

Diary

31 August 2005

MRCGP Preparation Course
Lyngford House Conference Centre,
Taunton

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1–2 February 2006

Patient Safety 2006
ICC Birmingham
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Want to change your lifestyle?

We are currently making a new health and lifestyle programme for Sky One and are looking for contributors to take part. We are looking for a variety of people who would like to change their lifestyles and receive help and advice in areas such as stress, work and social balance, health and diet. Our carefully chosen experts will then work with those involved to improve their lifestyles. This uplifting new series is aimed at showing people how to add years on to their lives, and in doing so, dramatically change the way they live, in order to get the most out of each day.

We are looking for somebody who dedicates a large proportion of their time to their job, often going above and beyond the call of duty. Perhaps they have to balance this with a busy family life or hectic social life. Perhaps they drink or smoke or their fitness levels aren't exactly where they should be?

If this sounds like you or anybody you know then please call 0207.017.8755 or email sarahw@zigzag.uk.com.



Neville Goodman

TO BRING YOU UP TO DATE ...

In summer 2003, we went to Scotland, to our favourite place, but I didn't tell you where it was. Now, I'm prepared to, because I want to tell you about a triumph: we climbed Beinn Dearg.

There are 284 Munros — mountains over 3000 feet in Scotland. Sir Hugh Munro originally listed 277, but there's been inflation. The list still doesn't include Torridon's Beinn Dearg which, at 2999 feet, is officially the highest non-Munro. Munro-baggers are a focused bunch. With 284 mountains to tick off, they can't afford to waste time climbing anything less than 3000 feet. Never mind that some Munros are extremely boring slogs up tedious slopes in the middle of nowhere, and that some sub-3000 foot mountains are real challenges with spectacular views. To the dedicated Munroist, 3000 feet is all.

So the Munro-bagger doesn't care about Beinn Dearg (pronounced Jerrag). But we do. We first saw it 33 years ago, lurking behind Torridon's more well-known hills. It's very steep on all sides, except round the back. There it's merely steep, but a long way to get to.

We took it on direct: up between the gullies on the south-west corner. It was an hour and half to the foot of the gullies, first on a good path, then over firm moorland. We drank coffee and peered up, picking what looked a safe route. Was it on? Yes. It was, simply, the most exhilarating climb we've ever done. There's no rock; it's mostly grass and heather, with some scree. But it is very steep, 409 metres of climbing in 570 metres: an average gradient of 36 degrees. Our walking poles, shortened to dig into the ground ahead, were invaluable. As we tackled a stream crossing half way up, where the gradient was especially steep, we became aware of a stag above us on a crag. He edged forward to watch us, wondering what we were doing in his domain. A fighter jet screeched through the glen, hundreds of feet below us, and frightened him away.

Eventually, the gradient slackened slightly. A few more steps and we'd made it: an easy stroll now to the summit.

OK, there are plenty of you out there who have climbed vertical rockfaces, and struggled through Himalayan snowdrifts. But we're just ordinary walkers. We each have our triumphs, and Beinn Dearg is one of ours. And you Munroists, if Napoleon had won, there would have been fewer Munros anyway: there's nothing magic about 915 metres.