

MUNRO MATTERS 2011

by Dave Broadhead (Clerk of the List)

ANOTHER year and another file bulging with fascinating letters and lists to review before passing them on to the National Library. This is the first report to cover the calendar year 1 January to 31 December.

BEFORE delving into the highlights of the letters, a brief summary of some simple data to allow comparison with last year (shown in brackets): New Munroists 242 (217); comprising males 78% (78%); resident in Scotland 54% (59%); couples 16% (15%); average age 55 (53); size of Completion party 11 (15); time taken 24 (22) years.

COMPOSING a song is sometimes part of the celebrations. Alison Mason (4717) "included a song my husband wrote for my Completion party – it has the name of every Munro in it!" "Ali's Munros" can be sung to the tune of "The Irish Washerwoman" and starts "Your first, from Glen Nevis was Mullach nan Coirean/ And next day the Ben with its snow covered cairn/ That's what must have triggered the bug I suppose/ And for 42 years you've been climbing Munros". This jolly ditty continues in similar style for a remarkable 25 verses.

DISTANCES feature in a number of letters. Richard Simmons (4797) counted up that "it has taken eight years using the bulk of my holidays. My distance has added up to 1550 miles walked and 524,000 ft climbed (including the ones that took several attempts)." Christopher Paul Thorpe (4750) calculated "I have averaged about 2 to 3 Munros per round trip from Sheffield with each trip approx. 800 to 1000 miles. It has been well worth the driving!" Gerald McPartlin (1644) accomplished what he claims is "the fastest Round by a pensioner (aged 66), with the help of a camper-van. I walked on 84 days, covered 1,191 miles and climbed 438,000 feet with 140 different companions." Gerry raised a remarkable £50,000 for the "David Gemmell Living Memorial Fund" – further details <http://dglmlf.wordpress.com>

EXPATRIAT Completions confirm that once hooked on bagging there is only one possible outcome, whatever the distance involved. John Pearson (4736) justified his 46 year Round by mentioning "that since 1973 I have lived abroad, in Brussels until 2001 and since then in France.....so my Round may be one of the dearest and a probable factor in Ryanair's success." Geoff Butcher (4782) accomplished his 14 year Round from bases in Kent (2 Munros), Aberdeen (190 Munros) and Texas (92 Munros). Aidan Joy (4802) "emigrated to Australia with my family in 2004 with 53 Munros still to climb. I have been able to return to Scotland on eight occasions to climb them all. I am slowly working my way through the Corbetts too." Putting these admirable efforts in the shade must be Frank G. Joyce (4808) who "was challenged to complete a round of the Munros about a year after I moved permanently to the USA in 1996 from Chester, England. I have finally Completed after 13 trips over 13 years." He also emailed a photo of his Pennsylvania car registration plate BAGD 283.

FAVOURITE Munros include Lochnagar, nominated by Susan Davison (4766) “on a fabulous winter day when we could see snowy peaks to the horizon in every direction.” Graham Roberts (4785) gave a top six: Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan; Beinn Fhionnlaidh; Beinn Fhada; Seana Bhraigh; Bla Bheinn and Ben Alder. Donald McGill (4909) nominated his “best single day on the hills in Scotland? A summer traverse of the full Cuillin Ridge”. Annette Hardman (4948) also noted “the highlight has to be the Cuillin Munros completed in my 50th year and in perfect weather.”

GOLDEN Munroists this year include Wang Liston (4778) (58 years), Margery Johnston (4835) (51 years), Peter Coupe (4837) (50 years), Phil Dover (4878) (51 years), Alex Cook (4936) (51 years) and Tony Davies (4952) (52 years).

HISTORICAL links are always interesting. Alan Puckrin (4862) “did my final Munro with my uncle, Finlay McKenzie who was GP for Kirriemuir for many years and visited the Munro family home on a number of occasions during the course of his duties.” Veteran member, Miles Hutchinson (23) reported a Graham Completion on Beinn a’ Chearcaill. Among the party was Jill Dodgson, daughter of the late Colin Dodgson (16) who was also the first Grahamist. Miles notes that “at 85 I find the Munros rather hard going but there are plenty of lower hills to be enjoyed before I hang up my boots!”

INSPIRATIONAL Munroists include John Ibbetson (4781) who “met with some serious difficulties along the way because my kidneys started to fail in 2000 when I still had around 90 Munros left to do. I did as many as I could before they failed completely a couple of years later, leaving me with 33 to go. I spent nearly five years on dialysis. By the time I got a transplant in 2008 I had four Munros left to do. These four have taken me a while to get round to as they are all fairly remote and I took a long time to get fit again after multiple surgery.” Reporting her Donald Completion, Hazel Strachan (3438) “was looking forward to Compleating a fourth Munro Round. “Unfortunately the physiotherapist treating my pelvis condition had other plans. From only managing half an hour walking uphill after weekly physio sessions for almost four months to walking a five hour day over rough hills, the Donalds have been ideal training ground.”

JOINING the queue to Compleat on the ever popular final summit of Ben More (Mull), Charlie Craig (4888) and his party of 12 arrived half an hour after John Mulgrew (4870). On the same summit Bill Wickham (4921) “met a pair of Geordies who were also celebrating their Completion. They’d forgotten their bottle & were good enough to share ours!”

KEEN young lads, Tom O’Connell (4884) and Alex Robinson (4885), both students at Exeter University, accomplished a continuous car-free Round. Starting on Ben More (Mull) on 1 August 2011 and finishing an amazing 48 days 6 hours and 56 minutes later on Ben Hope on 18 September, raising money for DecAid. More details on www.decaidmunromission.blogspot.com. Aged 21, Alex becomes the youngest self-propelled continuous Munroist. Another former “Youngest Munroist” and still very

keen, President Andy Nisbet belatedly reported a fourth Munro Round Completion on Stob a' Choire Odhair on 29 December 2009. "The original plan was to do a new route on Stob Gabhar and then finish on that, but there was deep snow and my companion refused to climb Stob a' Choire Odhar first (he'd done it before). So we did a new route each on Stob Gabhar (I called mine "Munrovin") and I was left to bag the last in darkness and deteriorating weather and spindrift."

LATE notifications are always welcome, on the basis of better late than never. Jonathan Richards (4856) Completed in 1996, followed by Tops in 1998 but waited until he finished his Furths in 2011 before writing. He explained "the gap between Tops and Furths was filled with Alpine 4000ers, a couple of Himalayan trips and a wife and children." Another excuse was offered by Christine Hill (4943) who explained "Keith (4944) proposed at the summit and the rest as they say is history. Part of the reason for not writing earlier was the chaos of organising a wedding!" Ronald Cameron (4950) Completed in 1998 and admitted "after due reflection I think I'd like my name added to the List." He went on to explain "my greatest current Munro obsession involves badgering the OS to correct sloppy Gaelic in the place names on its maps. I've lost count of the number of names I've persuaded them to change but they include a number of Munros. They were very reluctant to change Stob Diamh (Cruachan) to Stob Daimh but eventually gave in. Such carelessness should not be tolerated."

MOTIVATION comes from many sources. Stuart Penny (4747) reported "my employer encouraged me by offering to give £1,000 to a charity if I Completed. The cash will go to the Children's Critical care Unit at Hull Royal Infirmary where my daughter is a nurse." Tom Ferguson (4714) reported "I had a good day on Ben Vrackie yesterday where I reckon females outnumbered males by 3 to 1." Susan Low (4803) "used my weekends climbing Munros as training for expeditions to the Alps, Nepal, Kilimanjaro and Aconcagua." Sandy G. Macdonald (4833) hoped "my name being on the list may inspire my sons and grandchildren to take to the hills!"

NO review would be complete without mention of the many and varied amendments received, 73 this year, compared with 66 last year. David I. Nixon (1150) finished his third Munro Round on Luinne Bheinn on the same day as his Corbetts, Completed on Sgurr a' Choire-bheithe. Lindsay Boyd (1801) finished his fifth Munro Round on Christmas Day, the same date as his Corbetts in 2004 and Grahams in 2009. Diana J. Harkins (539) and Frank Baillie (4691) joined the "Full House" List which now stands at 22. Member Mike Dixon (959) reported a second Round of Furths, Completed on Skiddaw "arriving in the Lakes via Colonsay, the Trossachs, Arran and Ailsa Craig (the best half day outing in Scotland)". Anne Butler (3366) Completed her third Munro Round within a year, despite the severe winter and having to be airlifted off Liathach because of the fire. Robert B. Gunn (954) wrote to complain that his Furths Completion, reported in 2000 had still not been added. Sorry Robert, I am always happy to correct mistakes and omissions, however small!

OVERSEAS Completions never cease to amaze! Dutch activity continued with Bart Doornbosch (4730) and Willem Vermeulen (4731) Compleating on Ben More (Mull), accompanied by three other Dutch Compleaters among their 26 friends and family. Bart wrote "life after Completion will exist of doing the most beautiful ones once again" while Willem promised "finishing the Munros won't stop me going to Scotland!" Chantal E. N. Elson (4748) became the second Dutch woman to Complete, though now living in Cheshire. She climbed her last 150 in 18 months, raising £25 per summit for the charity "World Peace Flame", the cost of a cataract operation in India. These enthusiasts keep in touch on a website www.buitensport-schotland.nl. Anne Morrissey (4880) counted up "it has taken me 13 years and 27 trips to Scotland" from her native Ireland. She wonders "how many Irish people have Completed the Munros?" Sorry not to have been counting, as there must be quite a few by now. Writing from Austria, Anja Bruske (4755) "has followed the Munros only during my annual holidays (usually 3 weeks in spring) because I had not the privilege of living in the UK. But the long journeys were well worth it." Bernhard Lapp (1173) became the first overseas Munroist to Complete the Tops, noting "since 1993 I have reclinbed 70 Munros in 5 holidays (from Germany) to Complete the Tops." The SMCJ Editor also tipped me off about www.bgmb.de a blog by "bloody German Munro baggers".

POSTHUMOUS Completions are occasionally received. Stanley D. Morris (4794) was notified by his brother Ronald A. Morris (4795). They both Completed in the early 1990's but it was not until after Stanley's tragic death from cancer in June 2011 that Ronald decided to register. He explained "I had climbed most of my Munros with my brother and have renewed my interest in hillwalking and find that is where I can best reconnect with Stan recalling very fond memories of our times on the hills." Jean Gaskell (4756) recounts "In July 2005 my beautiful 17 year old daughter died in a car crash. How was I to carry on? I went in search of help to Scotland and made friends who suggested we climb the Munros. In August 2005 I climbed Bidean nam Bian and knew that this was to be my greatest support through a time of great anguish. They have not failed me."

QUIRKY Completions include Jeremy R. Purvis (4845) who started on his 40th birthday and Completed on his 50th. Colin McBeath (4864) "enjoyed many gastronomic delights on the Munros, including smoked eel on Sgurr a' Chaorachain, various malts and fine dark chocolate and a particularly tasty Arbroath Smokie on Ben Chonzie!" Phil Dover (4878) was able to enjoy a "birthday/Munro cake cooked by my wife and iced by my daughter" as Completion "coincided almost with my 70th birthday." Robert H. MacDonald (375) Completed his eighth Munro Round on Beinn Fhionnlaidh, "the sixth time that I finished a Round on this hill....for nothing other than a bit of British eccentricity."

REACHING a balance between Munro bagging and other commitments presents its challenges. Mick Bashford (4926) worked part-time and "was able to fly up to Scotland on a Wednesday evening, walk Thursday, Friday and Saturday, then fly home Saturday evening and have Sunday with my other half several times a year." Alasdair Law (4947) reported "my first summit was way back in 1986 with my then

(nearly) 6 year old son for company. I am delighted to report he was with me on Bynack Mor, my final summit." Tony Davies (4952) seems to have got it right too and Completed on Beinn nan Aighenan with his wife, "three daughters, two son in laws and three grandchildren."

SKIS get an occasional mention. Member Brian Dullea (4726) "Completed on Sgor an Lochain Uaine on 26 November 2010, solo, on Nordic skis, from Achlean car park in Glen Feshie." Roland Ingram (4745) reported "my Round includes nearly 30 ski Munros".

THE MUNRO SOCIETY have been up to more shenanigans as their "Heighting Campaign" continued and I was very sad to hear of the demise of Beinn a' Chladheimh, the worthy start (or finish) of the "Fisherfield Six". My impression is that most Munroists find these changes to the List a bit confusing and unsettling, especially now they are becoming more frequent.

UNUSUAL stories sometimes emerge. Stuart W. Cummings (4776) recalled "my first Munro was way back in 1975 while a student at Strathclyde University. With a number of fellow students and lecturers we left Rowardennan car park at midnight to begin our ascent of Ben Lomond where a few hours later together with some 200-300 other walkers we watched the sunrise. The walk was memorable for the fact that during the ascent, two of our party, a fellow Mexican student and his German girlfriend invited us to their wedding. A few hundred yards later we learned this was to be at 9 am at the Glasgow Registry Office. After some very early morning coffee at the Buchanan Arms Hotel in Drymen we duly made our way there and celebrated the wedding by sharing a couple of bottles of champagne before heading to our respective beds." John Harris (4761) recalled climbing his first Munro, Ben Lomond "in June 1970. I had to get a bus from Faifley to Clydebank, then the train to Balloch and finally the Maid of the Loch to Rowardennan. We had to complete the climb for the return of the Maid of the Loch or we'd have been stranded in Rowardennan." Alexandra Macleod (4775) announced most alarming future plans - "to give my knees and ankles a break!"

VOCATIONAL details are not required to register, though some correspondents are keen to disclose. Mark Longley (4729) described himself as "a Train Driver, living and working in London." Deborah Howard (4838) and Malcolm Longair (4839) gave details of their web-pages which revealed them to be Cambridge Professors of Architectural History and Natural Philosophy respectively. Malcolm is also a former Astronomer Royal of Scotland. Given away by his headed notepaper, Ron Norman (4840) is actually Sir Ron, OBE, DL and author of "Odd Man Out in the Alps". John Mulgrew (4870) described himself as "PGA Master Professional" and may be the first such to Compleat. To celebrate, John "hit a few drives off the top of Ben More (Mull), even though I could hardly stand." Jamie Bankhead (4915) "is the Centre Manager at the Ice Factor in Kinlochleven."

WEATHER of course features in many reports, particularly those who had the misfortune to choose a poor day for Completion. Gordon Mackie (4817) was a bit more objective, accumulating a record “over 48 years, in all 4 seasons, with 285 data points.

View from the Top	61%
Good day out but no view from the Top.	24%
Wet and miserable with little visibility.	15%

I have always found this evolving trend surprising in that I have had a view from the Top. It is not what is generally thought to be the case in the Scottish hills.” Denis M. Wilson (4821) achieved a remarkable Round, starting on Cairngorm in 1949, “during which I had a view from every one (I believe there is a name for this?) and did not count an ascent without a view.” Sheona York (4824) reported “only 35 in truly awful weather, only struck by lightning once.” Sheona also documented her Round in “a serious diary with photos , which now amounts to a small book” and kindly sent a copy on CD, to add to the ever growing archive of fascinating material held for posterity in the National Library. Tim Flisher (4858) reported “notwithstanding Scotland’s dreadful reputation, I have reached the majority of summits in clear weather. I was caught in thunder storms on three different Munros in 2007 but not any other time.”

XTRA-TERRESTRIAL is the only explanation I can think of for Derek M. Barnes (4924). Writing to report a bumper Completion of Munros (in 2001), Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds he claimed “I had not appreciated that Compleater Lists existed!”

YEAR long career break was the opportunity for Elaine J. Spiers (4906) and Cameron A. Spiers (4907) to achieve a lifelong ambition. Starting on Sgurr nan Coireachan on 6 November 2010 they finished on Braeriach on 1 October 2011. Clocking up 174,252 metres of ascent and walking 2,794 kilometres they also raised over £1000 for Cancer Research UK. More details on www.scotlandinview.com.

ZEBRAS have never featured in any correspondence, though I saw plenty on my summer holiday in Tanzania, returning to a pile of 45 letters to work through. No rest for the Clerk of the List who is always happy to register a Completion or amendment.

Enjoy your hills.

Dave Broadhead, Clerk of the List