

A Cairngorm Diary
24th -29th July, 1932
Written 'en route' by
James Nicoll Kerr Henderson (1908-1989)

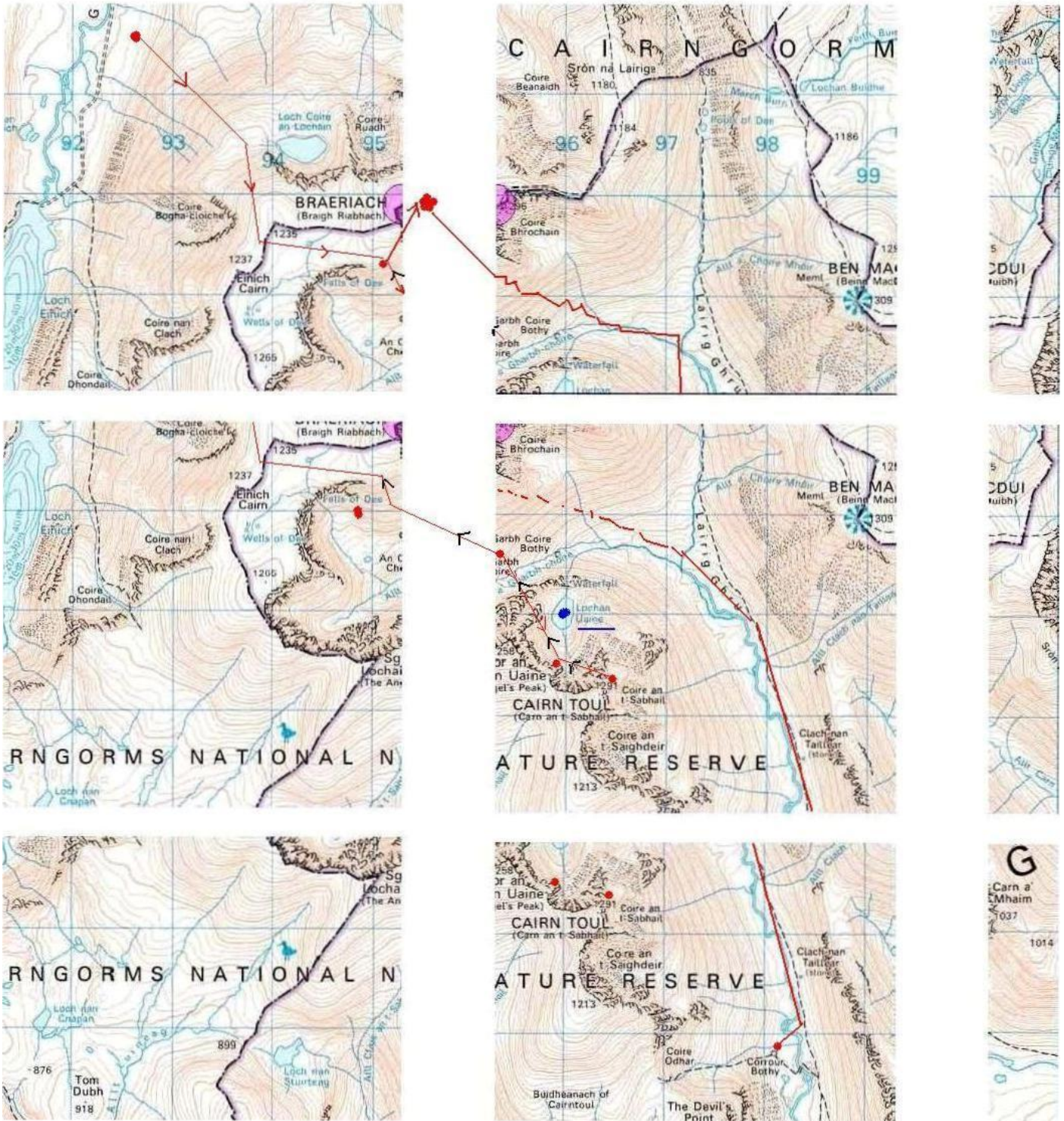
Monday, 25th July, 1932

Wakened at 7.40 a.m. by JJ asking me to go for water - the porridge are getting too thick. However breakfast was a great success, as was the following shave using a biscuit tin lid for a mirror. About 10.30 a.m., we swept the bothy, shouldered our rucksacks and set out for the head of the glen. There we beheld Loch Einich looking dark but transparent and walled in by huge peaks of rock. Our path now rose steeply South-East over the shoulder of Braeriach and by noon, when we looked back to the North-West, we were rewarded for our climb by magnificent views of Glen Einich and Rothiemurchus Forest beyond. Needless to say, the camera was in full operation. As we climbed, our packs became heavier and our stomachs lighter, until we reached Corrie Garbh about 2 p.m. and 4000 feet above sea level.



Corrie Gharbe on Brae Riach from Cairn Toul

Here we decided to have lunch. Gosh it was cold! But hot tomato soup, cold meat and peas and then fruit salad for dessert soon made things better. Thereafter we decided to dump our rucksacks at this point for later collection. So, having tied a white handkerchief to each of them, we headed off for Angel Peak and Cairn Toul, 3950 and 4241 feet respectively.



Our way lay eastwards, round the vast Corries which separate Cairn Toul and Braeriach, up Angel Peak, down the other side and then up Cairn Toul. As we were on a plateau of 4000 feet, the peaks were easy of access but oh! they were stony! Huge boulders which we had to mount in much the same way as you climb a Stair.



Cairn Toul and Ben MacDhuie from Angel Peak

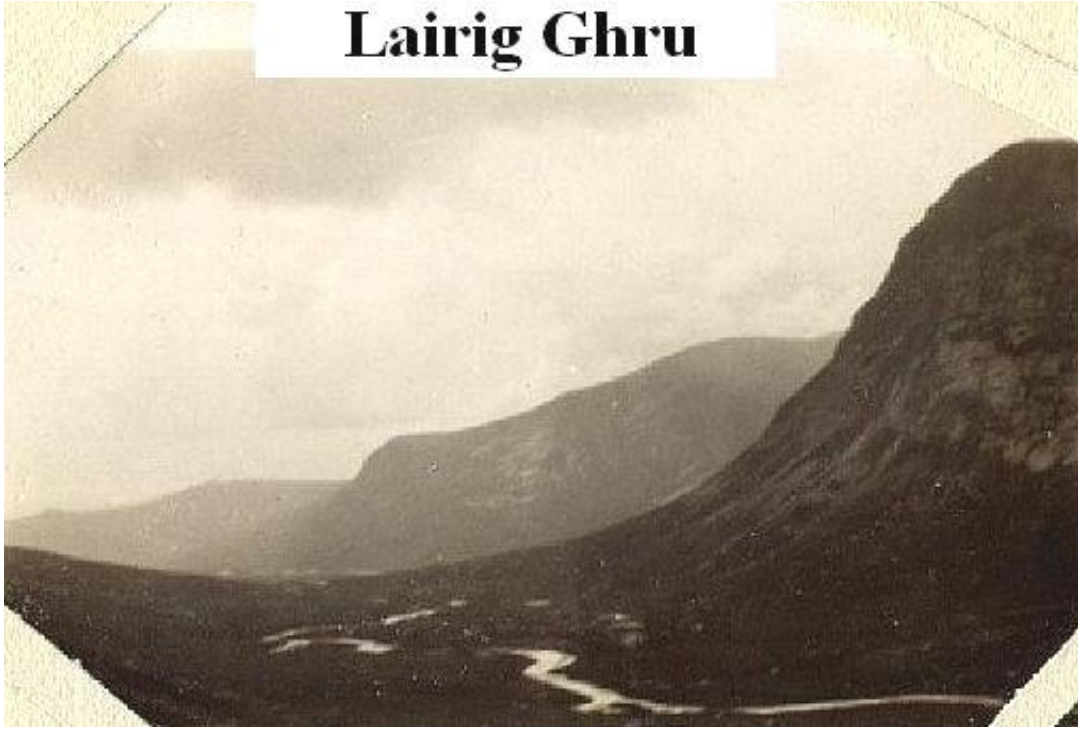
The peaks afforded us with a glorious view of the Corries, chiefly An Choire Garbh. The mist was rising out of it like steam from a gigantic cauldron, snow made all sorts of fanciful shapes in the clefts (including a perfect map of Australia!), while the water from the Wells of Dee (source of the River Dee) hurtled down a sheer precipice to a depth of about 1500 feet -the height of Dumyat! Cairn Toul gave us a magnificent view of Corrie Bhrochain - another wild, rugged, unscalable mass, carrying no sign of any life at all.



Corrie Brochain

Here also we had a fine view of the Lairig Ghru being drained by the Dee and containing our target bothy and shelter for the coming night.

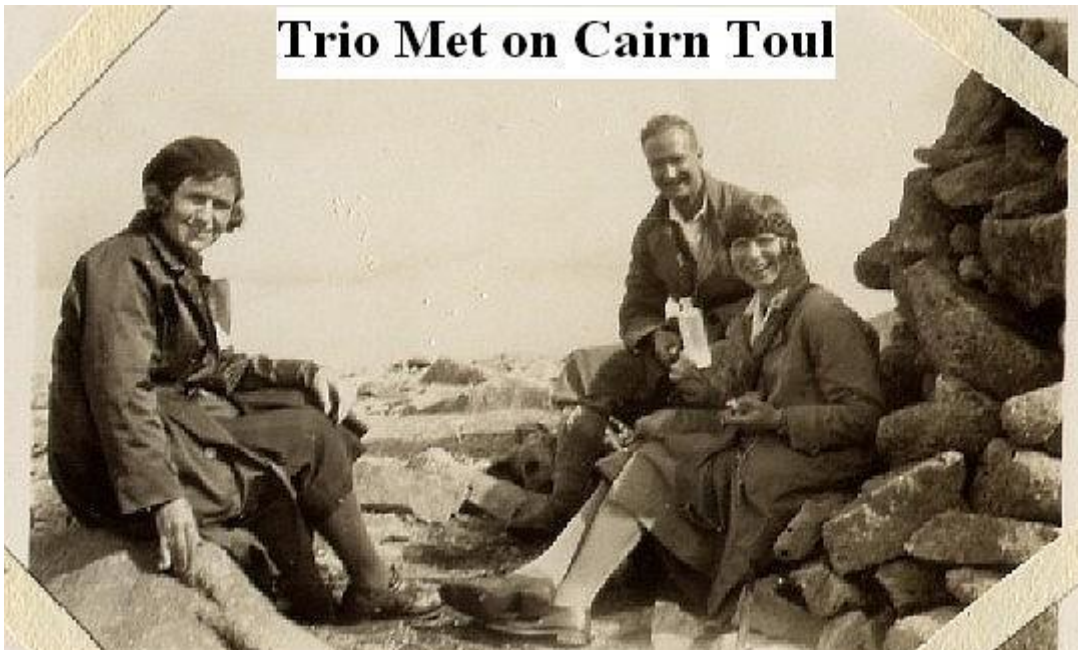
Lairig Ghru



Just over the pass to the North-East, and towering high above it, lay Ben MacDhui (4296 feet) and North-North-East behind it lay Cairn Gorm (4084 feet) - our objectives of the morrow.

On Cairn Toul we met up with the two ladies and a gentleman who had been tailing us all day from Glen Einich. We duly took photographs to record the meeting before descending thence back to our packs below.

Trio Met on Cairn Toul



Having secured our rucksacks without difficulty, we now went round the North-West ridge of Corrie Gharbh, passed the Wells of Dee



Brae Riach from The Wells of Dee

and climbed the easy remaining ascent to the Cairn of Braeriach (4248 feet)... more, wonderfully rugged, grandeur, tempered by peaceful vistas... .. and it was here that we had a gorgeous sight of a rainbow end in the Lairig far below,



Rainbow with Ben MacDhui

while the sight of Loch an Uaine nestling in the bosom of Cairn Toul and spilling water over the side in the shape of a waterfall into the glen below was unforgettable. Really these hills and glens are gripping with

their foregrounds of placid lochs, plunging waterfalls, rushing torrents and delicate tints adding their influence to the constantly changing scenic tones caused by the subtle effects of sun, mist and cloud. All within a background of rugged grandeur - absolutely invincible!

By now it was 6 p.m. and tea was indicated but alas no water in die vicinity. Accordingly, we decided to scramble down the side of Corrie Bhrochain for 1000 feet by way of loose sand and very stiff rocks. It was sore work and a bit dangerous, but thrilling and necessary... and worthwhile too as we startled a dozen red deer on the way.. .the first we'd seen. Shortly after 7 p.m. we reached a convenient pool and drank our fill as we ravenously did justice to tinned salmon and a loaf of 'Bermaline' malt bread. We had felt dead tired before eating and drinking but this energising, coupled with a wash, made us fighting fit again and at about 8.30 pm. we set out on the remainder of our scramble into the Lairig Ghru 2000 feet far below. Here we found a network of streams and boggy ground a real slog and very tiring to our weary limbs. But we plodded on to reach Corrour Bothy about 10.15 p.m. We were not alone in our glory as six Dundonians were there as well to share the hikers' haven with us.



Corrour Bothy & Three Lads from Dundee

After partaking of the usual supper and exchanging questions and answers with our fellow lodgers, we washed (feet too!) and settled down to our diaries about 11.30 p.m. with the lantern hanging in the window above us to guide any other wanderer to safe harbour. Yes, of course we remembered to steep the meal before retiring... despite having to scrape half of it off the floor when JJ tripped and spilled the pot. It's after midnight before I crawl into 'bed' - been a great day climatically and in so many other ways. I think of Chapman's Homer - 'Much have I travelled in the realms of' Tomorrow we mean to cross the Lairig and climb Ben MacDhui, thence Northward to Cairn Gorm and descend by continuing North to rest at a bothy called '**Ryvoan**'. (*Later the word on which my parents based the name of their first house, 'Revoan'*)

It's a great life, full of solitude and grandeur and sweet content. There are no worries except physical ones and it is realised here in these mountains, if anywhere, just how frail man is! Ah, well! Sleep! I wonder if all my loved ones are abed and how they've fared today?