

POINTS OF INTEREST – or a series of useless facts!

A. This road is the A862 but, prior to 1982, when the Kessock Bridge was opened (that's 41 years ago), it was called the A9 and is often referred to as 'the old A9'. However, between 1923 (when roads were first numbered) and 1935, the road was called the A88 running between Inverness and Scrabster via Wick and Thurso. The A9 used to terminate at Inverness. The current A88 is Britain's shortest double digit 'A' road, at less than 3 miles long, and runs from Larbert to Stenhousemuir. It shouldn't even be called the A88 as it is not in the '8' road numbering zone and should really have number starting with a '9'.

B. Look slightly to the right and there is a fine view of Muir of Ord with Ben Wyvis on the far horizon. For an east coast Munro (mountain over 3000ft high), Ben Wyvis is really quite high at 3432ft and is listed at no. 85 out of a total of 282 Munro's in Scotland.

C. Look to the left and a bit behind you, there are fine views over the Beauly Firth and The Aird. Beyond the Kessock Bridge in the distance you might see a plume of smoke/steam – this is from the Sterling Board factory near Dalcross.

D. Just as you turn the sharp left hand bend there is a lovely view straight ahead of the wooded gorge of the Beauly River heading upstream to the west. After the gorge and the village of Struy, it changes its name to the River Glass and the valley is known as Strathglass. This has absolutely nothing to do with Loch Glass, Glen Glass and another River Glass which are all up behind Evanton – very strange. Slightly to the right are the Munro's in Glen Strathfarrar – the highest being Sgurr a' Choir Ghlas at 3555ft and no.58 out of 282. We will see a better view of these mountains later.

E. On the left is Kilmorack Hall – a very old fashioned village hall dating from the 1920's, clad in corrugated iron, recently refurbished. Inside the walls are panelled in timber – a great place for community dances and the like.

F. On the left is the Kilmorack Gallery (in the old Kilmorack Church) where you will find collections of paintings by well known artists (for those in the know). They are available for purchase but you might have to sell the Classic to be able to afford one! Look out for the lizard climbing the front wall – made out of scrap mechanical parts.

G. As you cross the Black Bridge (no idea why it is called this), Kilmorack Dam and hydro power station is visible on the right. This was opened in 1962 and the reservoir behind submerged the Kilmorack Falls which was a beauty spot on the River Beauly (good photos on the net). The bridge is an excellent vantage spot to watch salmon jumping as they wait for favourable water conditions to get up past the dam. There are lovely riverside walks on

the left bank (looking downstream). A fine place to take your dog or your beloved (if different!).

H. On the left, near the brow of the hill, set back from the road, the big green square building was once the Lovat mineral water bottling plant, opened in 1992 but closed in 2001, allegedly due to the spring having dried up.

I. At this junction (where we turn left) you will see a sign pointing right to Garden Centre (this is a no through road and we won't be passing). This is Highland Lilliums, a traditional garden centre where its emphasis is on plants and garden equipment only. It has a great range of plants with some less common species for sale – well worth a future visit for green fingered members.

J. As we climb the hill there are great views to the west. On a clear day it is possible to see An Teallach, an impressive Munro behind Dundonnell on the west coast, some forty four miles away. This has a height of 3486ft and is no. 72 in height out of the 282 Munros. The Strathfarrar Munros mentioned earlier are clearly visible from this point.

K. On the right at the fork in the road, the white buildings across the field is the Moniack Mhor complex – a retreat for budding writers where residential courses are held. The venue has very green credentials including a vegetable, herb and fruit garden and a straw bale building.

L. This is the highest point of tonight's run and we have just broken through 1000ft.

M. As you approach the junction, straight ahead is Moniack Castle dating from 1580 but extended and altered extensively in the 1800's. A winery was started here in 1979 producing a range of wines using local produce. Unfortunately it closed in 2012 but Moniack Mead is still produced – in Devon of all places, by the Lyme Bay Winery.

N. We are now at the car park for Reelig Glen where it is suggested we make a stop for a photo opportunity. There are several walks up the glen from here, one of which is a low level route which follows one side of the burn, crosses a footbridge and returns down the other side. Near the footbridge there are some of the tallest trees in Britain – Douglas Firs at over 165ft in height. In 2000 one tree named Dughall Mor (Big Douglas) was claimed to be tallest in Britain at 210ft. However, in 2014 another Douglas Fir, just 55 yards away, was thought to be some 8ft taller.