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With compliments

CHAPTER NEWS

Highlands & Islands

A total of 30 people turned out for the Aonachmor day trip on Saturday 13th October including a lively group of planning students from Heriot Watt. The ascent of the mountain began on Gondola cable cars continuing in more conventional fashion to the peak. There was a touch of drama later in the day when the Chapter Convenor failed to turn up for the last gondola back down the hill. The panic died down when he appeared at the base station a couple of hours later claiming to have followed an alternative descent with a lone hillwalker. Rumour has it that he lost his way and was walking around in circles on the Aonach-Mor ridge in the mist.

Forthcoming Chapter events include a ten pin bowling night at R.A.F. Lossiemouth on 12th January. An evening meeting has also been arranged for 26th February in Inverness when the topic of discussion will be 'aspects of Traffic Calming'. With 1991 approaching the Chapter elections are upon us again. Nominations for the office bearers are being invited before 14th December. Local members should look out for the current issue of the Chapter newsletter 'Headlines' for further details.

Grampian

Visit to Bennachie
Sunday 23rd September

Bennachie may not be the highest mountain in Grampian but it is certainly one of the best known and climbed. Its striking form and Iron Age summit fort makes it a prominent landmark and its closeness to Aberdeen assures its continuing popularity. The opportunity to walk it in the company of a recognised authority on its history and wildlife was therefore eagerly accepted by the Grampian Chapter.

The original plan was to walk the newly opened section of the West Gordon Way, a joint initiative between the District Council and the Forestry Commission. The late September weather proved to be so wet, however, that

an alternative shorter walk was attempted which gave the 20 strong party an opportunity to study in detail a smaller section of the hill. In the company of James McKay, a founder member of the conservation group known as the Baillies of Bennachie, the afternoon allowed those present to question our guide on the various aspects of the hill, ranging from flora and fauna to its social history.

Of particular interest were the ruined remains of a group of over 30 cottages - The Colony - where between 1800 and 1850 land hungry pioneers colonised the common land on the slopes of the hill and worked there, dyking and crofting. In 1859, nine lairds persuaded the Court of Session to divide the common between them and the colonists subsequently became tenants, suffered steeply rising costs and many were evicted. The last died in his croft in 1939.

Discussion also centred around the recent afforestation schemes on the hill and the general environmental measures required to keep in check visitor pressure on what for many people is their own local "popular mountain area".

Thanks are due to James McKay for an informative guided walk and also to Sheila Young for the excellent homebaking which was greatly appreciated by all on such a wet day.

(John Cairnie,
Gordon District Council)

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**GRAMPIAN CHAPTER
MEMBERS AT
BENNACHIE IN THE
RAIN!**

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