

This report covers 1 January to 31 December 2016. Comparing this year's data with last year (in brackets): New Munroists 202 (217); males 77% (80%); resident in Scotland 66% (64%); couples 13% (12%); average age 55 (55); size of Completion summit party 13 (10); average Completion time 24 (24) years; Golden Munroists 10 (8).

CLERK OF THE LIST HITS THE HEADLINES

Early in 2016 I was invited by Peter Evans (4999) to feature as Clerk of the List in the regular "Working in the outdoors Q&A" which appeared as a full page in the Spring/Summer "Active Outdoors" colour supplement issued with all the Scottish Provincial Press local papers. With social media currently getting a bad name for some less than accurate reporting I thought it would be appropriate this year to highlight my review of the correspondence with some good old fashioned attention grabbing headlines. No fake news here!

CHILDREN CLIMB MUNROS

As ever, some Munroists remembered being introduced to the hills by their parents. Alasdair Raffe (6092) began his Round aged 6 and was delighted that his mother who encouraged him on that occasion was able to join him again on his Completion on Mount Keen. Kevin Joss (5928) remembered "aged only 8, kitted out in a pair of wellie boots and a less than watertight blue kagool, I made my way to the summit of Mayar in Glen Clova in the driving rain and snow with my Dad, William G. J. Joss (1978) and a couple of school friends." Rhona Adam (5942) climbed Ben Vorlich (Loch Earn) in 1964 with her father, Duncan H. McPherson who had joined the SMC in 1929. Chris Gooch (6014) "tagged along on my Dad's walking trips with his friends in my teens. The one you may have heard of is the late Jim Rennie, who used to draw the maps for SMC guides."

HAPPY FAMILIES

Alistair K. Smith (5954) joined his two brothers Barry K. Smith (1652) and Jonathan M. Smith (2904) on The List. Father and son Derek (6017) and Neil Sharp (6018) Completed together on Ben More (Mull) and proudly requested joint certificates. Young Neil had introduced his Dad "to climbing and hillwalking when I was aged 42 and extremely unfit." James R. Plant (6064) his brother Allan P. Plant (6065) and Allan P's son Allan Plant (6066) Completed together on Bla Bheinn while brother and sister Moira C. Thomson (6077) and Derek Thomson (6068) finished on different hills a few weeks apart but ended up with sequential numbers. Alastair MacLean (6042) Completed on Ben Challum "chosen because my eldest son is called Callum! Not to upset my daughter Iona, my second last hill was Ben More on Mull, overlooking Iona!"

BEN NEVIS THE HARD WAY

Howard Mckee (5929) claimed "I never intended to 'do' the Munros, my interest is in the scenery and peace of the mountains" but then went on to recall "probably the best day was to meet friends staying for a weekend at the CIC hut to winter climb, when I couldn't arrange a lift, so got the night train from Preston, got off at Corrour, walked in plastic boots along the Grey Corries and glissaded at 11pm down a long snow-filled gully in the moonlight from Carn Mor Dearg, arriving at the hut about 11.30pm to the astonishment of my friends and the grudging admiration of the SMC residents. An off-day ascent of North Gully on the Sunday, down to the Fort & back on the train to work in Preston..."

BAGGER NEARLY CAME A CROPPER

Munro Rounds do not always go smoothly. Keith Monaghan (5908) a rare Munroist from Northern Ireland admitted that he “fell off Fionn Bheinn going through a cornice in a whiteout.” Luckily, he “was able to climb 100 feet or so back over the top” despite a couple of broken ribs. I also have to own up to cracking a rib on the same hill some years ago when I slipped climbing over the roadside gate!

BEINN DORAIN MYSTERY SOLVED

Explaining her choice of Completion hill, Barbara Brodie (5930) explained that “my Dad grew up in Tyndrum (Brodie’s store was my Grandfather’s, then my Uncle’s and is now my cousin’s) and it’s where he met my Mum; when we were young if we lost anything and asked where it was the answer was always the same “the top of Beinn Dorain.”

BELGIAN BAGGER ADMITS TO SPENDING MONEY

Michel Van Herck (5940) from Mol in Belgium was the only overseas Compleater this year. He sent a delightful letter, introducing himself as “57 years old, married and have a nice and lovely wife who gives me two beautiful children.” He then explained “I have been in Scotland 18 times, all this times I came by van which I use for my work....I drove thousands of kilometers, I spent a lot of money on fuel and scottisch outdoor shops!!!I became wet, cold, white out, almost eaten by midges, pain in legs and knees, all kinds of weather you can get and so much more!!! But also very nice views. But? It was worth it.”

ARTS & BOOKS

The Munro Society JOURNAL No 4 (2016) arrived in the post, literally bursting out of its envelope. Expanded to an impressive 182 pages with a striking colour photo of Suilven on the front cover, this publication has gone from strength to strength thanks to the editorial skills of Derek Sime (685) and his team. Inside, 34 concise articles cover a worldwide range of mountain related topics, interspersed with photos, illustrations, poems and member’s short anecdotes. Plenty here to interest anyone who enjoys going to the hills. Highly recommended.

Jim Coxhead (6083) noted that “I am more than following in the footsteps of my aunt, Elizabeth Coxhead who wrote a couple of climbing novels and presented me with my first pair of climbing boots.” This reminded me how much I enjoyed reading “One Green Bottle” many years ago, a classic of the genre whose heroine obtains her first pair of climbing boots by more dubious means! Google for more details.

KEEPER TRIBUTE

In July 2016 I was very sad to learn of the death of Gordon A. McAndrew (450), Keeper of Regalia. Following his Completion in 1986 Gordon decided to produce a more tangible celebration of this achievement and designed a distinctive tie and brooch. With the approval of the Court of the Lord Lyon, this incorporates major features from the Arms of Sir Hugh T. Munro, a red stylized heraldic eagle’s head encircled by branches of laurel and oak, all subscribed by the numeral 3000. Although not an SMC member, for the next 30 years Gordon supplied ties and brooches to Munroists with great efficiency. To allow this tradition to continue, his family agreed to sell the remaining stock to the Club and Chris Huntley has taken over as Keeper of Regalia.

MUNROS A MERE WARM-UP

Munroists are invited to share future plans when they report. Victoria Morris (5944) “has arranged an 8-month sabbatical from work in 2017 to walk from John O’Groats to Land’s End via the highest point of each of the mainland historic counties. Currently the route is

about 3500 miles!” Sorrel Hopkins (6028) had “a trip to the Himalayas planned for next year to ensure that I keep my motivation.” Travelling from Cambridgeshire, Stephen Wool (6041) worked out that his 7 year Round required 27 journeys to Scotland totaling circa 30,000 miles and declared “ I will definitely not attempt a second Round. As I kept a journal for every climb and have a photo of every summit I may write a ‘book’ for my grandchildren.” Tom Thomson (6052) reported “my interest in Munros sparked a general interest in mountaineering and I have now completed Kilimanjaro, Mont Blanc, Gran Paradiso, Stok Kangri, Toubkal and Aconcagua.” Moira Hamilton (6081) “plans to go to the Atlas Mountains in Morocco - meanwhile she noted “I did spot an SMC Grahams and Donalds book the other day and have put that on my Christmas list.”

MUNIFICENT MUNROISTS

Fraser Campbell (5958) was prompted by “the thousands of gallons of rain which drenched me, my boots and equipment” to raise over £12,000 for Water Aid. Alan Clayton (6060) celebrated his Completion with donations to the Scottish Mountaineering Trust, Mountain Rescue and the Mountain Bothies Association and finished his letter “thank you and all at the SMC for the wonderful work you do on behalf of us all.”

FIRST COMPLEAT WOMAN MINISTER?

Apart from First Munroist Rev A. E. Robertson (1) The List has traditionally been egalitarian and avoided titles. Valerie Allen (5979) aka Rev Dr. Valerie L. Allen wonders if she is “the first woman Church of Scotland minister to climb the Munros?” The first such ordinations were made in 1969 so I think she probably is.

MUNRO MIX UPS

Stacy Hearl (6003) organized a large celebration of her Completion on Meall Buidhe (Glen Lyon) but “unfortunately we were 8 people down on the day as they had attended Meall Buidhe the Corbett also in Glen Lyon!” Fortunately, Fergus the piper climbed the correct hill. With only two summits left, David Atherton (6035) struggled up Knoydart’s Luinne Bheinn in horrendous weather “and a record number of midges for company.” Careful preparations followed for Completion in the Northern Highlands a few months later “only to discover that Beinn a’ Chlaidheimh, the target hill is no longer a Munro!”

****STAR LETTER****

From the many fantastic letters received each year I like to share part of my favourite. Like many others, Gill Cairney (6013) experienced highs and lows in the course of her Round and finished by writing: “Apologies for the long letter, but I am always amazed by my own achievement. Doing this has been a journey, not a long one as such, but I have learned, confidence in myself and my abilities has grown. I know my wee Dad would be proud of me, not necessarily for ticking off a list, but for getting out there and doing it. I genuinely do feel, compleat.”

LOST AND FOUND

Iain Mitchell (6029) reported losing “a camera on Beinn a’ Clachair, several walking poles, a sit mat and a small tripod” but was lucky “to find a ten pound note near ski slopes on Meall a’ Bhuiridh!” Domoskos Gyore (6046) reported losing a tent but finding an ice-axe and a full bottle of champagne!

CURIOUS COINCIDENCE LEADS TO SPOOKY COMPLEATION

Devastated by the death of his wife in a road accident in 1998, well-meaning colleagues of John B. Robertson (6032) persuaded him that “a day out in the hills could only help the healing process I was going through. My first tiny hill was Ben A’an in the Trossachs and I was hooked from the first day.” 18 years later he planned to Compleat on Ben Avon (Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe) and admitted “as a spooky aside I only realized a few weeks before that Ben A’an was my first hill and Ben Avon (pronounced the same way you will be aware) was my last Munro, a totally unplanned coincidence.” A final supernatural twist to the tale came “on the day before climbing Ben Avon we all visited Craigievar Castle and while in the haunted room I was tapped twice on the shoulder with no one behind me. As a total sceptic I attach no significance to this but it remains unexplained nevertheless. My more superstitious colleagues reckon it was a sign of approval for what I was about to do the next day.”

WEDDING BELLS FOR BAGGERS

In October Thomas P. Wright (6076) chose his Completion on top of the Inaccessible Pinnacle as the moment to propose to his partner Alfiya. Their guide for this happy event was Jonah Jones who had notched-up 63 ascents of the In Pin so far that year!

GOLDEN GUYS AND GALS

Prolonging the pleasure of their Rounds over 50 years or more, Golden Munroists this year were W. Roger Parry (5902) 50 years, Donald Mackenzie (5914) 50 years, Richard Catlow (5915) 52 years, Geoff Cooper (5938) 51 years, Rhona Adam (5942) 52 years, Fraser Campbell (5958) 50 years, James A. Robertson (5960) 54 years, Conan Fischer (5992) 51 years, Jim Coxhead (6083) 50 years and David J. Hartley (6095) 50 years.

CLUB CORNER

Clubs continue to play an important role in encouraging and supporting Munroists through their Round. Mentioned this year were Aberdeen Mountaineering Club; Banbury Mountaineering Club; Blantyre Hillwalking Club; Cairn Ban Mountaineering Club, Glasgow; Chester Ramblers; Capricorn Mountaineering Club; Colmcille Climbers Club, Londonderry; Deeside Hillwalking Club; Glasgow Holiday Fellowship Walking Club; Glenrothes Hillwalkers; Grampian Hillwalking Club; Highways Hillwalking Club, Edinburgh; Inverness Highland Hillwalkers; Lylecraigs Hillwalking Club; Jacobites Mountaineering Club, Edinburgh; Milgavnie Mountaineering Club; Ochils Mountaineering Club; Paisley Hillwalkers Club; The Pill Ptarmigans, Bristol; Scottish-hills; XXL Hillwalking Club, Aberdeen.

WEEKEND SUPPLEMENT aka AMENDMENTS

In 2016 I heard from 75 (88) Munroists requesting to amend entries on our Lists (last year’s figure in brackets) as follows: New Munro Rounds 14 (19); Tops 6 (10); Furths 11 (10); Corbetts 40 (29); Grahams 11 (17); Donalds 12 (12). Full House 4 (6) total now 44.

CORBETTEERS CONFUSED

The irrepressible heighters were busy again, establishing Cnoc Coinnich 764m near Arrochar as a new Corbett, bringing the total to 222. This confused some would-be Corbetteers such as Alexander J. L. Stalker (2110) who “thought I had finished them a month or so earlier on Ainsival on Rum but then noticed the list had changed.”

ROYAL NOTES

“Queen of the Munros”, Hazel Strachan (3438) reported Round 8 but still has some way to catch “King” Steve Fallon (1045) with 15 Rounds. The effusive tone of her letter made it clear that familiarity has not diminished her enthusiasm. Her latest Round involved 113 days of walking and was almost thwarted by a heavy fall of snow on the Cuillin – in June! “I was wearing a pair of Marigolds covered with a pair of gardening gloves.” How’s that for “chasing the ephemeral” President Richardson? More seasonally, in January she “caught a lovely sunrise as I climbed Fionn Beinn, happy that I had snowshoes on my feet.” Hazel seems to have a knack with the weather and noted “it has been years since I’ve had a truly soggy day.” On her penultimate day, in the Northwest Highlands (where else?) she “rather enjoyed myself in 9 hours of constant drizzle and rain because it was such a novelty.”

NOT THAT DONALD AGAIN

Enthusiasing about the Donalds, John Edward Casson (2862) noted “whilst they do not have the grandeur of the Highlands, they do have the attraction of being unfrequented by other walkers. In fact, you have more chance of bumping into a wind turbine than another walker.”

TICKING IN TASMANIA

Thanks to the wonders of the world-wide web I had a fascinating exchange of emails with Dr Louise Fairfax of Launceston, Tasmania. Louise maintains a list of bush-walkers who have climbed all the Tasmanian Abels and was preparing a magazine article about Munros. With 160 summits of height exceeding 1100m the Abels sound a much tougher proposition requiring long approaches through challenging terrain. She noted that a recent Launceston Abelist, Malcolm Waterston, is the son of Robert Waterston (4321) who still holds the record, at 69 years, of the longest Munro Round. Malcolm is apparently also close to his Munro Completion, so I look forward to hearing from him.

INCOME TAX INSPECTOR DODGES LIST

Writing to correct a small error with his entry, Chris Andrews (280) explained that his late father and SMC member Christopher Andrews was an early Compleater who chose not to register, unlike his friend and fellow Income Tax Inspector John Dow (5) though his Round was acknowledged in his 1953 SM CJ obituary.

METRIC BAGGERS FORM NEW SOCIETY

Distracted some years ago into climbing Marilyn's (British hills with 150 metres of separation) your Clerk subsequently registered in the Marilyn Hall of Fame, having climbed more than 600 of the 1556 listed hills. This has revealed a whole new world of bagging beyond our familiar Imperial lists. To cater for this growing interest the Relative Hills Society was formed in 2016 to support those climbing not just Marilyn's but also Humps, Tumps, Simms, Sibs, Ultras, Ribus, Majors and the Switzerland Finest 50. For further details please visit www.rhsoc.uk.

APOLOGIES

In last year's SM CJ (2016) I mistakenly congratulated Bert Barnett (3112) on equaling what I thought was a record 17 entries in the Lists, established by Hamish Brown (62). An eagle-eyed correspondent quickly pointed out that with a remarkable 26 entries, Stewart R. Logan (327), currently President of the Munro Society remains well ahead. Apologies to all concerned.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Munroists who finally got around to registering in 2016 include Garry Minors (5941) from 2008, Gil Carling (5945) who finished the original List in 1993 and the Revised List in 1999 while Maureen Stevenson (6021) finished back in 1992. Remember it is never too late to add your achievements to our six Lists. Check www.smc.org.uk for further details and to view the picture galleries of Munroists and Corbetteers celebrating on their final summit.

Enjoy your hills

Dave Broadhead (Clerk of the List)