

NEWSLETTER 2013

THE 34TH TGO CHALLENGE 10-24 MAY 2013



MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE who has submitted their routes, especially those who met the early deadline of January 31, helping spread the work load for our hard-working vetting team.

The final deadline for receipt of routes is rapidly approaching: if we haven't received yours by February 28, we'll have to assume that you've chosen to withdraw and will feed your place to the 80 or so hungry standby listers; the 68 folk who haven't yet submitted their routes ought to get cracking!

Since the draw for places in late October, a handful of those who gained places have had to withdraw, for various reasons. They include Andrew Skurka, Jim Groark & Gordon Elliott, Adele Masini, Oliver Bartrum, Dave Stewart, Christopher Yapp, and Neil & Rachel Slack. Their places have been readily snapped up by Nicolas Roggen, Jennifer Wheeler & Ian Adamson, Neil Griffiths, Lindsay Jones & Diana Gerrard. The apparent discrepancy in numbers is due to a team of four having been last out of the hat in the original draw.

Submitting Routes

Routes can be submitted either by post or email. You should have received a route sheet with your letter of acceptance in November but blank sheets can be downloaded from www.tgomagazine.co.uk/tgochallenge/about-the-challenge/resources/. Alternatively, you can request a paper copy by post – just contact the co-ordinator. The electronic format – our preferred choice – greatly speeds up admin and vetting.

This year's route sheets and planning notes were adjusted slightly, and most routes have been submitted with more of the required information. Overall standards seem to be rising so, if you've yet to submit yours, be sure read the notes carefully.

A few folk seem stumped by our request for 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey sheet numbers and for dates & locations to be provided for the four (minimum) phone-ins.

OS 1:50,000 mapping is the common factor shared by vetters, co-ordinator, Challengers and rescue services. Vettors trace routes on OS sheets so they can offer valuable comments and advice; during May, your progress is monitored on 1:50,000 sheets; in case of an incident, we communicate with police & rescue services referencing 1:50,000 sheets. Digital mapping has revolutionised route planning but with so many different systems in use among more than 300 Challengers and vetters, the event will, for now, be sticking with the common method used by all: 1:50,000 sheets. The ability to read paper maps and transfer the information correctly to the route sheet can reflect route planning abilities, enabling vetters to tailor their comments accordingly.

Phone-in points are key to safety procedures. It's important that they're at key stages in your journey, around three days apart. Calls on Day One, to let us know you're on the west coast, are needless; same with calls from the east coast when you reach the beach. Make your calls from the trail, during your walk.

Admin forms

As usual, many folk seem more anxious to submit admin forms than their route forms, while others seem to have forgotten them altogether! By all means send them in separately **but do send them in**. All dinner bookings, note, are notional – you have to reach the east coast first!

Start off on the right foot...

Wherever you are starting, please consider using the sign-out point for accommodation and/or meals before striding out. They support us loyally and deserve our support. Sign-outs, with phone numbers, and email addresses where known, are:

Acharacle: Loch Shiel House Hotel*
01967 431224, info@lochshielhotel.com

Ardishaig: Grey Gull Inn
(01546 606017, thegreygull@live.com)

Dornie: Dornie Hotel
01599 555205, dorniehotel@hotmail.co.uk

Glenelg: Mrs Davidson, Registrar
01599 522310 (several B&Bs in the village)

Lochailort: Lochailort Inn
01687 470208, enquiries@lochailortinn.co.uk

Mallaig: West Highland Hotel
01687 462210, info@westhighlandhotel.co.uk

Morar: Morar Hotel
01687 462346, cr@theangushotel.com

Oban: Youth Hostel
01631 562025, oban@syha.org.uk

Plockton: Plockton Hotel
01599 544274, sales@plocktonhotel.co.uk

Shiel Bridge: Kintail Lodge Hotel (bunkhouse available)
01599 511275, kintailodgehotel@btinternet.com

Strathcarron: Strathcarron Hotel
01520 722227, strathcarronhotel@gmail.com

Torridon: Youth Hostel
01445 791284, torridon@syha.org.uk

Sign-out point details, including opening hours, will be confirmed in the Final Details in April. Room rates should be obtained from the accommodation when booking.

** Any special Challenge rates offered by establishments as a goodwill gesture to the event and have not been negotiated by event organisers; feel free to ask but please don't be put off if discounts are unavailable.*



All queries and enquiries:

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01729 822546 • tgoc@outdoorsmanning.com

'AFORE YE GO...

Putting you on the SPOT

Sincere thanks to Donald Cruttenden at Adventure Trading Post, who will again provide facilities for SPOT tracker-carrying Challengers' progress to be followed on-line. For 2013, he might be able to add other devices to the map: we'd be delighted if folk planning to carry such a GPS-enabled unit would contact him to help conduct a trial...

SPOT units allow walkers to send pre-programmed messages to family and friends to let them know they're safe, and allow them to follow progress on Google Maps. They work via satellite, dispensing with concerns about mobile phone signals, vandalised phone boxes or carrier pigeons being knobbed by falcons.

In emergencies, a GPS location is sent to the authorities, taking the "search" out of "search & rescue"; in less threatening situations assistance can be summoned from family and friends.

During 2012's storm, Challenge Control kept informal tabs on SPOT-carrying Challengers, reassured that, despite phone-ins being overdue, they were still moving under their own steam; fortunately no-one had to activate their SPOT device in anger.

Adventure Trading Ltd introduced the devices to the UK, and has provided the online Challenge tracker map for several years, allowing followers to identify individuals as they weave their way from west coast to east.

If you'll be carrying a SPOT tracker or other device, please email your "Public Shared URL" (included in your SPOT account) to Donald Cruttenden at support@AdventureTradingPost.co.uk at least a fortnight before the Challenge begins; don't forget to mention the TGO Challenge connection.

Challengers considering a purchase can also claim a 10% discount on SPOT units bought from Adventure Trading Post bought before the end of May. Visit www.adventuretradingpost.co.uk and enter the unique code "TGOC2013" when checking out. For further details contact Donald on 0161 713 2426.

River crossings

If there's been any noticeable trend with the weather in May it's been for wet, wet... and wetter. 2011 and 2012 saw particularly bad storms and last year we had three instances of mountain rescue teams being called out, with inordinate amounts of water being the common factor in two of those.

Despite this, many routes submitted so far indicate a desire to go swimming. Have you plotted a precarious river crossing along your route?

If so, just how well practised are you at river crossings? The Mountaineering Council of Scotland's excellent DVD *Water Hazards in the Mountains* is recommended viewing for all Challengers, whether on high- or low-level routes, demanding or gentle.

It highlights the dangers of mountain streams and rivers and includes advice on crossing in easy summer conditions, changes that occur in water levels after rain or snowmelt, pre-planning (studying maps and weather forecasts), choosing a safe place to cross while on the hill and when not to attempt a crossing. Also covered are recognised methods of crossing rivers and fast flowing streams, as recommended by the Mountain Training Boards.

The DVDs were jointly produced and funded by MCofS, The Scottish Mountain Safety Forum, SportsScotland and the Mountain Leader Training boards. The cast includes volunteers from the mountaineering clubs and school pupils from Grantown Grammar School. The 20-minute narration is by former TGO editor and occasional Challenger Cameron McNeish.

Water Hazards in the Mountains costs a mere £6.99 (£4.99 for MCofS members; this is a worthwhile organisation which Challengers might consider joining) from some outdoor retailers or from the MCofS's own online shop at www.mcofs.org.uk.

www.mcofs.org.uk/water-hazards-dvd.asp

Great Outdoors Grub

Backpacking food specialists Outdoors Grub has again offered Challengers a rather tasty 10 per cent discount off its wide range of dried meals, snacks and accessories, a great way to get quality lightweight supplies at great prices.

To place your order, go to www.outdoorsgrub.co.uk/tgoc and enter the unique discount code "TGOC695A" to proceed to the order form. You can also call Outdoors Grub on 0800 567 7152, though please note that payment needs to be made online – payment over the phone is no longer available.

Along the trail...

ENGINEERING PROJECTS

Beauly-Denny power line: The four-year project to replace the 132kV power line between Beauly and Denny with a 400kV super pylon line will continue throughout 2013. All TGO Challengers should be aware that they might encounter access restrictions around construction sites. In particular, work between Beauly and Fort Augustus might be intense as efforts are made to complete the 30-mile section before autumn. Follow signed diversions where requested -. Some of the work involves undergrounding sections of the line, which should, in the long term, improve the view... well, bits...

Glen Doe Hydro scheme: As far as we are aware work on this major construction project on one of our favourite Monadhliath portals should be complete.

New tracks and indeed the dam are shown many digital maps but we're not sure where the paper versions have caught up yet. Some of the tracks will ease passage but keep your navigational wits about you. Please don't fall into any new bodies of water not shown on maps.

Upland power station projects: Life's too short, frankly, to compile all the proposed upland "wind farm" projects into a list which will, anyway, be out of date by May. If you're concerned, then monitor the situation on-line (Challenger Alan Sloman's blog – alansloman.blogspot.co.uk – is a very good start point). Please respect any warning signs you encounter at construction

sites and follow any diversion requests; inform Challenge Control during your scheduled phone-ins of any construction sites encountered, so that we can spread word to others.

TGOC Loch Ness Ferry

We're indebted to Gordon Menzies who will again provide a Challenge-specific ferry service across Loch Ness, from Temple Pier, Drumnadrochit. The service is very popular and we recommend that you book at least a day in advance. Crossings are at approximately 8am and 5pm and the MV Morag mo Chridhe can hold 12 people with packs. If you find the boat full, please wait patiently for the next crossing; Gordon always does his best to get everyone across as soon as possible.

The price for 2013 has been pegged at £10 per person, with a minimum charge of £20 per crossing. Please pre-book at least a day ahead of your crossing (gordon.menziesm@btopenworld.com, 01456 450205, 07831 434691). As you approach Drumnadrochit on your walk, please contact Gordon by text to confirm your crossing time (don't forget to include the names of all in your group in the text).

Don't sleep in! Gordon sails from Temple Pier (GR NH528300), more than a mile out of Drumnadrochit centre. Allow adequate time to get there – if you're in accommodation you might like to order an early breakfast! The landing on the east shore is at Inverfarigaig (GR: 517237).

ACCOMMODATION NEWS

Tarfside

St Drostan's Hostel, in Tarfside, will be available for Challengers from May 18-22. Team Tarfside 2013 will comprise of Patricia Smith, Marie Donohoe and Marion Mitchell, ably hindered... sorry, assisted, by hubbies John (D) and Alan (M).

As usual, pre-booking is not possible and beds will be allocated on a first-come basis. It is not possible to send parcels to Tarfside. Whether you plan to stay at the hostel or camp on the village sports field (cold running water, toilets, phone box), do drop into the hostel to say "Hi", have a brew and help with the washing up.

Mar Lodge

The National Trust for Scotland will again offer a very warm welcome at Mar Lodge. The 12-bed bunkhouse is available along with the lodge's largest luxury apartment, which sleeps 17. Special dinners will be laid on on the Thurs/Fri/Sat/Sun nights, and continental breakfasts will be available. Clearly labelled resupply parcels can be sent. Campers can access drying rooms, showers and toilets; tea and coffee will be available in the gunroom along with, perhaps, something stronger. Prebooking is much preferred – contact hospitality assistant Rebecca Rowe (RRowe@nts.org.uk, 01339 720170).

Changes at Laggan

Laggan (Speyside) has long-been a much-valued stop-off for TGO Challengers. There have been a number of important changes to facilities there which those passing through in 2013 should be aware of.

Laggan Stores: we're very sorry to report that the shop, which has fed and resupplied many Challengers down the years, and offered moral support and many other kinds of assistance has now closed. Sincere thanks to the most recent owner, Kala Downton, for her support for the event and the Challengers who passed through. If you were planning to resupply here you'll either have to carry additional supplies from the Great Glen or get to Newtonmore or Kingussie, or come up with another solution.

Monadhliath Hotel: the hotel's new proprietors, Neil and Annie Whittle, have declared their support for the event but camping will no longer be allowed among the chapel ruins in the hotel grounds. "We are fully aware of the past history," said Neil. "Not only is it an issue with SEPA (using grounds and neighboring farm as a toilet after hours) we have eight bedrooms that can be utilised by the walkers. I hope everyone will understand. We of course would gladly serve lunch and dinner to anyone wishing to fuel up on their way."

If you were planning to overnight in Laggan and wish to book a room at the hotel, the number is 01528 544 276.

Other options: the *Pottery bunkhouse* and tearooms (NN632931 – www.potterybunkhouse.co.uk) is very busy at this time and proprietor Lynda Whitty prefers advance bookings. Payment is by cash as there are no credit card facilities and advanced bookings must be pre-paid. Call 01528 544 231.

A new farm-sited bunkhouse – the rather Tolkien-esque *Bunkhouse at the Round House* – has opened mid-way between Laggan and Newtonmore on the A86 (approx NN672951). Proprietor Roy Tylden-Wright informs us that it's usually for groups but he's happy to keep it available for individual Challengers – we'd advise booking ahead! Camping pitches might also be available. See www.myhighlandbunkhouse.com or call 01528 544344.

And of course, the folks at *Mrs Os' Newtonmore Hostel* go above and beyond the call of duty to offer all Challengers a very warm welcome and see to their every need. The hostel is run by vetter Sue Oxley and hubbie Neil; co-owner and fellow vetter Ali Ogden will be on this year's crossing and, once the flood of Challengers has passed through, Sue will be helping out in Challenge Control in Montrose during the second week. Any Challengers who come unstuck in Laggan during the event can call the hostel (01540 673360, www.highlandhostel.co.uk) and be whisked away to its comforts, with the promise of a morning return to the point at which they broke off. As well as offering beds, Sue will be providing tea, coffee and cakes for Challengers who pass through.

www.scottishcampingguide.com/index.php is great for identifying tent-friendly campsites as well as closed sites.

Other accommodation news

The Feughside Inn is for sale, with an application submitted to convert the building into three dwellings and erect a further three on the site. Vetter Alan Hardy reports that the inn remains open at the moment – contact them in late April (01330 850225) for up to date information. The nearby campsite (01330 850669) happily accepts tents and the place is a popular stopping off place for Challengers within sniffing distance of the east coast.

The Taynuilt Hotel, near Oban, will fully re-open before the the Challenge kicks off in May. New owner John McNulty is refurbishing the hotel to offer six bedrooms, as well as the public bar and meals. Contact: 01866 822437.

The Tomdoun Hotel, Glen Garry, remains closed and isn't expected to be open during the 2013 TGO Challenge.

The Dunalastair Hotel, Kinloch Rannoch, went in to administration on November 2, 2012, and isn't taking bookings.

Youth Hostels: Glen Affric (fully booked May 13-17) and Loch Ossian SYHA hostels will be open during May. Beds cannot be guaranteed. Enquiries to info@syha.org.uk. Though shown on some maps, the former hostels at Inverey (near Braemar), Glen Doll and Killin are now closed, as is the campsite at Memus.

Many places marked on OS maps as "campsites" now only take caravans – if you intend to use any campsite, it is worth checking in advance that tents are accepted. Challengers will again be welcome at the campsite in Fort Augustus.

• If you know of other changes to accommodation providers popular with Challengers, please let the co-ordinator know (email, tgoc@outdoorsmanning.com)



The Challenge's sponsor is TGO Magazine, the UK's leading monthly title for hillwalkers & backpackers. Published by Newsquest

SpecialistMediaLtd, it's widely available at newsagents or on subscription (www.escosubs.co.uk/newsquest/tgo.asp, 01371 851867, tgoc@escosubs.co.uk). Our main partner is Rab, one of the world's foremost outdoor brands, which produces a wide range of high quality, innovative clothing and equipment (www.rab.uk.com).



Databases

We need your help! Our team of route vettors does, I hope you'll agree, provide an incredible service when it comes to supplying advice to help you get from one coast to the other. Their massive store of information, however, can always be improved.

With the Final Details to be issued in March, you'll receive forms on which you can record information to assist the vetting process in future years.

We'll be looking for information on bridges, deer fences (especially the electric type) and non-MBA bothies you come across during your crossings.

We'd very much appreciate your help – full details will be sent out in April and the forms will be collected at Finish Control in Montrose.

AND NOW, THE END IS NEAR...

Finish In Style

Finish Control is, as ever, at the Park Hotel, John Street, Montrose DD10 8RJ, where the usual splendid hospitality will be offered. The Park is offering rooms to Challengers at competitive rates: book direct with the hotel (reservations@montrosepark.co.uk, 01674 663400). Other local accommodation can be found through the tourism website, www.angusanddundee.co.uk.

The Park is already full on Thursday, May 23, but it might be possible to put your name on a waiting list for rooms.

Arrangements for sending parcels of clothing etc to Finish Control will be given in the Final Details in April.

There will be gatherings and dinners at the Park on the Thursday and Friday of the second week, when plaques will be presented to those who have completed 10, 20 or 30 crossings. Note that dinner indications given on the Admin Forms will need to be confirmed as you approach the east coast; we'll do our best to get you into your preferred dinner but places are limited and Thursday's will be restricted to Challengers and a small number of invited guests. A smaller, less formal dinner might be held on Wednesday, May 22; more details nearer the time.

T-shirts etc...

All successful 2013 Challengers will receive a Rab Aeon T performance-fit baselayer top, bearing the 2013 TGO Challenge logo. The soft-handle fabric will delight those obsessed with

cutting pack weights – most Challengers, in our experience! – making it perfect for 2014's TGO Challenge.

Because of production deadlines, the Aeon Ts were ordered some months ago and size quantities were based on last year's. We hope we've got it right – last one to Montrose will find out!

Footwear sizes were requested instead of T-shirt sizes: because Challengers will receive a pair of Bridgedale Trekker socks (www.bridgedale.com), featuring WoolFusion technology to provide insulation, wicking and durability.

We'd also like to thank BUFF (www.buffwear.co.uk), who will be providing customised Original BUFFs – wicking, wind-resistant tubular headwear made with high quality polyester microfibre and treated with Polygiene to deter odour-causing bacteria. Buffs are one-size-fits-all... so we didn't ask for head sizes!

Time out in Montrose

A free exhibition featuring the work of artist Bern Ross will be held throughout May at Montrose library – perfect timing for those who've finished their crossing and have time on their hands before the evening's celebrations! Bern's husband Rod Ross will be on his milestone tenth crossing this year, in the company of Alan Hardy (24) and Bernard Forrester (2). Last year she very generously donated a painting for the raffle at October's Scottish Reunion. For exhibition opening times check the poster which should be on the notice board in Finish Control in May.

DON'T BE A STRANGER

The Challenge is far too much fun to be a once-a-year kind of thing. There are, therefore, two annual re-unions so that friends old and new can walk, eat and be merry without having to worry about reaching the east coast on time! Both are organised by Challengers, for Challengers.

The **TGOC SPRING GATHERING** will be held between March 8-10, 2013, at the Snake Pass Inn in the Peak District. Forms were distributed back in November with the Entry Details, and can be downloaded from the TGOC Challenge resources webpage at www.tgomagazine.co.uk/tgochallenge/about-the-challenge/resources/. The gathering dinner will be at 7.30pm on Saturday, March 9, and will be a three-course meal (with choices) plus coffee. The price will be £18. For details, or to book, contact Alan Hardy (01255 670131, alanhardywalks@lineone.net).

Accommodation bookings should be made directly with the

inn (The Snake Pass Inn, Snake Road, Bamford, Derbyshire S33 0BJ – 01433 651480, info@snakepassinn.co.uk) – mention the TGO Challenge dinner to ensure you're not told there's no room at the inn!

The **TGOC SCOTTISH REUNION** will take place over the weekend of October 18-20, 2013, at the Crianlarich Hotel (www.crianlarich-hotel.co.uk). There will be a three-course dinner on the Saturday night at £18.95 per head, followed by music in the lounge.

For details, or to book for the dinner, contact Les & Issy Silkowski (appin070@btinternet.com). Accommodation (£27.50 per person per night based on two sharing; single occupancy £37) should be booked directly with the hotel (01838 300272) quoting "TGO Challenge Reunion". A form is included with this newsletter.

Vetting, advice and commonsense

Vetters do an incredible job advising on route safety and feasibility: without them there would be no TGO Challenge. Each have their own specialities and they might offer additional information: good teashops, pubs or camp sites, perhaps.

They are, however, not a tourist information service and we expect the majority of Challengers to be able to identify information such as ferry timetables, B&B provision and good resupply points for themselves. In most cases, Google is your friend – vetters and co-ordinators can't book ferries or accommodation for your *self-supported* hike across Scotland and we're very grateful to everyone who has respectfully kept their demands as minimal as possible! We're always, of course, willing to extend the helping hand of friendship to our guests from overseas, providing information where possible.

Vetters' advice is given in good faith, in light of their current knowledge. Challengers must use commonsense and experience in applying that advice, taking into account current ground and weather conditions as well as their own fitness and abilities.

Challengers are not obliged to accept the advice but are strongly urged to do so in the interests of safety. Organisers and vetters reserve the right: 1) to reject, or request revision of, routes deemed potentially unsafe, or in any other way inadequate; 2) to exclude from the event those whose routes, in the organisers' opinion, continue to involve undue risk.

Those who participate in the TGO Challenge do so at their own risk, agreeing to abide by the rules, conditions and spirit of the event, accepting the inherent risk of mountain walking.

Participants acknowledge that TGO, Newsquest Specialist Media Ltd, its agents, personnel or associates (including event sponsors, organisers, vetters and others acting on the event's behalf) shall not be liable for any damage, loss, injury, illness or mishap, however caused, nor do they accept any responsibility for the individual safety and security of participants, or for any difficulty, delay, injury or other mishap arising during the event.

Participants who do not agree to the above statement should contact the co-ordinator to notify him of their withdrawal.



All queries and enquiries:

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