

## TORRIDON—WHITSUNTIDE, 1959

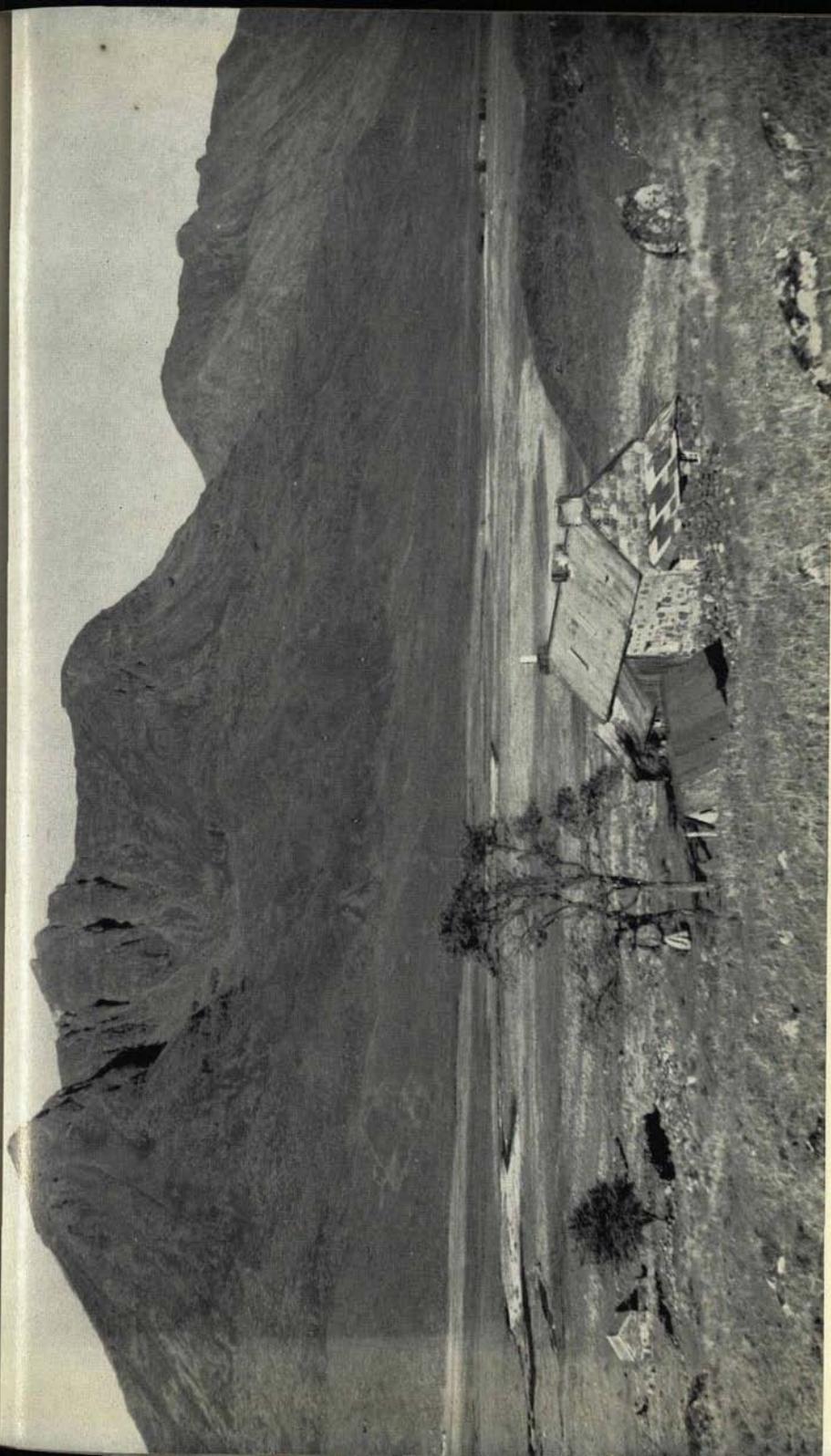
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In the dim and distant past a Presidential holiday (of one month's duration with Alpine season to follow) was held at Loch Maree Hotel and the inevitable lecture which followed interested one young member so much that maps were purchased, if only to sort out such magical names as Ben Eighe and An Teallach. Eventually the exciting journey to Western Ross was made.

It was therefore with great interest that news was received of the proposed Whitsuntide meet and that the Scottish activities of the M.A.M. were to be extended beyond the usual visits to Fort William and Glen Brittle. One feels that most people in the course of their mountain careers must get to know these districts, but this is not the case with the more remote mountains of the North West. Wester Ross has its limitations for winter climbing, but for summer scrambling it is probably supreme, and with rock climbing of a high order becoming available there is no finer district in these isles. One may speak of Skye with bated breath but it cannot be denied that the Coire Lagan track becomes wider and wetter every year, whilst many of the Torridon hills can be reached and ascended without setting foot on bog. Possibly the appreciably lower rainfall accounts for this!

Lochs Duich and Hourn (some distance to the South) have the reputation of being the finest West Coast inlets, but they are both rather narrow and confined by the surrounding mountains and anyone who has lived beside Loch Torridon will probably prefer its more open character and fine distant views. Gruinard Bay is unique for its colouring and Loch Maree is as lovely as an inland loch as anywhere else of its kind.

Liathach, rising from sea level and being exceptionally narrow throughout its length, is the steepest mountain in the country. Others nearby are only a little less so and where there are cliffs such as those overlooking Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Corrie na Caime and Toll an Lochain the scenery is not surpassed anywhere. Distances from centres vary from moderate to considerable but one has to judge one's powers more from the character of the ground to be covered than the actual distance. Slioch (from Kinlochewe) may be cited as a fairish walk but quite easy as the whole structure is of sandstone, but Ben Eighe on the far side of the valley has a disintegrating quartzite ridge which is both long and tiring, and as one has to watch every step the traverse of its ridge is a long expedition.



*Beinn Dearg Mhor and Shenavall*

Stuart Hutchinson

The party at Whitsuntide numbered twenty-six and consisted of fifteen members, nine wives and guests, and two children. All but four camped and the camp site near Fasag was all that one could wish for. The others had very satisfactory cottage accommodation in the village of Annat with glorious views overlooking Loch Torridon and across to Ben Alligin and Liathach. The weather was quite exceptional and in fact the sun was not obscured until the Potteries were approached on the return journey, creating a very different and unpleasant aspect. In consequence sore faces and limbs were the order of the day and the fact that further south the weather was quite indifferent caused us no concern whatever. The writer took his twelve foot caravan (Bedford Utilabrake towing vehicle) and it is worth mentioning that the long journey from Surrey was entirely successful.

Liathach, Ben Alligin, Ben Eighe, Slioch, Ben Damh and Ben na h-Eaglaise were ascended and traversed by large and small parties, and if this list may not seem impressive it was sufficient to make the whole party (with one exception) feel the need of an off day—the exception being a West Midland member in his sixty-first year and thirty-second year of M.A.M. membership. The coast walks from Inver Alligin to Diabeg and on to Craig were most enjoyable and almost as strenuous as anything the mountains had to offer. Inverewe Gardens were also a pleasant diversion.

The most notable excursion was one of three days during the course of which Helen Hartley, Stuart Hutchinson and Trevor Savage, saw and spoke to no other person. The twenty square miles of country lying roughly between Poolewe and Dundonnell has only two normally occupied dwellings, one at Achneigie in the North East and the other at Carnmore to the centre. A disused barn at Carnmore provided very adequate accommodation for our members on their first night, whilst the second at the derelict farm of Shenavall proved to be even more luxurious, although here there are broken panes in the roof lights. As climbers are allowed access during the spring months possibly the various clubs might get together with a view to keeping the building water tight. Both Carnmore and Shenavall have magnificent situations and thanks are due to the Cambridge Mountaineering Club who have done so much in opening up the district for serious rock climbing in addition to publishing the recent guide. The district has unlimited possibilities, and an intriguing feature is that the Ordnance maps are wholly inaccurate both in regard to heights of mountains and general levels, and that the rivers, if in spate, may prove to be the biggest problem of the day.

The party left their car at Kernsary some four miles from Poolewe and carried their loads over the almost trackless moor for eight miles to Carnmore. This proved to be the most tiring part of their journey but in the afternoon they were sufficiently energetic to climb A'Mhaighdean by a series of broken ribs and steep gullies from Gorm Loch Mor. This is a magnificent gneiss mountain (3,100 feet, and not as shown on the map) and the map quite fails to show the large cliff extent on the northern side. In fact the only easy route is from the east, but this involves a shockingly long walk from either Kinlochewe or Dundonnell. A descent was made to the North West to pick up the track which was to be ascended the following morning prior to climbing Ben Dearg Mhor, another fine rock mountain really more accessible from Shenavall. On the third day the well known round of An Teallach was completed before descending to Dundonnell where transport had been arranged.

This was a very fine performance, carried out exactly to programme and apparently without difficulty apart from the allocation of loads before starting out. Rumour has it that they were sent to Dingwall for weighing and while confirmation of this is not available it is certain that Stuart and Trevor have the most enormous appetites (as a result of which the whole district ran short of bread later in the week), and as the diet was strictly "balanced" one fears that the supposedly weaker member of the party carried far more than her share. It was ascertained afterwards that instead of her usual hot water bottle she was given each night something far more effective and warmth-giving so that eventually her companions were forgiven, despite their deficiencies and refusal to eat mushroom soup.



The meet had such wonderful weather and could hardly have been other than a success. The interest shown, as indicated by the number attending, should make it possible for further meets during the Whitsuntide pre-midge period. At any rate there are plenty of fields to conquer either in Wester Ross or elsewhere in Scotland.