

ANNA WELLS ON HER
WINTER MUNRO ROUND



2024 MOUNTAIN WRITING
COMPETITION WINNERS

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEER

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

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Get ready for summer in Scotland's hills with the new issue of **Scottish Mountaineer**



It's easy to understand why, after what can fairly be described as a seriously disappointing winter for many hill users, most of us have waited eagerly for the arrival of spring's longer days and better conditions. While the new season is no guarantee of perfect weather (as a recent soggy summer bank holiday spent up Cruach Àrdainn and Beinn Tulaichean quickly reminded me!), those light mornings and stretched nights do lend themselves to planning for bigger adventures.

Inspiration for hill days comes in all shapes and sizes in this issue, from lesser-known island peaks to local favourites and endless ideas for climbing spots thanks to the Scottish Mountaineering Club's (SMC) new route database. Record-breaker Anna Wells also gives a personal account of her incredible Winter Munro Round, which saw her become the first known woman to 'compleat' the challenge, while President Anne Butler shares her recommendation for Scotland's Best Walk (which, considering her completion of two SMC Full House Rounds, you know it is going to be a good one!).

Meanwhile, Bob Sharp conveys the small joys of the Campsies, the Relative Hill Society sets off by boat to explore Skye's Significant Islands of Britain (SIB) and the Association of Mountaineering Instructors' Scott Kirkhope sets out how to hire a guide for those in search of bigger challenges this season.

In addition, we've got all your latest access and conservation news, including our new Manifesto for the Mountains and the most recent updates on the Shared Rural Network (SRN) as well as the latest goings on from the Mountaineering Scotland team.

This issue also sees the return of the Mountain Writing Competition, with the publication of our three winning submissions across Prose, Poetry and our new Young Poet category. If you're feeling inspired to put fingers to keyboard after reading the winning entries, don't forget that we love to hear from our members with their stories and photos year-round, so drop us an email if you have an idea for a future issue of *Scottish Mountaineer*.

And now all that's left to say is, we hope you have an incredible summer in Scotland's great outdoors and we'll...

See you in the hills!

Fiona McNicol, Editor

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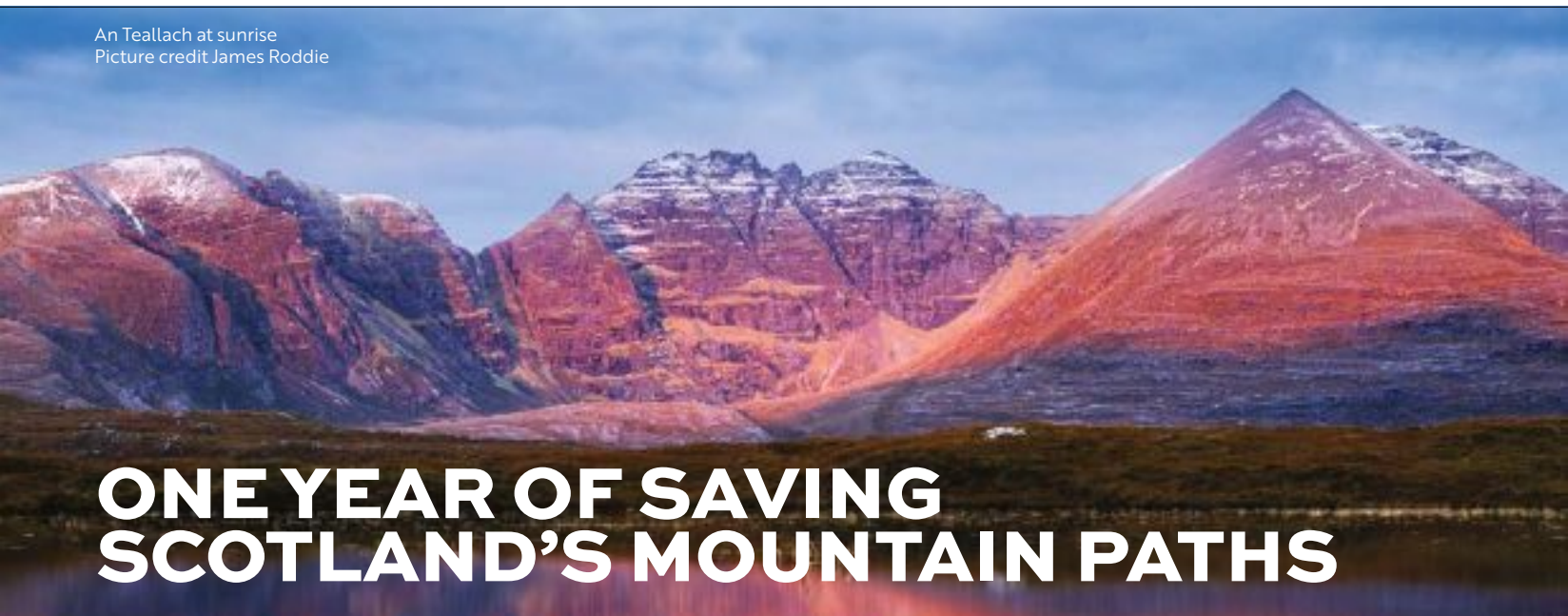
President Anne Butler's dog Ralph looking towards Suilven. Featured as part of our new hillwalking series, focused on Scotland's Best Walks.
Credit: Anne Butler, President, Mountaineering Scotland

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Bothy blether



An Teallach at sunrise
Picture credit James Roddie



ONE YEAR OF SAVING SCOTLAND'S MOUNTAIN PATHS

The 25th May 2024 saw *It's Up to Us* – our joint path campaign with the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) – celebrate its one-year anniversary, having raised more than £218,000 of the £300,000 target in the first 12 months alone.

The initial stage of the campaign is focused on repairing 3.2km of badly eroded path on An Teallach, one of Scotland's most iconic mountains. Path contractors from Cairngorm Wilderness Contracts (CWC) have so far completed 340m of path building and maintenance work on the mountain, funded by the campaign and supported by a team of enthusiastic path maintenance volunteers.

The three-year *It's Up to Us* campaign, supported by Cotswold Outdoor, has received generous donations from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust, European

Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA) and other charitable trusts (£154,858), a major private donor (£25,000), the general public (£24,996), commercial donations (£7,550) and mountaineering and hillwalking clubs (£5,900).

As the campaign enters its second year, Mountaineering Scotland and OATS are issuing a further appeal to all hill path users, outdoor and conservation businesses, organisations, and charities who care deeply about the conservation of the hills they use and love to support the campaign and help them reach the £300,000 required to complete the An Teallach project.



To find out more and get involved, visit: www.savemountainpaths.com
Or scan the QR code left.

Meet Lucy Ross: ClimbScotland's new Head Route Setter

We're delighted to welcome Lucy to the team, who started working as the Head Route Setter for ClimbScotland in May 2024.

Lucy is a Route Setter from Glasgow who came up through the ClimbScotland comps and started route setting seven years ago at TCA Newsroom. Since then, she has worked all over the UK in lots of different roles, setting competitions and as part of the GB National Setting Team.

Lucy said: "I'm excited to join ClimbScotland

because I really enjoy setting comps and I'm looking forward to helping the new generation of climbers develop their skills and find community.

"I love route setting when I can bring the joy I feel outside on to the wall and share it with other climbers."

Want to find out more about the Mountaineering Scotland team? Visit: www.mountaineering.scot/about-us/meet-the-team



Manifesto for the Mountains

Have you read our new Manifesto for the Mountains?

The new policy explains our key priorities and shows why our members value the hills and mountains of Scotland, along with detailing the work we carry out to protect our landscapes and wildernesses.

Read more on page 10



It's time to click and climb

Have you spotted the new ClimbScotland website?

Making it even easier to find all the latest news, courses and events, the website also has a new interactive climbing wall map to help you know where to climb in Scotland.

Visit: www.climbscotland.net



Jo Dytech

CHAIR AND DIRECTOR FOR CLUBS

I hope you are all well and, like me, delighted we are finally seeing signs of brighter days and nights after a particularly wet winter.

In my recent appointment as Chair, I've been asked several times what my goal is in 2024. You might remember our strategy review which took place in 2021. Following consultation with members, we presented an updated tangible strategy with four key pillars of **Representing**, **Protecting**, **Inspiring** and **Developing**, which illustrate the depth and breadth of work we cover as an organisation and how we deliver the work you, our members, have asked us to prioritise and focus on. Over the next few months, we will turn to reviewing our strategic plan which will be launched in 2025.

While thinking about this project, I started to consider what sits at the core of Mountaineering Scotland. For me, there is a real sense of belonging within our organisation, across the sports we represent, which reflects how people feel when they are outdoors in Scotland's hills and mountains. You might be an individual member, part of a club, a youth taking part in our ClimbScotland programme or keen to support our work in landscape and conservation

protection. Regardless of why you are a member, everyone is part of the same community. We want to continue to deliver for our existing membership and welcome new members into the organisation, as we feel our community has something to offer for everyone.

“Regardless of why you are a member, everyone is part of the same community.”

I'd like us to continue to be a part of the growth of mountaineering in Scotland and encourage more people to join us. We want to stay true to the original priorities which launched the Mountaineering Council of Scotland 50 years ago, while developing with the ever-changing landscape to ensure we are here celebrating all that our outdoor playgrounds have to offer.

To find out more about our strategic plan, visit: www.mountaineering.scot/about-us/business-matters/strategic-plan-and-policies

Live for
the challenge
the connection
the freedom

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CONNECTIVITY BUT AT WHAT COST?

New map shows proposed masts for almost all Wild Land Areas in Scotland

BY DAVIE BLACK, MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND'S ACCESS & CONSERVATION OFFICER / ACCESS@MOUNTAINEERING.SCOT

The roll out of the Shared Rural Network (SRN) is running into trouble with more and more

opposition to proposals for 4G telecommunications masts in wild and remote hill country.

This is a worthy project to provide 4G digital connectivity for rural communities, but the plan for geographical coverage of the uplands risks wasting public funds by placing masts in remote hills and ridges, providing digital coverage where no-one lives. How is this happening?

It needs saying that Mountaineering Scotland supports improved connectivity for rural residents and businesses and there are still properties and roads which will still require connection to the 4G network.

The geographical coverage approach to digital coverage, with telecoms masts using line-of-sight microwave links to run them, has been successful up until now, but it makes no sense as the means to address the specific and unique problems of connectivity in the Highlands and other sparsely populated upland areas of Britain.

We think this approach is now the wrong tool for this task – it needs more precision to identify the areas of need for residential properties, businesses and roads; there is also a real need to consult on what communities and landowners want and from there plan where to place masts for maximal benefit.

We have met with representatives from Vodafone and Cornerstone, the consultancy working with them to deliver the masts on the ground,



- The map shows current proposed mast sites solely for the TNS element of the programme.
- The number of TNS sites is likely to reduce as more optimisation work is undertaken.
- Until site locations are finalised, they may relocate or be removed from the plan as the programme progresses.
- Delivery is subject to achieving planning permission and agreements with landowners or landlords.
- The number of sites will change as the programme progresses. This could be due to planning refusal, failure of sites to deliver value for money, improvement in coverage delivered by other sites, etc.
- Most mobile masts deliver coverage to areas as part of a 'cluster'. This means that a mast's contribution to enabling coverage for other masts in its cluster (as a link into the wider mobile network) is factored into the rationale for its location, in addition to the individual coverage it provides.

Find out more at online at:
srn.org.uk/about/srn-tns-site-locations


to talk about changing the approach. We find that they are only able to discuss delivery through the planning process – policy is reserved at a higher level.

We have also met with SRN, DMSL operatives and a BDUK representative and have been told the same – we can discuss delivery problems but can't challenge the policy to any effect. Along with other organisations, we wrote to the UK Government Minister responsible about the policy. We received a polite response stating the existing policy and suggesting we maintain discussions with BDUK and DMSL for the planning applications.

This is a political matter now, involving £300 million of public funding, dedicated to providing new 4G coverage in areas of Scotland where there is no commercial case for the mobile network operator (MNOs) to build masts – the Total Not-Spots (TNS) of remote and wild country.

The SRN has recently produced a map of where it expects these masts to be placed, almost all of which are in wild land areas, the last remaining landscapes of the UK free from civil engineering works.

Time is running out to change this policy, as planning applications for masts build up with local authority planning departments.

We will continue to scrutinise proposals and engage in discussion with the agencies responsible for implementing this UK Government policy. If you are concerned about the installation of telecoms masts in wild and remote areas, well away from where people and businesses need them, then please let your MP/MSP know of your concern as soon as possible – there is an election approaching. 

HOW (NOT) TO BE WEIRD

A guide for men on the hills

DR RICHARD TIPLADY



A recent encounter in Kintail got me thinking about Kirsty Pallas's article in last year's 100th issue of *Scottish Mountaineer*, 'Empowering Women in the Mountains'.

In early January, having parked in Glen Shiel and got myself kitted up for a winter attempt on the Brothers' Ridge, I restarted my car engine to keep warm while I had a pre-walk 'second breakfast'. At this point, a solo woman walker ambled up to my car and asked if I was leaving because I had forgotten some of my gear and said she might have been able to lend me something. I hadn't, but it was a kind offer. After the usual pleasantries about the hills, the weather, and the snow conditions, she surprised me by asking if I wanted to team up to do the route together. Although I prefer my hill days to be solo, I didn't feel like I could refuse and so I agreed. She texted her husband to tell him that she was walking with someone. I suggested that she take a photo of me and my car registration and send them as well, but she demurred.

As it turned out, I'm really glad that I accepted her invitation. My mystery solo woman turned out to be Renate Powell, Munro completist, long-time friend of Oban MRT and of Kirsty herself, and wife of the former Chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue. We had a great day on the hill, discovered a number of mutual acquaintances and put the world to rights on a variety of topics. It was one of those

days when the 'fellowship of the hills' paid its due rewards.

During our descent from the ridge, I asked Renate a question. She had approached me in the car park and suggested that we walk together. How would she have felt if I, a solo male, had approached her and suggested the same? She admitted that she might have been uncomfortable at this, and this led us to a conversation about what men can do to make women feel comfortable on the hills.

As I've already said, I like my solo hill walks. I've done just short of 200 Munros, most of which I've done on my own. I like the space, the silence, the solitude. It's not unusual to encounter other walkers on the hills, of course. But on those occasions when I have met a solo female walker, either on the route or at the summit cairn, I have often been conscious of how my behaviour might help her to feel safe (or

"Don't greet women with 'hello, darling!' or 'hello, sweetheart!' It's not the 1970s."

not), as potentially the only two people for miles around. How should I behave in a non-weird way, so that (as a representative of the dominant majority on the Scottish hills – a white, middle-aged, middle-class male) I do what I can to ensure that women experience the mountains as a safe and inclusive place for them to be in?

This hit me a couple of years ago, when I was leaving Corroon train station to begin a walk over the Loch Ossian Munros en route for Ben Alder and an overnight camp. Two young women also got off the train and were clearly kitted up for an overnight stop somewhere. Making conversation, I asked them what hills they were planning to do and got the kind of non-committal response that really meant: "As if we're going to tell you!". And why shouldn't they have felt that way? They didn't know anything about me. So, why should they trust the intentions behind my question? As I walked on and as I camped near the summit of Beinn Bheoil that night, overlooking Loch Ericht and enjoying the peace and tranquillity, it gave me much food for thought about how people might be inadvertently made to feel unsafe in remote hill locations.

Following our chat in Kintail, and unbeknown to me, Renate posted an account of our chat on a Facebook group of the Scottish Women's Walking Group. I found out about this, not just because she told me, but because I have some friends in the group who recognised similarities between her account and my own Facebook story of the walk. In her post,

she asked women to recount their horror stories about the ways that they had been treated by men on the hills. She was kind enough to send me a flavour of some of the discussion. It makes for sobering reading. So, here's a To Do list (or maybe it's a 'Not To Do' list) for men when they meet women on the hills. All of them are based on real experiences reported by women.


- A brief chat in passing about the hills, the weather and your own intended route is fine (but don't ask what route they are taking).
- If you do ask someone if they want to walk together, make it easy for them to say no (in fact, make 'no' the assumed answer). And don't ask questions or push it if they say they want to walk by themselves.
- Don't greet women with "hello, darling!" or "hello, sweetheart!". It's not the 1970s.
- If they say to you, "I'm stopping here for a break, you carry on", take the hint.
- Don't hang around in the car park while a woman is kitting up and then assume that you can accompany them.
- Yes, they probably can read a map, thanks.
- If they ask for advice about kit or their route, be polite without being condescending. But don't offer advice if you're not asked for it.
- If you walk fast and you catch up to a solo female walker, say a brief hello well before you pass then and keep going. Don't slow down to walk with them.
- Never ever say to a woman, "I'll walk

with you to keep you safe" (this rings major alarm bells).

- Never camp near anyone else, especially if they're a solo woman, even if they're in the best location.

In short, it's rather simple. Respect people's boundaries. Be friendly but don't try to be friends. Treat someone as they would like to be treated. Then clear off and leave them alone.

One of the more controversial aspects of Kirsty's article is her defence of women-only or women-focused spaces on the hills. It can feel exclusionary. But it really isn't. As a leadership development academic, I know that the best research evidence tells us that you need both shared spaces and specialist spaces to help female leadership development. There's no reason why the same shouldn't apply on the hills.

The dominance of white middle-aged men like me in Scotland's hills is obvious and it is unacceptable. We are used to having power, so let's use it for the benefit of others, and maybe even give it away. Think about what the following list of names might tell us – Nicky Spinks, Jasmin Paris, Jamie Aarons, (Polar) Preet Chandi, Anna Wells, Kirsty Pallas. Many outdoor women will outdo us in the hills. Overall, the advice is simple. Climb Like A Girl. 

Dr Richard Tiplady is a Munro bagger, a member of Mountaineering Scotland and a trainee Mountain Leader. He has a doctorate in leadership development from Glasgow Caledonian University.



Renate Powell

Richard gave Renate a draft of this article and asked her to comment on it. Here's what she said:

"I'm probably not the best example of a female feeling uncomfortable with others on the hills. I've been at this game for a long time and I'm confident about my ability and its boundaries. But after Richard posed the question and I had some time to mull it over, it did make me realise what I do to feel safe when I'm by myself. I will usually take the lead on conversations and ask anyone else kitting up what their intended route is (and maybe decide to do something different to avoid their route choice!). Equally on the hills, I will deliberately make eye contact with people, I always say hi to everyone and dominate a brief conversation to make it easy for me to walk away from it. A lot of routes I do are off the beaten path (that is, non-Walkhighlands), so it is very rare that I meet anyone there, and I'm not sure I've ever wild camped and come across anyone else other than on the remote summit of A'Maighdean in the Fisherfield, but they were there first!

"I feel much more vulnerable, both by the car and on the hills by myself, in what I see as more urban areas, such as the Ochils, the Campsie, etc, and I very much stay away from anyone there.

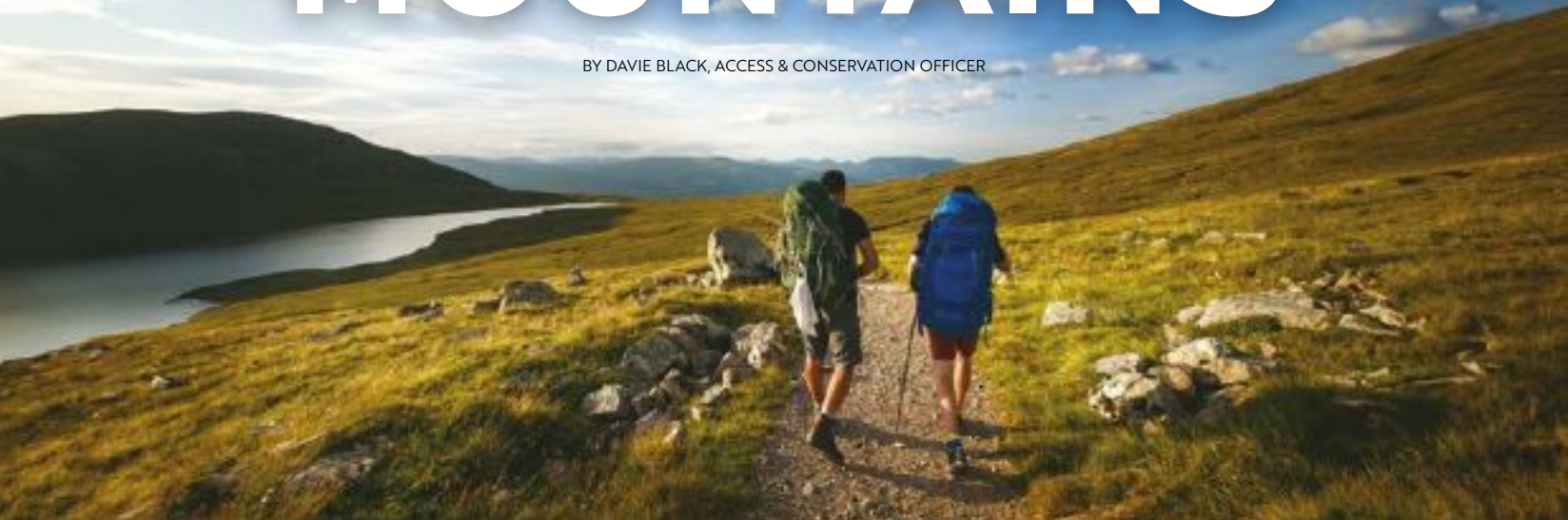
"Looking back, I made several 'mistakes' myself if the roles had been reversed. I didn't make it easy enough for Richard to say no thanks about joining up. I also waited while he nipped back for something he'd forgotten. I really should have got the hint, whereas I thought I was being accommodating. It just shows how easy it is not to do the right thing!"

It's important to treat people with respect on the hills



A MANIFESTO FOR THE MOUNTAINS

BY DAVIE BLACK, ACCESS & CONSERVATION OFFICER



Mountaineering Scotland members care passionately about Scotland's hills, mountains and crags, and have a deep appreciation of the beauty of the land: repeated members' surveys tell us so.

The hill and mountain country is crucial in delivering environmental, cultural and economic roles for all of society in Scotland, creating many and varied tensions on what our mountains need to deliver.

Our Manifesto for the Mountains is a new policy, explaining our key priorities; showing why our members value the hills and mountains of Scotland and what we do to protect landscape and wildness.

It is an evolution of the policies set out in *Respecting Scotland's Mountains*, published in 2015, and reflecting Mountaineering Scotland's work and approach around climate change, land use and landscape, wildlife conservation and access, including local communities – providing a context and guide for representing the views of our members in discussions on how the land is used and cared for.

In 2023, the draft Manifesto for the

Mountains went out to consultation with members, our Board of Directors and with other organisations we work in partnership with, to ensure we were addressing the key concerns regarding outdoor recreation and environment.

We believe in the importance of balancing the differing interests with compromises and trade-offs when possible. This may not be easy or simple but must be within a context of care and respect for mountain landscapes, for future generations to enjoy and use, safely and responsibly.


In pursuing our aims, we will:

- **Safeguard and promote recreational access** to Scotland's hills, mountains, and crags for a range of abilities.
- **Promote and support access rights**

“The hill and mountain country is crucial in delivering environmental, cultural and economic roles for all of society in Scotland.”

and responsibilities explained through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

- **Understand and uphold our membership's interests** and priorities for the hills and mountains.
- **Support and promote climate change and biodiversity initiatives** for mitigating or adapting to the effects of rapidly changing environmental conditions.
- **Work in partnership with others** to manage and maintain public access while increasing the wild and natural qualities of land and water, supporting local community initiatives where they align with our members' interests.
- **Scrutinise development proposals** for environmental and community benefit and challenge those potentially damaging or degrading the experience of the hills and mountains.
- **Provide opportunities to acquire skills** to be safe and self-reliant in Scotland's hill and mountains.
- **Support the development of climbing** in Scotland.

This Manifesto for the Mountains is for everyone who cares for Scotland's hills and mountain country. 

The full manifesto can be read on our website www.mountaineering.scot/manifesto-for-the-mountains

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MOUNTAIN WRITING COMPETITION 2024

BY TOMMY MCMANMON,
MOUNTAIN WRITING
COMPETITION COORDINATOR



Competition coordinator Tommy McManmon lives and works in the Pentland Hills Regional Park, which feels much busier than his previous home of Knoydart. He won the prose competition 12 years ago, in 2012.

This year's competition saw some stellar entries and our judges took pleasure in reading through them. Thank you to all who entered and remember, it's really not the winning that is the important thing. What matters is that so many of you took the time to compose a creative piece, and the very act of doing this is a huge step and something to be proud of.

We had three categories this year, with the addition of a Young Poets category. We also had a welcome selection of prizes to encourage you to enter, which seemed to work!

In the prose category, in third place was *One Yellow Balloon* by Allan Bolton. His piece was described by a judge as "an affectionate and lightly written piece, but it covers serious feelings too". In second, *All Alone?* by Iain Cumming was described as "a sobering study of hypothermic confusion", with "terrain, weather and surroundings expertly conveyed". In first place was *Gifts* by Jo Austen: "The new girlfriend is hurried up a stormy hill by her awful boyfriend. But it doesn't matter! The gifts, from moss, from stone, from spiderwebs, are all around her and beautifully conveyed." One judge was

surprised that fourth-equal-placed *Glen Quoich* – an extract from a novel by EV Connan, didn't place as a prize winner – he gave it 10 out of 10 and thought it was the best prose entry of any that he's seen – and he's been judging a long time! This reader agrees it was an enjoyably realistic depiction of West Highland life... please feel free to enter again, EV Connan.

"Thank you to all who entered and remember, it's really not the winning that is the important thing."

In the adult poetry category, third-placed was *Gorton* by Gordon Bell: "Night marches to bothies inspire a lot of poems, but few of them manage this sustained, urgent pace or use starlight to heighten the sense of threat." I've tramped that path at night, with headlights sweeping across the moor at the start, so I can appreciate those sentiments! Another judge appreciated the "magical realism of the language and descriptions." In second place was *Things We Cannot Keep* by Lauren Kedar: "Memories and remembrance beautifully intertwined in a lyrical elegy."

First place was Colin Bancroft's *Between*

Little and Great Dunn Fell: "A heartfelt reflection of harder times and a recognition of how fortunate we are in the present," and "a fine recall of the people that the hill belonged to, whether or not they wanted it, before our generations came along."

All three winners in the Young Poet's category deserve their plaudits. In third place was *A Journey Through the Heights* by Ben Cooper: "An uplifting call to action to explore and find personal growth in the outdoors." In second was *Blustery Crags* by Isla: "A well-crafted poem honouring the mountain's role as protector, standing sentinel over the landscape." First place went to *Majesty of the Skies* by Alexi: "In the questions posed the author skilfully ponders their own life through adolescence to old age, and whether they'll have the same impact as the mountain," and it "really does manage to tell us about the personality and presence of the mountain."

Huge thanks to the judges, including newcomer Chris Townsend, who has to be easily the most accomplished outdoor writer we've ever had on our panel! It's not easy fitting in all the reading around everyday tasks and it is much appreciated. Here's to the next competition: next time you're walking, climbing or skiing, start having a wee think about expressing all those weird and wonderful ideas that come to you in the middle of nowhere! 🏔️

Read all the entries online at:
www.mountaineering.scot/members/members-benefits/scottish-mountaineer-magazine/mountain-writing-competition



1ST PRIZE: PROSE

Gifts

BY JO AUSTEN

A smoky curl of breath composed of vapour crystals, not quite chilled enough to freeze, twisted its way out of her mouth. She put her hand up without thinking in an attempt to catch it, but it carried on regardless trailing up the path in front of them. An invitation to proceed. The path was dirty with stiff dry ruts that she knew would be a muddy quagmire come the Spring. The boots held on tightly to her feet, grabbing and pinching at her toes. They weren't hers; her footwear being deemed unsuitable. How was she to know you couldn't wear trainers? A black mark against her already but belonged to the one who had come before her. What did she think, she wondered, the new girlfriend wearing the old girlfriend's shoes? The boots wanted to go quicker than she could manage. They had clearly been here before.

'How long is the walk?' she asked.
'Have you had enough already?' He turned to look at her, his face was red, was that anger or cold or exertion?



'No, no, just wondered. You can't see the top.'

The clouds had clung to them since they arrived, there had been nothing to see but her breath and the path just a few steps above and below her.

'We can turn around if you want.'
She knows he doesn't mean it.

'It's fine. I mean, I'm having a great time. Thank you.'

Around a corner and a bench appeared. It was slowly rotting back into the hillside, but they sat for a moment, she balanced her pack behind her, lifting the weight. She ran her fingers over the wood feeling the lettering carved into the surface. An A, an L, perhaps, and something that might once have been a pierced heart. For a brief moment, the landscape unfolded below them to show a barren wasteland, the colour washed out leaving a spread of grey that varied merely in its intensity.

Continued overleaf ►

OUR WINNERS

Prose

- 1st:** *Gifts*, by Jo Austen
2nd: *All Alone?*, by Iain Cumming
3rd: *One Yellow Balloon*, by Allan Bolton

Poetry

- 1st:** *Between Little and Great Dun Fell*, by Colin Bancroft
2nd: *Things We Cannot Keep*, by Lauren Kedar
3rd: *Gorton*, by Gordon Bell

Young Poet

- 1st:** *Majesty of the Skies*, by Alexi
2nd: *Blustery Craggs*, by Isla
3rd: *A Journey Through the Heights*, by Ben Cooper

Meet the judges

Chris Townsend is one of Scotland's most well-known and loved outdoor writers and authors.

John Donohoe is a past president of Mountaineering Scotland.

Adam Boggan won the prose competition in 2021. He is Scottish doctor and writer, who lives and works in London.

Sunyi Dean won the poetry competition in 2021. She is a Yorkshire-based mother of two, and *Sunday Times* bestselling author.

Mike Merchant is a former winner of the prose competition and co-ordinated the writing competition for some years.

Mike Richards won the poetry competition in 2019. He is a ski instructor, photographer and poet based in Wales and Japan.

Jim Manthorpe is a wildlife cameraman and guidebook author, based in Morvern. He has worked on a number of BBC series including *Springwatch* and is the author of five *Trailblazer* guidebooks.

Fiona McNicol is the Communications Officer at Mountaineering Scotland and Editor of *Scottish Mountaineer*.

Thank you to our sponsors

This year, Mountaineering Scotland worked with some of the UK's top outdoor brands and publishers to add fantastic prize bundles to the usual cash prizes for first, second and third place winners in each category, including Highlander Outdoor, Scottish Mountaineering Press, Lifesystems, Harvey Maps, Cicerone Press and SIGG. We'd like to say a huge thank you to each of our sponsors for their support!



From previous page ►

'Ready to go on?' he said. It wasn't a question; he was already up and moving. She watched as he disappeared ahead of her, sucked into the hill. Her feet throbbed in a rhythm that jarred against the tap-tap of the boots on the track. The path wound on and up.

Around another corner and the first needle drops of rain arrived. Small and sharp, they stung where they landed. The path was slippery now, she slowed her pace, cursing the boots as they tried to make her stumble and fall. Moss, so bright she wanted to close her eyes, covered every surface, hushing away sound. Twisted trunks wrapped in a verdant coat; headless trees hanging with threads of green, skeins of living wool draped from bough to bough. Strands crept across her face and tangled in her hair, pulled her over to one side. Her face brushed against lichen-crusting stone. She smelt its leathery breath as it kissed her cheek before releasing her. Disorientated for a moment, she thought the path had gone, but there, marking the way, was a berry, purple and black, hanging on a branch. She put it in her mouth and crushed it between her teeth. So sour, it made her shiver.

She took off her gloves and stroked a neighbourly fern, fingers entwined with fronds. More ferns unfurled on the banks, beseeching her to touch them all. No time for that. She waved at them and promised to return. She heard the sigh briefly before it dropped and was enveloped beneath the ground. The rain fell heavier now, thick round drops splashing one by one. She put out her tongue and tipped her head back to drink, grateful for the second gift.

Water bounced off rocks and

boulders, merged and formed streams that raced past her. A small fish, dripping with silver and tiny pearls, mis-judged a bend and landed on a sundew plant with its sticky lips puckered up and ready to feast. She picked it up gently and placed it back in the new river. On it went, cascading down the hill. What joy it was to be here.

Onward she climbed. Another twist, another turn. So steep she had to scramble, hands against the earth. The rain stopped and the trees fell away. The path opened out onto a plateau with a small lake nestled beneath a scarp face. Wind ran in wide circles across the surface, shrieking at her. A small yellow tent had been erected and secured to the ground, skewered so deep with metal spikes that it made her gasp.

'Where were you?' he said.

He didn't wait for an answer but took the pack from her back to retrieve a billy kettle which he filled from the lake.

'It will be dark soon' he said as evening fell low and heavy around them. They ate brown food out of a colourful packet, backs to the elements.

During the night the wind grabbed and clutched at the tent, trying to wrench it from the ground, but it held fast. The sides slapped across her face so hard she thought she might bruise. She didn't think she would sleep, but she must have because now it is morning, and she can feel light and warmth through the thin nylon shell.

She unzips the tent and steps outside, bare feet on the earth. The only person in the world. She could stop time if she chooses.

The ground shimmers in front of her, a million spider webs suspended across the grass, a bride's veil made of babies' breath and tears. Her third gift.

1ST PRIZE: POETRY

Between Little and Great Dun Fell

BY COLIN BANCROFT

Between Little and Great Dun Fell
A spine of stone stretches across the boggy col,
Each slab reclaimed from fallen northern mills.
Two hundred years ago these blocks were floors
In dark and dusty rooms where workers stood
For hours on end feeding threads into a loom.
They had no thought for these high moors,
Gore-Tex, Go-Pro's, Open Access Rights,
For them outdoors was a dark walk home,
A Sunday trudge to church, not hikes
Up to a radar dome and lunch beneath a currick.
Now these steps that line the ridge like unmarked
Graves are all that's left of that dimming past,
Unless you count the clumps of cotton grass
Ghosting up along the edges of the path.

Colin Bancroft is a poet currently living in the North Pennines, a place that inspires much of his writing.

1ST PRIZE: YOUNG POET

Majesty of the Skies

BY ALEXI

Look down on the lakes with those old, old eyes,
Hear the lonely wail of wind as it cries,
Tell me, does the rain pierce that jagged flesh,
Like times of old when every cut bled?

When you were red and hot glowing,
A swirling mass of molten heat flowing,
Tell me, is it different now than before,
Was the rising flame an unarguable law?

Were you young and reckless, with violent revenge?
Could you tell the future, or did you pretend?
You'd be spitting fire and ash forever,
Burning and burning, free and untethered.

I see you now, great one up high,
Head in the clouds, thinking of times gone by,
Now the gale is harsh, and the storms are fierce,
But ahead the skies are a little more clear.

Look down on me with those old, old eyes,
Ever majesty of the skies,
Here will you,
Always preside.

Alexi loves geology and walking on Dartmoor.

Jo Austen is a printmaker (etching) based in Kent. She is drawn to wild spaces to 'find hidden narratives, patterns and the magical moments we can experience if we take a moment to really see'.

DRESS FOR OUTDOOR SUCCESS

Whether you're in search of nature or adventure, striding out with friends or craving some quiet, the partnership between Mountaineering Scotland and Cotswold Outdoor means you'll get more out of your walk.

From offering member discounts on gear and gadgets to providing expert advice and fittings, Cotswold Outdoor is proud to be the main sponsor of Mountaineering Scotland and the Outdoor Access Trust For Scotland's It's Up To Us campaign, providing funds to support vital mountain footpath repair.

It's Up to Us is a campaign by Mountaineering Scotland and Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland to highlight the desperate need for long-term public funding for upland path projects. As hill-goers, we are fortunate to have the free right of access to all the incredible mountains and hills Scotland offers.

But how often do we stop to think about our physical impact on the mountain landscapes we love. With more people than ever getting out to enjoy Scotland's mountains, along with the effects of extreme weather and climate change, upland paths are deteriorating fast. And with no public funding available for upland path restoration and maintenance, it's up to us, the hillwalkers, mountaineers, outdoor enthusiasts, businesses and organisations who care about Scotland's hills to give back to the mountains we all enjoy.

Getting out for a walk may be one of the simplest forms of exercise, but you need the right kit to make the most of it. Effective layering and fabrics designed for the outdoors will make sure that you're comfortable and prepared for any weather.

Here is Cotswold Outdoor's expert kit list:



Footwear

The right footwear can make or break even the shortest venture into the outdoors. Walking footwear comes in a variety of types to suit your activity and the weather, all equipped with technical features to enhance comfort and prevent injury. When choosing boots or shoes, look out for a waterproof and breathable material or membrane like Gore-Tex. This is crucial for keeping feet dry, both from puddles on the outside and sweat on the inside, preventing wet socks and reducing your risk of blisters.

Waterproof jacket

Whatever the weather looks like when you head out, we all know a shower is rarely far away! A waterproof jacket is also great for a little extra warmth and wind protection, or as a final layer in colder weather. Waterproof jackets should keep you dry on the outside and the inside – choose a breathable waterproof that allows sweat vapour to escape and helps regulate your temperature. We also recommend going for a lightweight and packable one that can be easily stowed without weighing you down.

Mid-layer

Your mid layer is where you'll get your warmth from. Fleece is excellent for mid layers as it offers a great warmth-to-weight ratio, is breathable and quick-drying. This could be a thick, fluffy, cosy but breathable fleece; a thin, lightweight, microlight fleece; or anything in between. Insulated jackets and soft shells can work as efficient mid layers in colder conditions, with a waterproof hard shell on top.

Legwear

Jeans are a no-no when it comes to walking – denim is a stiff material and will soak through in a shower. Walking trousers, trekking leggings or shorts offer comfort while walking in the outdoors as they are usually made from a water-resistant stretch fabric, which adapts to your body as you move. Choose trousers that zip off into shorts for use in variable weather conditions.

Cotswold Outdoor is delighted to offer walk readers a 15% discount in store and online using AF-MSCOT-M5. T&Cs apply. Cotswold Outdoor in-store experts are passionate about helping you enjoy the outdoors more sustainably. Simply book an appointment and let them help you make the right choices when finding kit for your next walking adventure.

Mountaineering Scotland members get a special discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need – contact us for more details.

www.cotswoldoutdoor.com

Continuing our new hillwalking feature, Scotland's best walks, in association with the Scottish Mountaineering Press. In each issue, a member of Mountaineering Scotland's staff or Board will share a favourite hillwalking route, from well-known Munros to lesser-visited Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds. Be inspired to follow a different path this year...

Scotland's best walks



In partnership with the Scottish Mountaineering Press



Beinn Alligin

Chosen by Anne Butler,
President, Mountaineering Scotland

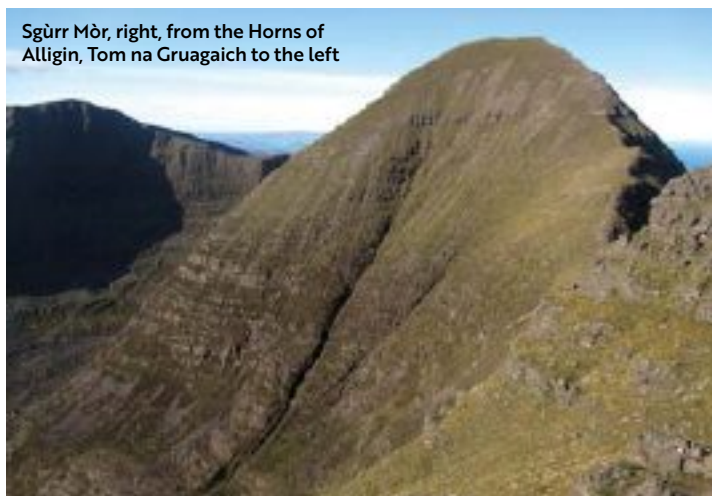
I have been lucky to have climbed Beinn Alligin several times. Torridon is a special place, challenging hills with superlative views but what makes it a favourite are the indelible memories that it evokes. Whenever I feel life is getting on top of me, I often think back to Beinn Alligin and those memories come flooding back.

The first visit was early on in my Munro round, a full traverse over the Horns which was challenging but not challenging enough to take away from the exhilaration of simply being there. That visit gave me the confidence to return again, each visit has been unique, shared with friends and giving a different experience each time but there was one stand out day, forever embedded in my mind and in my heart.

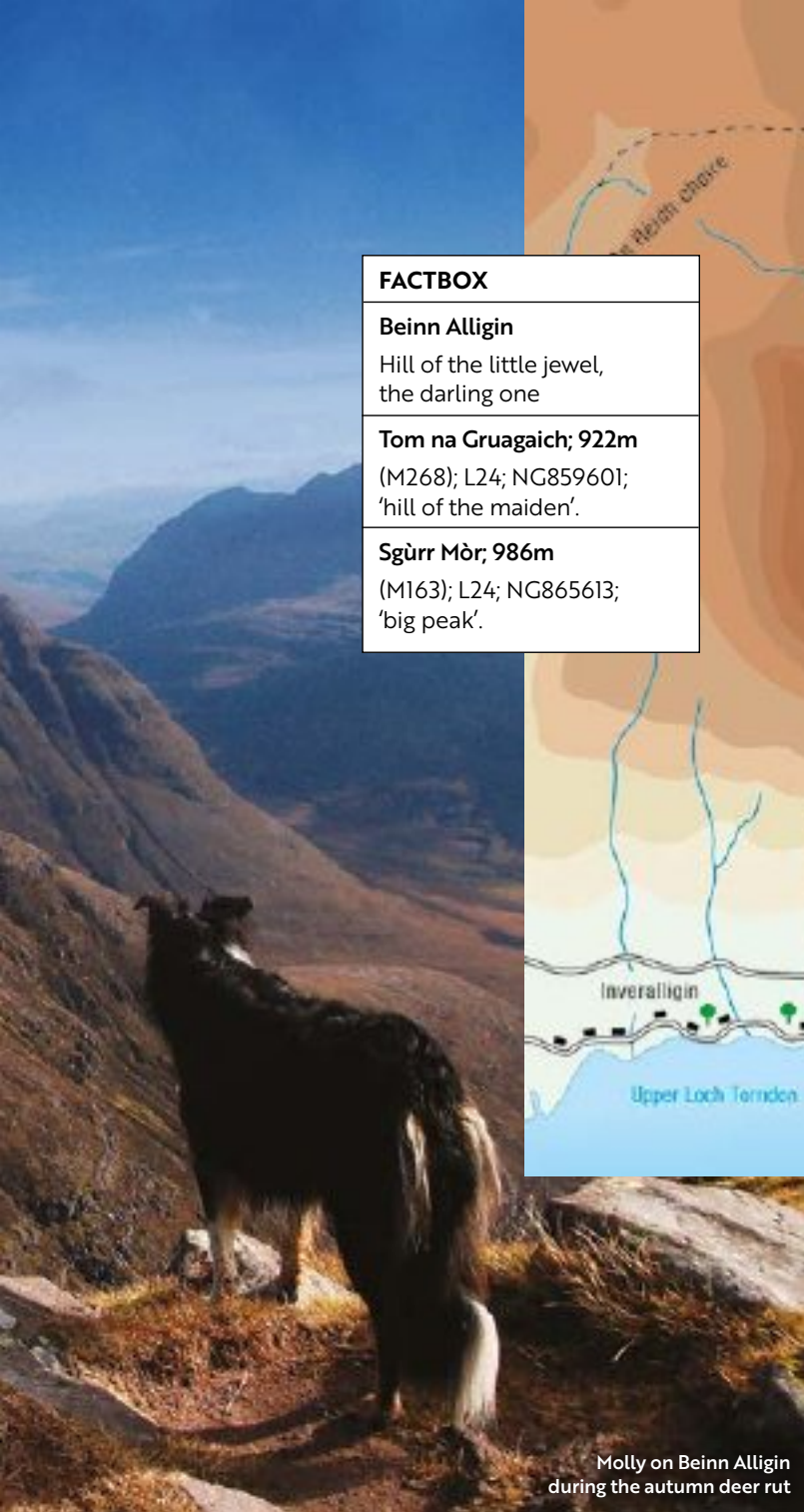
It was autumn 2012, Molly (the Collie) and I arrived early and had the hill to ourselves, or so we thought. After a few minutes I realised we were in the midst of a great battle; the rut. In all directions, stags were roaring at each other and as we climbed higher their calls were echoing around us in the corries below. When we got to the summit of Sgùrr Mòr, it suddenly went quiet. Not just quiet, there was total silence, there wasn't a sound, no wind, no birds, no burns, nothing. Molly and I stopped, taking in the view, it was just us; we sat and took it all in, a feeling of complete contentment that I had never previously experienced. And then it started again, the stags were gearing up for round two. The roaring was all around us and we had to drag ourselves away to continue our walk.

THE ROUTE

Sgùrr Mòr, right, from the Horns of Alligin, Tom na Gruagaich to the left



Lying on the north side of Loch Torridon to the west of Liathach and Beinn Eighe, Beinn Alligin is the easiest and least complex of the big three Torridonian mountains. It is a fine triple-topped massif, curving around the south-east facing corrie of Toll a' Mhaidaidh Mòr. Tom Na Gruagaich forms the left side of the corrie while the higher Sgùrr Mòr sits at the back with the distinctive great cleft of the Eag Dubh falling from its summit. The lowest of the three peaks is Na Rathanan, the Horns of Alligin, which forms the prominent ridge on the right side of the corrie. The classic view of the mountain is across Loch Torridon from the road on its south side, just west of the head of the loch. Turn off the A896 at the mouth of Glen Torridon and follow the narrow road through Torridon village and west along the north side of Loch Torridon towards Inveralligin, for almost three miles (5km), to reach a car park at NG869576 on the south side of the road. This is immediately west of the stone bridge over the Abhainn Coire



Molly on Beinn Alligin during the autumn deer rut

FACTBOX

Beinn Alligin

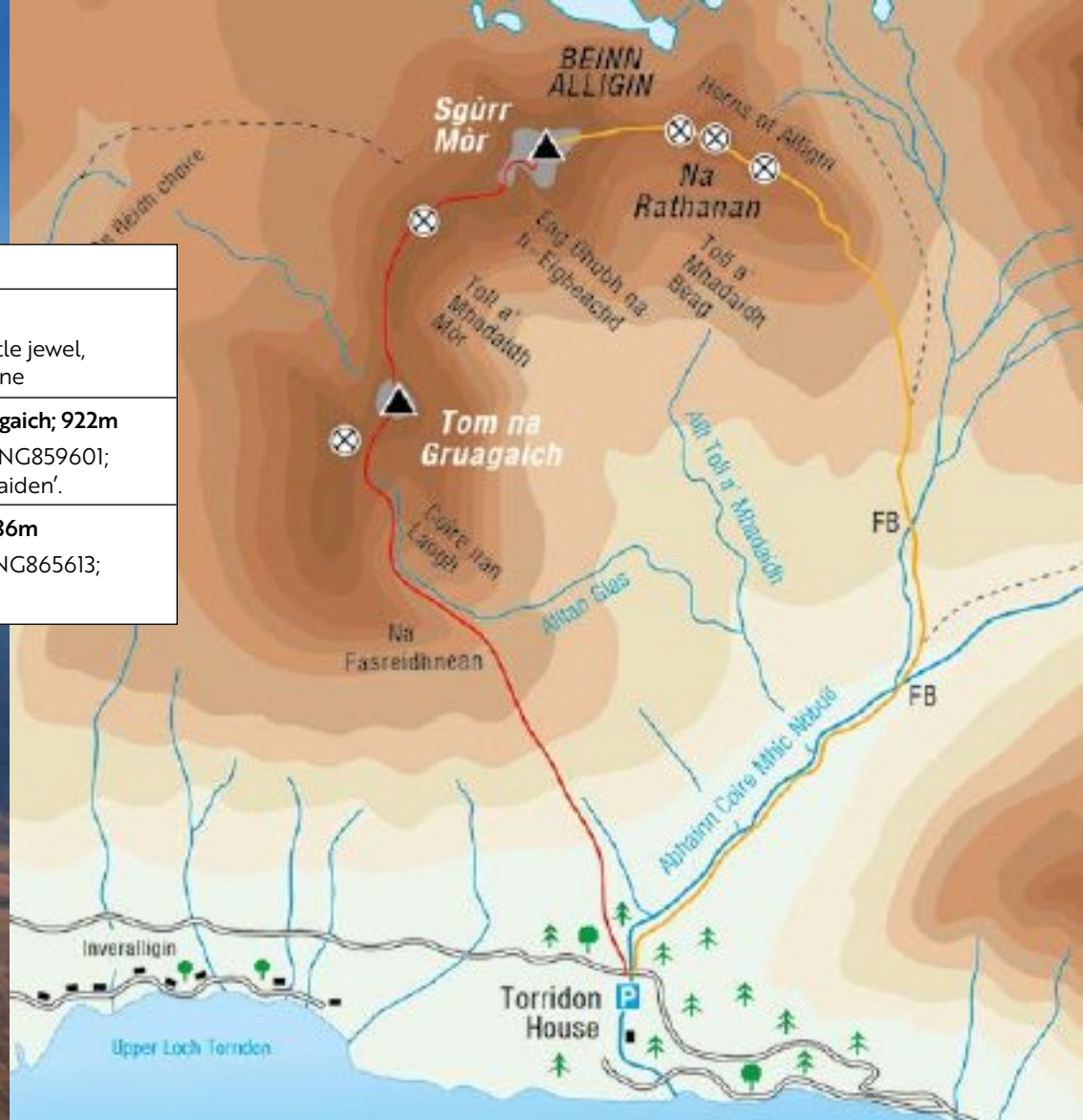
Hill of the little jewel, the darling one

Tom na Gruagaich; 922m

(M268); L24; NG859601; 'hill of the maiden'.

Sgùrr Mòr; 986m

(M163); L24; NG865613; 'big peak'.




Mhic Nòbuil at the entrance to Coire MhicNòbaill, the deep glen between Beinn Alligin and Liathach.

From the west side of the bridge, follow a stalkers' path north-northwest towards the foot of Coire nan Laogh, the narrow corrie which has been scooped out of the side of the southern end of the mountain.

Pass below Na Fasreidhnean, the flanking buttress on the left, and climb up the east side of the burn in the corrie to reach Tom na Gruagaich, whose stone trig point is perched on the edge of cliffs plunging into Toll a' Mhadaidh Mòr (3km; 880m; 2h 10min). Descend steeply north down a narrow rocky crest to the col (767m) forming the lowest point between the mountains then climb a broader ridge, which is still precipitous on its east side. Cross a minor top (c857m) then a level

section and ascend past the spectacular cleft of the Eag Dhubh na h-Eigheachd, the black cleft of the wailing; it is worth going up the slight rise onto Sgùrr na Tuaigh, which overlooks the cleft. A short climb above the cleft gains.

Sgùrr Mòr's summit and superb views, especially to the east where the impressive slender crest of the Horns of Alligin captures the eye with Liathach and Beinn Eighe beyond (4.75km; 1125m; 3h).

The quickest and easiest return is by the route of ascent (9.5km; 1265m; 4h 40min). However, a much better route is to complete the traverse via the slender castellated crest of Na Rathanan; the Horns of Alligin. Descend steeply east down a narrow ridge to a col (c760m) and traverse the three Horns; (866m), (854m) and (815m). There is a path over these rocky tops, which give some easy, but in places, exposed scrambling. Keeping pretty much to the crest on the first two tops, then just to the right by a chimney on the third top, gives the easiest and safest line. From the third top (An t-Sàil Bheag), continue south-east down the ridge. Towards the bottom of this, the slope steepens considerably before the angle eases and a stalkers' path coming down from the Bealach a' Chòmhlà to the north, is joined. Cross a footbridge over the Allt a' Bhealaich, then another over the Abhainn Coire Mhic Nòbuil and continue along the path on the south bank to the road (10km; 1280m; 5h 5min). 



Route description, map and image taken from **The Munros (SMC)**, by Rab Anderson and Tom Prentice. For more information, visit: www.scottishmountaineeringpress.com

Instructor Morag Skelton
at An Groban, Gairloch.
Picture credit Mary Eagleson

British Sign Language Navigation Weekend at
Glenmore Lodge is widening access to our mountains

THE POWER OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS

For many folks, learning to navigate in the hills is an important step in our outdoor journeys. Navigation opens new adventures off-the-beaten-path and lets us explore wild landscapes safely. There's no doubt that it's an essential skill set, but not everyone has equal access to the learning opportunities that enable us to navigate independently and with confidence.

Glenmore Lodge, sportscotland's National Outdoor Training Centre, has taught navigation since its founding in 1948. This year, they're delivering the UK's first navigation courses in British Sign Language for those who are deaf or experience hearing loss.

The course was developed with and is delivered by Morag Skelton, a deaf mountaineering, climbing and ski Instructor. Morag is a lifelong outdoor enthusiast, formerly worked at Glenmore Lodge as domestic staff through the Outdoor Training Scheme before training as an instructor there and has been deaf since birth. She said: "I hope this course gives deaf people the confidence to go out in the outdoors independently, and to share their experiences with their friends and the deaf community. The outdoors can be one of the best ways to spend time together with friends, creating lifelong memories."


Glenmore Lodge seeks to broaden access

to these learning opportunities that enable independent outdoor adventures. This often involves working with a wide range of people and groups to provide tailor-made experiences, designed to meet people's needs and remove barriers to help everyone achieve their aspirations in the outdoors.

Principal Shaun Roberts said: "Our goal is for more people to enjoy the benefits of Scotland's wonderful outdoors and break down barriers, giving people a sense of confidence and community."

"The idea for this course originally came from an individual enquiry. Our approach is always an optimistic one, where we ask, 'how do we make this work?'. It was a learning curve, but I'm grateful for this request because it sent us on a path of looking at how we could improve the accessibility of our delivery."

"Each time we deliver a course or host a group, we're learning directly from them about the barriers they face. These experiences help us continually develop how we meet the needs of everyone in Scotland who wants to enjoy the outdoors."

The next course date for the BSL Navigation Weekend is 21-22 September 2024. Want to find out more about how Glenmore Lodge can help enable you to experience the outdoors? Head to www.glenmorelodge.org.uk/tailor-made/accessible-adventures or get in touch with our team. 



Based in the Cairngorms near Aviemore, Glenmore Lodge delivers skills training courses in winter skills, avalanche awareness, mountaineering, winter climbing, rock climbing, hill walking, navigation and runs a Summer Alpine Programme in the Alps each year.

Along with mountain-based activities, Glenmore Lodge also delivers skills courses in mountain biking, paddlesports and ski-touring, as well as governing body qualifications – from Summer Mountain Leader to Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor. To find out more, visit www.glenmorelodge.org.uk

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  Glenmore Lodge instructors are kept warm and dry thanks to Rab and Lowe Alpine Range

Find out more at www.glenmorelodge.org.uk

FULL CIRCLE:

A CLIMBSCOTLAND STORY

Daniel Smith details his climbing journey, from early family Munro adventures to national and international competitions...



A recent training session
at The School Room

It all began when I was nine years old, tackling the Munros with my dad. Some of the harder Munros require climbing skills so my dad took me to the Glasgow Climbing Centre (GCC) to practice – this is where my love of climbing started. After completing the Munros, I continued to climb at the GCC and The Climbing Academy (TCA).

I soon joined the GCC youth squad – to do this I had to complete a trial which was really nerve-racking at the time, but soon the GCC felt like a second home. There was a strong and dedicated team of climbers and coaches at the GCC, and we all pushed each other along really hard. I still remember the constant extra burpees I was given by ClimbScotland's Robert McKenzie because of my talking.

I improved quickly in this environment and dipped my toes into competitive climbing, starting with local rounds of the Youth Climbing Series (YCS) and gradually working my way up to larger national events. The YCS was an amazing development opportunity and a chance to test my skills against the best young climbers in the country. I was quite nervous in the beginning but as I gained more experience, I started to perform better and the sense of accomplishment after a day of competition climbing was the best feeling ever.

My first Youth British Lead Climbing Championships at Awesome Walls in Sheffield stands out in my memory. I was lower Youth C, and it was my first national competition outside of the YCS. I surprised myself by qualifying in first place, securing my spot in the final. It was a total shock. I had trained hard and did okay in the YCS finals, but nothing that made me think a finals spot was possible. I ended up finishing fourth and was selected to the

"I'm eager to share my experiences with the next generation of climbers as I was so inspired by the generation that came before me."





Daniel receiving his first senior British title

GB Junior Lead Team a couple of months later after competing in the Youth Open, my first competition as an older Youth C.

I still remember the first day I pulled on the GB kit at a youth open in Liverpool. The vest was way too big, but it didn't matter, I wore it all day and couldn't wipe the smile from my face. I was too young to compete internationally at that point, but team training weekends were awesome. Over the next five years, I developed quickly, representing Great Britain on the international stage, making both European finals and World semi-finals. I had the privilege of competing alongside some of the world's most talented climbers. It was so inspiring to have clear goals to work towards that kept me motivated through long winters of training alongside my school work.

I have since competed for the GB senior team at internationals, the most recent highlight was winning the British Senior Lead Championships last year (2023) at Ratho where I had trained constantly and competed in my first national YCS final nine years earlier. I worked hard all year in preparation for this specific event and felt that I was able to put my best climbing forward on the day. It's so hard to get all the mental, tactical and physical aspects of a competition right on the day, so to see it all come together was an amazing feeling.

It's been pretty tough over the past two years because, alongside my competitive pursuits, I have also been studying to become a PE teacher. Balancing climbing commitments with coursework and placement has been a challenge, but very rewarding. I'm eager to share my experiences with the next generation of climbers as I was so inspired by the generation that came before me. This sport has had such a positive impact on my life, and I hope it will do the same for many young climbers in the future. SM



A European Youth Cup in Soure, Portugal

A HISTORY OF 4X4S IN SMR

The origins of mountain rescue in Scotland were ad hoc, and therefore it should come as no surprise that so too was its use of vehicles. Prior to the formation

of the civilian teams that we know today, mainly through the 1960s and 70s, mountain rescue was an informal affair. Official input from the RAF and the police was assisted by local volunteer networks of farmers, gamekeepers, doctors and teachers to name but a few of the professions that have contributed.

Stories of mountain rescues in the early days of the civilian teams generally involved long walks and equipment that was "beg, borrow or..." and personal vehicles were the norm. These took a variety of forms – when Bob Burnett, the survivor of the longest known full avalanche burial in Scotland in 1965, was transported down from the base of Beinn a'Bhurd in the Cairngorms, this was on a tractor cart filled with hay.

As teams became more formalised and finances improved through the

"Prior to the formation of the civilian teams that we know today, mainly through the 1960s and 70s, mountain rescue was informal."

1980s and 90s, they began to invest in vehicles. This was frequently assisted by the generosity of the Order of St John, who support continues today.

The sheer diversity of the Scottish landscape, one of the factors that makes time spent in it so satisfying, means that teams have differing requirements from their vehicles. Some teams will muster at a base, going on from there in team vehicles, but other teams with large areas to cover and members travelling from far and wide will meet at a roadhead before jumping in the MR vehicle that a single team member has collected.

The terrain also varies – large expanses without access roads or tracks require long walk-ins, whereas other teams can get their vehicles relatively close to the casualty. All of this requires a 'horses for courses' approach, although the near ubiquity of the Land Rover Defender, in various guises and vintages, testifies to their capability and versatility.

The simple nuts and bolts build of the Defender allowed them to be modified to suit teams needs, either in the 130" wheelbase or more common 110" version. The passenger compartment was long enough to take a loaded stretcher or could fit five to nine personnel plus rucksacks depending on the model, although sometimes it was a tight fit.

These vehicles were frequently fitted with winches, radio repeaters and scene lights as well as roof-racks for the carrying of bulky but lightweight items such as (empty) stretchers or even the spare wheel. This last one generally did not persist beyond the first puncture however, since getting the wheel down often proved less easy than hoped!

Once the workhorse Defender ceased to be produced in 2016, teams were faced with several options. Some with the cashflow accelerated their replacement cycle, but the price appreciation that followed has informed the choice of some teams to repair and rebuild their existing Defender. Many of these vehicles have driven relatively few miles for their age, although they are often hard-fought miles. By putting them on a new chassis to address a well-known corrosion problem (and to install rollover protection, another weakness of the original design) these vehicles can be given a new lease of life.

However, the Defender is not the only

Braemar MRT and Police Scotland Defenders at the Linn of Dee, Cairngorms





game in town, and teams have long experimented with other types. Terrain plays its part again, with the larger contact patch of tracked vehicles proving very valuable in dealing with snowy winter conditions or softer ground surfaces, such as heather or peat.

Other options come in a range of sizes and capabilities, from nimble ATVs and tracked quads to Argocats and even the large Kassbohrer piste bashers operated by Braemar MR. The first, used by Tayside MR and others, offers a fast-in fast-out opportunity to quickly recover a casualty in difficult conditions underfoot. The Argocat may be less swift, but it is more versatile. With balloon tyres it can get across rough ground and heather, and the addition of winter tracks offers another dimension in tough conditions.


The Kassbohrers are instantly recognisable and extremely capable but very reliant on snow cover to be operational. While we are seeing fewer of these winters in recent years, in the most challenging conditions, they are unrivalled. They are, effectively, mobile bothies as well as troop carriers – after hours of searching the Cairngorm plateau in a blizzard at night, the comfort and relative quiet of the heated module on the rear is a haven

for a few moments of rest. They can also be a valuable resource for community resilience, as demonstrated during the heavy snowfall of early 2021 when they were used to assist SSEN in repairing downed power lines.

In the farming community the popular, and financially attractive alternative to the Land Rover for some time has been a pickup, and there are not many teams left through Scotland without one in their stable. While they are not as capable as the Defender offroad, this is not always a constraint, and they tend to be an easier

drive on the road. They are not the perfect option though, as the separate cab and loadbed means that carrying a stretcher is not feasible. Additionally, while they are designed to transport a heavy payload, the high volume but low weight of MR rucksacks, casualty bags and stretchers makes space at a premium in the back.

These compromises have partially driven an increasing exploration by teams of using large vans with four-wheel drive systems. These have a long history in MR in Scotland, as far back as the early civilian teams, but the improvements in vehicle design have made them more robust and versatile. The previously mentioned need for some teams to operate far from fixed bases has been met by large vans kitted out as mobile command centres, equipped with computers, radios and Nespresso machines!

It is clear though that MR vehicles will evolve as the energy transition gains pace, and our shared love of the natural environment compels us to consider this carefully. Whether the future of the MR vehicle is an electric or a hydrogen one is too early to pin down, we are a small link in a bigger chain that is forming, but SMR is discussing with a number of manufacturers to plan for change and to assist its member teams. 

Braemar's newer Kassbohrer
in the corrie of Lochnagar



Most will have heard of the islands of Rhum or Raasay, but there are many more islands to be explored around Skye. Last year, Members of the Relative Hills Society (RHSoc) visited 17 significant islands of Britain (SIBs) – significant islands with a high point exceeding 30 metres (100ft) and/or 30 hectares. Here, Barry Smith, Alex Cameron, Jenny Hatfield and Tony Jenkins from the RHSoc take us through a few of the highlights...

SKYE HIGH

Canna and Sanday

The first trip was to Canna and its tidal neighbour Sanday in late May. With four hours, there was plenty of time to visit the highest point on each island.

Canna and Sanday islands have a rich history. Around 1,500 years ago, the islands were an important monastic site linked to St Columba, and in 1821, 436 people lived on Canna and Sanday, but only 15 live there today. Most of our group decided to climb Carn a'Ghaill, the highest point on the island at 211m, paying a visit to the ancient punishment stone on the way up, although one member made the long walk to the western end of the island to climb Sliabh Meadhonach.

In the afternoon, most of us were to be found on Sanday's high point, Tallabrig, a beautiful spot overlooking the sea, and reached by a bridge and coastal walk.

North of Raasay: Eilean Tigh, Garbh Eilean, Eilean Garbh, Rona, Eilean Fladday

On a calm, grey morning, we headed out of Portree harbour to the islands north of Raasay, to the east of Skye. Our first stop was Eilean Tigh, connected at low tides to the northern tip of Raasay. We met up here with Bill, the island manager, who acted as our local guide and ferried us over to each of the islands. Eilean Tigh is a rugged, rocky island, with a massive, glaciated boulder for its highest point at 111m. Bill picked us up on the SE shore, where we saw the remains of a well-constructed house. The children here had a long walk to school on Raasay!

There followed two smaller islands, Garbh Eilean to the south of Rona, and the similarly named Eilean Garbh, to the west. The highlight of the day was sailing into Arcasaid Mor, Rona's beautiful natural anchorage, and the climb through natural woodland and heather to the trig point and top, Meall Arcasaid (125m).

We visited one last island on the way back to Portree – Fladday, a tidal island to the west of Raasay. We reached the landing point, a well-constructed, but steep ladder up a rockface, quite a challenge for our cocker spaniel Bryher, who loves island bagging as much as we do! From there we were soon at the highpoint (43m) just on the edge of a tiny crofting community with picturesque, white-washed buildings.

The Crowlins and Scalpay; Pabay, Lingay, Eilean Mor, Eilean Meadhonach, Eilean Beag, and Scalpay

A packed itinerary would see us visiting six islands around Inner Sound north of Broadford in one day. Pabay and Lingay didn't take too long to explore, and just before noon we dropped anchor beside Eilean Mòr, the largest of the Crowlins. The island highpoint Meall a' Chòis offered excellent views eastwards to Loch Carron, though attention was focused on idyllically sited Uags bothy two kilometres across



Carn a' Ghaill summit, Canna

Approaching the landing at Soay



The Soay high point



“We reached the landing point, a well-constructed, but steep ladder up a rockface, quite a challenge for our cocker spaniel Bryher, who loves island bagging as much as we do!”

the water at the far southern point of Applecross. The two remaining Crowlin Islands, Eilean Meadhonach and Eilean Beag, were both very enjoyable and filled the mid-afternoon.

Last, but by no means least, was Scalpay, the day's main objective. It was an easy pontoon landing, followed by a steady 396m climb up to Mullach na Càrn. The views included the fine Corbett Glamaig, coastal Marilyn Ben Tianavaig, and the unmistakable Dun Caan across on Raasay. It was a panorama to savour and a superb climax to a top-rate day out exploring serene Hebridean waters.

Soay and Loch Bracadale; Wiay, Harlosh, Turner, Soay

Despite less-than-ideal conditions and a rather bumpy journey, we reached the first island of Wiay – the largest of those in Loch Bracadale – after two hours. Once ferried to shore, we made our way over extremely rough terrain to the island's summit, a rather nondescript 61m point. With a tight schedule there was no time to linger, and soon we were back on the boat heading towards our second island, Harlosh.

With a fine sandy beach and steep cliffs, Harlosh was the most attractive island we visited. Once we had found a route round the cliffs, the going was much easier than on Wiay and we were soon on the summit! Next, on our third island, Turner, no dinghy was needed as we were able to step straight out of the RIB on to rocks. The terrain here, like on Wiay, was hard going so it took a little longer to reach the 69m summit.

Out of all the islands we visited, the final island of Soay was the only one to be inhabited, with a population of three! We were given an hour onshore, which proved to be just enough time to reach the 141m summit and return to the boat. The summit is over a kilometre away, the route covering a bog and some very rough terrain. We were, however, rewarded with magnificent views once at the trig point marking the summit! 📍

THE RELATIVE HILLS SOCIETY

The Relative Hills Society (RHSoc) was formed in 2016 from the RHB Group which originated in the late 1990s based on Alan Dawson's 1992 book *Relative Hills of Britain*, a listing of all British hills with a prominence of 150m, commonly known as Marilyns. RHSoc subsequently affiliated with Mountaineering Scotland in 2019 and currently has 250 Members around the UK, the majority of whom are 'hill baggers', albeit with interests in a variety of lists including Marilyns, Humps, Tumps, and Simms. As can be seen from the article, there is also plenty of interest in significant islands of Britain (SIBs).

The Society publishes an annual journal, *Relative Matters*, as well as regular newsletters keeping members up to date with events. The journal includes reports of our members' adventures during the year together with articles relating to Relative Hills. It also includes the Marilyn Hall of Fame, listing those who have climbed 600 plus of the 1556 Marilyns.

The Society arranges trips all over Britain with one speciality being St Kilda and its neighbouring islands, the latter islands rarely visited since the evacuation in 1930. An annual dinner is held where awards are made to those who have passed various bagging landmarks, including completions of English and Welsh Marilyns and Humps for our members south of the border.

We welcome new joiners, visit our website, www.rhsoc.uk or email rhsoc@rhsoc.uk.

THE WINTER ROUND

Earlier this year, Anna Wells became just the fourth person, and first woman, on record to climb all 282 Munros in winter. Here, Anna gives a personal reflection of her journey and shares stories of those from the mountaineering community who helped along the way

A mountaineering proposition of high order, was how Martin Moran described the concept of climbing all 277 Munros in a single winter season back in 1985. In his book, he describes how the proposal of tackling all of Scotland's highest mountains within a 90-day schedule made his 'heartbeat race'. I think it is that sensation of a racing heart, or as I often describe it 'an excitement in my tummy', that informs us we have struck upon an idea that we are now destined to pursue. Sometimes the feeling lingers until the timing is right, and sometimes it sneaks up and grabs us by surprise. For me, reading Martin Moran's book in 2019 ignited a spark that burned in the background for several years. Then, while watching Kevin Wood's film *Winter 282* in June 2023, the spark roared into flames. I left the cinema knowing that a Winter Munro Round attempt existed in my near future!

Six months later I found myself driving up Glen Strathfarrar with Kevin Woods himself, on a dark, wet and wild December morning. "How does it feel?!", he kept asking me. All I could do was laugh and say it didn't quite feel real. It really didn't. This was day one, and Kevin had kindly offered to join me for my first four Munros. It was a sweet 'passing the baton' sentiment, since Kevin had become the third person to complete a winter round after his success in 2019.

We climbed up to our first summit experiencing full-on winter conditions, with ample fresh snow and

strong icy winds. "How often was it this windy during your round?" I tentatively asked. Kevin laughed. "More than half the time". What had I let myself in for!? I recall descending from the fourth Munro with hailstones blasting into our faces. I felt a joyful anticipation for a cosy and relaxed evening at home, ready to enjoy multiple cups of tea, with that 'post sufferance' feeling of accomplishment. Then I did my sums and realised I would only have a couple of hours to unpack my kit, dry everything, recharge batteries, eat food, shower, study the weather forecasts for tomorrow, make a plan, study maps, pack my bag and get to sleep at a reasonable hour!

The Winter Munro Round was 'more' than I expected, in every single way. It was more fun, more consuming, more challenging and more addictive than I ever could have imagined. Soon, I settled into a rhythm and became more comfortable with living in a state of slight chaos. I used every spare moment to plan, having had only two days off work before starting, and having only climbed 110 Munros prior. Eventually, I sussed out how I wanted to link together all the Munros, drawing loops on my wall map and assigning a distance and height statistic to each day. For me, this was an extremely effective way to choose my daily objectives based on weather, energy and location. Whenever possible, I combined days in the same area, gratefully accepting the immensely kind

Continued overleaf ►

“I recall descending from the fourth Munro with hailstones blasting into our faces. I felt a joyful anticipation for a cosy and relaxed evening at home.”



Anna Wells on the summit of Sgùrr a' Bhealaich Dheirg in Glen Shiel. Photo by Mairi Gibson



offers of food and accommodation I had received from around the country.

Almost every morning I woke up bursting with excitement to get into the mountains. I think that I was so completely dedicated to the objective, that I never questioned whether or not I 'could be bothered'. With an unshakeable commitment, I experienced bucket-loads of motivation that truly made it feel easy to leap out of bed, whatever the weather. I enjoyed spotting cunning weather windows among the storms, and the satisfaction that came from making good safe decisions against the odds. I relished the contrast between gnarly days battling through the elements and cosy evenings at home, or occasionally the bouldering wall! I cherished the episodes of pleasant weather, when visibility was clear and the underfoot conditions were easy. I took equal enjoyment from mountain days with friends and those spent alone; the variety kept me motivated. I thrived on massive linkups, knowing that endurance was my most valuable strength. By doing huge days, I was able to earn more rest days, eventually completing my round with only 67 days spent on the hill, and 16 days of rest. My daily average was 29km, 2100m and 4.2 Munros.

It is impossible to choose a best day because they were all so incredibly rich for a myriad of different reasons. I experienced an epic sunrise on Ciste Dhubh before skipping along the North Glen Sheil Ridge on perfect neve; I micro-naved through a blizzard in the darkness for hours during a sixty-six kilometre day in the Cairngorms; I paraglided off the summit of Ben Sgritheall while the snowy mountains of Knoydart glimmered in the sun; I watched the sun set on my fourth Fisherfield Munro when I still had another five to go in darkness without any more food; I skipped along the Cuillin Ridge in deep, fresh snow under a blue sky; I cried with relief after battling unexpected 80+mph winds and horrendous weather on the Munros above Glencoe; I laughed and whooped with friends as we snowshoed for kilometres in fresh powder on plateaus rising above a tremendous inversion in the southern cairngorms; I wept with frustration and exhaustion when I got unwell and had to bail halfway through the Beinn Dearg Munros, desperate for my bed; and

“Throughout the winter I experienced the highest of highs and the lowest of lows.”

many, many times I sped down dirt tracks on my mountain bike by head torch, freewheeling under a starry sky with music blasting in my ears at the end of another long day. Throughout the winter I experienced the highest of the highs and the lowest of the lows; the richest of emotions that will last me a lifetime.

The unpredictability of the weather and my uncertainty around my body's ability to cope with back-to-back days meant that I had never properly considered a precise completion date. I knew I wanted to achieve sub-90 days, and I was aware of Martin Moran's long-standing record of 83 days, but my strategy was simply to just keep going at whatever pace felt sustainable. It was only when I whittled my list down to '10 more hill days', that I began to speculate with any specificity. In fact, I reached that

Anna Wells and John Briggs on Cairn Bannoch in the Eastern Cairngorms. Photo by Ben Haynes





Anna Wells crossing the pinnacles on the Aonach Eagach Ridge. Photo by Mike Pescod



Anna Wells on Ben More Assynt on day two. Photo by Arron Sparks



Anna Wells and Tom Lawfield on the summit of Sgùrr Mhic Choinnich



Anna Wells on the Cuillin Ridge. Photo by Tom Lawfield

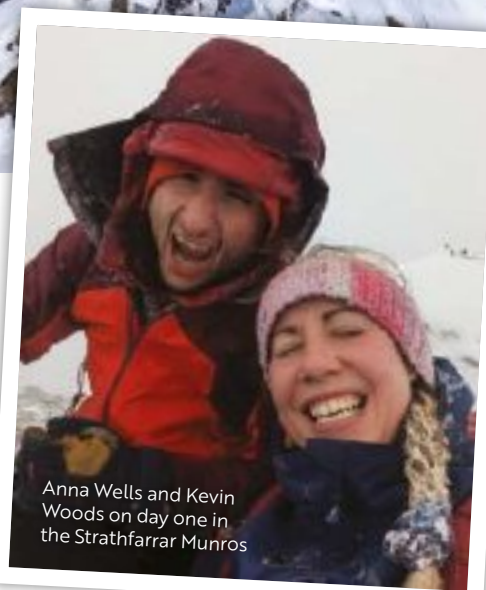
'10 days to go' milestone on day 67, at which point I thought I could comfortably finish on day 80! However, I was then struck by the lurgy and spent several days in bed, battling a head cold and heartache as the sun beamed through the window, missing some of the best weather of the winter.

I was relieved to bounce back fairly fast and inspired to put in a strong fight for the finish line. In the end, I decided to try to match Martin's time of 83 days, which demanded an insane schedule for my final four days. It was very special to be joined by Martin's son Alex on the penultimate day, after which I continued into the night to climb the three Beinn Dearg Munros that I had previously bailed from with sickness. Another friend, also called Alex, joined me through the night. The weather was brutal. We started at midnight in the pouring rain, racing to beat the 70mph winds that were forecasted for the morning. After a long hard night filled with laughter and exhaustion, my mum met us in the morning sunshine at 9am and drove us back to Inverness. I was giddy with excitement, like a kid at Christmas, as I hopelessly attempted to grab a little sleep. In the afternoon, friends and family joined me to climb

"I was giddy with excitement, like a kid at Christmas, as I hopelessly attempted to grab a little sleep."

my 282nd Munro, Càrn Gorm. The combination of sleep deprivation, exhaustion, elation and euphoria produced a cocktail of emotions that I will never forget.

The challenge of climbing all the Munros in winter perfectly aligned to my passions, personality, strengths and skill set, and genuinely became the best three months of my life. I feel very fortunate that I was able to take time away from the fast-paced reality of 'normal life' and spend such a long time running about in the mountains doing what I absolutely love best. Throughout the winter, I was absolutely blown away by the kindness and support I received from the outdoor community. Strangers welcomed me into their homes, cooked me dinners, gave me lifts, shared advice and sent messages of support. I am incredibly grateful for the kindness I received and all the wonderful people I was so lucky to meet along the way. I felt hugely supported and it made the challenge much easier, and a thousand times more fun. The outdoor community is a very special group of people. It perhaps speaks for the depth of our shared passion for the mountains that we can forge such meaningful connections with strangers. [SH](#)



Anna Wells and Kevin Woods on day one in the Strathfarrar Munros

FIRST AID KIT *FIT*

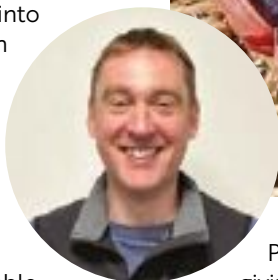
BY ROSS CADIE (PICTURED), SENIOR MOUNTAIN SAFETY ADVISOR, MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND

Walking in the mountains of Scotland is a fantastic way to stay fit and healthy, both in body

and mind. However, venturing into the mountains also comes with inherent risks. Whether you are a seasoned mountain goat or a hiking newbie, having an appropriate **first aid kit** is important.

While it isn't possible to take something for every eventuality, and you won't be able to fix a broken ankle well enough to enable walk off the hill, the following items are recommended:

- **Antiseptic wipes:** Useful for cleaning up wounds to stop infection.
- **Plasters of varying sizes:** For covering up minor cuts, blisters and scrapes.
- **Blister foot care pads:** More effective than a normal plaster and probably the most useful item for getting yourself off the hill.
- **Gauze wipes:** For mopping up and cleaning wounds.
- **Non-adhesive dressings:** Small, medium and a large. Great for those larger and deeper cuts and grazes. They will need to be kept in place with either tape or a bandage.
- **Zinc oxide tape or gaffer tape:** For sticking things in the wet, or to sweaty skin.
- **Triangular bandage:** Good for a supporting bandage on an arm or shoulder injury.
- **Vet wrap (self-adhering bandage):** Really useful for applying pressure to help stop bleeding, covering and protecting a dressing, or giving support to a sore joint.
- **Sterile wound dressing:** Have small and medium sizes.
- **Tough-cut scissors/trauma shears:** For cutting dressings, tape and plasters to size.
- **Drugs:** Personal medication for any existing conditions, but also some over-the-counter pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen.
- **Tick remover:** Getting ticks out as soon as possible greatly reduces the chance of being infected by Lyme disease.



• **Nitrile gloves, two pairs:**

Protecting yourself when giving first aid.

Other useful items to add to your kit:

- **Waterproof paper and a pencil:** To be able to take a few notes about location, other phone numbers in the group and nature of incident before calling police on 999 or 112 and asking for Mountain Rescue. Having this written down will take some of the stress away and help with accuracy.
- **Whistle:** Signalling for help from other hill goers or to help Mountain Rescue get to your exact location.
- **Emergency head torch:** Easier than needing to change batteries and less likely to forget if it's part of your first aid kit.
- **Dry bags and waterproofing:** It's important to keep everything dry, so consider putting it in a dedicated dry bag. You could also write 'First Aid Kit' on the outside so it's easy for everyone to find.

Even a blister on the heel can be debilitating, but with the right items in your first aid kit and a bit of knowledge, many issues can be treated enough to get you off the hill.



Regularly review and check the contents to make sure they are in-date and replenished. Consider adding specific treatments for different activities – for burns if you go camping a lot, for instance.

Upskill on a first aid course

Going on a first aid course is a really good way of making sure you have the skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to deal with most general first aid issues. There are a wide range of courses but doing an outdoor-specific one would be the most useful. One of the many benefits of Mountaineering Scotland membership is access to some great discounted first aid courses – website address below.


What about the big problems?

Broken ankles, dislocated kneecaps, big bleeds, serious head injuries. All these, I would argue, are showstoppers for being able to get yourself off the hill because there's a good chance that you could do more harm than good. Use what you have to slow or stop the problem, then make yourself as comfortable as possible and call for Mountain Rescue.

Call 999 – ask for police, then ask for Mountain Rescue

Tell them:

- Location of incident – ideally a six-figure grid reference and a named feature.
- Number of casualties and others in the group.
- What is wrong with the casualty(s).
- What equipment you have in the group.
- Telephone number of the phone you are using, plus any others in the group.

A group shelter and extra layers of warm clothes will make the wait for help much more comfortable... but only if you remember to pack them in your rucksack! 

To find out what else you might want to include in your kit, visit:
www.mountaineering.scot/activities/hillwalking/getting-started/essential-kit

Discover more on first aid courses:
www.mountaineering.scot/members/members-benefits/your-discounts/other-discounts

Bob Sharp delves into just a few of the reasons these lovely lowly hills are so popular, and the important role they've played in the hillwalking, climbing and skiing history of Scotland

CAMPSIE CAPERS

View from the summit
of Dumgoyne looking
east towards Slackdhu

The Campsie Fells ('The crooked fairy hills'), which lie a few miles north of Glasgow, are the highest and most extensive group of hills that range between Dumbarton to the south west and Stirling to the north east. They are bounded on the south by a steep escarpment (Slackdhu) which comprises horizontal layers of rotten and broken rocks of volcanic origin. Ballagan Glen and Fin Glen both cut deep into the main plateau, while Campsie Glen further east effectively divides the Campsies into two sections. The northern

boundary is also steep and craggy in places and the Corrie of Balglass above Ballikrain is a classic armchair corrie. The highest points on the fells are Earl's Seat (578 metres) and Meikle Bin (570 metres). The plateau rarely drops below 400 metres and, for the most part, undulates and is relatively featureless, apart from several distinct rounded tops the most notable being Dumgoyne (427). These are the vent plugs of volcanoes that have weathered more slowly than the surrounding terrain.

The Campsies are not lofty compared to the hills and mountains further north, but nevertheless, their lowly standing masks several gems of historical significance. Take

skiing. For those interested in ski touring, the plateau has potential, with reasonable access both west and east from the Crow Road, although a fair depth of snow is needed to smooth out the tussocky grass and boggy sections. Unfortunately, rising temperatures mean that today, the opportunity for decent skiing is limited. But turn the clock back 50 years and extensive snow cover was almost guaranteed, and it wasn't unusual to see the plateau crisscrossed with ski tracks.

Significantly, if we go back to the late 19th century, the Campsies witnessed

Continued overleaf ►

the very beginning of skiing in Scotland! Distinguished mountaineer William Naismith was a key proponent. Naismith was a founder of the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) in 1889 and his first ascents included Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis and Crowberry Ridge (Naismith's Route) on Buachaille Etive Mòr. Many readers will know of 'Naismith's rule', which he devised to estimate the time to walk a route of a given distance and elevation gain. Naismith was also a notable skier and is reported to have made the first expedition on skis in Scottish history when, in 1892, he skied across the Campsie Fells. Myrtle Simpson, who penned the definitive history of Scottish skiing, described his expedition, viz.,

"There was fresh snow on the hills on the 12 March 1892. W.W. Naismith and a friend boarded the train in Glasgow for Kirkintilloch, then caught the early trap to Milton of Campsie. Bystanders were surprised to see them shouldering long heavy planks of wood and setting off to clamber up to the snow behind the village.

"The wooden planks were ash skis, seven feet long and four and a half inches wide with leather fastenings. The young men fixed the straps over their heavy workmen's boots and skied up onto the ridge before following the crest for two miles to a top known as Meikle Bin. It was a clear crisp spring day, and the two men were thrilled with the view. The hills were glistening white, the sun sparkling off the fresh snow. Naismith could see right across Scotland, from the Ochils and Firth of Forth to the Arran Hills beyond the Clyde. They retraced their tracks, and Naismith found that a very slight gradient was sufficient to set the skis sliding at a tremendous speed. As the angle steepened, he kicked them

"If you met him on the hill then most likely, he'd be wearing his trademark red woolly bunnet, fair-isle jumper and Tweed breeks."

off and sat on them instead, turning the skis into a toboggan. He could hardly wait till the next annual dinner of the Scottish Mountaineering Club to relate his experience."

At that meeting, Naismith gave an account of his day on Meikle Bin and pointed out to members that with skis they could range all over Scotland even in winter. He did say that skis weren't much use on ascent but, on level ground or on soft snow, better progress was made with them than without.

Just like William Naismith, Tom Weir, who passed away in 2006, was also attracted to the Campsie Fells. Tom was an iconic Scottish figure. If you met him on the hill then most likely, he'd be wearing his trademark red woolly bunnet, fair-isle jumper and Tweed breeks. Born in Glasgow in 1914, Tom was – among many other things – a broadcaster, author, mountaineer and environmental campaigner. He developed a lifelong affection for the hills as a child, commenting that his love of the Scottish landscape began when a young teenager living in Springburn. He is widely known for his travels throughout Scotland, numerous writings and TV programmes and for his many excursions on mountain ranges throughout the world, including Everest in 1950, but it was the Campsies

where it all began. Reflecting on his very first experiences, Tom said:

"The bus that ran past our door went straight to Campsie Glen. A single journey cost just 6p. From my house I could see the green outline of the Campsies and the blue skyline of far away and bigger hills and decided I would go there. For me, the Campsies became the most wonderful place in the world."

Today, there is a memorial cairn in Campsie Glen which commemorates Tom's vast contribution to Scottish outdoor life.

As noted before, the northern and southern aspects of the Campsies comprise steep escarpments and layers of exposed rock which suggest climbing potential; but that is not the case. The rock is mostly unstable and, although there are a number of named routes on the face of Slackdhu, they are rarely climbed. The best climbing is on a short outcrop near the south-eastern end of Slackdhu. A small stream flows over the edge and, in very wet weather, becomes a significant waterfall that cascades down a 15-metre chimney called Jenny's Lum. If the wind is strong and southerly, the waterfall defies gravity and blows straight back up the chimney! The cliff to the left of the Lum is vertical and its north-western edge is called Jenny's Lum Arete. Graded hard severe, the rock is solid, but the holds are small and there is little or no prospect for protection; that is why most climbers rig a top rope. It's a fine little climb and regarded as the classic problem on the Campsies. There are several other short climbs adjacent to the arete. Notably, after a long spell of subzero weather, Jenny's Lum freezes and makes for a decent ice pitch. Also, following a good fall of snow, Coffin Gully which divides the face of Slackdhu becomes a decent Grade I route.



The hills are a popular leisure location during the winter



Dumgoyne looking west is an impressive and inspiring sight

View from the south. Coffin Gully centre of image with Black Craig on far right



About 500 metres south-east of Jenny's Lum is an obvious open gully to the right of which is a prominent vertical face called Black Craig. A grassy ledge splits the face, whose total height is about 50 metres. The rock is very loose and vegetated, underlined by a report in the SMC Journal from 100 years ago suggesting that climbing the crag is 'barely justifiable'. In 1935 it was reported to be the scene of a tragic accident. However, it should be recorded that the crag played a very important role in the history of Scottish climbing. In his biography of legendary climber John Cunningham, Jeff Connor described an event that took place in 1930.

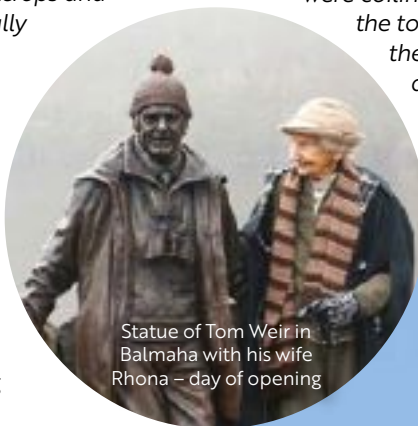
"The Campsies offer fine walks of easy gradient below the 2,000-foot contour – and all within a bus ride of Glasgow. But their crumbling dolerite outcrops and vegetated gullies are virtually worthless to the man with boots and rope."

"Not that that deterred Andy Sanders when he set out from his home in Clydebank on a spring weekday in 1930. First, he took a tram ride to rural Milngavie north of Glasgow then, with a companion tramped – clinker-nailed boots ringing on the tarmac – along the remainder of the A81 to the village of Blane field above which Slackdhu and its conical outpost of Dumgoyne do their best, in their own modest way, to tower. It was a fine day and although in the past Sanders had used his thumb to hitch from Clydeside out into the hills north of the city, he and his mate were in no hurry; like some 120,000 other unemployed Glaswegians of that year, they had time on their hands. At Blane field the two mountaineers turned right along the Campsie Dene road, hastened on tiptoe

past the gamekeeper's cottage – Slackdhu like most of the Campsies in those days was on private land – and then stuck up the hillside towards the cliffs, just on the 1400 foot contour.

"Sanders had been here before and the gap in his broad and often employed grin was the legacy of an earlier attempt on Coffin Gully, the deep black cleft in the centre of the crag, when a loosened rock hit him full in the face and removed a front tooth. This time his target was the two-tiered outcrop on the right of the escarpment and a route directly up its face which, after a struggle with loose rock, vertical grass and vegetation, eventually succumbed to the determination and bloody-mindedness of the two Clydesiders. It was as they

were coiling their manilla line at the top that they noticed they had company: two doctors on their way south along the track from Earl's Seat. Astonished to see two bodies clad



Statue of Tom Weir in Balmaha with his wife Rhona – day of opening

in ill-fitted, buttoned corduroy lumber jackets and with baggy trousers tucked into puttees, emerge from the depths below, the gentlemen hikers hastened over and there followed something approximating the following conversation:

First doctor: "Good heavens man, have you just climbed up there?"

Sanders: "Aye, that's right, Jimmy, no' as hard as I thought."

First doctor: "But that has never been climbed before, it's a first ascent!"

Sanders: "Aye, well, that's as maybe, but it was good fun and anyway I dinnae even ken the name of yon crag."

It was then that the other doctor, who had remained silent until then but who was obviously a local expert, interrupted.

"It's called the Black Crag," he said, "although some locals know it by the Gaelic name, Creagh Dhu."

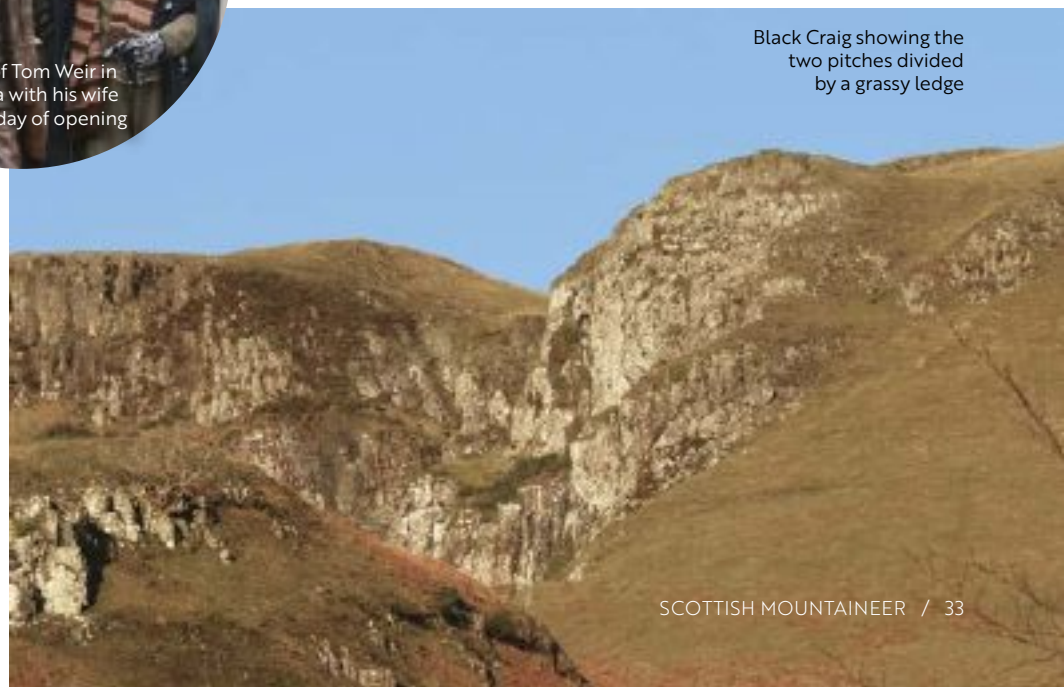
It's unclear exactly what happened afterwards (perhaps there was a meeting of like minds?) but there is no doubt that the Creagh Dhu Mountaineering Club saw its birth on this "scruffy crag in the Campsies".

If you visit the Campsie Fells for a walk, climb or even a ski, then take a moment to reflect on stalwarts such as Tom Weir and William Naismith who went before you and who opened the door to outdoor adventures for generations of hillgoers. ●

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Black Craig showing the two pitches divided by a grassy ledge





How to hire a peak professional

With Scott Kirkhope, Development Officer for the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI)

Engaging a mountain professional is a great way to help achieve your goals or ambitions while building your confidence and experience. However, choosing someone to put your trust in can be a challenge in its own right! If you're planning to hire a professional mountaineer, we offer the following advice:

Decide what you want to achieve

- Is it a guiding/leading service or an instructional/coaching service? This will have a direct effect the level of experience and or qualification required by the professional.

- Always discuss your aims when you approach a professional or company for the first time and be totally honest and open with them about your experience and fitness.

Research the market

- Be aware there is no comprehensive statutory requirement for a person offering professional services in the mountains to hold any particular qualification. While qualifications alone are not a reason just to go with one person or company, a qualification shows individuals or staff have been trained and assessed to an agreed standard by their peers.
- We suggest you make your choice by finding





out about what qualifications the professional has, what professional development they currently undertake, their relevant experience in the activity or particular chosen location or route and insurance levels.

- Ask about insurance. Regardless of qualification, we suggest you check whether the professional has appropriate professional liability or indemnity insurance and that it is current. In the absence of evidence of such insurance, our recommendation would be to look elsewhere.
- Once you have a few options, reach out to those individuals or businesses and let them know what you would like to do. The cheapest price isn't always going to be the best. You may

“Discuss your aims when you approach a professional or company for the first time and be totally honest and open with them about your experience and fitness.”

find the way individuals or companies answer your questions will tell you whether you want to engage their services or not.

- Check the reviews. There are plenty of ways to gather reviews and build a bigger picture about an individual or company. There are a number of review sites along with social media platforms, and don't forget the power of word of mouth from someone you trust.

How to check for qualifications

- Many professionals will hold qualifications awarded under the various schemes administered by Mountain Training (www.mountain-training.org), including Members of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors, British Mountain Guides or The Mountain Training Association.
- Current membership of an appropriate professional organisation, such as the Association of Mountaineering Instructors. By being such a member, the individual is subject to requirements of continuing professional development and kept informed of developments in practice in their professional work. AMI members adhere to a code of conduct and have professional standard policies.
- The Association of Mountaineering Instructors has a handy search function so you can find an instructor or guide based on location or activity that they are qualified to offer. SM



**ASSOCIATION OF
MOUNTAINEERING
INSTRUCTORS**

The Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) is the representative body for professional qualified Mountaineering Instructors in the UK and Ireland.

AMI members are highly experienced mountaineers who have undergone rigorous training and assessment to qualify under the Mountain Training UK (MTUK) Mountaineering Instructor scheme.

The AMI is committed to promoting good practice in all mountaineering instruction. By employing an AMI member, you will be in the very best hands. Look for the AMI logo as assurance of high-quality instruction.

**To find out more,
visit: www.ami.org.uk**



Scott Kirkhope is a Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (WMCI) living and working, year-round in the Scottish Highlands. He runs Elite Guides, which offers guiding and instruction across the Highlands, from the North West, to Skye, Ben Nevis and Glencoe.

THE SMC PUBLIC ROUTES DATABASE

BY ROGER EVERETT, SMC DATABASE CURATOR AND JOINT NEW ROUTES EDITOR

Scotland has a wealth of climbing adventures on offer, climbs of all types on mountains, crags and sea-cliffs, from the northerly outposts of Shetland down to the balmy climate of the Solway coast. In today's fast-moving world, climbers have come to expect rapid reporting of developments but, until recently, there has been no comprehensive source of climb descriptions all in one place. The SMC has now filled this gap with a free routes database web page at routes.smc.org.uk that includes the descriptions of all the climbs in SMC guidebooks and subsequent *SMC Journals* – more than 40,000 routes. The site is updated regularly – new climbs are published within days or hours of the descriptions being submitted. The climbs are catalogued by region, mountain and crag with powerful and rapid search functions. Designed to be used in combination with the printed guidebooks, the website provides an unparalleled resource for climbing information in Scotland. This article presents a brief history of its development and associated web pages.

A digital adventure

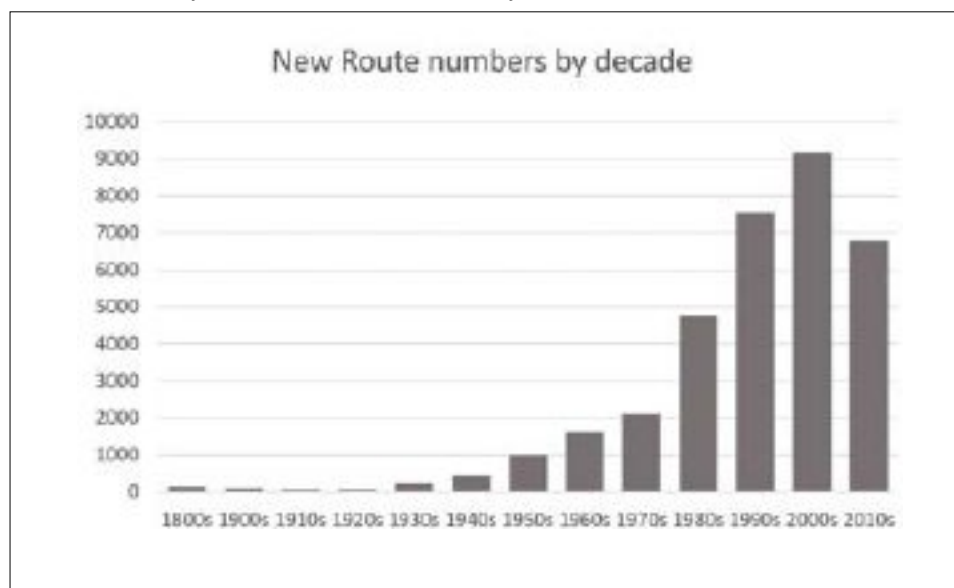
The number of new routes in Scotland exploded in the decades since the 1980s, graphically illustrating the health and vibrancy of our sport. But this exploratory energy was creating a problem of how all the information could be managed. When President of the SMC, Simon Richardson initiated a project to find a digital solution. With seed funding from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust, John Hutchinson and Mark Atkins researched available database systems, with input from Simon and myself, but despite considerable effort, we could not identify an existing solution that fitted the SMC's needs.



The SMC public routes database homepage. Search for an individual route or crag (includes area, mountain, crag group) or browse by geographical region

There was a hiatus, during which I compiled the information into Word files (almost three million words!), but Nevil Hewitt had been thinking of designing a new climbing database system and, after discussions with Simon, he built in remarkable speed a new web-based tool using the latest software packages and an imaginative structure

The number of newly recorded climbs in the database by decade



Lapwing on Creag Toll Tuill Bhearnach, Sgurr nan Clachan Geala, Glen Cannich. Climber: Neil Adams. Photo: Ryan Balharry. An example of a fine route in a little-known area published within days of the first ascent

that could cope with the complexities of the SMC's data. We were off and running, and we soon had a core database to store information and provide the starting material for guidebook authors.

Publishing through both guidebooks and the web

The SMC had already made the strategic decision that many of its new series of guidebooks would be selective. There was too much information to include everything in a book, especially with modern standards of photo topos



illustrating nearly every included route. The rest would be published digitally, but the question was how. Supplementary PDF files can be excellent, but they take time to assemble and update. New routes sections published in SMCJ have been made available on the SMC website since 2002 (see www.smc.org.uk/journal/downloads) but in today's fast moving world, climbers expect the information to appear rapidly.

The SMC New Routes webpage

The first stage of adding a rapid digital option was the New Routes public webpage www.smc.org.uk/climbs/newroutes.

Launched in January 2023, it was an instant success. This describes more than 10,000 new routes done after the publication of the most recent comprehensive guidebook for each area. Submission of new route descriptions is via a user-friendly website, visit www.smc.org.uk/climbs/submission.

The TopoEditor

Integrated into the New Routes submission page is a basic version of TopoEditor, a web-based tool for the creation of high-quality topos. This is being increasingly used by first ascensionists to provide topos alongside their new route descriptions.



The TopoEditor main working screen

There is a free public website www.topoeditor.com that has a full version of the software. It is very easy to use, does not require expensive commercial software and it allows download of the result for your own purposes – make a topo of your holiday routes on your own photos! The files can be imported directly into page setting programmes for print publication, allowing guidebook authors to draw their own lines and spreading the work involved in topo production.

The SMC public comprehensive routes database

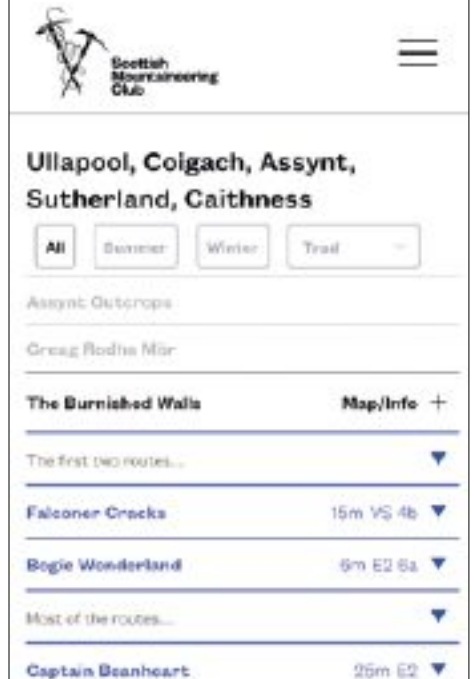
It was a big step for many reasons, both technical and strategic, to extend the New Routes webpage to the complete database content. With the strong support of Rob Lovell at the Scottish Mountaineering Press and the SMC Publications sub-committee the decision was made to go ahead. The webpage layout is optimised for phones, but it is not an app, so it requires internet access through 4G or WiFi. It is text-only – the SMC's guidebooks should be consulted for detailed general information, maps and topos. It also complements the selective SMC information available on the Rockfax app. There is no download facility, but screen shots of your chosen climb can be convenient on the hill. It provides easy access to all route descriptions whether or not they are in the guidebooks. Feedback and comments can be submitted via a section of the new routes web page, or by a feedback button under the three lines menu icon.

The first ascent function

A unique feature is the comprehensive first ascent search facility, allowing search and display of the new routes done by any individual – look up notable climbers, your mates (and yourself) and marvel that if you joined all Andy Nisbet's routes from end to end they'd stretch for Glasgow to Aviemore. We are always happy to receive corrections and additions, and we are particularly keen to get information on the first names of climbers so the lists can be made less ambiguous and more informative, especially in highlighting that women have always been – and continue to be – involved in first ascents.

A long-term team effort

Many people have contributed a large amount of voluntary time to enable this project. Nevil Hewitt's outstanding coding skills have produced all the tools and web pages described here. Others have helped build and curate the information. But the utility of any web page depends




A typical crag page. Click on the Map/Info + to open the crag information or any blue triangle to display the text under any item. Use the upper boxes to filter the view by climb type, and navigate around by clicking on any higher heading levels

on the quality of the information it holds. For this we must thank the many authors and editors who over previous decades have built up the SMC's authoritative comprehensive guidebooks. This information has in turn depended on the many people who have developed new cliffs and climbs and freely provided all their route descriptions. We are indebted to them all.

A free resource for everybody

The future success of this venture depends not only on past contributors but also on engagement with the active climbing community so that we can continue to update the site with new routes, comments and corrections. We are very grateful to receive all such information, which we now make publicly available in a timely manner for the benefit of the whole climbing community. We present a summary of new route submissions in a monthly illustrated blog, available from the climbs menu on the SMC website, visit www.smc.org.uk/climbs/blog.

A personal note

It has been an exciting and somewhat wild ride getting to this stage, everything has moved so fast in the past few years. It has been a pleasure to work with so many positive, forward-thinking people. It has required many hundreds of hours of work of course, but always interesting, a sort of digital trip through many of the venues where I've enjoyed climbing during the past six decades. Plus, of course, getting lots of ideas of where to go next... have a browse, and do likewise. 

WOODLAND CREATION WITHOUT FENCES?

NICOLA HUNT, HEAD OF LAND MANAGEMENT,
BORDERS FOREST TRUST

In the central Southern Uplands of Scotland, Borders Forest Trust (bordersforesttrust.org) is restoring native woodlands. Owning 3,250ha of land in the uplands near Moffat, which includes the upper slopes of Hart Fell and White Coomb, they are trying to do this without the use of extensive deer fencing and have established more than 600ha already.

Native woodland and montane scrub are being restored on its land among a mosaic of other natural upland habitats, through a landscape-scale, ecological restoration initiative called Reviving the Wild Heart of Southern Scotland. One of the greatest challenges facing the Trust and those that are trying to establish this native woodland is deer, which exist in very high numbers in Scotland.

Why restore woodlands?

Native woodlands once clothed the hills and valleys of much of Scotland and, on the hilltops, the wee trees once created a network of montane scrub. Over the millennia, these valuable habitats have been greatly diminished as a result of changes in land use and climate, leaving less than 4% of Scotland's land under native woodland today. Native woodlands provide many benefits – a habitat for a range number of species, sequestering carbon from the atmosphere helping to mitigate climate changes, help to alleviate flooding and diffuse pollution, provide

“Deer management may be very effective if well delivered, but it is not always an option in very remote, hard to access areas.”

shelter for livestock and can provide a valuable product and associated revenue.

How do we achieve this?

It is a conundrum for those engaged in native woodland restoration to work out the best way to protect trees from deer and satisfy the grant funders, Scottish Forestry, that the chosen way will deliver the required results. Deer management may be very effective if well delivered,

but it is not always an option in very remote, steep and hard to access areas and in places like these, deer fences may provide the only defence.

Borders Forest Trust has adopted an approach of deer management where possible and has successfully established more than 600ha of native woodland without fences. It can be done. A further 350ha however has been planted and reluctantly protected by deer fences where management was not possible.

Once established, these fences will be removed to open up the hillsides once again, a practice that needs to be undertaken wherever deer fences have served their purpose and are no longer needed. Perhaps a grant to support this activity would incentivise more of this.

The challenge...

There are three principal ways to address the issue of deer:



Native woodland thriving at
Corehead without deer fence



- Exclude them from the new woodlands with deer fences.
- Place the trees in tall tubes.
- Control deer numbers to maintain a low density that does not impact on the trees.

Deer fences are not completely deer proof and deer do manage to get into enclosures, so deer management will also be required to ensure numbers do not build up to levels where significant damage occurs. Deer fences themselves are high impacting on the landscape and can create barriers for access to the land, causing lots of frustration to walkers on the hill, especially ones with dogs.

Tall tubes of 1.2m for roe deer and 1.8m for larger deer species may prevent the trees from being browsed and frayed with antlers but they too have their issues. Tall tubes generally do not create good growing environments for native trees as the tube forces the tree to grow up fast, tall, skinny and weak and they often create damp microclimates, which can actually cause the trees to rot and die.

Deer management, by contrast, addresses the issue of having high numbers of deer in our environment

A happy volunteer
in the great outdoors




and protects the trees by reducing deer numbers to a level where only low levels of damage occurs.

To establish planted trees and encourage trees to regenerate naturally, a deer density of fewer than five deer/km² is required. To reach and maintain this density requires significant work assessing impacts of deer on trees, assessing the numbers of deer on site and undertaking effective and

responsive deer management to achieve the necessary cull targets.

It also requires there to be confidence from Scottish Forestry that those growing the trees can be trusted to be able to do this adequately over long time periods. This trust is a high-risk area, and one that would need monitored, so not surprisingly Scottish Forestry has a preference of the lower risk barrier approach to dealing with the deer issue.

Looking to the future, a more concerted effort of all landowners to reduce deer numbers across our landscape would be beneficial not only to reduce the risk to tree establishment and prevent the need for deer fences and tall tubes but also to reduce road traffic accidents, damage to peatlands and loss of farm crops.

It may happen as the government is currently seeking ways to reduce the unsustainably high deer numbers we have across the country. Following on from this, and taking on board that trees can be established through deer management, that perhaps the forestry grant system could perhaps consider an option of planting without fences. 

Club Spot

CARN DEARG MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

WORDS: IAN JOY



June 2024 sees the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Carn Dearg Mountaineering Club. After the Second World War, many ex-servicemen brought home an enthusiasm for outdoor life making use of various bothies, howffs and youth hostels. Given their economic position, travelling to the hills was always a challenge and in Angus the proximity of Glen Clova to Forfar and Kirriemuir whetted many aspiring mountaineers' appetite for the hills.

Regular weekenders realised that the only way to access the hills and mountains further afield would be to get organised and run buses on a regular, and cheap, basis. At a meeting held in the Rover Den in Forfar on 15 June 1949, the attendees decided to form a mountaineering club and, given their association with Glen Clova, the scene of their early rock climbs, the name 'Carn Dearg' was adopted. In February 1950, the club became a member of the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs, a forerunner of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

With a focus on attracting a young, enthusiastic membership, it was felt that a rather free and easy atmosphere should prevail rather than the fussiness

Above: A party of club members during the January 2024 meet in Glen Doll, heading up to Corrie Fee

and formality of older established mountaineering clubs. This approach was successful with membership booming to such an extent that District Secretaries were required for Kirriemuir, Brechin and Dundee. However, that initial enthusiasm rather dwindled and in 1953, the club was reinvigorated with an influx of new Dundee members who reinforced the remaining Forfar and Brechin folk resulting in annual general meetings moving to Dundee. The club subsequently took on a Dundee identity, but retained the free and easy atmosphere, attracting a more working-class membership, compared with the established Grampian Club, which had a rather more 'professional' membership.

Mike Sutherland was elected as the club's first

"It proved to be a very successful project providing a base for both social events, mountaineering exploits and subsequent celebratory trips to the bar in the Clova Hotel, a mere three-mile stagger back up the road!"



Above: Glen Clova

Below: The first club meet in Glen Coe in 1949. Return bus journey set off from Glen Coe at 5am on Monday morning, 12 hours behind schedule due to 'an incident' on Raven's Gully!

President, with the indomitable Davie Glen invited to be Honorary President. Bill Wyllie also justifies recognition for his enthusiasm and hard work as the first Secretary-Treasurer, the most arduous office bearer, and this continues to be the position today.

The monthly bus meets were very popular, sometimes attracting so many members two buses were required. However, in the early 1950s focus

remained active on the Red Craggs in Clova with Fred Old, Frank Anderson and Alex Ferguson particularly active. Their first ascent of Guinness being of some significance, but there were several other excellent rock climbers active in the club. Anybody wanting to learn more about their escapades and achievements should take a look at Grant Farquhar's A'Chreag Dhearg, Climbing Stories of the Angus Glens.

In 1965, club members built their first club hut at Braedownie in Glen Clova and it proved to be a very successful project providing a base for both social events, mountaineering exploits and subsequent celebratory trips to the bar in the Clova Hotel, a mere three-mile stagger back up the road!

In the 60s and on into the 70s, club members continued to be at the forefront of Scottish climbing with Graeme Hunter and Doug Lang leading the way on Creag an Dubh Loch and the classic Ardverikie Wall. Lang and Neil Quinn were a formidable pairing on the snow and ice routes in winter.

The club also managed to provide a more sociable side. The annual Carn Dearg Social, held at Dykehead Hotel, was always a highlight on the club calendar. This event necessitated involvement of both



Continued overleaf ►



From previous page ►

members and partners and the club has always encouraged a mixed membership. In 1983, Irene Hughes was elected as the first lady President of the club, and today a significant number of our active members are women.

Carn Dearg members have regularly been at the forefront of other mountaineering related activities, with slide shows and lectures from visiting speakers initially held in rooms at Dudhope Castle, then the Ancrum Activities Centre and, for a more prestigious venue, the University of Dundee could be accommodating. Members, particularly Honorary Life member Alfie Ingram, were fundamental in establishment and running of Tayside Mountain Rescue, the Mountain Mind Quiz, and the Dundee Mountain Film Festival.

By the early 2000s, the Clova hut was showing signs of considerable wear and tear, and at the 2009 AGM, members agreed to initiate a plan to develop a new hut. After considerable lobbying, fund raising and brute force effort from members, the new hut was officially opened in 2017 and provides very comfortable premises at the Braedownie location.

Although its current membership of around 40 is rather less than in the club's heyday, members continue to hold regular monthly club meets. Members are now spread across Scotland and even into England and attendees at the meets include members from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Fife as well as the Dundee and Angus area.


Although camping is still an option, many members nowadays prefer the comfort of a hut

Above: Official opening of the new hut in 2017. From left to right: Brian Clark, former President who had been significantly involved in construction of the original hut as well as a key contributor to the new hut, Katie Marwick, Club Secretary in 2017 and Jon Shutt, President in 2017

or cottage to a tent, and with the geographical spread of our members, cars are the normal mode of transport rather than the traditional club bus. Evolution has resulted in hill walking replacing the early rock and ice climbing activities of most club members and recently, one member walked from Dundee via Newtyle, Kirriemuir, Clova, and Linn of Dee to Aviemore to participate in a Cairngorms meet.

New members are always welcome and interested parties are invited to join in as guests prior to joining the club. In the second half of 2024, meets are scheduled to Glen Affric, Lairg, Arrochar, Torridon, Laganside and Bridge of Orchy. A meet to the Isle of Jura in 2025 has already been organised.

The active committee, like many other clubs and organisations, is still grappling with the post-Covid world and is actively trying to re-establish a presence on social media.

However, one significant step forward is the launch of a new, updated club website at **www.carndearg.org**. Members hope this will enable interested parties to find further, appropriate information about the club. 

“Members are now spread across Scotland and even into England and attendees at the meets include members from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Fife as well as the Dundee and Angus area.”

Trail running

NAVIGATION FOR MOUNTAIN RUNNERS: PART 1

Set your map and everything else falls into place, says Ian Stewart, founder of Trail Running Scotland



Photo credit The Adventure Photographers



The world's best navigators are orienteers, who can move rapidly through complex terrain with limited visibility, using small features to pinpoint their position. They do all of this with a very simple compass, often with little more than a magnetic needle and a straight edge that sits on the thumb.

As walkers and runners, the features we navigate to are much bigger, so navigation should be easier. However, our compasses are often more complicated, with a rotating bezel with 360-degree markings and a larger baseplate. Does this actually help? And how do orienteers manage without it?

As always, it comes down to using the right bit of equipment for the right job. You can consider your compass as three separate bits of kit; the magnetic needle tells you where north is, the base plate is useful for pointing at things and the bezel can be used to 'record' a bearing on your compass.

All three come into play when we are walking accurately on a bearing in open country for extended distances. But let's be honest, this is only a very small part of how we spend our time navigating. For the majority of the time, all we really need to know is where north is and then everything else falls into place.

To make this work, hold your compass flat in one hand, and the map in the other. Now turn the map until north on the piece of paper is lined up in with the north magnetic needle. Your map is now 'set'.

Example 1:

If you know where you are on the map and it is set, everything around you will line up perfectly with the map. So, it is quick and easy to check the direction

“As always, it comes down to using the right bit of kit for the right job. You can consider your compass as three separate bits of kit.”

of features around you. Point on the map along the line of the trail you want to follow, or ridgeline down from a summit, then raise your finger and, as if by magic, you will be pointing where you want to go.

Example 2:


If you are unsure if the path/stream/slope on the ground is the one you should be following, you can quickly test to see if its direction matches the one you want. Again, set the map, point where you should be going. Does it match what is in front of you? Here you would use other information as well, such as the steepness of a slope or other features you can see, but on a misty day when all paths look the same, direction should be a key piece of your puzzle.

Example 3:

If you are not sure where you are you can quickly test the direction of any line feature (trail/stream/wall/edge of a forest) against the map and narrow down your options. Point your feet along the trail you are testing, set the map. Hold out your finger in line with the trail and compare its direction to the ones on the map. You can probably quickly eliminate most trails on the map.

More information

Watch a short explanation video on the Trail Running Scotland YouTube channel www.youtube.com/@trailrunningscotland and don't forget to check back for part two in the next issue of *Scottish Mountaineer*!

Looking to up your navigation skills this year? Mountaineering Scotland's one-day navigation courses are great for those just starting out in the hills, or anyone looking for a navigation refresher. Visit: www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/courses-and-events/our-courses/navigation-courses 



Your View

We've had some fantastic entries for our Your View competition over the last

six months, with our members sharing a wide range of images from days spent in Scotland's hills and mountains.

We've chosen our favourite shots, including the winning image from **Jamie Sillars**, who will receive a SIGG Silver Starter prize bundle, worth over RRP: £90.00, which includes a SIGG Gemstone Food Jar, SIGG Hot & Cold One Light, SIGG Traveller and SIGG Total Clear One MyPlanet, as advertised in last November's special 100th anniversary edition of *Scottish Mountaineer*.

To be in with a chance of winning this issue's prize of a SIGG Gemstone Food Box (RRP: £33.99) and seeing your photo published in the next issue of *Scottish Mountaineer*, as well as on our social media channels, send a high-resolution jpg image (at least 1MB in size) to the editor at: fiona@mountaineering.scot before **1 September 2024**. Don't forget to let us know where and when you took the photo, and the name(s) of anyone it features!

T&Cs apply. The winner's name and contact details will be shared with SIGG for the purposes of dispatching the prize.

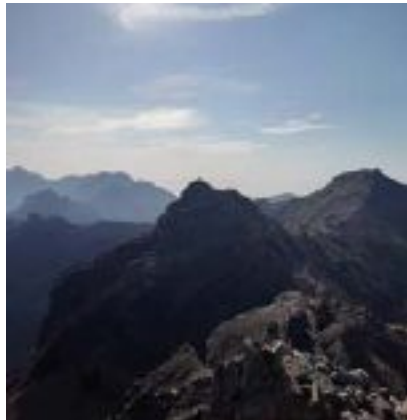
SIGG 



Bruce Russell took this photo of wife **Clare Russell** during the Mountain Heights, Hidden Depths Munro Soil Survey, run by the James Hutton Institute last August. Clare chose Meall Dearg on the Aonach Eagach Ridge as her adopted Munro, seen here taking her soil sample with the Mamores and Ben Nevis in the background.



Mark Norris took this incredible shot last September from Am Basteir, looking south west along the Ridge, with a climber on the summit of Bruach na Frithe.



An early November start on Ben More allowed **Ryan McNeil** to capture this beautiful sunrise selfie.

A February trip to Sgòr Gaoith in the Cairngorms saw **Andy Barnett** capture this incredible shot, with fellow mountaineers walking across the plateau on the way to the summit.



Winner



Jamie Sillars' wonderful image of six-year-old Caesar the German Shepherd near the top of Beinn a 'Chrùlaiste, who loves roaming the Scottish mountains with Jamie, is the winner of our special 100th edition prize bundle!



A beautiful shot from **Elizabeth Mitchell**, taken from Stob Coire a' Chearcaill, with views towards Ben Nevis and Fort William.



Crystal clear water and mountain views from Loch Coruisk, Skye – taken by Inverness Mountaineering Club member, **Terry Moore**, last summer.



Andrew Neison sent in this monumental (!) shot of girlfriend Katharina Lenz (Skye MRT), standing on their local trig point on the Sleat peninsula, taken in March 2024.

Book reviews

The Cairngorms & North-East Scotland (SMC)

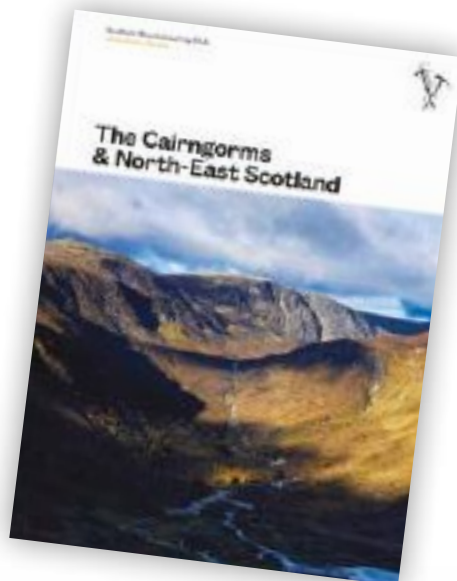
Iain Young, Anne Butler and Heather Morning

£35/SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING PRESS (10% DISCOUNT ONLINE FOR MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND MEMBERS)

The Cairngorms & North-East Scotland is the first of the area guides from the Scottish Mountaineering Press to get a major update in their distinctive new look. Packed with fascinating background information on a diverse part of the country, this attractive and inspiring medium-format hardback tome is so much more than just a book of walks – though it is that too.

List-based books, such as *The Munros* or *The Corbetts*, range far and wide across Scotland but provide coverage in a very selective way. If ticking the list is your prime concern then these may be all the Scottish walking books you need, and there's nothing wrong with that. But many folks want to take a more considered view of a place.

What's different about the area guides is the way they drill down into the detail of a particular region, looking beyond the key summits to offer a deeper and more nuanced appreciation. *The Cairngorms & North-East Scotland* is a big hit on this



score, supplementing the many walk descriptions with a wealth of information on geology, human and natural history.

There's a double page devoted to the Shelterstone (the howff, not the crag); notes

on all the major bothies; even a full page on trig points. If there's something notable on the ground then the chances are the book's three knowledgeable co-authors, Iain Young, Anne Butler and Heather Morning, have it covered in the book. It's great to see a whole chapter devoted to the main passes and through-routes, for instance, since these are a defining feature of the area; likewise, the section on long-distance trails and the more obvious extended hill days such as the Cairngorm 4000ers, which will be useful for those thinking bigger.

Photography is inspiring throughout, and the clear maps and smart layout make this book a joy to browse. *The Cairngorms & North-East Scotland* is a fantastic resource that will help to deepen your knowledge and appreciation of this wonderful part of the world.

To read Dan's full, in-depth review, visit www.ukhillwalking.com

Dan Bailey



Mountain Rescue in Scotland (The Early Years)

Dr Bob Sharp

COPIES OF THE BOOK CAN BE OBTAINED FROM BOB SHARP
DIRECTLY BY CONTACTING LOMONDBOB@GMAIL.COM
£15 + P&P

A fascinating read that covers not only the history of mountain rescue in Scotland, but also some of the characters and organisations that influenced the direction of Scottish mountaineering overall. This is an extensively and carefully researched book which will be a valuable record of Scottish mountain rescue for years to come, but also of great interest

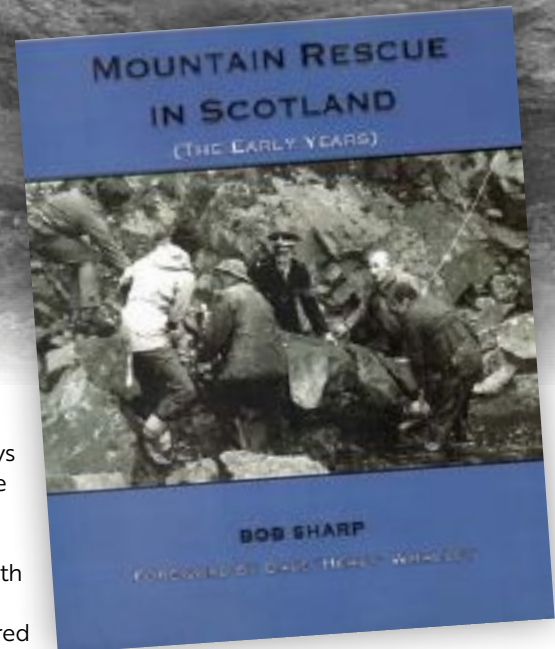
to anyone who enjoys the history of people and places of the Scottish hills.

The book starts with historic examples of incidents that occurred as far back as the 1800s and highlights what it meant for hillwalkers and mountaineers of the time to need help before the days of organised rescue. The author then tracks through the twists and turns, both technologically and politically, to where we are today. And like all good journeys, it wasn't straight forward!

Half the book is dedicated to chapters for each Mountain Rescue Team, outlining their own unique development and history, in their own words. There are also specific chapters looking at some key characters, such as Eric Langmuir, Hamish MacInnes and Donald G Duff among others, as well as organisations that played pivotal roles.

If you want to know the 'who', 'why', 'when', of the volunteer Scottish Mountain Rescue Service, this is the book to read.

Ross Cadie



**Experience
These 'Hostels
of Destination'**

Visit Rhenigidale
(photographed) for
Clisham at 799 metres,
the only Corbett in the
Western Isles, and the
overhang at Sron Uladal,
both in its vicinity.

HUNTER SCOTT

1932-2024

Family and friends gathered in Dunfermline Crematorium on 8 April to celebrate the life of Hunter Scott, Munro bagger, former President of the Braes o' Fife Mountaineering Club, beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Hunter, born David Chalmers Hunter Scott in Dunfermline in 1932, passed peacefully with family by his side aged 92, following a stroke. His loss is met with great sadness, but also the discovery of his logbook, detailing his journey from novice hill walker to bagger of all the Scottish Munros, teacher and guide to many newer members of the Braes o' Fife and Dunfermline Ramblers Club, as well as a qualified summer mountain leader.

A teacher by profession, he discovered a love for the hills when he was asked to accompany a school group on an expedition to the Ochil Hills in May 1967, during which they tackled six peaks including Innerdownie, Whitewisp and Tarmangie. A few more school outings and trips with friends and family later, in May 1968 he bagged his first Munro – Schiehallion – which he recorded in his log with the notes: "Day walk... from Braes of Foss to Schiehallion (1) - 3547' and return along E. ridge. Mainly dry but first sighting of Brocken Spectre and Glories on tops." He also records that on this walk he was accompanied by Allister, his late son who passed away in 2008.

Hunter continued to meticulously record the details of his walks, including the Braes o' Fife 'Hunter's Last Munro Meet', 17-19 August 1990, when he and 12 friends celebrated with whisky and Champagne at the summit of Gulvain. Aged 58 at the time, his family found a

Hunter (right) with friend Eric Simpson (left) at the top of Fionn Bheinn in 1996.



certificate naming Hunter as 'the oldest Munro bagger', with his logbooks, and are currently working to confirm if he did indeed hold this title for a time.

Members of both the Braes o' Fife and Dunfermline Ramblers attended his funeral and shared stories of his dedication to walking and their community, as well as his position within their groups as the 'sensible adult' and supportive teacher who could be relied upon to welcome new members and share his knowledge and experience. The family was heartened to hear that he was held in such high regard by all who knew him.

He is survived by wife Cora, daughter Linda, daughter-in-law Audrey, grandchildren Michael, Robert, Beti and Luke, and great-granddaughter, eight-month-old Rowen.

ROBIN CAMPBELL

1942-2024

By Bob Aitken

Robin Campbell, former President of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and one of the most kenspeckle and widely respected figures on the Scottish mountaineering scene over the past 60 years, died at his home near Fintry at the beginning of March.

Robin took to climbing in the later 1950s, when he and his lifelong friend Paul Brian as bold schoolboys opened up the playground crags of Craig-y-Barns above Dunkeld. At the University of Edinburgh, studying maths and psychology, he joined the dynamic coterie around

Robin Smith and Dougal Haston in a variety of scarifying mountain ventures. Later, he roped up with Jimmy Marshall on major first ascents in both summer and winter in Glen Coe and on Ben Nevis.

Professionally, Dr Campbell was a highly regarded lecturer in Psychology at the University of Stirling and a respected researcher in early child development. A devoted member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) for more than 60 years, Robin claimed with characteristic wry humour that he'd held "every office in the SMC for which administrative competence is not required" – including long stints as Editor, Librarian and Archivist, as well as becoming President and Honorary Vice-President. He even sang and played the piano for the ritual performance of the club song at annual dinners. He contributed a vast and hugely diverse range of articles and reviews to the SMC Journal and many other publications, often coloured by his trademark acerbic and irreverent wit, but always marked by vivid



PETER CURRIE MANN

1954-2022

Peter Currie Mann was born and grew up in Fauldhouse, West Lothian. Following a spell in the Royal Navy, Peter turned to higher education, gaining a BA Honours degree in Recreation from Dunfermline College of Physical Education.

Postgraduate research and some practical experience in the field led to a successful career in teaching Leisure and Recreation Management in further and higher education establishments including Motherwell College, the University of Sheffield, Wirral Metropolitan College, and finally University College Birmingham. Peter spent the last 14 years of his working life in Birmingham and rose to the position of Assistant Dean before retiring when he decided to make his home in Scotland once more. He moved to the Dundee area to be near to his sister and her family and this gave him wonderful access to what he loved most in life – being outdoors in nature, especially among the hills and mountains.

His interest had started with an initial enjoyment of skiing, but he went on to develop a great love of hiking and climbing in mountainous landscapes and relished the challenges, both mental and physical, of exploring them. And the sharing of these adventures in the hills with like-minded

people was very much part of it. He admired the traditions and ways of mountaineering people. One of the well-read books on Pete's bookshelf, *The Living Mountain* by Nan Shepherd, gives great expression to his respect for and awe of the high places, coupled with a sense of history and the people who went before.

Pete's serious expeditions probably started while he was living in Sheffield when he took up climbing in the Peak District with a group of friends. This group also started making regular forays up to the Scottish Highlands. When Pete's work took him to the Wirral, he joined the Gwydyr Mountain Club and loved going to their 'hut' in north Wales – actually an old converted chapel. He had a long and happy association with the club which continued throughout his time in Birmingham too. He spoke often and fondly of the people he met there – the friendship, camaraderie and sense of community they generated. He was proud to have served a spell as Chairman of the club and especially loved the week-long expeditions they organised to the Scottish mountains each Whitsun

holiday. Happily, Peter encountered the same openness, warmth and friendship when he joined Dundee Mountain Club (DMC). Again, he spoke of many great times on the hills when they went off for weekend 'meets'. The social side was just as important to him and he enjoyed the chat at the Thursday night pub nights. DMC and the friends he made there certainly became an important part of his life when he moved back north of the border.

One happy outcome from Peter's funeral is that contact was established between members of the Gwydyr and Dundee mountain clubs. Six members from Dundee made the trip down to north Wales in October 2023 and had a really enjoyable experience. In return the Dundee club is hoping to host some visitors from the Gwydyr during summer 2024. Pete would be delighted about such an exchange between his mountain buddies.

Editor's note: We would like to thank Peter and his family for their generous legacy donation to Mountaineering Scotland.



Peter enjoyed many mountain adventures



Robin was a talented and witty writer and explorer

and effective writing. His *Munroist's Companion* of 1999 is a tour de force compendium encompassing every facet of the Munro-bagging experience. He also gave numerous talks, rich in erudition and mischievous humour, to climbing audiences across the UK.

But because it's a long time ago now, many Scottish mountaineers may not be aware that Robin also gave sterling voluntary service to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, as it then was, in the 1980s and 1990s. He was persuaded, rather against his better judgement, to stand as President in 1982 when the Council was navigating 'choppy seas' in the aftermath of the divisive struggle over the Lurcher's Gully ski development proposal on Cairn Gorm. Contrary to his disclaimer of administrative competence, over four years Robin applied unstinting effort, commitment and diplomacy to steadying the ship and plotting a new course, so that he was able to pass the Council on in excellent shape to his successors.

All of us in Mountaineering Scotland owe a great debt to Robin. He made a profound contribution to the Scottish mountaineering scene. We mourn his passing, and extend our condolences to Robin's wife Vicki, his two daughters and five grandchildren.

Gear Review

SPONSORED CONTENT



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Mountain Mind Quiz 2024

Teams test their knowledge in a fun and friendly event

Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club hosted the 2024 Mountain Mind Quiz with teams from Mountaineering and Hillwalking Clubs from throughout Tayside and Fife being represented.

The quiz, held on 12 March, consisted of 80 questions on mountains and the mountain environment, and the victorious team was Forfar and District Hillwalking Club who walked away with the presentational ice-axe. The team who was last, and who 'won' the old boot, will remain nameless! The event raised £250 split between two charities, The Little Sherpa Foundation and *It's Up to Us* – the joint path campaign from the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland and Mountaineering Scotland.

Next year's quiz will be hosted by

Forfar and District Hillwalking Club, and the organisers are always looking for more teams in the area to join the rota for hosting the quiz.

The idea for a hillwalking/climbing quiz came originally from a member of the Dundee-based Carn Dearg Club as far back as 1977. It was an informal affair where teams of three members from a small number of local clubs competed in a knockout round, the four top teams played again then the two top teams from that round then played off to decide the winner. It was very much a friendly competition with the accent on fun.

In the ensuing years a trophy was offered to the winning team, an old 'grotty' boot that had once belonged to a stalwart of the Carn Dearg Club. Amusingly in the

year that the RAF Leuchars MRT had been awarded the boot, it was given a military polish! The boot was eventually replaced by a miniature ice axe that had been purchased in Chamonix during a club trip to the Alps. The boot then became the booby prize awarded to the team with the lowest score. This remains the case to this day.

The competition became a more formal affair in 1997 and with it a new name, the Mountain Mind Quiz, the idea borrowed from BBC's *MasterMind* competition.

The annual Mountain Mind Quiz remains a major event in the calendars of local clubs and while the event technology has changed over the years it remains the very friendly and fun event that it has always been.

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HIGHLAND HOLIDAY COTTAGES

We're delighted to have added another amazing offer to our member benefits, with 15% off all stays at Highland Holiday Cottages. The family-run business in the Cairngorms National Park offers affordable luxury four-star pet-friendly self-catering holiday cottage accommodation.
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Members can now enjoy 10% off main chalets at Inchree Holiday Chalets when booking a minimum of a two-night stay. Located just seven-miles south of Fort William, the chalets make an ideal base for hillwalkers exploring the Lochaber area. Contact directly to book, quoting your membership number.



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Left to right: Colin Sinclair, Graham Brown and Ray Campbell



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