

## The Kishorn Story

Many years ago, before I even knew the Mad Moufflon was concealed in the person of a mate at work, the mate and I went in a party of 4 to stay in a borrowed cottage by Loch Kishorn in the north west of Scotland. It was the first week of October. We arrived very late at night, so popped to the nearest village for shopping the next day. Roddy the butcher sold us lots of goodies, and we picked up other basic staples in the village store.

One of our party was a keen walker and had brought Ordnance Survey maps of the area. We'd been advised to see Bealach na Bà, which we were told was the highest metalled road in Britain. This pass started only a few miles from the cottage and led to the hamlet of Applecross, where the pub was highly recommended. Looking at the map, there was a footpath marked starting near Loch Toscaig, crossing the southern tip of the Applecross peninsula, then returning along the coast. A circular walk of about 7 miles. So on the first decent day of the week, we set off for Applecross.

The cottage had a very old electric cooking stove, with a primitive oven timer that seemed to function. So thinking we might be a bit late back, we cobbled together a casserole with the beef we'd bought and shoved it in the oven with the timer set for 2 hours starting late afternoon, so the meal would start cooking in good time.

All went really well, the scenery over the pass was terrifyingly spectacular, and the pub lunch and pint every bit as good as billed. Soon after 1pm, we were setting off on our walk. The first three miles followed a line of telegraph poles, which served a cottage on the coast at the turn round point. As we crested the hill and walked down towards the building perched above the shore we had lovely views of Loch Carron stretching ahead of us. We followed the path as it wended parallel with the coast but a fair way above the loch, making good time. At first. Then the path got less distinct, and started to meander more. It rained for a time. We kept going, keeping the water on our left, but progress got more and more difficult. There were streams cutting the slope with deep ravines that meant we had to detour upwards to get across. Then we couldn't find the path onwards and stumbled into boggy ground. Quite soon, we realised we were not going to get back to the car before dark. So rather than risk the attempt, we found a patch of dry rock and got ready to sit out the night. We were not very well prepared, we had just about adequate clothing, but only a Mars bar between us by way of sustenance. We solemnly divvied up the chocolate as darkness fell.

It was a long night. A long rather cold night. We could see the lights of fishing boats on the loch below us, and even heard indistinct snatches of voices. But as we weren't in any real danger we did not try to attract attention. We did know enough to realise that it was probably important to stay awake.

We learnt quite a lot that night. We learnt that the temperature drops markedly when the sky clears, and that clouds are good unless they rain. We learnt that the sun does not rise as early as you might think. The rest of the gang learnt that I could talk *all* night, so they probably garnered more than was strictly necessary about my family history.

When the sun finally deigned to raise its sluggardly head, we uncramped ourselves from the rock and trudged on back to the car – it took almost 5 hours. We realised why the path had been difficult to find when we came across the cottages it served, derelict and roofless, we had been following sheep tracks. We were mightily relieved when the car came into sight. I don't think I've ever seen the Moufflon move so fast as then – he knew there was a new packet of fags on the dashboard and those he had with him had got soaked in the first rain.

We got back to the cottage, shrammed. Too cold to eat very much, we had a bowl of soup then crashed into our respective pits for the afternoon. When we woke, early evening, there was a delicious savoury smell wafting through the cottage. The oven timer was a 12 hour repeater! The meal had cooked in the early evening as planned, then again the next morning and was now heating through again. And it was delicious.

We subsequently discovered that OS mapping in Scotland is subtly different, a public footpath on an OS map of England is pretty much bound to exist, not so north of the border. And when I bought the map sheet for the same area on a later holiday (the Moufflon and I sometimes go back for anniversaries of the trip), the path along the coast was no longer shown.