

## SOME NOTES ON A WALKING HOLIDAY IN THE HIGHLANDS.

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If you want to walk in the Highlands go in late May or early June. If you must go at any other time between June and September make a tin of "Flit" the first item in your equipment. That was one of the things we learnt on a walking tour last summer from Braemar to Skye.

The subject of equipment is the most important where everything has to be carried. A good deal of thought was given to it and on our return we decided that we should not alter it for another trip. Three is the best number to distribute the load amongst, and we bought a tent 9" x 6" which slept three comfortably and also held our rucksacks under cover. This tent weighed 9 lbs. complete. For cooking we had a pocket Primus, an aluminium mess-tin which included a frying-pan and saucepan, and a special flat aluminium kettle, and with these our cook worked wonders. For personal use each man had a bakelite mug and porringer, and knife, fork and spoon. Bedding gave us a good deal of thought, as blankets were too heavy, and in the end each had a down sleeping bag weighing 2½ lbs. and a very light ground sheet weighing 1 lb. which would also have served as a cape had it been required. There are differing opinions on the best type of rucksack, but we all carried Bergans and had no reason to regret the choice, as our loads were fairly heavy. One rucksack was not a genuine Bergan but an imitation, and was apparently not entirely satisfactory as its owner called it various uncomplimentary names.

Theoretically each load should have been about 21 lbs., but with food for two days and spare clothing to taste it worked out at rather more than that. Footgear is also a matter of individual choice but two of us preferred heavy walking shoes. The third man chose golf shoes with crepe rubber soles and regretted it. For wear in camp we carried very light rubber shoes which were a great boon.

Food is somewhat of a problem; on the route we followed we sometimes had to carry supplies for two-and-a-

half days. One has to rely to a great extent on tinned food but this is heavy, and bacon, sliced ham, and sausages were got wherever possible. There were few places where we could get fresh milk, but tinned milk could be obtained anywhere. Our great standby was oatmeal, as a handful of oatmeal will make a large helping of porridge for three. One useful hint is to get jean bags made with draw-strings for carrying oatmeal, tea, and sugar. For the benefit of the men, jean is a very finely woven cotton cloth which is impermeable to tea and sugar.

We chose Braemar as a starting point, but it is a difficult place to get back to by train, so we left the car at Blairgowrie where we camped, and went on to Braemar next morning by bus. From Braemar there is a choice of routes to Aviemore: by the Larig Ghru path which finds its way between the two great masses of the Cairngorms: over Cairn Toul and Braeriach; or over Ben Macdhui and Cairngorm. We chose the last route and decide that the Cairngorms as a group are more effective scenically below than at close quarters, except possibly the ridge between Ben Macdhui and Cairngorm. For those who want to spend two days on the journey there are good camping sites just above Luibeg, and for non-campers accommodation can be obtained at the game-keeper's house. It was on the north side of the Cairngorms that we made the great discovery, after a sleepless night, that "Flit" sprayed in the tent not only kills the midges already inside but keeps all the others out, and "Flit" sprayed over the face and hands makes cooking and eating outside possible, though tasty.

From Aviemore various cross-country routes to Fort Augustus can be worked out and from there it is a pleasant break to sail up on the little steamer to Drumnadrochit. Having arrived there, there is an endless variety of routes to the West coast by the glens which run more or less east and west. We chose Glen Affric, which has considerable justification for its claim to being Scotland's loveliest glen. No supplies can be obtained between Tomich and Invershiel so one must load up at Tomich, but the country is well worth it. Tomich is rather off the route but must be visited, as the only food available in Cannich is in liquid form. At Invershiel one has reached the West coast but we went on via Dornie—where there is an extremely hospitable garage

known to some of our members—to Kyle of Lochalsh and so over the ferry to Skye, whose glorious peaks had been calling us all the way from Dornie. By the way, if time permits and the weather has not been too dry, a detour can be made to the Falls of Glomach, where the burn drops 700 feet in one clear leap.

Skye was desperately hot and I could raise no enthusiasm in my companions for climbing. We did meet one member of the M.A.M. on Skye, but he was driving round and round the island at very high speed in his car to get away from the horse-flies.

Skye is a place which it is difficult to leave, but time pressed and we had to return to Kyle of Lochalsh to catch the train for Blairgowrie—and from the point of view of scenery that train journey is well worth doing.