Red Rope

SCOTLAND

SPEAN BRIDGE

FEB 23 – 1 MARCH 2020



Ivy Cottage

Luxurious accommodation with spectacular views

Adventurers:

Sarah Bates - Trip Organiser
Brian Greer - Trip Treasurer
Becky Bates - Accommodation
John Aldous - Training Coordinator
Uta Praekelt
Pete Watson
Simon Skerrit
Damien Connor
Glyn Rowlands
Paul Davidson
Lynne Newark





Becky

Most years I would be disappointed by soft snow heralding the end of Munro ambitions but at the end of this wettest of wet winters any snow was most welcome. We enjoyed ploughing through it, sliding down it, climbing up it (tho I need to practise my front pointing) and just being in snow. I couldn't recall all the words to a snow song but made up new ones as I stumbled along.
Happy Days.





Damien

Sauntering up Glen Gloy - not Loy - and seeing three stags up close. Not quite getting to the CIC Hut but rewarded with the wonder of the ice and snow covering the north face buttresses and gullies. Lovely food and company.





Pete

I've no experience of snowy mountain walking and have been wary of it. I borrowed boots and an ice axe (thanks to Glyn and Jake), went to the training on Stob Ban and climbed Beinn Bhan. Brilliant! Just to experience white everywhere. And have fun too. I'd like to thank Lupine for the training but also particularly the Red Ropers who helped me find my winter feet.







Uta

It was a Great week, but my highlight was the last day - Fort William Parkrun, followed by a train ride up to Mallaig on the Hogwarts Express. After getting cold feet and chickening out half way up the mountain on two occasions, it was something I could do. It was the most scenic parkrun ever, an “undulating“ route on forest trails at the foot of Oonach Mor. I think Glyn enjoyed it too, thanks for coming along!





John

Lochaber didn't disappoint. Days stomping through deep snow, sometimes necessitating swimming strokes to escape. An encounter with an enraged farmer screaming "the cows will kill you" there were no cows. Amazing panoramas of white mountains under azure blue skies rapidly lost in near blizzard conditions. Adventures when Red Rope had the hill to themselves and not a footprint to be found in the pristine snow. All this and the optimistic signs of spring in the glens. As ever it felt like a privilege to be in such a beautiful environment and one I long to return to.





Lynne





For me the beauty of the trip was in the surroundings: the velvety silence at night, the brilliant stars when clear, the shining mountains blending with the sky, the crisp clean air laden with snow breath. And the wildlife: a stag pausing to look at me through whirling snow, a big dog fox racing across the hillside, dippers on the river. And the ponies in their squelching wet field who appreciated a carrot now and then.



Simon



Snow-covered Ben Nevis under a clear blue sky was the view that greeted me upon arrival at Ivy Cottage. I took that as a good omen!

Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin (1105m) via Meall Cian Dearg on a beautiful sunny (most of the time) day with Brian had the added challenge of ice axe and crampons bouncing off the snow, instead of biting into it. The slippery descent was augmented by amazing views of the Grey Corries as the sun began to get low.

My friends all think I am mad when I tell them stories about sandwiches that freeze as you are eating them but for me that is the joy of what we do and I would not have it any other way!

Thank you to you all for making the trip what it was.

I look forward to the next one.

Another portion of Swiss roll custard surprise, anyone?

Brian

Lovely to back in Ivy Cottage with the luxury of towels, sheets and heating. Also back to deep soft snow, over ambitious route cards and a long list of 'nearly got there' summits. Still a great week and the food just gets better every time. Highlights were nearly getting up Sgriodain, nearly getting up Saobhaidd, nearly walking the Gualainn Caillich ridge and nearly getting up Bein Bahn.





We may actually have got up that last one, but nobody was very sure given the conditions. Anyway, Glynn said we were at the top so we probably were. I'm sure the view was wonderful but the feeling of elation at the conquest was tempered by not being able to see the ground never mind the view and the unrelenting blast of jet powered snow in the air. Loved it!

Thanks to everybody for making it such a great week - despite the 'nearlys'

Sarah





It was really great to be in the snow again after missing last year. A slight shame we couldn't get higher up due to avalanche risk and the deep soft snow which made for very slow-going. HOWEVER, that same soft snow, and strong winds up high, led to dramatic clouds of spindrift which were much better appreciated from below, and to sculpted forms beautiful to behold. Lupine Adventure led us to some suitably steep snowy slopes above Glen Nevis where we had fun learning and practising winter skills. The company and the cottage were great too!

Glyn

After a 7 year break I arrived at Ivy Cottage with some trepidation. But everything about the trip was wonderful: the company, the accommodation, the food, the organisation and the walking. So thank you to everyone.

The conditions were very challenging, but I certainly gained confidence from being able to cope with the difficult conditions. For those who ventured higher, I think we did well in carefully planning routes, making clear decisions on when to turn back, when the visibility and wind did deteriorate.

I think it was really great to have a day's training in winter skills. As the trainers themselves point out, even lots of previous experience does not stop you making mistakes, so it is always good to refresh your skills.

Almost impossible to describe, but as others have commented, we encountered some amazing snow conditions and shapes – and cornices where they shouldn't be.







Glyn

Thursday 27th February 2020

I look out the window. There is a thin layer of snow on the ground outside Ivy Cottage. The fir tree plantation on the hillside opposite has turned a muted grey green.

There is a nervous flutter of butterflies in my stomach – what if we can't get out today, but the temperature is just above freezing.

Soon after we are on our way. We begin our walk in the sunshine up from Loch Leven. As we climb the grass, bracken and heather disappear; as the snow turns from slushy patches to deep, powdery and all encompassing. As we head up onto the West shoulder of Mam na Gualainn, the spindrift picks up. I have to stop to put on my goggles. If this doesn't relent, we will have to turn back.





But after a short pause we continue. The going gets slower as we rise. The snow now has a strange orange tint thanks to the goggles. The world closes in to a increasingly diminished field of vision. We passed wonderful wind sculptured snow shapes, their size magnified to be huge and daunting in the flat light. We pick our way carefully to avoid the deepest snow. Shorter and shorter become the distances it is possible to cover, all thought of a complete traverse of the mountain abandoned. Near the summit a line of fence posts, only occasionally poke out of the snow. For the only day of the trip, we actually get to see and touch a summit trig point. Occasional glimpses back down through the clearing of cloud and spindrift, show the sun glittering a silver pink light reflecting off Loch Leven below, in contrast to the black of fir forests on the lower slopes and the deep caked white of every mountain we can see.

It is for days such as these that I crave, when I return each winter to the mountains of the Scottish Highlands.

Winter Skills Training

Red Rope with Lupine Adventure Co-op

footwork

crampon techniques

ice axe arrest

avalanche assessment

self belay

movement skills

conservation





