

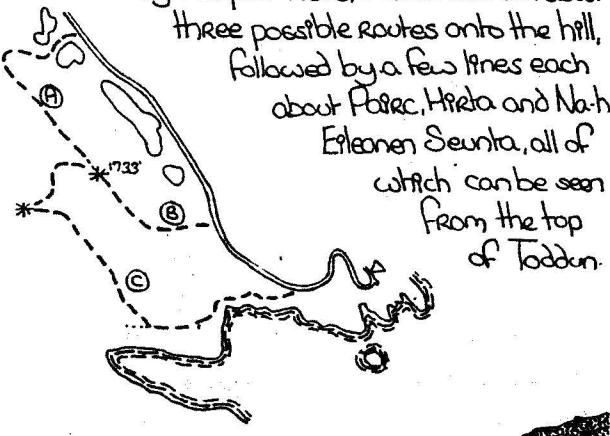
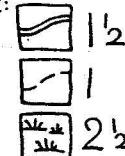
TODDUN

$3\frac{1}{2} \rightarrow 7$ miles

Toddun, rising to 1733 feet, is the highest hill within easy range of Reinigeadal, with the promise of far-reaching, breath-taking views (weather permitting) for those who climb up onto the high slopes. Here, I have written about

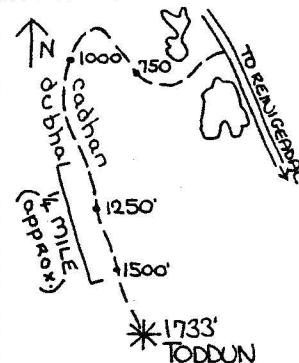
three possible routes onto the hill, followed by a few lines each about Polrc, Hirata and Na-h Eileanen Seunta, all of which can be seen from the top of Toddun.

Ascent by ⑧, returning by ⑨: 5 miles, i.e:



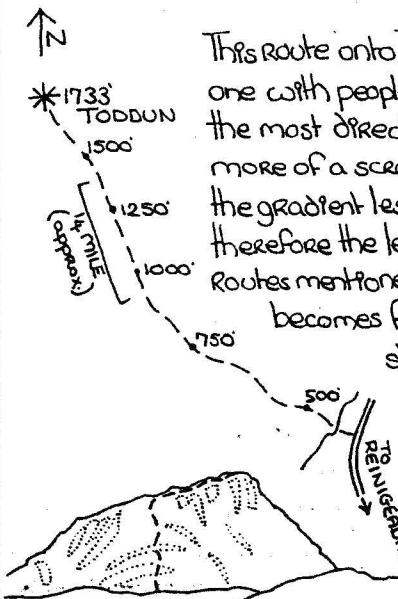
Reinigeadal and Loch Trollamairic from the Ridge on Toddun. (⑧)

Ⓐ TODDUN: CADHAN DUBHA ROUTE



Of the three routes onto Toddun mentioned here, this is probably the least strenuous, though it does have its steep moments, and also it requires a longer walk along the road. Leaving the hostel, follow the road for two miles, passing Loch Beag and Loch Mor before choosing a way up onto the Cadhan Dubha, (Dark Slope). The land in the valley surrounding the lochs is likely to be quite boggy, but there are three or four potential natural routes up onto the higher hillside. The one I have illustrated begins by leaving the road between the two lochans beyond Loch Mor, but you could stay on the road a little further and choose an alternative way up. Following the shape of the land you will find you swing round north-westwards to climb away from the lochans, and therefore away from Toddun's summit, until you reach the broad Cadhan Dubha. Have a rest! In fact, indulge in rest-breaks for the remainder of the climb as the views are wonderful and it'd be a crime not to notice them evolving. The climb, now drier, is constant (and at times more constant than others), getting the steepest of all for the last push, ensuring you arrive out of breath at the top of the slope and indeed, not far from the very spot you've possibly been anticipating, the trig point and its encompassing ring of stones. Inside a tin box, within the ring of stones, is to be found a visitors book, provided by the Galloway Trust.

(B) TODDUN: RIDGE ROUTE

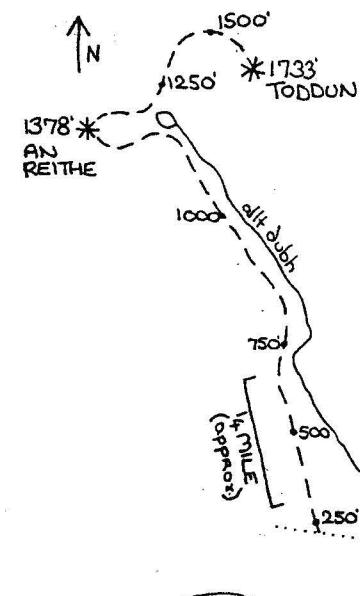


This route onto Toddun is the most popular one with people staying at the hostel, as it is the most direct, though it is steep in places, more of a scramble from leaving the road till the gradient lessens on the high Ridge, and therefore the least appealing of the three routes mentioned here to descend by. The ridge becomes fairly thin for a time, and the slopes scoop steeply away on either side.

Toddun, seen from Reingeadal.

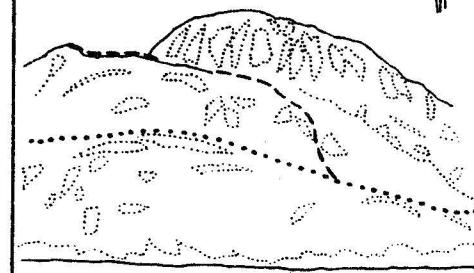
Leaving the hostel, follow the road out of the village for about a mile. A spur of Toddun reaches down to the stream running by now alongside the road, whilst on the other side the slopes of Mulla draw close, squeezing the road through a cutting not far ahead. Leave the road and cross over the stream and then basically start climbing, up and up and eventually onto the ridge. There is no path to follow, and care should be taken not to forget about the cliffs to the left. High up on the hill there is a lot more loose stone to negotiate and it should be noted that the flat-sided shape of Toddun makes for some lively wind movements when there is a breeze blowing from the right direction. The views from the ridge to the summit are wonderful, looking down to Reingeadal and beyond.

(C) TODDUN: AN REITHE AND ALLT DUBH ROUTE



I shall treat this route as a descent from the summit, but it could also make a fine ascent too.

Leaving the summit cairn on Toddun, continue northwards. The land will drop away after a short distance, into an area of slate-red stone. Choose a course through this scree, down into the shallow valley between Toddun and An Reithe, and keep an eye out for mountain hare amongst the rocks. From the



An Reithe and Toddun, viewed from Mdinginis



lochan (from which the Allt Dubh - Dark Stream - flows) it is a short climb up to the top of An Reithe, for more fine views of the area. Return to the lochan. From here the route down to the Taibheart Path is straight-forward, though pathless. Simply follow the stream, keeping it on your left, for it flows basically in a straight line down to the sea, but about half-way along its course it turns about ninety degrees, and then again, about ninety degrees back into its original south-westerly direction. Take this feature of the stream as an indication that it's time to leave the stream behind and choose a more southerly course (the Allt Dubh soon after flows into a small gorge). On this new course, winding downhill amongst rocky outcrops, you will reach the Taibheart Path, then turn left and let it lead you back around the coast to Reingieadal.

Pairc - Park

The people who made a life in Pairc have long gone, though sheep are still ferried in to graze the land. Tiny settlements are scattered along the coast, such as Reimsa-bhoidh, just one and a half miles from Reingieadal by boat. Boats were crucial to the people, it would be a long hard walk through Pairc to the nearest road...

Hirta - St. Kilda

On a very clear day, you may catch a glimpse of Hirta far away on the western horizon. Wherever those enigmatic islands and sea-stacks are viewed from in the Western Isles they allude to being of greater size than they actually are. Here,

they are some seventy miles distant, most clearly witnessed as their eastern hillsides and cliffs fall into shadow at sundown. Hirta's story is fascinating and very well documented, it is not difficult to find a book to satisfy (or feed) your curiosity with regards to its human history, archaeology and wildlife, so I shall say no more. Hirta is unusual amongst these islands for being the centre of so much attention, most lost communities are largely forgotten.

Na-h-Eileanan Seunta - The Enchanted Isles

Rising from the sea twelve miles away, just south of eastwards, are the Shiant Isles. Often hidden from view by the delicate shades of mist, some of the cliffs reach up to 400 feet into the sky, great upheavals of basalt that could dwarf Staffa, more famous for its shared geology. Garbh Eilean (Rough Island) and Eilean An Tigh (Home Island) are connected by a low isthmus, Eilean Mhuire (Mary's Island) remains out of sight of Reingieadal.

In previous centuries, a few families made a life out there, but by the 1901 census only one family remained, and soon they too were gone. Sir Compton Mackenzie bought the islands in 1925, and he renovated one of the cottages there, to which he could retreat for peace and quiet, when the muse was on him. The islands were also the home of a thriving colony of rats, and so cats were brought in to hunt them to extinction... but the rats remain.

Travellers upon the waters of the Sound of Shiant should be wary, for the Blue Men of the Minch, great blue-skinned, grey-faced storm kelpies, haunt the depths.