starting from
somewhere above the Cluanie Inn. I have a slide of the party, which
also included Josh and Dave, consulting a map near a bridge (?) to
decide where we should strike off uphill, and later, Dave giving me
two fingers as I snapped him having a piece from what seemed to be a
full plain loaf, the sort you get only in Scotland. Out of practice I
was also out of stamina after the previous day's exertions, and I
descended rather than do the ridge. I can't remember whether I did
any of the ridge, or whether I just reached it, and then decided to
go straight back down again. This latter option seems particularly
stupid, but it's the sort of wimpish thing I'm well capable of. As
well as the previously mentioned snaps, I also have a slide showing
the glen covered in snow, under grey clouds.

Fast forward to last Thursday when Roger, my usual walking companion these days, who also lives in Dingwall, suggested the western two tops of the Five Sisters. It seemed a fair idea to me. We'd had a dump of snow on Ben Wyvis, and I thought the place would be plastered. I did my research the evening before. The new SMC district guide, said that a bridge marked on the map was no longer present; an internet (!) report suggested it was present but damaged.

We were surprised. There was less snow out west than we had expected. Roger's original idea had been to ascend straight from the glen, roughly level with the disputed bridge. I persuaded him to drive round to where we started all those years ago. (I admit to not understanding this. The 'obvious' way is to go east-to-west for the sea views, and here was I starting from the west for a second time.) Well there were new houses, and from the van we couldn't see where the path started. I guess most parties finish rather than start here. We reverted to Roger's previous idea, and drove back to Shiel Bridge where we crossed the river via the road bridge, and walked along the north side of the loch until it was time to turn uphill.

The version of Naismith's rule I use for these 'new' metric maps is to look at the height difference in meters, knock off the last digit, and use that as my estimate for the time, in minutes, to gain the height. So 1000 ft is 300m, and should take 30 minutes. It took me an hour and a half to get up 450m of that hillside, twice the 'guidebook' time. Well the day was getting on, and although the days are now lengthening, there were other things to be done, and although we continued it was inevitable we had to turn back without getting up any of the Munros! (I need hardly say that the delay was down solely to me; my partner was more than capable.)

On the way up we had seen that the bridge was still there, and Roger was keen to examine it on our way back. I would have been happy to retrace our steps along the lochside to Shiel Bridge where the van was parked. On our (north) approach to the bridge, the path was under water to about the depth of my ankles, so I found myself taking a circuitous route, trying to hop from vegetation to vegetation, particularly around the tree bases, where the dead thorns from last years brambles tore at me, catching at my jacket, piercing my trousers and, as I found out when I got home, puncturing my skin. The bridge platform was missing in the middle, leaving a gap to jump over. It was hard to be certain from the bankside, because the bridge was also carrying a mound of vegetation dumped by a previous flood. The cable stays were still there, and I watched as Roger first held on to them and then leapt across. Ever the feartie I suggested I would just walk back along the lochside. "Oh, it's not that bad," he said.

At this point I have to digress, and say that Roger is a member of the SMC, and has the natural low cunning and superiority that all that entails. Once we were in Polldubh rock-climbing, and as I approached our crag he pointed out a feature and I looked up, whereupon, distracted, my foot immediately went down the deep, wet hole in front of me, thus ensuring I started off the day with one foot and rockboot already well soaked.

However, when I looked, he was right. The gap was small and had looked bigger from the bank only because the far side was lower, and

part obscured by the higher, nearer edge. Having expended this effort we were then free to walk along the road, leaping onto the verge occasionally to avoid manic drivers, all to the backdrop of the general traffic noise. I'm still trying to figure out how that bridge could be useful to hill-walkers. I'm beginning to think it's a case of "Oh, there's a bridge there, let's cross it."

They say a drowning man clutches at straws, so when I look again at the district guide and notice the time they give to reach the ridge from the road at the east end of the ridge (about 80 min for 540m; steeper slopes are harder work) I do the sum to scale the time for the other end, and if I take enough decimal places, I'm only 150% slower rather than 200%, and I figure this is all right because since that time over 25 years ago the SMC have also inflated the number of Munros on the ridge, from 2 to 3. So, in relative terms, maybe my times are 150% of what they were, but the number of Munros is also 150% of what it used to be, so it all works out. (Look, I know the arithmetic only balances out if I actually get up the bloody hills, but a drowning man...)

Well, it was a good day, and I enjoyed it. Very good views out to Skye, and a tantalising view north to Torridon which left us puzzling over the disposition and identification of the hills we could see. The view back over 25 years was also illuminating.

Predominantly small pix are attached. The larger pix are at:

<http://web.mac.com/kmckinlay/iWeb/Feb%208/Pix.html>

ken

filename=IMG_1267_7.jpg

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filename=IMG_1278_7.jpg

filename=IMG_1286_7.jpg

filename=hockney7442652.jpg

filename=IMG_1288_7.jpg

Date: Mon, 05 Mar 2007 15:38:14 GMT

To: Ken McKinlay <kmckinlay@mac.com>,
Richard Stonehouse <richard@rstonehouse.co.uk>

Cc: Dave Archibald <darchibald@btinternet.com>,
Larry Cable <larry_cable@yahoo.com>,
Dave MacLaren <dave@davemaclaren.me.uk>,
Alan Peck <alan.peck1@breathe.com>,

Val Sharp <val@valsharp.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago
From: Josh Reynolds <JoshReynolds@Tiscali.co.uk>

Greetings all,

Notes from my 1976 diary -

April

Fri 8 to Ratagan YH with Richard, Dave A
Sat 9 4/7 from the east end of South Kintail Ridge joined by
Alan and Ken (camping) for the first two. Creag a'Mhaim,
Druim Shionnach, Aonach air Chrith, Maol Chinn Dearg.
Sun 10 A not-very wet sunday in Kyle
Mon 11 Five Sisters of Kintail with Richard, Dave A, Ken, Alan.
Sgurr Fhuaran, Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe.
Tue 12 Moved to house and caravan at North Strome, met
McPhails, Hutchings?
Thu 14 Sgorr Ruadh with Richard, Dave A, etc

Apologies for the spelling.

I don't remember a bridge on the north side of the road but I might if
I get out the appropriate map.

I didn't take photos at that time but I'm fairly sure Ken gave me a
small number of slides featuring myself which I failed to find when I
re-organised my slides a few years ago. I'm equally sure that I didn't
throw them out so perhaps it's time for another reorganisation.

Josh

Cc: Richard Stonehouse <richard@rstonehouse.co.uk>,
Dave Archibald <darchibald@btinternet.com>,
Larry Cable <larry_cable@yahoo.com>,
Dave MacLaren <dave@davemaclaren.me.uk>,
Alan Peck <alan.peck1@breathe.com>, Val Sharp
<val@valsharp.co.uk>
From: K McKinlay <kmckinlay@mac.com>
Subject: Re: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago
Date: Mon, 5 Mar 2007 20:08:11 +0000
To: JoshReynolds@Tiscali.co.uk

Josh,

What a delight to hear from you. Another few exchanges of emails and
we'll be cc'ing everyone!

I'm glad someone is so organized as to provide some real facts,
confirming Richard's recollection that the South Glen Shiel Ridge
came **before** the Five Sisters (not afterwards as I thought), and -
by virtue of the date - confirming Alan's comment to me that I wasn't
employed in Germany at the time. Inevitably then, the whole title is
also wrong: it should have been 'Photos I didn't take 30 years

ago' (or maybe '31' years if you're a stickler for detail). On the other hand, as well as not taking the photographs 30 (/31) years ago, I didn't take them 25 years ago either...

I couldn't resist attaching a map centred on the alleged bridge, upstream from Loch Shiel. You'll notice that the Five Sisters don't appear on the same map! though you can just about see the 'F' on the right-hand side, so maybe they should be called the 'F' Hills. I feel confident in saying we were nowhere near that bridge 30 years ago, which might be one reason we were successful on the 'F' hills then.

I'll take these corrections as another indication of powers failing over the years, this time powers of recollection. But as your powers wane, you can always adjust your behaviour to compensate, and I'll take your mention of Sgorr Ruadh - which I definitely did not climb 30/31 years ago - as a prompt to relate that I was in Coire Lair for the second time last week, and on this occasion my memory of the earlier visit was spot-on. But then, that was only a month earlier...

<http://web.mac.com/kmckinlay/iWeb/CoireLair/Coire%20Lair.html>
<http://web.mac.com/kmckinlay/iWeb/CoireLair/Jan%2018.html>

And I want to deny that I go about the hills sleep-walking, despite what the attached photograph shows.

Conditions in February were easier underfoot than in January, particularly the slog up the end shoulder of Beinn Liath Mhor where the snow was nowhere near as deep, and of course the weather was so much kinder, as well as the days being longer. In January I managed up Beinn Liath Mhor only, while last week I managed to stagger on to Sgorr Ruadh. Those of you who know the geography of the corrie will no doubt be looking out later this month for the pix showing me on the top of Fuar Tholl as well...

Finally, I thought it'd be nice to revisit my slides from that time. Unfortunately I don't have a scanner. (Digression. I have thought about buying a dedicated slide scanner, and trying to scrape a living from converting slides to digital images as people inevitably move to digital. However, judging from my own experience it's only fuddy-duddy tight-arsed old gits that have slides, so that's probably a non-starter.) However I still have the slide projector which also does back-projection onto a built-in matt surface, and I've photographed that. Inevitably the quality is crap, but then so's my memory...

Now it's time to put everything back in the box for another 30 years.

Take care one and all.

ken

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filename=IMG_1406.JPG

filename=IMG_1407.JPG

filename=IMG_1408.JPG

filename=IMG_1405.JPG

filename=IMG_1403.JPG

From: "Dave Archibald" <darchibald@btinternet.com>
To: "K McKinlay" <kmckinlay@mac.com>,
<JoshReynolds@Tiscali.co.uk>
Cc: "Richard Stonehouse" <richard@rstonehouse.co.uk>,
"Alan Peck" <alan.peck1@breathe.com>
Subject: Re: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago
Date: Tue, 6 Mar 2007 08:58:47 -0000

Hi all

It is with some trepidation that I venture to disagree with the Samuel Pepys of our age, and I certainly don't have a diary to support it, only a set of related dates, but I would say that the Glen Shiel outing was in 1977, not 1976.

The memories say

1. I joined ICL in August 1974
2. I started hillwalking in June or July 1975, on Cruach Ardrain, the week after the famous Crook Inn to Peebles walk BTW The Crook Inn has recently closed, and a planning application to convert it to flats (presumably holiday accommodation for fishermen?) has been made.
3. I think the first time Richard & I did something beyond a day trip was a weekend in Fort William in September 1976, doing Ben Nevis via Carn Mor Dearg, while Ken & Alan were torturing Josh on Tower Ridge. The weekend ended with a traverse of the Aonach Eagach, which Tony, Richard & I found a wee bit more challenging than anything we had met before.
4. Winter 1976/77 was the time that we started to venture further away, with several weekends in Youth Hostels, plenty of snow, and some stupidly long days. The Ratagan/Loch Carron trip came at Easter 1977.

Good to hear from everyone again. Ken's photos from February are a reminder of just how good Scottish hill walking can be when the weather co-operates.

Cheers

Dave A

PS One other piece of evidence - I've just typed 'Calendar 1976' into Google, and found that April 8th was a Thursday in 1976.

Date: Wed, 07 Mar 2007 11:43:20 GMT
To: Dave Archibald <darchibald@btinternet.com>,
K McKinlay <kmckinlay@mac.com>
Cc: Richard Stonehouse <richard@rstonehouse.co.uk>,
Alan Peck <alan.peck1@breathe.com>
Subject: Re: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago
From: Josh Reynolds <JoshReynolds@Tiscali.co.uk>

Hi Dave,

on Tue, 6 Mar 2007 08:58:47 -0000 you wrote

> It is with some trepidation that I venture to disagree with the Samuel
> Pepys of our age, and I certainly don't have a diary to support it,
> only a
> set of related dates, but I would say that the Glen Shiel outing was in
> 1977, not 1976.

Feel free. I may be the whatever, but I'm a bit cross-eyed in my dotage.
In
my defence, I can only say that I copied from a transcription in which
the
year is not prominent - I had to poke around for it and found the wrong
one.

This clearly demonstrates the benefit of extensive cc'ing to potentially
interested parties - errors are picked up and corrected quickly.

Josh

From: K McKinlay <kmckinlay@mac.com>
Subject: Re: Photos I didn't take 25 years ago
Date: Mon, 16 Jul 2007 22:18:39 +0100
To: Dave Archibald <darchibald@btinternet.com>,
Dave MacLaren <dave@davemaclaren.me.uk>,
Alan Peck <alan.peck1@iclway.co.uk>, JoshReynolds@Tiscali.co.uk,
Richard Stonehouse <richard@rstonehouse.co.uk>

On 6 Mar 2007, at 08:58, Dave Archibald wrote:

> Ken's photos from February are a reminder of just how good Scottish
> hill walking can be when the weather co-operates.

I'm afraid I'm just as susceptible to flattery as I always have been.

Last week my local walking partner, Roger, suggested a Sunday trip to
Kintail, and I researched almost all options, for he has a habit of
postponing final decisions till the last moment when there's less
uncertainty about the weather. Come Sunday morning, when he picked me
up he offered 3 alternatives, one by An Teallach and a second by Loch

Quoich. So I picked the third option, the only one in Kintail as I understood it. We were off to pay our respects to the Five Sisters.

After February's experience we started at the east end: less height to climb, less steep (just!), easier ground (no knee-deep heather), and of course a lighter load in summer compared to winter. When we made the bealach in just over an hour, toiling under the blazing sun, I felt good, even if some young Californians, seeking to commune with their ancestors, started after us and then left us trailing in their wake. I gave up competing with young men years ago when even I couldn't sustain the pretence.

Before we started we had seen a pair already part-way up the slope. We caught up with them on Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe. Wahay! We left them sitting in the sun, and made our way to Sgurr Na Carnach, ...where I told Roger that was enough for me. Don't get me wrong, I was sure I'd get up Sgurr Fhuaran, but with only one vehicle we had already agreed to just go 'so far' and then retrace our steps rather than face the walk back up Glen Shiel on the busy A87. Looking at the map, going on would seem to involve another 300m of ascent there and back. Not another thousand feet please, not on top of what we'd have to retrace already. We could see another party already labouring slowly up the steep slope facing us. Roger wasn't too bothered - he's already done 2 Munro rounds, and both of us go out for an enjoyable day in the hills rather than ticking off a list. But it did look close.

Then I had my brainwave. Dump the sacks. Which we did, and easier going impelled us to Sgurr Fhuaran where we found the party in front still sitting there. When I went to take a photograph I found I'd left my glasses behind and on hearing my complaint, one of the girls enquired where I thought I had left them. We deprived them of a chance to gloat under the disguise of mock sympathy by explaining that we had left the sacks behind deliberately, whereupon they offered us some food. When the girl pulled out a hand of 4 or 5 bananas from her rucksack I reckoned they were really trying to lighten their own load. We also had to explain why we were going back rather than going on, at which point they told us they had hired a taxi that morning to take them up the glen from their hotel, and they were now on their way straight back to the hotel. We wished them well, and each party went their own way.

We weren't long on our way back down when we met a single walker ascending. Again we explained why we were retracing our steps, only to be told that he had a cold beer waiting for him in his caravan, and he had been dropped off that morning. We had barely said to goodbye to him when we met the first couple again. We explained blah, blah, blah. They said they had left their car at Shiel Bridge and taken the morning bus up the glen! By this time I was truly hacked off because everyone seemed to have arranged transport, everyone except us that is. And of course we couldn't get into company with them, and possibly get a lift back, because our sacks were on the previous summit... Some fucking brainwave that was. As we made our way back to the middle of the 3 Munro summits I remarked that we'd probably be written off as 'twa loons fae Aiberdeen' to which Roger added 'wi short hauns and deep pokets.'

Never that much of a walker, I think it's the first time ever that I've covered more than 5,000ft of ascent in a single outing, and when

I later checked our times against Mr Naismith's rule we seemed to have taken about half as long again as we should have. I suppose there is some consolation in that even though we might have given ourselves upwards of an extra 3 or 4 hundred metres of ascent, we didn't have to cover any greater distance than had we completed the traverse, and we were on the tops for the best part of the day (in more ways than one...).

Of course the purists will say that we didn't 'do' the traverse, to which I can only point out that neither do those parties who miss out the two westerly 'sisters' because they're not Munros.

All of the previous is meant to explain why the views at the beginning and end of

<http://web.mac.com/kmckinlay/iWeb/kintail/>

look strangely similar, just taken in different light.

Was it like this 30 years ago?

ken

filename=_MG_1000.jpg