

## MUNRO MATTERS 2010

by Dave Broadhead (Clerk of the List)

After a few years in the job I am accustomed now to the seasonal ebb and flow of correspondence, which tends to dry up to a trickle after the New Year and gives me the opportunity to go through the old letters a third time in order to compile this report before the start of the Spring surge. Now that the editor has delayed publication of the SMCJ until later in the year, there seems no obvious reason why the Munro List should follow the precedent of the Inland Revenue, so henceforth it will follow the calendar year. The following Completions were received between 1 April 2010 and 31 December 2010. Some simple analysis allowing comparison with last year (shown in brackets) shows total registering 217 (239); comprising males 78% (81%); resident in Scotland 59% (63%); with couples 15% (12%); average age 53 (52); size of completion party 15 (14); and time taken 22 (22) years.

I noticed in a 2010 Himalayan Club newsletter that my Kathmandu equivalent, Elizabeth Hawley, who keeps a list of Everest summiteers, had reported 5070 ascents by 3431 individuals. How long before they overtake the number of Munroists? Reading through so many interesting letters, it is clear that Compleaters show an abundance of certain personal qualities which have helped them to reach that final summit.

**INSPIRATION** Correspondents often identify what first kindled their interest in the Munros. Andrew Wells (4498) remembers “my interest in the Round was awakened when I met a climber with a copy of the Tables. I recall a happy evening browsing through them with the aid of a dram of Lagavulin.” Roy Stirrat (4588) “started when a member of the Hillwalking Club at Aberdeen Grammar School, led by Donald Hawksworth (72) and I. T. Stephens (89). As schoolboys we had vaguely heard of Munros, but just knew that this was what our two bachelor teachers did at weekends.” Ian Renwick (4594) “began with Blaven, at the time not having heard of Munros. A couple of days later while looking around the Tourist Information Centre in Fort William I came across the SMC guide.” He finishes “realistically I won’t aim for a second round, nor will I try to Compleat the Corbetts. I have however stumbled across another book which might well keep me occupied for some time – The 100 Greatest UK Cycling Climbs! The top rated climb is the Bealach na Ba.” Janice (4663) and James M. Thompson (4664) wrote that “during a week’s holiday in Aberfeldy, we were looking for something to fill our day. Whilst browsing around the Tourist Information Centre, I was drawn to a wall mounted map and the name “Schiehallion” caught my eye.” William Wilson (4673) remembered that he “started walking in 1995 with my brother. Both being big lads at about 20 stones and our occupation being digger operators we took to walking to start getting fit and take more exercise.” Gerard Thompson (4616) reported “my first Munro was Ben Chonzie, climbed at the tail end of a golfing holiday and wearing golf shoes.” Thomas Beutenmuller (4687), a German citizen, admits “it actually took me four or five years after my first Munro to realise what a Munro was! An article by Cameron McNeish in a German travel magazine enlightened me to this folly and by the time I moved to Scotland permanently I possessed my own copy of the SMC guide.” Isobel (4707) and Graham Murdoch (4708) “started by accident. We drove to Glen Clova looking for casual

walk and drove as far as we could. Only because it was such a nice day we followed the path which led to the Shank of Drumfollow and to the top of Driesh.”

**TENACITY** Bagging Munros often illustrates the old adage regarding “the best laid plans”, usually falling foul of the weather. Andrew Wells (4498) reported that “Sgurr a Choire Ghlas required three visits to Glen Strathfarrar, our first two visits being defeated by thick wet snow, strong wind and zero visibility.” Colin H. Wigston (4502) “finished with Ruadh Stac Mor then A’Mhaighdean on a 2 day trip. This was my fourth attempt on these two summits.” James P. R. MacLaren (4602) Completed on Ladhar Bheinn “at the fifth attempt!” No details, but he comments “I have also climbed many peaks around the world – Alps, Elbrus, Mt. Kinabalu, Carstenz Pyramid and Mt. Cook but I consider Compleating the Munros to be my top achievement.”

**LONGEVITY** The benefits to health and well-being of climbing Munros are well illustrated by many Compleatists. I am always particularly pleased to hear from “Golden Munroists” who have managed to stretch their round over 50 or more years. Norman Hull (4506) “climbed his first Munro (Ben Lomond) in 1956 when he was 17, finishing on Stob Coire Raineach at the age of 71.” His son Craig wrote to notify me as “Norman is currently embarking on the TGO Challenge.” John Pope (4529) started with Dreish in 1959 “with Bell-Baxter Biological Society – without the benefits of map, compass, waterproof, leader or anything at all” and recalled being “led round the Grey Corries at New Year by P. N. L. Tranter, in white out conditions, in 1966.” He also suggested that instead of issuing numbers and certificates free, the SMC should ask Compleaters to make a £50 donation for footpath repair. Iain Mackenzie (4581) started in 1958 and finished in July 2010 on Sgor an Lochain Uaine , reporting “the day on my last Munro was marked by a unique experience. A group of about 20 deer appeared in the misty gloom and started trotting towards us. Our mood of disbelief was only dispelled when they came sufficiently close to discern that they were reindeer.” Andy Hosking (4618) climbed Beinn Alligin “as a 16 year old in 1960...part of the Maidstone Grammar School Senior Scout trek.” David A. Wright (4630) “climbed Ben Nevis by the tourist path with my father sometime in the summer of 1948, aged 9.” David Barraclough (4637) “climbed my first Munro – Sgurr nan Gillean- as a 14 year old member of a school party in 1959. I walked (or cycled) about 2085 miles and climbed 680,000 feet in my 51 year campaign of 193 separate trips.”

**REFLECTIVE** One of the pleasures of reading Compleatists letters is that many take the opportunity to look back over their bagging years. John Johnson (4511) observed “I value my time in the mountains, a place of great experiences and fine people. In some ways “finding” the Munros is an insubstantial event as setting the arbitrary height of 3000 feet does not condemn those of lesser height – now to seek other horizons.” Roddy J. Murray (4599) confided “summiting on Sunday was a strange feeling...a curious mixture of joy and some sadness, all mixed up with a great sense of achievement – the beginning of something rather than the end. Plans are afoot to work my way through a list of all the three star Severes in Scotland as my next mission.”

**FAMILY LOYALTY** Husband and wife Completions continue to be popular, with other family connections cropping up occasionally. Dustin (4534) and Howard (4535) Bunyan, son and father “both started our Munros with Ben Nevis.” Their hill-going ways diverged for a few years, before coming back together to Compleat on Carn Mor Dearg, “before

following the arête over to the Ben.” Mary C.M. Rogers (4577) and David A. Rogers (4578) “have some family connections with earlier Munroists. Mary’s father is John Havard (352). A lot of his and Mary’s Munros were done with Bill Myles (157). David’s grandfather “was a friend of Willie Docharty (13), the first person to do the Munros, Tops, Furths and Corbetts. Both served as officers in the King’s Liverpool Regiment at Ypres in France in 1917 and 1918. My father and his siblings knew Mr Docharty as “Uncle Doc”. Lisa Bowman wrote “My father Derrick Bowman (4654) and my Uncle, David Bowman (4655) both Completed last year. They never got round to sending off for a certificate which is a shame considering it was such a huge achievement! It is my father’s 60 th birthday and thought this would be a nice surprise for them both.” Martin Wilson (4557) sent me a copy of a very interesting illustrated summary of some of the highs and lows of his round. He also noted “I rented a cottage near Kirriemuir in August 2009. The lady owner told me that Sir Hugh Munro was buried nearby. Of course I visited his grave to pay my respects and found it completely overgrown. The family had clearly been neglecting its clearance. I borrowed a set of shears and for two hours cleared the area around the grave.” Trevor Dearnley (4659) Completed on Meall nan Tarmachan and reported “that I met Sir Hugh Munro’s great great grandson in the Ben Lawers Visitor Centre car park at the end of our outing. A charming man from Suffolk who had also been up the same hill, his fourth Munro. He and his family had come up to see why his ancestor was so famous and were thoroughly enjoying themselves. In the excitement we never thought to ask his name – his mother was a Munro.”

**DEDICATION** I am frequently reminded of my good fortune in being able to look away from my computer screen and out of the window see several Highland Munros. Mark Williams (4536) sums up the determination of those living further afield, with a brief summary of his final Munro weekend from his home in Suffolk. “Leave Bury St Edmunds at 0600hrs Saturday 29 May...Breakfast A66...Coffee break Pam’s Café, Newtonmore...Tiso’s, Inverness for some kit. Arrive1800hrs at Sheena’s B&B, Lochluichart...600 miles...dinner...bed. Up at 0700hrs for start of route ...Loch a’Bhraoin to Beinn a’Chlaidheimh. 10.5 hours later back at car, job done. Celebrate at Altguish Inn. Back to Sheena’s for dinner, bottle of fizzy stuff then bed. Off to Glencoe in the morning for Sgurr na h-Ulaidh...start at 1200hrs...back at car by 1800hrs...wash in river...fish & chips in Tyndrum, then home...arrive 0400hrs.” Another Highlander, Ken Wiseman (4514) who I met on Ben Wyvis a few months before finishing confessed “although I have Completed my Munros I believe that I remain a lazy so and so. Often I think I would like to sleep longer on a Sunday morning rather than getting up early to go walking.”

**TRUE GRIT** Every year I hear remarkable accounts from people who have used the challenge of climbing Munros to help recuperate from serious illness or overcome a serious disability. Allan Stevenson (4537) “took up hill walking after retiring from Highland League Football. When I had completed 270 I discovered that I needed a triple heart bypass which knocked me back for 2 years.” Geoff L. Davies (4521) suffers from an inherited form of macular degeneration and has been a Registered Blind Person since 1991. He Completed with the help of his wife, Julia Jackson (4520), who commented that “for Geoff, who only has peripheral vision and no central vision, it was a herculean effort.” Gregory P. Lambert (4530) reported that “in 2003 I was diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis, a lung disease, with a median survival time of 4.5 years.

The mountains of Scotland should be placed on the recommended treatments for patients under the NHS! They have given me life.” Larry Foster (4676) suffered “a major accident in Coir a’Ghrunda that resulted in a broken pelvis, head injuries and a substantial rescue by the Skye MRT and Coastguard helicopter. After a year off to recover I went back to Skye and finished the hills there.”

**RECORD BREAKING** As ever, the occasional Compleater has an eye for the record books. Steven C. P. Cham (4538) made an unusual claim during his Round “my longest stay at the summit was Ladhar Bheinn, over 5 hours, just watching the world go by!” Martin Sansby (4544) noted “26 Munros have been done using X-country ski gear.” Obviously a man of diverse interests, he also reported “plans for the future include: taking up sea kayaking; drinking more *Red Kite*; hand diving my own scallops.” Pete Nienon (4546) reported a summit party of 102 on Ben na Lap, ranging in age from 72 years to 6 weeks. Stephen Pyke set a new record for the fastest round, a remarkable 39 days 9 hours 6 minutes. He has not yet written to register for a number.

**INTERNATIONALISM** The challenge of climbing Munros continues to appeal to overseas visitors. Anne van der Wal (4517) and Jan Vijfhuizen (4518) became the first Dutch couple to Compleat and Anne the first Dutch female. French-Canadian Nicole Bourque (4647) became the second Canadian female Compleater, with an interesting story. “My first Munro was the Inaccessible Pinnacle on my first weekend away with a boyfriend who was a mountaineer. I had no idea what I was doing .... we had practised abseiling at a local crag before the climb. Sixteen years of Gortex later I arrived at the summit of Ben Lomond with the same mountaineer, Robert Wright (3508). As I pulled up to the cairn I heard some corks popping.” This Coincident Completion was Ali Odds (4651) who “moved to Scotland 9 years ago from the flat lands of Flanders.” Nicole and Robert used the late Irvine Butterfield’s map for their Completion, given to them by his sister.

**CELEBRATORY** Most Compleaters enjoy some form of celebration to round off the big day and like to fill me in on the details. Typically, after finishing on Ben Lomond, John Crascall (4524) “stayed overnight to celebrate at the Rowardennan Lodge Hostel and enjoyed a bottle of 18 year old Dalwhinnie malt and a good meal.” A couple of weeks later, after receiving his certificate and number, he sent me a copy of the menu of a surprise celebratory lunch organised by his wife in The Blacksmiths Arms, Chichester, West Sussex, with a useful list of the Munros printed on the back. He commented that “these sorts of things do not happen very often down south.” Fiona P. Duncan (4650) finished on Schiehallion then “partied in Killiecrankie Village Hall which I booked through to the Sunday. There was a huge spread and a barrel of Schiehallion Ale. We danced into the wee sma hours. Next morning there was tea in sleeping bags and egg rolls all round.”

**GREAT AND GOOD** Occasionally a familiar name appears. A certain David Gibson (4559) let slip that “I work for the MCoFS in Perth.” Paul Webster (4591) noted “I also run the walkhighlands.co.uk website which has all the routes of ascent.” Jim Willsher (4598) the Webmaster’s Assistant noted that “I’ve had clear views from 261 summits, experiencing mist on only 22.” He even included a pie chart to prove the point, adding

that “I saw no point climbing hills unless there was a good chance of a view from the top.”

**ECCENTRICITY** One cannot help but smile at the antics of some Compleaters. Les Reilly (4560) started “when my big cousin took me out into the hills for the first time. Since July 2003 I have been climbing wearing my kilt. I am also known as the Kilted Munro Bagger.” Helen Hamilton (4705) enclosed a photo, noting “hopefully you will all have noticed my pink shoes. This was the second time that I had them on. The first time was on the summit of Kala Pattar 18,514 ft in the Himalayas, when I raised £ 1,650 for breast cancer research.”

**QUIRKY** Under this heading comes the growing phenomenon of the Contiguous Completion, *Munrosis contiguum*, a carefully planned event, not to be confused with the entirely accidental Coincident Completion, *Munrosis coincidentalsis*. Deborah (4600) and Andrew (4601) Ramage contrived an extreme form of the former, finishing both their Munros and Corbetts on the same day. With the help a couple of trains to Corroun station, early birds accompanied them to the summit of Leum Uilleim, while a bigger group arrived later to join them on Beinn na Lap. Colin D. Smith (4686) held back from registering until he had completed Chris Crocker’s “600” (Munros, Tops and deleted tops as set out on [biber.fsnet.co.uk](http://biber.fsnet.co.uk)).

**CHARITABLE** Occasionally Munro bagging is combined with charity fundraising. Michael Howell (4624) used his Completion as the final summit in a fund raising project for Afghan Action, a small training school in Kabul which is giving young men and women skills to become economically independent. The total raised is £21,000 so far.”

**INVESTIGATIVE** David Barraclough (4637) set out to answer the old question “So which is the most remote Munro?” With the help of a digital map wheel and 1:25000 maps he produced an interesting paper with data for 21 hills, giving distances for the “shortest, most direct and sensible walking route from a public road or railway station.” His top 5 are:

1. Carn an Fhìdhleir	From Linn of Dee	11.40 miles
2. A’Mhaighean	From Incheril	10.98 miles
3. Beinn Bheoil	From Rannoch Lodge	10.46 miles
4. Ruadh Stac Mor	From Corrie Hallie	10.37 miles
5. Ben Alder	From Corroun station	10.34 miles

**AMENDMENTS** Recording Amendments continues to take up an increasing proportion of the Clerk’s time. I have laid in a large stock of Corbett Completion certificates and the Webmaster has set up a Corbetteers Photo Gallery. Once you have received a number, a Completion photo can be emailed or posted to the Webmaster. Alex Mayes (4644) waited 25 years before registering, so it really is never too late.

I continue to be impressed and inspired by the enthusiasm of correspondents. Worthy of note include Andrew M. Fraser (73) who has Completed a Munro Round in each of five separate decades while Steven Fallon (1045) registered his 14 th Munro Round. Richard Knight (3497) “noted that it took me 22 days more walking to achieve the Corbetts than the Munros with the average distance per Corbett being 1.3 miles greater than that

required per Munro.” The number of different Lists seems to keep growing. Alan L. Brook (225) has compiled a number of “Private Hill Lists” including “Highlands +Islands Tops 2000’ to 2999’ + Hills with 500’ drop (1634 Tops + 410 Hills). Ken Whyte (319) Completed his second Munro Round “as part of a quadruple Completion of Slioch (Munros), Meall Fhuaran (Corbett Tops), Meall Daimh (Graham Tops) and also the last 2000’ Top with a 30m prominence in GB & Ireland.”

Enjoy your hills.

Dave Broadhead, Clerk of the List