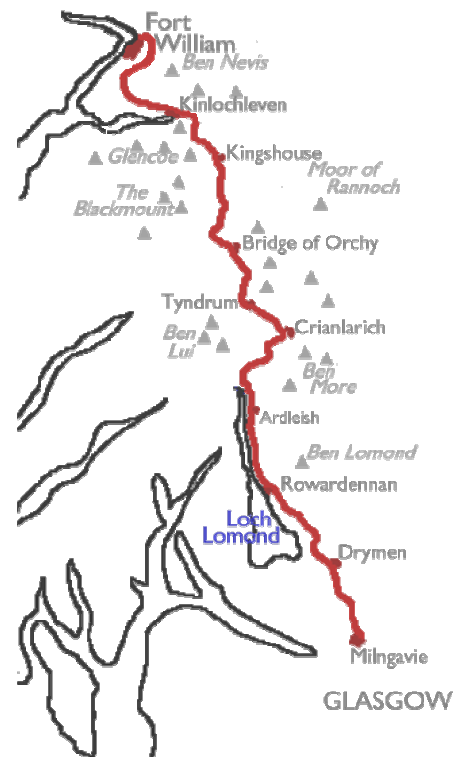




In aid of The Colonels Fund Grenadier Guards and at their own expense – Andy Reid (Chairman of the Grenadiers Guards Association, Surrey and East Hampshire Branch) along with his wife Babs, his brother Alex and wife Gloria took on the challenge of walking the West Highland Way setting off on Monday 13th October 2008 and taking 8 days to complete.

The West Highland Way

Was Scotland's first official long distance route. Originally conceived in the 1960s, it was completed in October 1980. The Way links Milngavie to Fort William – a distance of 152km (95 miles) - from the outskirts of Scotland's largest city to the foot of its highest mountain, following the shores of its largest freshwater loch. It passes from the lowlands, across the Highland Boundary Fault and on into the Scottish Highlands. It passes through a wide range of different terrains, ranging from lowland moors, through dense woodland and rolling hills, to high mountainous regions. This variety of environments provides habitats for a diverse range of wildlife species, both flora and fauna.



Day 1 (Monday 13th October) Milngavie – Drymen (12 miles)



After weeks of planning - we are finally here formed up in front of the obelisk (the official starting point for the West Highland Way Walk) and after high jacking a very nice lady (who just happened to be walking past at the time) and asking her if she would mind taking our photo for the album - we are ready for the off. But, not before being spotted by four young lads who took an interest in our banner which said "Walking The West Highland Way For The Colonels Fund Grenadier Guards" and wanting to know all about what we were up to. They were from the Royal Signals Regiment and also doing the same walk as us. They were not walking for a Charity or any other reason other than "they just wanted to do it," but, they were going to do it in four days – the reason – they said the weather was going to get bad after that. After wishing us luck with our

walk, they were off like greyhounds, never to be seen again. The weather was dry and the walk was very easy for our first day, breaking us in gently. It took us six hours, including stops.

Day 2

Drymen – Rowardennan (15 miles)



Today's walk begins where yesterday's ended, half a mile east of the village of Drymen on the A811 road to Stirling nestling within the pastoral Lanarkshire countryside, we progress via the forestry plantations of Garadhban, we then



cross a stretch of rough moorland and the Highland Boundary Fault to climb the splendid viewpoint of Conic Hill where we find a nice spot to have our lunch stop and take a photo looking out over the village of Balamha on the shore of Loch Lomond and beyond. After lunch, we descend Coric Hill and follow the eastern edge of Loch Lomond (Britain's largest freshwater lake) through wooded areas all the way to Rowardennan at the foot of Ben Lomond, Scotland's most southerly Munro (mountain over 3000ft high). Compared with yesterday the going was much harder, but the views were fantastic with nice weather. Took us 9 hours on this one, but we did have a few stops along the way to take it all in. Its back now to a long hot soak in the bath.

Day 3

Rowardennan – Ben Glas Farm, Inverarnan (14 miles)

Before we start our walk today we happened by chance to come upon Rowardennan War Memorial and because of the reason for our walk – we find it a fitting moment to pause and spare a few private thoughts for the guys of 1st Battalion who were killed serving in Afghanistan.

Gdsm Simon Davison, 3rd May 2007, Age 22
Gdsm Daniel Probyn, 26th May 2007, Age 22
Gdsm Neil Tony Downes, 9th June 2007, Age 20
Gdsm Daryl Hickey, 12th July 2007, Age 27
Gdsm David Atherton, 26th July 2007, Age 25

Also, for friends and all other Grenadiers killed while serving in other actions in past years

“Lest we forget”



On with our walk. Still following near the banks on the east side of Loch Lomond the terrain chops and changes a little, varying between vehicle tracks and forest through woodland paths, to clammers over rocky outcrops. It's these rocky clammers, which occur in forest sections and also feature the additional tripping hazard of exposed tree roots that give the walk its reputation. So we were in for a bit of work, but, there are as many delightful places to discover and glorious views to be had. We have had some rain today and by the time we got to Inversnaid Hotel we were ready for a bowl of hot soup for our lunch and a big dram, before continuing. Now into day three we are start to pass and be passed by

people we have seen from our last two days who are from all over the place, not only our country but others and are doing the complete walk. They are a good bunch and it's nice to have a chat with them on route. Our banners for the Colonels Fund (which we all have tied to our back packs and printed on our tee shirts) are now attracting lots of attention and people are beginning to talk about us and ask us questions, which is good, because we are trying to get lots of money. The walk becomes very rocky and there are lots of tree roots which are very slippery so we have to be careful now. At one stage we have a bit of ledge walking where there is a bare rock face and the ledge is only nine inches deep in order to walk across, it's only about eight foot long but there is nowhere to fall other than into the deep loch. One that Babs feared, but I am very pleased to say that she overcame it and done me proud – well done Babs!. Today we see the end of Loch Lomond and come out at the Ben Glas Farm campsite where there is a good shop and facilities where the walker can spend the night in strange looking timber wigwams before continuing on the way. The views again have been fantastic and so far we think it's the best. Took us eight and a half hours with stops.



Day 4 Ben Glas Farm, Inverarnan – Tyndrum (12 miles)



Today the West Highland Way reaches a mature stage, leaving Loch Lomond behind us and getting into the heart of the Highlands proper. The difficulties of day three are behind us. This section of the way starts off on a simple path but at Beinglas it upgrades to a vehicle track, reverting to path only for the



Strath Fillan forest section. The miles seem to fly past now. The route follows Glen Falloch northwards from the upper end of Loch Lomond, and after the first two and a half miles through rough pasture and open woodland it keeps hard by the river, passing water meadows and cascades. Further on it switches to the left side of the glen, passing the lonely farm of Keilator before reaching the forest section west of Crianlarich. After two miles of forest walk with views down into Strathfillan and we are not able to resist this great spot to stop and have a lunch break. After which, the path descends and hops to the north side for a short section of pastureland before crossing to the woodland on the south side again and continues on the last mile and a half into Tyndrum. This section was a long haul, but we have now reached over the halfway point. At the end of this walk we have concerns for Gloria, as her feet are playing her up. The next morning Gloria's big toe nails are black. So, Alex takes her to the A&E department at Fort William – they lance her nails - then comes the bad news. They advise her not to do any more walking. So, we have to make a decision!.. “Alex and Gloria are now our support team.”

Day 5 Tyndrum – Inveroran (10 miles)



After Alex and Gloria drop us where we left yesterday we are on our way just the two of us this time. Joining the way behind the Green Welly Shop. This section is easy, being on vehicle track where the scenery there is totally different to what we have seen so far. (I have a bit of a drama because I have left my camera in the car, so

the two photos in here have been borrowed from the internet – hope they don't mind) We have a long winding walk following the line of the West Highland Railway (to Fort William) and the main A82 road, as all three highways squeeze through the narrow pass north of Tyndrum into Coire Chailein, crossing the watershed once more into Argyllshire. The line of the railway forms a massive horseshoe-shaped curve to keep to the contour of the surrounding mountain. We then pass under the station at Bridge of Orchy where there is little more than a hotel and a couple of houses. We then cross the A82 by the Bridge of Orchy Hotel, but, not before stopping off to sample what they have to offer in the form of soup and drink. We are then off again over the bridge that crosses the river Orchy and then we turn left off the road to join the path where it climbs for nearly a mile through the forest plantation to emerge on the height of Mam Carraigh. Where we get a view across Loch Tulla to the stark emptiness of Rannoch Moor beyond. Inveroran Hotel and Forest Lodge are seen at the western end of the loch which is where we finish our walk today.

Day 6

Inveroran - Kingshouse (10 miles)



Starting today with a bit of road walking from Inveroran Hotel to Forest Lodge where at which point a large sign indicates that you are about to follow the old Glencoe drove road. The drove road, a vehicle track that gives very good walking, veers northeast and climbs steadily. Trees close off the views to both sides initially. As we come through a gate we catch sight of our first deer standing about fifty feet away, we stand and watch as she continues to



munch away at whatever it is she find tasty enough not to take any notice of us. The only view



offered on this stretch is one of bare moorland and it is so different to what we have been seeing. The weather one minute is nice sunshine and the next raining, and today we are being followed by a rainbow which seems to be darting around all over the place. Between the showers we get some views that go on for ever, without a glimpse of any civilization and for a while we feel like we are the only people in the world, its so remote. This has to be the best day so far, but, how many time have I said that already?.

It's not long before we bump into a local couple coming the other way, after a bit of a chat, they tell us that this section is their most favorite section and they keep coming back to it again and again. We have got so lost with time that as we come round the bend of our path we can see Kingshouse hotel – today has gone by so fast. We find a place in the shelter by the side of one of the bridges and delay the end of our walk by having a hot drink and something to eat while taking in our surroundings. But, we have to descend from our perch at some point - and we do have a support team that is waiting for us to finish our day, so we pack our kit for the last time today and continue on to the Kingshouse hotel and yet another bowl of soup and a “not so wee dram!.”



Day 7

Kingshouse – Kinlochleven (9 miles)



The weather for the next two days is not good - it's raining again quite hard (as it turns out those Signal lads at the start of the walk in Milngavie were on the button with their weather prediction). The most frustrating aspect of the route is that we are now looking down Glencoe and we are just not getting the views that we both know are there,



because of the rain. Our route follows the old Glencoe road for three miles, running parallel with the A82 as far as Altnafeadh, after which it leaves Glencoe and strikes north, climbing the Devil's Staircase to the col (having got to the top with the rain and wind near blowing us over, we now know how it got its name). The long descent to Kinlochleven runs along the edge of some wild moorland scenery stretching out to the Blackwater reservoir to the east, looping across the shallow valleys of Choire Odhar Beag and Choire Odhar Mhor before coming alongside the service track to the reservoir. This track takes a long dogleg through the forested Coire Mhoraire before



dropping down to cross the river Leven just behind the aluminium works at Kinlochleven. The rain has not stopped all day and most of the time our path has been like walking in a riverbed where all the water has run off the mountains. We are not sorry to see the end of this walk and join our support team again where we can get into a warm car and start to dry out.

Day 8

Kinlochleven – Fort William (14 miles)

Starting off with heavy rain again today we climb until we join a section of an old military road, part of the network built by General Caulfield, which seeks the sea level route along by Loch Leven and Loch Linnhe. This road rose away from Kinlochleven to follow the valley of the Allt Nathrach (stream of the snake) up to the Lairig Moire and then followed the Allt na Lairige Moire. The old road is now a rough vehicle track, serving only the Mamore estate and the forest plantations around Blarmachfoldach. The pass runs hard around the



southern edge of the Mamores. Apart from two ruined cottages near the summit of the pass there is little sign of the hand of man - except for the track itself. However, the track was awash with water and we had scores of river crossings today which made it slow work. We did have some great views when the weather broke a couple of times throughout the day. Towards the end of the day we follow the old military road down to Fort William, which was to give great views in parts. As we approach our final bit of our walk into Fort William we are guided by our rainbow that has been following us over the last couple of days.



Well we have done it!

What we set out to do

“We have Walked the West Highland Way in order to raise funds for
The Colonels Fund Grenadier Guards”

We hope that by reading this you have enjoyed the walk. We have enjoyed every step of it. The eight sections have given us different walking, views and weather each day, we’ve had it all. And, it will stay with us forever, there is just one word for it “Fantastic”.

We would like to thank all the very kind people that have Sponsored us both on and off line. It means so much and is going to a very worth while cause and every penny that has been collected **will** go to The Colonels Fund with **no deduction whatsoever**.

We have just one final thing to say – if you have not yet sponsored us, it’s not to late. You can do so online at www.thecolonelsfund.com all you have to do is click on Walking The West Highland Way, on the Home page, or, on the News page then click the link to bmycharity then click on donate. Or, go direct to www.bmycharity.com/walkingthewesthighlandway

“please note if any Sponsor is a tax payer, I would ask for your permission to allow The Colonels Fund to claim gift aid at no extra cost to you (which is currently 28p in every £1.00 that you donate).

Or, send a cheque which should be made payable to **The Colonel’s Fund Grenadier Guards** and I would ask you to send it to:

The Colonels Fund
71 Wyke Avenue, Ash, Aldershot, Hampshire, GU12 6EA.

With our thanks – Andy, Babs, Alex & Gloria