

Lighting of the Highest Jubilee Beacon

By Peter Salenieks



Over two thousand beacons were lit across the United Kingdom and further afield on 2 June, marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by continuing a tradition that stretches back to 1897, when beacons were lit to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.



Veteran's charity *Walking with the Wounded* planned to carry beacons up all four of the UK's national summits: Scafell Pike, Ben Nevis, Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) and Slieve Donard. 'The Ben' holds a special place in British mountaineering and the thought of watching the ceremony from the 1,345 metres (4,411 ft) summit of the highest peak in the United Kingdom appealed to me greatly as a mountaineer.

Alighting from the Caledonian Sleeper in Fort William train station on Thursday morning, I made my way to Glen Nevis and started walking steadily up the mountain track, which zig zags to the summit. There was plenty of time, so I walked around the Half Way Lochan and visited the top Meall an t-Suidhe along the way.

Mountain weather can change rapidly at any time of the year and it's not unusual to experience several seasons in one day. Pleasantly warm sunshine faded and clouds thickened on a strengthening breeze. Before long it started to rain and the rain turned briefly to hail that drummed on my waterproofs.

Ominous rumbles of thunder made me wonder whether the ceremony would have to be cancelled. Fortunately, these thundery squalls passed by on either side of the Ben and the weather cleared shortly before the arrival of the beacon-carrying team just after 8:30 p.m., crossing old snow lying on the summit plateau.



With banners and flags unfurled, I was part of a small crowd who watched as the highest beacon in the United Kingdom was lit, a bright flame amidst the rocks of the summit plateau. It was an honour to be part of the celebration, reflecting on what the moment meant to everyone.



Whilst over 150,000 people typically climb the Ben each year, few will have encountered evening views such as these, watching as squalls were carried towards the coast with curtains of rain picked out by the late sun, an evening glow towards the islands of the West and the volcanic rock of the old observatory tower bathed fleetingly in the reddish light of Alpenglów. A crescent moon shone during the descent to Fort William, returning in the wee small hours to rest after a memorable occasion.

More information on the charity can be found here: [Meet the WWTW team who lit The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons](#)



