



*Gathering lightweight rations.*

far side. It was deserted except, that is, for some roosting swallows that I had disturbed but it was dry. Apart from the birds there was no other life; carcasses of small animals layout littered on the floor and there were plenty of bird droppings. There was no suitable firewood unless you have an axe. I wheeled my bike in and propped it against the wall and unpacked. I switched my head torch on and that, too, had lost most of its charge and failed completely 10 minutes later.

Going super light was, maybe, a mistake. I had packed no spare dry clothes and no spare equipment, not bad for a seasoned traveller, but it was a gamble of weight versus speed. I made a mental note to buy another bike pannier to increase storage and take more gear and maybe some music as well but that was for another trip.

I spread my groundsheet over the layer of bird droppings that coated the floor. I spread the tent on top, followed by my sleeping mat and sleeping bag. Without water my throat was parched; it was a most uncomfortable feeling and I resorted to having to swish and slurp saliva around my mouth but even that has its limitations.

The rain was still beating down as I eased myself into my sleeping bag. I had a dry lightweight duvet top which I had put on over my damp clothes. I was working on the theory that my thermals would dry out from the warmth of my body. I must have fallen asleep as I was woken by the sound of silence. The rain had stopped beating on the roof. Suddenly I was cold and shivering. Nothing had dried off; my duvet and sleeping bag were damp. I had never had to resort to using an emergency blanket before but, as I felt my body starting to go into uncontrolled shivers, this was the time to break it out. I pulled the silver sheet bag over my sleeping bag and wrapped it tightly around myself. I could feel a sense of warmth almost immediately, just enough to pass the next couple of hours in fitful sleep.

Just before 6am I shook myself out of my damp sleeping bag and the emergency bag. Physically, I didn't feel that great and, above all, I was dehydrated. I eased my feet into wet socks then into my wet boots. I put on my wet waterproofs over my wet thermals and emerged from the croft. Low clouds hung over the surrounding hills; it was damp but it looked as if the weather would improve. I quenched my thirst with a tin of sausage and beans. It was enough for now as, soon, I would be at the river.

I packed my gear back into the pannier and my rucksack and pushed the bike back up to the track. The croft is marked as 'Badnambast' on the OS map and from here it was a 1km downhill pedal to the river. I stopped to drink and drink, slaking my thirst, not bothering with a water filter. I filled up my water bottles and started pedalling up the track. Another bridge crosses the river and off to my right was Sronphadruig Lodge, another deserted property in a stunning location, its heyday well and truly past. I trudged through the long grass and entered a door. It was dry inside; I looked around but did not try the stairs lest they were rotten. This also has potential for shelter from the weather if you are up this way although I wonder how long it will remain so as decay has set in.



*The Badnambast croft.*



*The deserted Sronphadruig Lodge.*



*The push up to Loch an Dùin with An Dùn on the left.*



*Heading towards An Dùn in the distance.*

I cycled a little further upstream and just before the track crosses the river there's a visible, short, steep path that climbs above the river. I dismounted and hauled the bike up onto a wide and open boggy landscape. The path ahead is reasonably defined but it is not really cyclable and I had to push my bike for the next couple of kilometres, rising at first until I reached the southern end of Loch an Dùin and then skirting the loch until I reached its northern end. There was a patch of grass at the edge of the loch and I dropped off the path to have a rest and a second breakfast of hot chocolate and instant porridge. The loch was mirror still; nothing moved except for a swirl of midges. I sorted my gear out, leaving most of it by the bike before I started my ascent of An Dùn. I had a bike lock but it was a bit superfluous here as there



*Second breakfast.*