

MUNRO MATTERS 2015

by Dave Broadhead (Clerk of the List)

This report covers 1 January to 31 December 2015. Comparing this year's data with last year (in brackets): New Munroists 217 (250); males 80% (76%); resident in Scotland 64% (55%); couples 12% (16%); average age 55 (54); size of Completion summit party 10 (10); average Completion time 24 (23) years; Golden Munroists 8 (10). I have started every report with this summary for the past 9 years, so it is interesting now to look back on any variation or trends.

YEAR	MUNROISTS	MALE	% SCOTS	COUPLES	AGE	PARTY	TIME
2007-08	257	81	64	18	54	16	23
2008-09	227	79	55	12	54	14	21
2009-10	239	81	63	12	52	14	22
2010	217	78	59	15	53	15	22
2011	242	78	54	16	55	11	24
2012	248	79	63	18	52	11	25
2013	233	81	60	11	54	12	25
2014	250	76	55	16	54	10	23
2015	217	80	64	12	55	10	24
AVERAGE	237	79	60	14	54	13	23

Without doing any further number crunching it looks to me like things have stayed pretty steady over the years! I wonder if the low Munroist total for 2015 was a direct result of the poor summer weather? As ever there were plenty of interesting letters and I thought it would be worth looking this year at the length of time taken to Complete a first Munro Round as the focus for my report. Five categories were chosen, with the size of the group shown as a percentage of the 2015 total.

< 5 YEARS = Superfast = 6%

To climb all the Munros in such a short time takes a lot of focus, organization and determination. Lynsey Fitzpatrick (5694) "took the great challenge of completing the Munros to raise money and awareness for the soldier's charity *Help for Heroes*" along with her black Labrador Rabbie. As the wife of an injured veteran with a full-time job, their Round of less than 3 years was particularly impressive. She noted that "the Cuillin in Skye was definitely not at all dog friendly. With the help of a mountain guide, a dog climbing harness and boots made especially for him, we managed to find routes up to the summits." Steven Allen (5834) would probably be surprised to be described as speedy. He explained "before I started I read about the pioneers of the 1890s and was interested to find out how they travelled to the mountains. I was struck by the fact that they would sometimes use a bicycle to reach the starting point and being a keen cyclist myself and not owning a car I decided to adopt this approach to my hill walking. If no train was available for my bike I would take the bus."

6-23 YEARS = Nae hangin' aboot = 43%

This is the largest group, taking a less than average time. This would include my own Round of 18 years, achievable by most regular hill-goers. Steven Gillies (5686) neatly summarized the incentive for many in registering their Round. "On completing his first Munro I told my youngest son Thomas (aged 9) about "The List" and had to admit a little shamefaced that my name wasn't on it. He was very insistent that I should rectify this as he would want to show his children and grandchildren what his Dad had achieved." Brian W. Ringland (5716) a rare Irish Compleater from Co. Monaghan, reported a remarkably coordinated *Contiguous Completion* on 2 June 2004 with Munro Beinn Sgritheal along with its NW Top, Corbett Beinn na h' Eaglaise and Graham Beinn a' Chapuill. Martin Stevenson (5754) started his Munros with his father Roger Stevenson (3566) but has since moved to New Zealand and fitted in his Completion on Ben Lomond on a visit home. He is now working through the "Great Walks of New Zealand." Bengt Karlsson (5886) is the only overseas Compleater this year, from Jackson, New Hampshire, USA. He explained his introduction to Munros "while working in the US writing software I met Ron Bell who worked for IBM and discovered we were both avid hikers." In due course Ron completed the 48 mountains over 4000 feet in New Hampshire and the Lakeland Wainwrights and persuaded Bengt to join him on the Munros. He has spent about 180 walking days on the task and only has 2 more Munro Tops left. Apart from climbing all the Munros, Roy Robinson (5788) admitted that "his other ambition in life was to play professional rugby, which I achieved in 1993." Kevin Woods (5792) reported two Munro Rounds, finishing the second only 2 years after the first and was featured on a BBC Alba programme called "Dha-Ochd-Dha" literally "Two-Eight-Two." He admitted to a cumulative count but promised "I'm wiping the slate clean for the third Round!" John Tochel (Snr) (5893) and John Tochel (5894) father and son "completed every hill together" and "enjoyed a great family Completion day on Meall nan Tarmachan, with four first time Munroists including my wife, daughter, mother and sister." Correspondents often omit interesting pieces of information but Iain Thow (5896) is the first not to mention his name! Having met Iain a few times I soon worked it out from his long letter which started "Now that I'm an SMC member I suppose I'd better confess my bagging sins." As well as reporting "Full House" in the course roughly 7000 hill days he has finished various UK lists too numerous to mention and has an impressive tally of overseas summits. He comments "incidentally, my vote for the naturally roughest ground goes to the Ceathramh Garbh north of Loch Laxford." (Thankfully still a Munro free area.) Gulvain saw the *Co-ordinated Completion* of Kevin Moore (5864), Philip Birch (5865) and David Brown (5866) whose Rounds of 18, 27 and 25 years respectively cross my rather artificial categories!

24-45 YEARS = Whit's yer hurry? = 35%

Munroists taking longer than average have often had an interruption to their hill-going career and seem to write the most interesting letters. Andy Cox (5740) had a particularly harrowing Completion. After enjoying many years of ice climbing and skiing in Scotland and with only 4 Munros left he developed a neurological problem and "now find climbing stairs difficult". With a great deal of grit and determination he managed Beinn Dearg "having climbed Emerald Gully and Penguin Gully previously but never summited I was able to cling to the old stone wall down the long ridge reducing the number of times I fell." His final challenge was Conival and Ben More Assynt, overcome with the help of a friend Max, short roped and

wearing a helmet! Frances Watkins (5875) lost her husband Tim in a car crash in 2005 but “carried on Munro bagging with much help from my friends.” Paul J. Worsnop (5721) sent a very interesting “Munro Highlights” in which he admitted to being a Methodist minister, observing “all in all a wonderful experience which has given me huge pleasure and many real spiritual moments – I often find God closer in the mountains than in church” though he also admitted spending 32 nights in bothies. Stephen Cottrell (5790) belongs to the small group of Munroists who do not drive, explaining “while I was grateful for lifts to about 11% of the hills, the majority (about 75%) were climbed as a day out from accommodation, often using a bike or public transport. The remainder involved wild camping in the hills.” By the same method he is 2/3 through his Corbetts and “hoping to climb the Irish Furths as part of an extended cycle tour.” Graham Eccles (5709) finished his letter by observing “I suspect Sir Hugh Munro had no idea what he started many years ago. It must have brought millions of pounds of income to many areas of Scotland that would otherwise have never seen any visitors. Of course a big thanks must go to the SMC for issuing and updating the Tables.” Kenneth M. Murray (5768) celebrated his Completion with a toast to the late James S. Anderson (19) “a family friend and eminent Chartered Accountant in Dundee who sparked my initial interests, both in becoming a C.A. and in climbing Munros.” Stuart Robb (5798) introduced himself as the son of “a certain R. Robb you may know”. Roger Robb (262) is of course a fellow Dingwall resident, enthusiastic Munroist and SMC member. Stuart then went on to describe a series of incidents enlivening his Completion on Sgurr Dhearg (Beinn a’ Bheithir). “My brother-in-law forgot his boots and had to borrow trainers, the soles fell of both my sister’s boots and had to be bound on with tape. Half an hour after starting, my father realized he had left his camera behind and had to go back to retrieve it. Then there was the new path, not marked on my old map. Despite these setbacks we all reached the summit, where it proceeded to rain.” I blame the parents! John Reay (5799) became another second generation Munroist on Meall nan Tarmachan and reported “sadly my father John R. Reay (3338) who had taken me up Ben Wyvis in 1973 was unable to join us due to arthritic knees. He was at Ben Lawers car park to see us off and partook in the celebrations that evening.” Some Munroists feel they have to justify having taken so long. Andrew Reid (5813) explained “the long time to Compleat was due to a career at sea which has involved more time on the ocean than on land.” Michael Gotz (5730) commented wistfully “I have handed over the book of Munros to my youngest daughter Martha on her 18th birthday. May she carry on from here. What will I do next? I will never do the Drumochter hills again or Schiehallion or Mount Keen. I am going to do a lot of ridge scrambling; I’ll spend much time on Skye and whenever I can I’ll take my sea kayak, launch from Elgol, paddle across to Loch Coruisk, pitch my tent and do the Dubh slabs in sunshine next day. Back in the tent I will look at whales and otters, write bad poetry, read good books, talk to great friends and drink very small amounts of extremely good Speyside whisky.” Malcolm J. Otter (5857) finished his letter with a short but rather beautiful poem composed “after a bivvy beneath Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair.” “Often, only the swish of the wind in the crags, the curruck of the raven or the beating of your own heart break the profound silence of the mountains.”

>45 YEARS = Nae hurry at’aa = 5%

This category have extended the pleasures of climbing new Munros over almost their entire hill-going career and include nine *Golden Munroists* who are David Hall (5737) (59 years); Ian Hodgson (5752) (52 years); Sandy Presly (5783) (56 years); Stuart Whittaker (5814)(55 years); Gordon (better known as Curly) Ross (5836)(54 years); Catherine L. Warwick

(5843)(53 years); Alastair D. Bruce (5871)(51 years) and Charles Evans (5881)(58 years). Calum Anton (5734) reported a *Contiguous Completion* on 3 June 2015 finishing his Munros on Mayar followed by his Corbetts on Ben Tirram 5 hours 30 minutes later. Having climbed his first Munro in 1947 he managed to spread his Round over an impressive 68 years, nearly matching the record of 69 years set by Robert Waterson (3210). Ben More (Mull) is the most popular final Munro, but Archie Macsporrnan was brought up on the island and started his Round by climbing it at the age of six.

NO TIME GIVEN = Nae tellin' = 11%

Members of this category seem to have little of interest to tell me, but Shelagh M. Shoulder (5706) Completed with the inevitable poet Roger Barr (3696). His ode "Climb Every Mountain" ran to 15 verses opening "It started back in the 70s/Sometime in mid-July/When Shelagh climbed her first Munro/And reached up to the sky."

AMENDMENTS

The dreaded heighters were at it again in 2015. Turning their attention away from the 282 Munros, with the assistance of some members of this Club and The Munro Society, Messrs Barnard, Jackson and Philips lugged their GPS equipment up some Munro Tops instead, resulting in some minor alterations. Creag na Caillich on the Tarmachan ridge was re-heighted as 914.3 m, which rounds down to 914 m and is consequently demoted while Mullach Coire nan Cisteachan (aka Carn na Caim S. Top) was found to be 914.6 m, rounding up to 915 m and elevation to Munro Top. The number of Tops remains 255. Also hitting the outdoor-news headlines, Hazel Strachan (3438) Completed a 7th Munro Round, a women's record which firmly establishes her as *Queen of the Munros*. She reported that her most recent Round was also her fastest, accomplished in a remarkable 9 months! Another regular correspondent, Robert H. MacDonald (375) reported a 9th Round, noting that his Completion on Beinn Fhionnlaidh (Appin) was his 7th on that hill and probably a record. Andrew Nisbet (107) reported a 5th Round, undoubtedly a record for former SMC Presidents, one of whom to my knowledge has yet to report his first Round! Letters notifying amendments tend to be more matter of fact and less reflective than first Munro Completions. Kenneth J. MacIver (290) was an exception and was very reflective when reporting his 4th Round. Referring to "coverage in some recent Munro publications" he wrote "since May 1968 I have made 1478 Munro ascents, 130 without a beard and 1348 with. I have had canine companions to share my sandwiches on 252." Ken has a particular fondness for what he describes as *Skiosis* and explained "Since my first Munro ski ascent, Ben Macdui in April 1983 I have ascended 81 Munros on ski with a total of 302 ski ascents of Munros and Tops, including 41 tours on Macdui. Needless to say, ski descents have covered the full range from the sublime to the ridiculous! My fastest 10 Munros on ski were traversed on a wonderful day from Glas Maol to Lochnagar." In the course of his Round of Furths, Chris Pine (4006) reported carrying ski-mountaineering gear over Helvellyn to enjoy "an unforgettable ski off Seat Sandal." Graeme Morrison (1533) also reported a 4th Munro Round, accomplished in a 100 day continuous outing, accompanied by his dog Penny (who achieved a 2nd Round) with the help of a campervan and 8 nights in bothies. His GPS watch recorded a total of 1317 miles (including 141 biked) and a total ascent of 145186 metres. Reporting his 4th Round J. Brian Dick (364) reminded me "as far as I know I am only the 33 Munroist to do four or more

Rounds.” That total is now of course 34 with Peter Hamilton (2861). Another remarkable amendment was reported by Simon Waddicor (2308) who wrote “I finished the Munros while living in Nottingham and having no driving license. Since then I’ve done Corbetts and Grahams from Stuttgart, with the help of a car and many ferries.” He has kept diary entries for over 500 days in the Scottish hills. Thomas Bailey (2114) has always been fussy about the weather and enjoyed views from all but 14 summits on his first Munro Round. On Round 2 he “fixed those 14 and am pleased to be able to say that I have seen the view from the summit of all 282 Munros.” Patricia (3461) and Adrian Chapman (3462) have now Completed Rounds of Munros, Corbetts and Grahams together. Stephen Bateson (332) finished his 2nd Round on the Inaccessible Pinnacle explaining “the fear factor probably caused me to leave it to the end. I actually bought a new rope just for the descent. Having got to the summit block (in somewhat ungainly fashion) I began pulling said rope from my sac whereupon the team that was already abseiling from the block offered me the use of their rope. So I still have a virgin rope.” Six people reported a *Full House* having Completed all the six Lists on our website. Over 40 people have now accomplished this. Martin Almond (1911) came up with a Gaelic term “sarbheanntair” for these “compleat compleatists” suggested by the Gaelic Translation Service in Inverness. Apparently “bheanntair” means mountaineer and “sar” compleat. I will be interested to see if this term catches on. Something that has caught on is the new “*SMC Hillwalkers Guide to the Grahams and the Donalds*” which has attracted many enthusiastic comments along the lines of Norman Wares (4151) who wrote “I would like to pay tribute to those who have been involved in the new guidebook. I couldn’t wait to get my hands on it and have found it to be very helpful in planning how to tackle all the various hills.” With a double *Full House* Bert Barnett (3112) is another regular correspondent whose 17 List entries now equals the record set last year by Hamish Brown (62). Bert warned me “I am working through another set of Munros at present, so you might hear from me again next year.”

At the end of each year I always end up with a small bundle of letters filed as *MISC*. Most of this relates to mundane stuff, correcting errors (usually mine) and apologizing for underpayment of postage but sometimes seeking your Clerk’s judgment. Elizabeth McKinnon (5586) faced a dilemma regarding her dog Molly. Unlike Lynsey Fitzpatrick (5694) and Rabbie mentioned earlier, she was unable to find anyone prepared to help facilitate a four legged ascent of the Inaccessible Pinnacle and finished her letter with the plea “can we say Molly will have climbed all the Munros if she hasn’t been hoisted up that piece of rock?” Having politely but emphatically replied “no way!” I was delighted to subsequently hear that when Elizabeth took Molly up to Sgurr Dearg “she scaled the rock face of the Inn Pinn without any problems.” In the course of her Completion Molly helped raise more than £550 for Scottish Mountain Rescue and the Search and Rescue Dog Association. Not all stories have such a happy ending. Writing from Somerset to request a Completion certificate, Andrew Kilbride (741) lamented “sadly my motivation to travel North decreases year by year in direct proportion to the rate at which wind turbines continue to multiply and desecrate the precious Scottish landscape.” On a lighter note, he also lamented his failure to climb the East Top of Lurg Mhor on three occasions by paraphrasing Frank Sinatra as follows “Regrets, I have a few...But then again too few to mention/Three times I climbed Lurg Mhor...but never once its top extension/I will return, in years to come...when knees are frail and sight be dimmer/Disabled access will be there...I’ll do it on my trusty zimmer.”

Enjoy your hills

Dave Broadhead (Clerk of the List)