

JONATHAN JAMIESON

OUTDOOR JOURNAL

VOLUME III: 2017

*Far away and o'er the moor,
Morar waits for a boat that saileth,
Far away down Lowland way,
I dream the dream I learned, lad.*

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Preface

In many respects 2017 has been a great year. I finished my thesis, passed my viva and moved south of the border to start a new job. Unfortunately, the outdoor trips dried up after March so the journal this year is a thin edition. During the long summer in Dumfries I was out unicycling, running and mountain biking regularly but the trips were routine and relatively short. A sense of adventure is necessary to make it enjoyable for me to write and for you to read about an expedition. However, I do regret not including a few of the trips.

The outlook for 2018 is positive. The final entry this year recorded my first trip on the new 36" road unicycle I bought at the end of November. Bristol has plenty of good routes and Wales is only a stone's throw away. A hiking trip with colleagues has been organised for mid-January to climb Pen y Fan so plans are already forming.

Finally, it was a great pleasure to learn another dominguero entered the world this year. Bruno and his handsome crop of hair was born to David and Margit on St Andrew's day. Fatherhood (and my relocation) has temporarily curtailed regular dominguero trips but in only a few years there will be an energetic little boy keen to explore the Scottish wilderness and join the fun. The future is bright.

Barrs Hill – searching for a fort

1st January 2017

SINCE I DIDN'T STAY UP TO WELCOME in the New Year I was up bright and early for my morning run. Over the Christmas holidays I had been trying to run every morning in preparation for the Loch Katrine marathon in March. Today I had a special, slightly longer route instead of my standard, shorter jaunts. While looking at a previous track plotted on an OS map I noticed that a fort was marked on the top of a nearby hill. Of course, I could have searched online, but where is the fun in that?

Statistics	
Distance	17.74 km
Time	2h:15m
Average Speed	7.9 km/h
Elevation	265 m
Min. Altitude	17 m
Max. Attitude	213 m

A fine start to the year.



I ran along the cycle path towards Heathhall in the most glorious winter sunshine, there wasn't a single cloud in the sky and the air was cool and crisp. I followed the path and then the road to Tinwald. After scaring a few sheep on the final, gentle ascent to the summit I was at the top. There are no fort structures left but three, concentric, oval ramparts are clearly defined in places. The fourth, mentioned in a 1963 survey by Feachem, no longer remains, having been ploughed away.

There aren't any big hills in Dumfries and Galloway but the landscape has many undulations. On a clear day like this one, when you do get a little bit of height you are afforded a brilliant view for miles around. I spun around with the camera and described my surroundings but most of the narration was drowned out by wind noise. There was only a gentle breeze a few metres below the summit but the top was catching the wind so I decided to have a quick bite to eat and start the run home. I went back the way I come because a circular route would have greatly increased the distance... and the year has only just begun!

In south-west Scotland 'barr' means 'hill', so it's really called *Hills hill*!.



Straight into the countryside.

21st January 2017*West End to Dumgoyne – with the Devil's Pulpit*

THE KELVIN WALKWAY from Glasgow to Milngavie is a favourite running route. A minute's run from my flat and I am on the path by the river Kelvin and after 20 minutes or so the city is left behind. I was a little worried about the state of the path: even though there hadn't been too much rain it can get very muddy. In the end the waterproof socks I put on were not put up to much of a test but they did keep my feet nice and warm. The selfie-stick and camera stayed in my bag because there was heavy fog for nearly the entire route; only Mugdock Country park was clear.

Statistics	
Distance	24.54 km
Time	2h:41m
Average Speed	9.1 km/h
Elevation	234 m
Min. Altitude	25 m
Max. Altitude	139 m

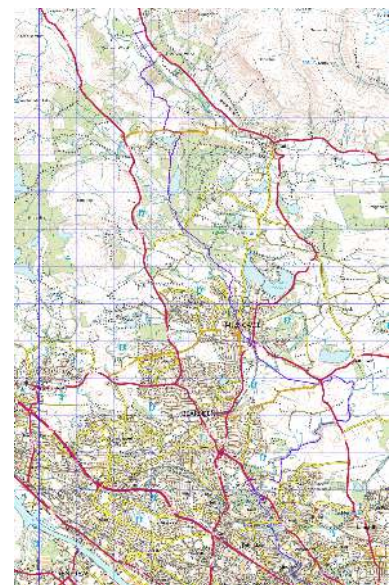
A good training run!



When I got to Milngavie I stopped at the Barnardo's charity shop for a short break and found a bargain: a 1984 guide to The West Highland Way by Robert Aitken. My dad did the route around this time with friends from university and is considering doing it again this year. We are both interested in the history of the route and how it has developed so for £1.49 it was a great find!

After the little bit of retail therapy I continued running into Mugdock Country Park. Following The West Highland Way I was soon at Craigallian Loch where I was hoping to get a nice picture of Dumgoyne but it was obscured by the fog. Despite the cloudy weather it was great to see so many people out, I think Mugdock was the busiest I had ever seen it. I had called my sister, Emma, in Milngavie and gave her an estimated time of arrival at the Glen-goyne Car Park next to Dumgoyne. She timed her arrival by car perfectly because we both arrived at the same time and I jumped in the car. Emma wanted to try some photography at the Devil's Pulpit which is nearby. I believe the plan is to take four photos from each season. Normally I have my wetsuit when visiting Finnich Glen but this time my waterproof socks were the only concessions to the cold water. I think the bystanders thought I was mad when I waded in!

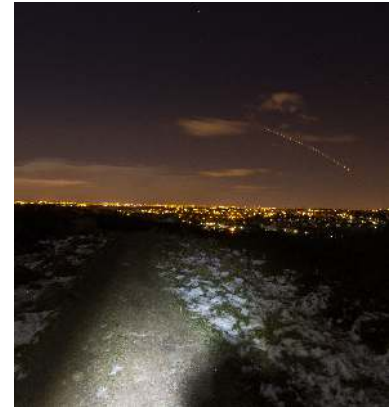
A photo taken by Emma of the Devil's Pulpit.



Struggling to fit it on the map!

22nd January 2017*Mugdock run – including toastie time*

TWO RUNS IN ONE WEEKEND, marathon fever has truly taken over! Ross and I went to back to Mugdock for the umpteenth time to have a little run round the forest. There was a time when we did this weekly after work but we fell out of the routine. After parking at the Drumclog Moor Car Park, instead of following the path into the forest we ran up the path next to the reservoir and did the little loop round at the top of Mugdock Reservoir. From there we went up the road for a short distance until we reached the path that goes to South Lodge Car Park. This little section of single-track is my favourite unicycling descent at Mugdock so it was strange running up it in the opposite direction. Next we went to the castle and did a loop past the Gun Sites to Khyber Car Park before descending the pass to Allander Water. After making our way back to the castle it was clear our hearts were no longer in the running and our stomachs were calling so we went back to the car for dinner.



Look out to Glasgow by the path near Drumclog Car Park.



For Christmas I got a new camping cooking gadget, a toasted sandwich/panini maker. It consists of two rectangular pans joined at one end by a hinge and clamps shut. This was its first outing and it performed exceedingly well. I did have the gas up a little high for a while and burnt one side but it still tasted fine. The convenience is second to none, I prepared the paninis in my flat and clamped it together so all that was needed to starting cooking was igniting the gas. For the next trip we are already planning some more adventurous food, pancakes and Bannock Bread are definite possibilities. Cooking over the fire will also save gas but we were both impressed at how fast the bread was toasted. Perhaps the Outdoor Journal has strayed from its roots, a whole paragraph on a cooking gadget is perhaps a little excessive, but we loved it so much!

The highlight of the evening.



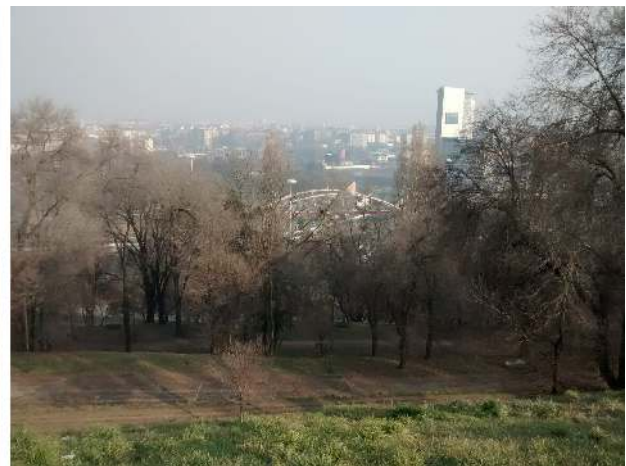
A light trail from Ross's headtorch.

29th January 2017*Parco Monte Stella – running in Milan*

I HAVE BEEN IN MILAN AS A VISITING RESEARCHER for a few weeks. It was summer last time I was here and much warmer! But the weather has been cold and dry (which is more than can be said of Glasgow when I left) so I've been running a lot, a half-marathon to and from the office to be precise. For my Sunday run I decided to visit Monte Stella (Starmount) which is not that far from the Bovisa Campus where the office is located. After following the standard route to Arco della Pace at the north-west end of Parco Sempione I ran along Corso Sempione instead of heading towards Chinatown like I do when going to work.

Statistics	
Distance	22.14 km
Time	3h:31m
Average Speed	6.3 km/h
Elevation	189 m
Min. Altitude	118 m
Max. Attitude	137 m

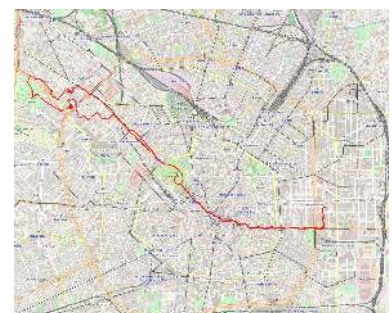
Roads slowed me down!



At Piazza Firenze I turned onto Viale Certosa until I reached Piazza Portello and what is possibly the best supermarket I have found in Milan, Iper Portello. As a city of (expensive) fashion, Milan doesn't offer many retail delights for someone with my tastes so my shopping gravitates towards finding reasonably priced food. I left the supermarket well stocked with groceries and focused on the task at hand. Getting to Parco Monte Stella required the crossing of a motorway so there was a short detour to reach a bridge. The park was reasonably quiet, the majority of people seemed to be running or cycling. There was no missing Monte Stella, it is an artificial hill and far steeper than any natural topography in Milan. Paved paths gradually wind their way to the top but now was not the time to be outdone by the middle-age Milanese man who was just starting up a steep dirt track. Cursing my inability to grasp the concept of not having to completely fill my bag when I go food shopping, I followed his lead. Hill training hasn't featured in my running schedule recently so it was a bit of a shock to the system. Fortunately a huge, friendly dog must have decided the runner in front was the best person in the world. Despite the owner's best efforts all he could do was stop and give him some attention. I took my chance and overtook him!

The climb didn't take much longer, it is only 45 m high. I have

The left photo is the "Monumento DNA di Charles Jencks" and the right photo is the view from Monte Stella.



I ran across the city.

read that the original plan was that it should be double that but the surrounding buildings would have been damaged by the pressure. The material used to construct Mounte Stella was the debris left from the buildings bombed in WWII and the remnants of the Spanish wall that used to surround the city. I didn't visit the other area of the park Giardino dei Giusti (Garden of the Just) that stands as a memorial to opponents of crimes against humanity. The park is a nice green space and a fitting tribute to those it honours.

At the top of Mounte Stella a Scout group had taken up all the seats so I found a little piece of grass and sat down. The air temperature was by no means warm but because there was no wind and the sun was shining brightly it was very pleasant. On a clear day you should be able to see the Alps, I looked but wasn't able to do so. After enjoying my short break and snack it was time to head home. I took a slightly different route for part the way and went to Parco Industria Alfa Romeo which has a rather wonderful little monument (Monumento DNA di Charles Jenks) that has two spiral paths winding their way to the top. It's hard to describe but running up a spiral is more satisfying than it should be! Although it is smaller than Mounte Stella there is a nice view of the city. I was careful not to descend on the spiral I used to get to the top because I like to explore everything! I eventually rejoined Corso Sempione and from there I followed the same route home as I had used on the outward journey.

The photo of me juggling was taken last summer when the sun was shining and it was shorts and t-shirt weather everyday. Milano in the summer is lovely and for me has a better atmosphere because everyone is outside enjoying the city. During the two weeks I was there the parks were almost deserted, which I thought was a pity. The rain didn't stop me from having lots of gelato! There were still lots of tourists around The Duomo and centre of the city so I think that area does well all-year round.

The only area of Milan I haven't explored yet is the Navigli District in the south-west of the city. It is famous for its canals and night-life but I've been informed that if you follow the water you join some nice cycling paths that take you out of the city towards the countryside. The other traditional option for escaping the city is heading north to Lake Como or further to the Alps. I haven't been to the Alps (and certainly wasn't prepared to do so on this trip) but I did visit Lake Como on my last trip to Milan. Instead of taking the funicular railway to Brunate I followed a steep little path that is barely used. I think most people are happy to pay a couple of euros for the easy way up! The view was nice and Lake Como is very pretty but it is quite well developed and there are a lot of very exclusive areas nearby. I definitely prefer my countryside wild and not taken over by the rich and tourists!



Some food from Iper Potello.



The Duomo.



Juggling at Parco Sempione.

4th March 2017*Peanmeanach Bothy – Ardnish peninsula*

ON FRIDAY EVENING ROSS AND I drove to Glen Etive camped overnight. The rain and wind started battering my tent shortly after it was put up showed no sign of stop as we drove away on Saturday morning. We had come as a sort of *advanced party* for the weekend bothy trip because Ross wanted to break the driving up and isn't keen on early rising. David, Margit, Annalisa, Julio and Arrate left Glasgow early Saturday morning (in accordance with David's detailed itinerary) and met us at a parking spot between North Ballachulish and Creagmhor. From there, our little convoy passed through Fort William before stopping again at Glenfinnan.



The Ardnish peninsula.



The rain was a bit lighter when we left the cars for the view-point on Torr a' Choit that looks across to Glenfinnan Viaduct. The conditions didn't do justice to the view so we continued our journey north-west passing Loch Eilt and Lochailort. By some miracle the rain stopped just as we passed Loch Dubh and parked the cars. Carrying mountains of equipment from the vehicles to



The final few hundred metres to the bothy.

the bothy is not appealing at the best of times so knowing it would stay dry was a small relief. There was only one climb on the way to the bothy and matters had been carefully arranged to ensure David was carrying the firewood then. I don't think the itinerary specified this but we are capable of improvisation when the need arises. As we descended Cruach an Fhearainn Duibh the sea was in sight and soon we had arrived.



Statistics	
Distance	5.31 km
Time	1h:26m
Average Speed	2.7 km/h
Elevation	153 m
Min. Altitude	7 m
Max. Attitude	157 m

All our gear slowed us down.

After a lunch, which included pancakes, we went to the beach which was at low tide. I have never so many oysters in my life and we collected the best for dinner. They almost made up for the terrible smell of dimethyl sulphide that can only be described as concentrated form of rotting eggs and is caused by a type of algae called *Emiliania huxleyi*.



The gang heads off to explore the beach.



It wasn't raining but the beach was chilly.

Back at the bothy the driftwood we had collected at the beach was chopped and the final outdoor preparations were made before retiring indoors. After organising our sleeping gear we re-communed for dinner in one of the two downstairs rooms. David assumed control for most of the cooking but I think he let Julio help him with the mussels. No less than five varieties of Ainsley Harriot cous-cous sachets were on offer but I think the stress of the kitchen did get to the chef when he served the spicy one to an unwitting Arrate. The after-dinner entertainment was charades and Julio's uncanny ability to not only be able to act every film title under the sun but also guess them too.



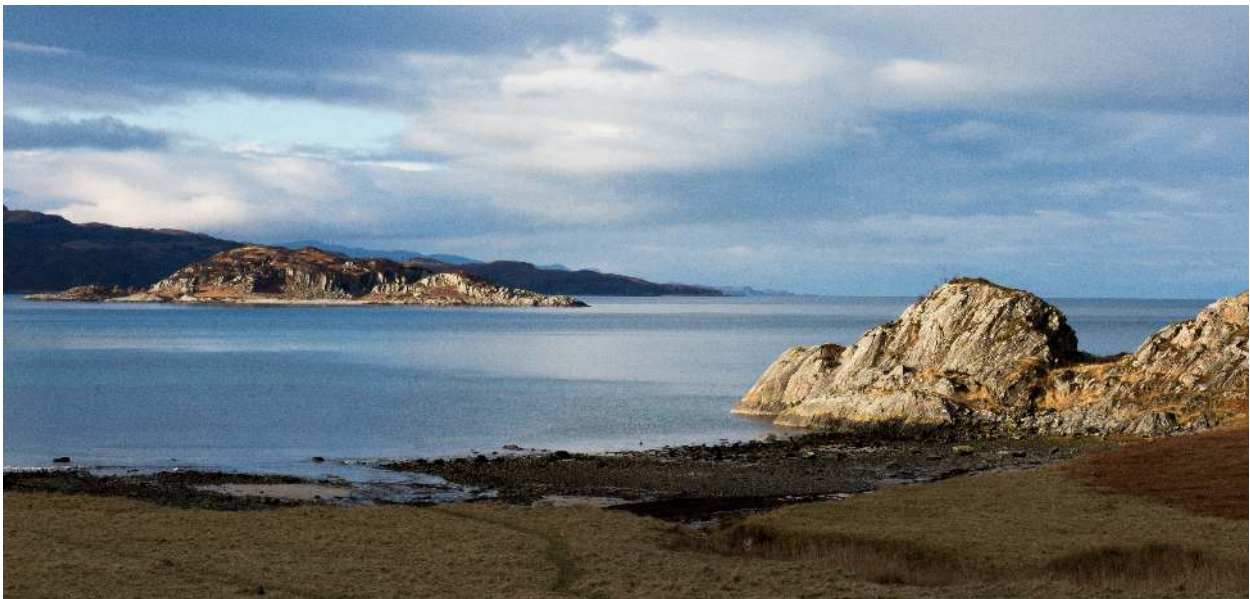
Tucking into the mussels.

5th March 2017*Peanmeanach Bothy Day 2 – Ardnish peninsula*

I WOKE UP WITH THE FLEECE covering my face, thought I should check the conditions so I popped my head out of the tent. This was a mistake. Contrary to what you might be assuming, it wasn't due to rain. No, the sun was blazing so brightly my eyes hurt from the sudden change in conditions! As a tortoise retracts his head back to the safety of his shell, so did I. After a few moments I tried again and this time it was tolerable. David and Margit were already on the beach to put my outdoor clothes on and left my tent to join them.



Crossing the river.



The tide was coming in and the rocks were submerged so there was no chance of mussels for breakfast. But the morning sun was shining brightly so I snapped away with my camera before returning to the bothy for some food. As I cooked the remainder of my pancake batter, David decided it was a good time to stamp down the cans from the night before. No alarm clock could have been more effective because soon the rest of the group descended from the loft. After breakfast we explored the beach to the north-east of the bothy towards Feorlindhu. The secluded little bay in front of a ruin was wonderfully blue, the water very inviting. For the people that lived there it must have been a hard life but the natural beauty is spectacular. It was warm enough to play with a ball on the beach in our t-shirts before we gathered our stuff and left the bothy.

Back at the cars, Ross produce his hot-beverage making kit and made tea, coffee and hot chocolate. Some of Margit's flapjacks magically appeared and disappeared (for which I may have played a small part).

The island is Eilean nan Gobhar.



It's time for tea.



Instead of returning straight back to Glasgow we followed the A830 to Arisaig because a few of us, myself included, had never been to the beach in that area. While we drove Ross gave a running commentary of the campsites, hotels, bed & breakfasts, restaurants, inns, cafes, caravan sites, motels and youth hostels he had been to. In summary, all of the establishments around Arisaig.

All great trips must end eventually, so after enjoying the beach for half an hour we started the drive back to Glasgow and civilisation. It was with some little satisfaction that as we passed south of Ardnish towards Glenfinnan the rain began to fall heavily, the weather gods had missed their chance to get us properly! Scotland's landscape just looks even wilder with the rain lashing down and when sitting in a warm car one can appreciate it even more. With Ross on driving duty I kept my eyes peeled for anything of interest. My attention was rewarded because just after passing Fort William while driving along Loch Linnhe I spotted a potential gorge walking site near Corrychurrachan.

The rain had stopped by Glencoe so we took the opportunity to stop at the viewing spot for The Three Sisters, a spectacular trio of mountains I haven't paid a visit to yet. With the flapjacks from lunch but at distant memory I was certainly ready for dinner at The Real Food Cafe in Tyndrum. I maintain the fish and chips there, whilst very tasty, are done in a way that could be considered almost healthy. Perhaps I have been living in Glasgow for too long! Back on the road, we passed the familiar banks of Loch Lomond and the city lights were in soon in sight, signalling the end of the weekend.



David was emotional after spending an amazing weekend with friends and needed a group hug.



Tórr Mor Ghaóideil is the mountain in the background.



Two of the Three Sisters (Aonach Dubh and Gearr Aonach).

19th March 2017

Loch Katrine Marathon – with quite a lot of walking

HAVING GREATLY ENJOYED THE 2015 RACE I was disappointed when last year's race was cancelled due to a landslide that destroyed a large section of the path. However, it is a testament to the popularity of the Loch Katrine Marathon that no momentum was lost after the year out and the event sold out quickly. My dad was on race support duty again and we arrived with plenty of time for registration and general race preparation. The forecast during the week predicted some dreadful weather for the race but on the day there were grounds to be cautiously optimistic of reasonably nice conditions as the race began. This proved to be the case and there was even some sun at times! Buoyed by the scenery and positive atmosphere I ran a fast start to the race, at the halfway point my split time was about 1 hour and 40 minutes.



Following the loch.



Unfortunately I was overeager. Apparently my legs' endurance do not match my cardiovascular abilities and I was reduced to walking for much of the way back. It was certainly not the glorious race I was hoping for but nonetheless I did finish it and will take the performance as a motivation to train better for next time!



Starting at the Trossachs Pier.

25th March 2017*Argyll and Bute – weekend road trippin’ day one*

IT COULD BE SAID THAT THE OUTDOOR JOURNAL is straying from its roots with entries like this one. This was more of a road-trip than an epic weekend hike. Nonetheless, we had a great time, lovely weather and the pictures turned out nice. It was also the first proper Domingero trip in David’s new car which has been affectionately called ‘Brenda’. Once we had all assembled, we headed towards Loch Lomond. There was a general plan but we hadn’t given David time to prepare a proper itinerary (I’m sure we will be treated to the one for Arran that he drew up earlier in the week at some point in the summer).



Rest And Be Thankful.



Holding shotgun (front passenger seat) in the car I naturally assumed control of the music. Little did my fellow travellers know, I had previously prepared a ‘radio show’ and put it on a CD. You can imagine their surprise when I started talking to them through the speakers! Time passed quickly and we were soon having lunch at Rest and Be Thankful which divides Glen Kinglas from Glen Croe. We then did a little tour round the Cowal Peninsula, stopping at a few beaches to see if there were any mussels (there were not). After that we explored some of the rapids at the River Massan near Benmore Botanic Garden. The final stop for the day was Jubilee Point on Loch Eck where we set up camp and enjoyed a beautiful, clear evening.

Sitting on the rock bridge.



A perfect night sky.

26th March 2017*Argyll and Bute – weekend road trippin' day two*

DAVID AND ROSS SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE CAR while I enjoyed a little spot right on the edge of the loch. I slept all through the night and when I awoke sunrise had already begun. After hopping out the tent I set my tripod up and started snapping away. There was no other sign of life that was awake, so feeling hungry I cooked my porridge without my fellow domingueros. Eventually they appeared and after they finished their breakfast we packed up and continued our road trip. Inverary was our first stop and we took the opportunity to buy lunch and some snacks.



Ducks and Kilchurn Castle.



The sunny weather from Saturday had continued and the town was very busy, there were motorbikes everywhere. Keen to get away from the hustle and bustle we followed the A819 that cuts through Glen Aray. We had lunch at Loch Awe at a spot overlooking Kilchurn Castle. I think it was the first time I had been in shorts and t-shirts and felt warm under the sun this year. Our final stop was the Eas Urchaidh Waterfall on the River Orchy. We donned our damp wetsuits (never a pleasant feeling) and jumped in to splash around, much to the amusement of the Indian family and elderly couple who watched us from the bridge. All that was left was the drive back to the civilisation known as Glasgow.

Loch Eck at sunrise.



Jumping into the pools.



Eas Urchaidh Waterfall on the River Orchy.

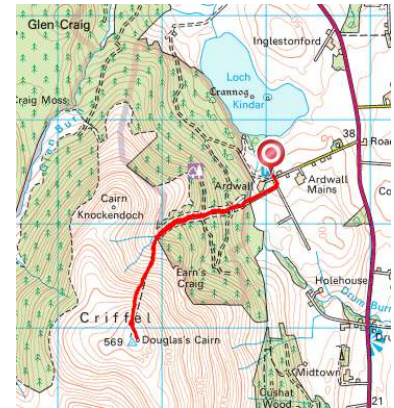


Chilling out with Brenda before heading back to Glasgow.

19th September 2017*Criffel – back to the adventures*

SINCE LEAVING GLASGOW I have not been up to any big outdoor adventures. That is not to say the summer has been devoid of exercise – I have been doing lots of running and cycling – but there has not been a lot to write about. To remedy this my second trip in my mum's car since getting insurance was to Dumfries's main hill, Criffel. I have lost count how many times I have done this climb but it is easy to get to and only takes about 40 minutes to climb from Ardwall car park near Loch Kindar.

Ever the optimist I packed up my camera gear into a rucksack far bigger than a short walk like this would normally demand. Initially things were going well, it was reasonably clear as I left Craighrockall Burn to make the final ascent up the muddy slope of Criffel. However, as I approached the top, the low-level clouds brought the visibility down to less than 100 m.



A simple route.



As I was leaving the summit I met Andy, who like me apparently also favours shorts even in the windy conditions. I had put my warm layers on by this point and felt very over-dressed. Chatting to him on the way down, it turned out that we have a mutual friend in common from Glasgow. He kindly praised my photo from the top for "emphasising the grass".

A better view from Criffel.
(Photo credit: Andy Robertson)

16th December 2017*Bristol to Bath and back – first trip on a 36" wheel*

A NEW JOB, MORE MONEY but less time. What's the solution to a problem in life? Buy another unicycle of course! A good price reduction for a 36" Nimbus Oracle unicycle appeared on unicycle.uk.com so I purchased one. And the handlebar accessory kit. And a new saddle for my mountain unicycle. November was not a cheap month for me! Bad weather and other set-up issues had prevented me from getting out on my new toy so I was determined, rain or shine to have a good day out. Fortunately, the forecast was promising and accurate: a combination seldom achieved in Scotland! I was a little bit worried that the paths would have ice on them since it was such a clear night but this fear proved to be unfounded.



Following the excellent path.



I followed the official cycling route from Bristol to Bath. Along the way the path passes the Avon Valley Railway. This is a short, disconnected line of track that runs old steam and diesel trains. It was the perfect spot for a photo opportunity! I tried to keep up with the train but the selfie stick got in the way.



Next to the River Avon (Kennet and Avon Canal).

This trip was the first time I had ridden such a large wheel so there were a few wobbles. Mounting proved to be the biggest challenge, it feels awkward and high as you stand behind the wheel psyching yourself up. If you don't commit 100%, then it won't happen! I managed to bang my shin hard off the handlebars on a particularly bad failed attempt. That one left a good bruise and cut down my left shin. Once you get going it's remarkably stable and offers a smooth ride so the miles pass by effortlessly.



Statistics	
Distance	45.40 km
Time	4h:24m
Average Speed	10.3 km/h
Elevation	636 m
Min. Altitude	55 m
Max. Attitude	127 m

Possibly the furthest I've travelled on a unicycle.

I noticed a cyclist sitting on a bench but couldn't see a bicycle. Looking closer, I spotted the tell-tale seat of a unicycle. It turns out Will Borrell from the Edinburgh juggling scene is living in Bristol now. He's heading off for a 3 month trip with Performers Without Borders soon, when he gets back I should have a new uni buddy!



Humous and homemade bread for lunch.



The long shadows from a winter sun.

I enjoyed my lunch at the Riverside Parade by the River Avon in Bath. I thought of going into the centre. However, one of the downsides of unicycles is that they attract attention and there is no way to lock them up securely. My lunch was simple enough, a tub of M&S hummus with home-made bread. I had brought my down jacket to stay warm during lunch but I didn't hang around because the temperature was low.

There are lots of great cycling routes around Bristol and it's a much more bike friendly city compared to Glasgow. Next year I hope to get out and explore more of them. I have two particular trips in mind. The first is to cycle to Wales and the second is to cycle home from work one day. Both trips should probably be attempted when the daylight hours are longer!



Loving the countryside