

MICROSPIKES
OR CRAMPONS?

MOUNTAINEERING
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NEW CHALLENGES
FOR OLD HILLS

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEER

NOVEMBER 2024

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The November issue of the magazine often focuses on transition and change, as we move away from autumn adventures towards winter activities. This edition continues that theme, with tips for planning epic winter days in Scotland's hills, winter trip inspiration and advice for keeping safe, as well as brilliant features from the likes of President Anne Butler, David Jarman, ScotWays, Jack P Harland, Jess Williams and more.

It's also been a year of change for Mountaineering Scotland which, as you'll see from our news pages,

means we're saying hello to some new members of the team, as well as goodbye to some staff members who've moved on to new challenges (page 4).

This issue sees me making a change of my own, as I leave Mountaineering Scotland after two years in the role of Communications Officer and Editor of *Scottish Mountaineer*. It's been a privilege to edit the magazine during this time, which included the 100th issue and relaunch of the magazine with a new look, as well as the introduction of our new digital magazine, *Mountain Matters*. But, most of all, I've enjoyed getting to know our incredible contributors. From well-known mountaineers and record-breakers to photographers, authors and writers, as well as our hugely talented members, your stories are what made editing the magazine my favourite part of the job...

I wish the new Editor all the best of luck in this unique role and look forward to seeing the how they will leave their own mark on *Scottish Mountaineer*, whether for the next five, 10 or 20 editions!


All that's left for me to say now is a huge thank you for reading along and... See you in the hills!

Fiona McNicol, Editor

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Bothy blether



ALL CHANGE AT MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND!

It's been a busy six months for the Mountaineering Scotland team, with a few changes, some new faces... and some fond farewells for long-serving staff!

In June, the Mountain Safety team said goodbye

to Ben Gibson as he headed off on new adventures after two years working for Mountaineering Scotland. Later in the summer, we welcomed Max Hunter, who takes over from Ben as part-time Mountain Safety Advisor.

The summer also saw one of our longest-serving members of staff, Calum McBain, Regional Development Officer for ClimbScotland, finish up after more than seven years at Mountaineering Scotland.

Then, in October, Heather McAslan joined the ClimbScotland team in the newly created role of Competition Officer.

We wish Ben and Calum all the best of luck for their future adventures and want to say a very warm welcome to both Max and Heather as they join the team!

You can learn more about the Mountaineering Scotland team by visiting www.mountaineering.scot/about-us/meet-the-team



Heather McAslan



Ben Gibson



Max Hunter



Calum McBain

It's Up to Us X Pennies at Cotswold Outdoor

We were delighted to hear that Cotswold Outdoor has chosen *It's Up to Us* – the joint campaign from Mountaineering Scotland and the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland – as the focus of its Pennies scheme in Scotland.

From now until the end of the year, you can round up your purchase in-store

at Cotswold and support vital path repairs on An Teallach, one of Scotland's iconic mountains.

Don't forget, Mountaineering Scotland members also receive 15% off instore and online at Cotswold Outdoor.

Find out more: www.savemountainpaths.scot



Register for our AGM

This year's Mountaineering Scotland Annual Members' Gathering and Annual General Meeting (AGM) takes place on Saturday 23 November at Birnam Arts, near Dunkeld. As well as the presentation of the 2023-24 Annual Report and formal AGM business, including the election of three new Board members – Fiona Bennett, Treasurer/Director for Finance; Steven Johnson, Director for Clubs, and Andrew Tait, Director for Landscape and Planning – there will also be a talk from adventure filmmaker and author Kevin Woods and the opportunity to join a walk to Loch of the Lowes.

To find out more and register, visit www.mountaineering.scot/about-us/business-matters/agn



Host applications: Sign up closing soon!

This is your last chance to apply to be a climbing host for the International Winter Climbing Meet (IWCM) 2025. Applications close at 5pm on Friday 22 November 2024.

The IWCM has been a highlight on the international climbing calendar for more than 25 years and has attracted climbers from across the world eager to sample the unique Scottish winter experience. The 2025 meet will take place from 1-8 March 2025, with places for 28 overseas guests and 28 hosts.

Find out and apply at www.mountaineering.scot/activities/mountaineering/international-winter-climbing-meet



Anne Butler

PRESIDENT

As I write this, we have just seen the best period of settled weather that we have had all year. After a cold, damp and dismal summer people have been out enjoying the sights and sounds of autumn. Long may it last.

I am constantly inspired by the strength, dedication and passion of our community. Whether you are a seasoned climber or just setting foot on your first Munro, it is our shared love for the outdoors that unites us. I would encourage everyone, newcomers and veterans alike, to get involved. 'Giving something back' is extremely rewarding and volunteer participation strengthens the fabric of our community. Whether that be volunteering at an indoor climbing competition, assisting with club activities, becoming a Director or attending a litter pick, contributing to causes that you care about will provide positive personal, social and organisational benefits.

Like all outdoor organisations, Mountaineering Scotland is not alone in facing a financial squeeze and as a result, Directors and staff have been working on how we deliver our member priorities in the most effective ways. This will culminate in the

“Giving something back’ is extremely rewarding and volunteer participation strengthens the fabric of our community.”

launch of our new Strategic Plan in 2025.

Looking to the future, we are excited to embrace new challenges and opportunities. With an ever-growing focus on sustainability, inclusivity and safety, we are committed to ensuring that whether we chose to walk, climb or ski, our sport is accessible to all and that our mountains remain unspoilt for generations to come.

Member involvement is important and I am looking forward to our 2024 AGM and Members Gathering. A welcoming event that aims to be informative and friendly, giving an ideal opportunity for networking with other members from our unique and inspirational outdoor community.



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SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

As it looks forward to its 100th anniversary year in 2025, the Eagle Ski Club is thriving with an extensive programme of ski touring and membership at an all-time high. In the coming season alone, nearly 70 different tours are planned. Scotland, the Alps and Scandinavia are the main focus, but the club's programme also includes locations further afield such as Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan (pictured). Club Newsletter Editor Dominic Byrne shares two of their unique tours from 2024...

Views north to the mountains bordering Kazakhstan. Photo by Andrey Golovachev

Continued overleaf ►



From previous page ▶

Taking a pit stop before the climb to Chamonix. Photo by Mostyn Brown

Happy to be back in Chamonix after a 4,000m descent. Ian Cooper, Claudia Norman-Wells, Mostyn Brown. Photo by Jacek Ciężki



Team breaks trail on the Midi Arête. Photo by Ian Cooper

Mont Blanc by bike: The ultimate low carbon adventure

For many years, the Eagle Ski Club has put a focus on reducing the carbon footprint of its activities. In May 2024, club member Mostyn Brown really moved that ambition up the gears by leading a trip by bicycle and skis to the summit of Mont Blanc. Four intrepid Eagles, two women and two men, set off from their homes in Manchester, Oxford, Turin and Geneva to cycle to Chamonix. Once there, they were joined by two more club members, one who lives close to Chamonix and the other who had come by train from the UK.

The club encourages low carbon travel, usually by train, but with so many hundreds of miles being cycled, this surely wins the accolade of the most climate-friendly Eagles' trip ever. Claudia Norman-Wells, who cycled from Turin, recalled: "When I first read Mostyn Brown's proposal for a bike ride to Chamonix with a ski ascent of Mont Blanc, I was hooked. After many hut conversations about climate change, I wanted to help protect the mountains. Those glaciers give us so much, what can we give back?"

Howard Pollitt took on the challenge of cycling from Manchester to Chamonix via the Hull-Rotterdam ferry. "Being a grey-haired wrinkly old Eagle who had not cycled further than the shops, I knew it would be a challenge," he reflected. It was a mammoth journey, but he succeeded with the experiences along the way rivalling the mountain experience: "Hailstones and thunderstorms in the Jura left me drenched but, just as I thought I had enough, I was given a hot

"Despite the challenging weather conditions, the group were able to tour each day."

meal and drink by a forester and got to dry my gear by his fire."

One of the recent trends in the Eagle Ski Club has been an increase in younger membership. The number of members under 30 has more than doubled and, like many club tours, the Mont Blanc trip was a good blend of youth and experience. The group acclimatised in the Torino winter room and a couple of nights at the Cosmiques refuge before moving to a packed Grands Mulets hut.

Tour leader Mostyn Brown takes up the story: "After an early morning 1,300m skin via the Corridor Route to the Col de la Brenva, strong winds and poor visibility forced our two teams of three to retreat. We returned to the valley and came back with a single team of three for a second attempt. This time we had great weather on our approach to the GM hut but a dodgy forecast for the summit push.

"Our team left the hut at 2am moving efficiently. Ian led a short boot pack to the Mur de la Côte and, as we started the final summit push, the weather cleared to reveal Chamonix and the whole of the Alps below us, a stunning experience. We reached the summit at 9am, by which time the cloud had returned. We were one of only two teams to summit that day.

"For the descent, we made our way safely back down our ascent route, side slipping the Mur de la Côte,



Val d'Anniviers, Switzerland: Tricky touring through the larch woods. Photo by Katharine Haggie

navigating primarily by GPS. Once below the clouds we were rewarded with some of the best powder of our lives, with a stunning backdrop of seracs and beautiful big mountain terrain. We made it across the dodgy La Jonction crevasse jump and then skied slush and bushes to reach the path below the old lift to return to Chamonix.”

Val d'Anniviers: High-level hut to hut touring

Mont Blanc by bike was definitely at the more adventurous end of the Eagle Ski Club tour spectrum. Tours typically fall into two broad camps – day tours from a single base, either hut, hotel or self-catering accommodation, or hut to hut tours taking in several overnight bases. They can be either member-led or guide-led. In late March 2024, a group of five club members – three women, two men – joined IFMGA mountain guide Hannah Burrows-Smith for a high-level hut to hut tour among the spectacular scenery of rocky peaks and glaciers that surround the Val d'Anniviers in Switzerland.

Safety is always the focus and, as with most tours, day one was devoted to warming-up off-piste and avalanche rescue refresher training. Safety considerations also shaped the itinerary for the rest of the week. Bad weather meant the group's original target of the Bishorn at 4,153m via the Turtmann and Tracuit huts had to be altered. Instead, the group

Continued overleaf ►


Eagle Ski Club Ardverikie meet, Scotland, February 2024. Photo by Alan Sloan



EAGLE SKI CLUB

The Eagle Ski Club was founded in 1925 by a group of British skiers staying at the Swiss resort of Maloja. It now has 1,500 members based in the UK and overseas, and is an affiliate of Mountaineering Scotland, retaining a strong Scottish focus. The club organises more than 65 trips each year, ranging from day tours and hut to hut tours in the Alps to ski expeditions further afield. Some are run by qualified mountain guides and others are organised by fellow club members. A number of meets focus on improving off-piste skiing skills. There is also a Scottish meets programme with 12 meets between January and March. They run a number of UK and alpine-based training meets covering things like mountain first aid, ropework, GPS and navigation, and avalanche awareness. The club also supports training for members who wish to organise and lead future club tours.

To find out more about joining, visit www.eagleskiclub.org.uk



Kayaking in the Issyk-Kul Lake in Kyrgyzstan with the Tien Shan Mountains in the background. The lake is considered to be the world's second biggest Alpine lake. In January 2024, six Eagle Ski Club members made it their starting point for a Grand Kyrgyzstan Ski Safari with 11 days of guide-led ski touring, based in yurts and family-run guesthouses. Photo by Andrey Golovachev.

stayed local with a day tour from St Luc to the Toûno east col ahead of a plan to approach the Tracuit via the Arpitettaz Hut the next day.

Eagle member Charles Stanley takes up the story: "The Toûno day tour has some steep pitches with a lot of kick-turns. It was good preparation for our 1,200m ascent to the Arpitettaz hut the following day. We were welcomed by clear skies and beautiful scenery as we skinned the Zinal valley, through a steep tree-lined section, to break out into great views of Mount Besso and the Glacier de Moming."

The group had the hut to themselves apart from just two other people but bad weather intervened. "Rising the following day, we were greeted with horizontal, blizzard-type conditions, resulting in us being constrained to the close vicinity of the hut and making any thoughts of proceeding to the Tracuit Hut out of the question. We made good use of our time, doing crevasse rescue practice, and digging out the pathway to the toilet, earning ourselves two free pots of tea from the hut guardian."


The weather window that was forecast for the following day failed to materialise and, with continued snowfall and warmer conditions forecast for the next day, the group decided to ski out. "This turned out to be a great decision. After a short skin to the Weisshorn,

we had a wonderful ski back to Zinal, still in whiteout conditions but making first tracks through the fresh snow that had fallen. On the final day we returned to St Luc and skinned to beyond the Toûno again, but via a different, gentler route, to then face a challenging ski across a variety of snow conditions, from powder, crud and crust, testing all of our skiing ability.

"Despite the challenging weather conditions, the group were able to tour each day," Stanley reflected. "The Bishorn was unconquered and so remains unfinished business for us all and thus beckons a return meeting. For anyone who has yet to ski the d'Anniviers valley, it is well worth a trip."

What's next for the Eagle Ski Club

With Eagle Ski Club membership thriving and reaching new highs, the upcoming season promises an exciting variety of ski tours. Nearly 70 adventures are planned across destinations such as Scotland, the Alps, and Scandinavia, as well as more unique locations like Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan.

Whether you're a beginner or an experienced ski tourer, the club's diverse programme offers something for everyone. Each tour is designed to suit the skills and experience of its participants, ensuring that all members, from novices to seasoned experts, can find a challenge that suits. 



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Aconcagua, Ojos Del Salado

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Volcanoes, Kilimanjaro, Mt Kenya

4000m Peaks

Mont Blanc, Matterhorn, Eiger, Toubkal
Mt Kinabalu, Ararat, Khuiten & Mongolia.



MICROSPIKES OR CRAMPONS?

BY MOUNTAIN SAFETY ADVISOR ROSS CADIE

Every internet discussion has the effect of polarising opinion, and the use of microspikes in the mountains is no exception. You would be forgiven for thinking that they are either the spawn of the devil or the best thing since sliced bread!

As our members know, Mountaineering Scotland isn't afraid of a controversial topic and a good Survey Monkey (navigating with mobile phones and the Old Man of Hoy spring to mind!). So, at the end of last winter, we asked people to let us know their thoughts on using microspikes in the winter mountains.

Winter in the Scottish mountains can be both breathtakingly beautiful and incredibly challenging. The rugged terrain, combined with unpredictable weather, makes it essential for those going out to be appropriately equipped, which also includes having the "right" gear on their feet. But what is "right"? And what factors should you consider when deciding?

Traditionally this "right kit" has been an ice axe, with crampons that fit a rigid boot. Crampons remain the most suitable thing to strap to your boots when winter mountaineering or winter climbing. So, why the growth in popularity of microspikes? And what situations can they be used safely in?

What are microspikes?

Microspikes are a type of traction device which you can attach to your footwear to provide better grip on icy and compacted snow. They consist of small spikes, usually

made of stainless steel, connected by chains or flexible bands that fit over your boots or trainers. They are much lighter than crampons, and much cheaper. They are also easier to walk in, requiring minimal to no training, and can be used on almost any type of footwear, not just stiff winter boots.

Although they aren't suitable for many locations and conditions in the Scottish mountains during winter, they can be used safely in the right situations. The key is to understand when to use them, as well as being aware of their limitations – go beyond them in consequential terrain and it's not going to end well.

When can microspikes be useful?

With microspikes being lightweight and easy to put on and off, they're great for those occasions where you are exploring well defined paths and tracks, particularly when covered in that type of awkward, compacted snow, or a thin layer of ice. In these situations, traditional crampons can be awkward (and sometimes, more hazardous) to walk in, while microspikes can give enough traction to walk safely and reduce the chance of slipping.

Considerations

Below are some things to be aware of if considering using microspikes:

Traction – they don't penetrate the snow and ice as deeply as crampons. Therefore, they are more likely to lose traction/fail at much lower slope angles especially if on icy snow or ice.

Slipping off – most designs are only held in place on the footwear by stretchy rubber. As the angle you walk on increases,

this flexes the footwear more and pulls the microspikes across the footwear resulting in it slipping off and sliding down the icy slope, probably with you soon afterwards!

Footprint – microspikes have small spikes under a much smaller area of the foot, which don't usually come to the edge of the sole. A crampon has large spikes around the circumference of the footwear. Microspikes therefore don't provide traction when only the edge or toe area is used.


Some final thoughts...

Knowing microspikes provide less traction and are more susceptible to falling off, it is important to consider the consequences of you falling over in the place you choose to use them. If you're in gentle rolling terrain, or on a well-defined path away from steep slopes, then a fall will probably only result in a bruised limb or two and a cracked ego. However, the consequences of falling in steeper ground, or a slope that leads to an edge, could be – and for some, has been – fatal.

If in doubt, take crampons.

Microspikes and crampons survey

Thank you to the 1,300+ people who took the time to respond to the microspikes and crampons survey. We appreciate all of the thoughtful, measured and appropriate comments/answers.

The Mountain Safety Group is now putting together some helpful guidance, which will be shared online as well as in stores, to help people make better informed decisions on how to choose what to wear in winter. 

Near Misses

Lessons learned in the mountains



Many of our members will be familiar with our popular Near Misses series on the Mountaineering Scotland website, where we share (mainly anonymous) stories of times when things have gone wrong in the hills, with the aim of helping others avoid similar mistakes.

Through this new Near Misses column, we hope to encourage more people to share their stories and lessons learned, whether they're a hillwalker, skier, climber, trail runner or any other member of the mountain-using community. First up, one of our Board members shares his own near miss...

Andrew Walker, Director Member Services & Communications, Mountaineering Scotland

My near miss on the Mull Corbett Dùn da Ghaoithe in September 2023 was the result of an accumulation of smaller poor decisions rather than a single factor.

Climbing with a large group of experienced hillwalkers, a weather front hit hard on the day. My daughter opted not to go to the summit, and she stopped in the shelter of a prominent boulder and I said I would return as quickly as I could.

Things went awry as I set off from the summit. In haste, I misjudged the route in poor visibility and found myself in unfamiliar steep rocky terrain – not the wide grassy ridge I'd ascended.

In my growing panic, I tried to correct my course but seemed to get further from where I felt I needed to be – an increasing sense of confusion clouded my decision-making. Despite looking at my position on navigational aids and apps, every time I tried to move, I seemed to make it worse.

Fortunately, I was able to message my daughter to stay in place; I also messaged the summit group. The message I got in return was to stay in place and a party would locate me.

Every instinct in me said move, but I knew that would get me into more trouble.

Eventually, a figure appeared on the slopes above me and got me back to the safety of the summit. Embarrassed,



I made my apologies and thanked those who tracked me down.

I've climbed nearly 100 Munros; I'm a member of Mountaineering Scotland; I've navigated in difficult weather before. So, what went wrong?

Various factors led to my confusion; lack of sleep contributed, for sure (we'd been on the go since 3am driving from central Scotland); I lulled myself into a mindset that

Corbetts = easier than Munros (very wrong); complacency, because

I was with a large group of experienced hikers, meant

I strayed from my usual preparation for routes and weather; and exiting the summit in a rush saw me lose my bearings.

A chastening experience, but one I'd like to think has left me better prepared for the next time I'm in the hills – Munro or Corbett; solo or in a group – whatever the weather.

Do you have a story to share?

If you have any cautionary tales of your own, during which you learned valuable lessons, send them to the team for consideration by emailing info@mountaineering.scot

Short on time? You can also fill out a quick form and your information goes into the UK and Ireland Incident Reporting database, or, if you've ever had to use the services of a mountain rescue team, please consider filling in the Mountain Incident Survey, both of which can be found on the Near Misses web page: www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/essential-skills/near-misses



TRIED & TESTED: OFF-GRID PEACE OF MIND WITH ZOLEO'S GLOBAL SATELLITE COMMUNICATOR

Mountain Safety Advisor Ross Cadie reviews the ZOLEO Global Satellite Communicator, an essential tool for adventurers in Scotland's remote areas. Its rugged, IP68-rated design makes it dustproof and waterproof, perfect for unpredictable weather.

The ZOLEO Global Satellite Communicator excels with three key functions:

- 1. SOS feature:** Sends a distress signal via satellite with a long press, providing quick emergency response.
- 2. Check-in function:** Sends an "I'm OK" message and location to up to three contacts, ideal for peace of mind.
- 3. Two-way communication:** Paired with a smartphone via Bluetooth, it enables messaging through the ZOLEO app using satellite, cellular and Wi-Fi networks.

The app is user-friendly, and the device offers up to 200 hours of battery life, though it charges via a micro-USB port, which may be inconvenient for some.

Subscription plans are flexible and affordable, with options for seasonal adventurers to pause and resume service as needed.

Overall, the ZOLEO is a durable, reliable device for those venturing off-grid, offering essential safety features and seamless communication. Whether you're on a solo adventure or exploring remote areas, it ensures you're always connected.

Mountaineering Scotland members receive free ZOLEO activation and one free month of service when activating their ZOLEO device for the first time. To find out more, visit: www.zoleo.com/en-gb





Planning a winter walking or climbing day out

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

Winter in the Scottish mountains is a fantastic time of year, that offers a great reward for those willing to head out. Challenging weather,

shorter daylight hours and the potential for avalanches means it can be a serious environment.

The Be Avalanche Aware process is a great planning tool and not only for the winter months. In this article, we are going to look at the things to consider in the separate elements and stages of the process.

The Avalanche Hazard, weather and mountain conditions

The Scottish Avalanche Information Service produces avalanche forecasts for six regions in Scotland. Lochaber, Glencoe, Creag Meagaidh, The Northern and Southern Cairngorms and

When making any decision in the winter mountains always consider these 3 factors:



These factors should be considered during each of these 3 important phases:





**ASSOCIATION OF
MOUNTAINEERING
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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 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.



Torrion. Outside of these regions, you may have to come up with your own judgements but sometimes the information gathered from the nearest forecasted area can still be useful.

What does the avalanche forecast say? What and where is the hazard? Read the full report, not just the image. More information on understanding the avalanche report can be found at www.mountaineering.scot/think-winter/how-to-read-avalanche-forecast

Weather forecasts are readily available with specific mountain forecasts available. The Mountain Weather Information Service and The Met Office along with others are a great place to start. What is the weather going to be? How is it going to affect you, the mountain conditions and the snowpack?

You and your group's personal skills and experience

Who is in your group? What is their level of experience? Have they used winter equipment before, can they navigate in whiteout conditions, does everyone have the right equipment? If they don't, how might that affect your planning?

What are the fitness levels of the group, how big a day should you plan?

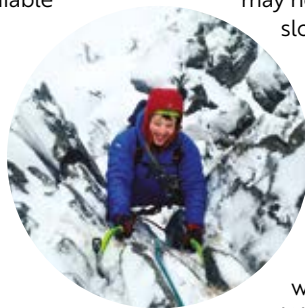
Plan a route that is appropriate for the group as a whole and be mindful of any changes. Maybe you find out halfway through the day that someone isn't feeling well or is missing some vital equipment and you need to adjust your plan accordingly.

The landscape you intend to visit

Now you have the information you have gathered from above, where should you head?

Where are the areas highlighted in the avalanche report, can you plan to avoid them? What are your escape points or key places/decision points on your route? Can you head for ridges or easier angles terrain?

Are strong winds keeping you from exposed ridges? Inexperienced members of the group may not be ready for steep hard snow slopes, what are your options instead?




Planning on your journey and key places

The largest proportion of your time should be spent in the planning stage. Here you can spend time without the distractions or pressures faced when out in the mountains.

What is your plan for the day? Where

are your key places (junctions in the road) going to be? What alternative options can you plan for?

Your key places are an opportunity to discuss with the people around you, what have you seen on your journey, is the forecast correct are you moving as fast as you thought you were going to be? You need to remain open to changes in the environment, terrain and your group as the day progresses.

Winter in Scotland's mountains can be an amazing experience. Enjoy the adventure, and stay safe! 

Continuing our new hillwalking feature, in association with the Scottish Mountaineering Press. In each issue, a member of Mountaineering Scotland's staff or Board shares 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



Sgùrr nan Gillean

Chosen by Max Hunter,
Mountaineering Scotland's new Mountain Safety Advisor

I was excited. I was about to complete my first solo week in Scotland, a trip to the Cuillins on Skye. It was 1996, and I was following a thin and vague guide to the Munros of Skye, that I'd found in a garage shop. I was on day six of the four-day guide – it had taken a week, but I was about to complete the guide. My last day was to be the northern Munros of Bruach na Frithe, Am Basteir and Sgùrr nan Gillean.

I'd learnt how difficult the navigation was; the 1:25,000 map wasn't very helpful, and the compass pointed in all directions. Now I needed to put my week of experience together to complete the northern three.

I found my diary notes from this week, and it's been fun reading it back. My notes state about Am Basteir 'it was hard', and my notes about Nicholson's Chimney to Sgùrr nan Gillean, say 'Blimey Hard'. This was before I knew about

the scrambling or climbing grading system, apparently there was no 'Blimey Hard'!

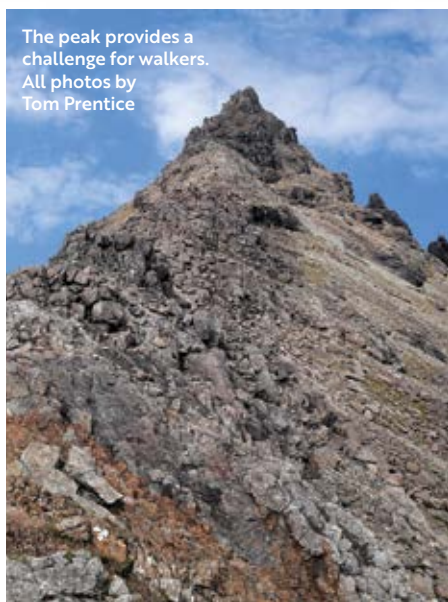
I got to the top of Sgùrr nan Gillean, and had the top all to myself, in fact I'd had the ridge to myself for the entire week! It was a really special moment, which I still remember today. I took a moment to reflect on my week, and this memory has stayed with me. The top is airy and sensational. I left the top, I followed my 'guide' to descend the SE ridge. I went on to climb Sgurr Beag and Sgurr na h-Uamha, before finding the path down and back to my car at Sligachan, which was the only car there! Skye wasn't busy then.

Back home in England, days later, I tried to share my experience on Skye, but nobody understood or appreciated what week I'd had. I stopped trying to explain, and just keep it for myself – but I knew I'd be back and needed more. I now live in Fort William.

FACTBOX

Sgùrr nan Gillean; 964m; (M191); L32; NG471252; peak of the young men, or more probably peak of the gullies

THE ROUTE



The peak provides a challenge for walkers. All photos by Tom Prentice

Probably the most familiar peak of the Cuillin, Sgùrr nan Gillean's prominent pointed summit, flanked by its neighbours Am Basteir, the Basteir Tooth and Sgùrr a' Bhàsteir, provides a classic first sight of this magnificent mountain range when seen from the A87 beside Loch Sligachan. However, this view fails to fully reveal Sgùrr nan Gillean's true majesty, for its finest feature, the jagged saw-toothed Pinnacle Ridge, which rises dramatically to its summit, as depicted in the classic picture-postcard landscape, is only seen end-on.

The ascent of Sgùrr nan Gillean, the first recorded ascent of a Cuillin peak, took place in 1836, when Professor James David Forbes, the physicist and Alpine pioneer, was guided to its summit by local forester Duncan MacIntyre. The route they took is the easiest of three narrow rocky ridges

that lead to the top and has earned itself the misnomer of the tourist route. This south-east ridge is certainly not a route for tourists, or for anyone without a head for heights and some scrambling ability. Some may require the security of a rope for the final rocks, which require exposed Grade 2-3 scrambling.

The featureless nature of the lower ground, the rugged and precipitous terrain higher up, and the final awkward moves to attain the exposed summit, all serve to make this a fairly serious outing for even the most seasoned of hillwalkers. As a result, the summit is one of the most highly sought after in the country. Many opt for the services of a professional guide or a friend with rock climbing skills and a rope to take them up Sgùrr nan Gillean and the adjacent Am Basteir. This is usually

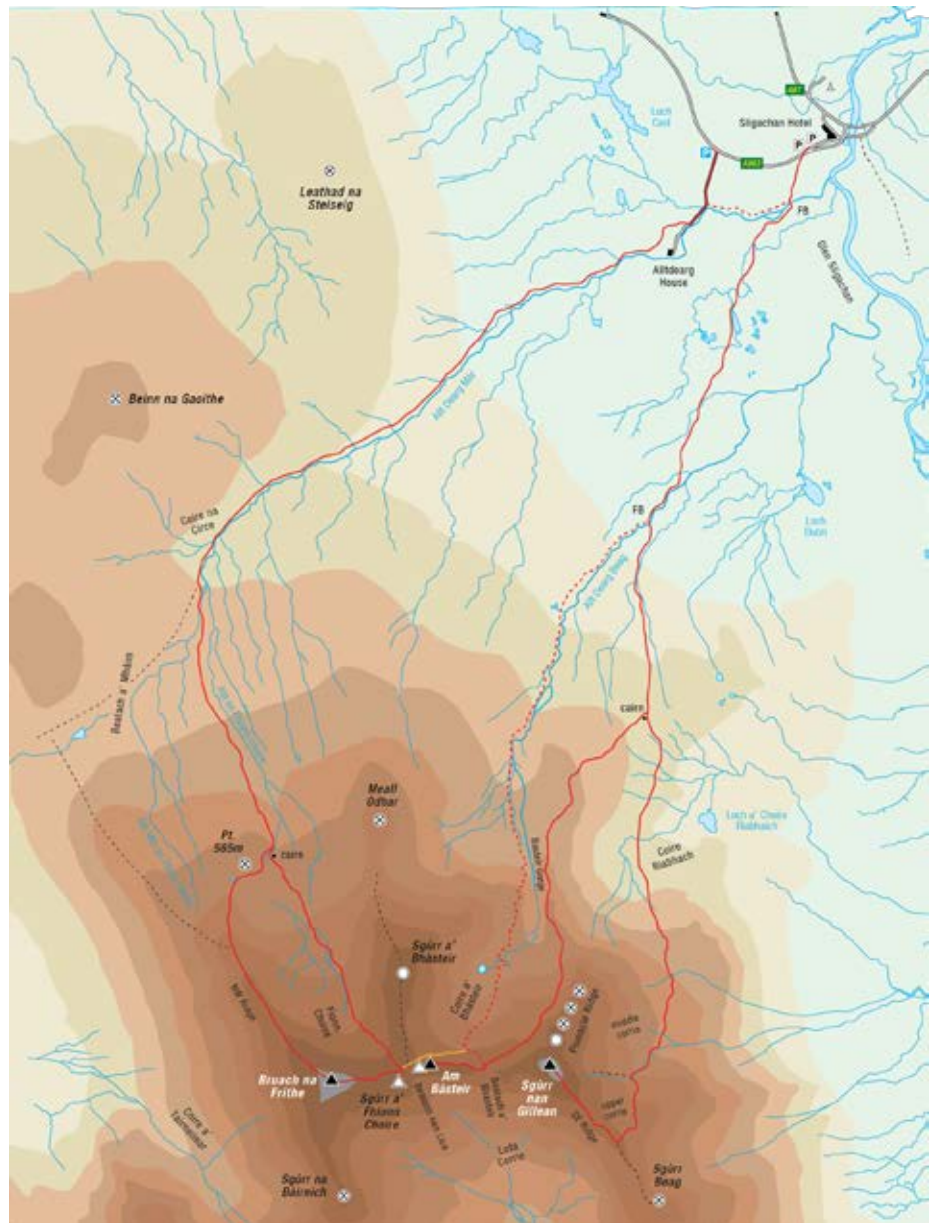
achieved as a circuit via Sgùrr nan Gillean's west ridge, which rises from the Bealach a' Bhàsteir, below Am Bàsteir, thereby dealing with two of the slightly more scary and problematic Cuillin peaks in one go!

However, the description here is for an ascent of Sgùrr nan Gillean alone, by the south-east ridge. The ascent starts from near the Sligachan Hotel, which stands at the junction of the A87 to Portree and the A863 to Dunvegan and Glen Brittle. Park on a section of old road and rough layby at NG484298, about 150m west of the hotel on the north side of the Dunvegan road. The parking can become crowded, so ensure the gated entrance to the Sligachan Mountain Rescue Base on the old road is left clear.

From the top end of the parking, cross the road and follow the path to a bridge over the Allt Dearg Mòr. Cross this, continue on the moorland path for 1.5km to reach the Allt Dearg Beag, and follow its west bank for 240m to a plank bridge, where the path divides. Cross the bridge and ascend south to reach a cairned highpoint overlooking Coire Riabhach, where the path to Bealach a' Bhàsteir and Am Bàsteir breaks off right and ascends towards the foot of Pinnacle Ridge.

Drop slightly into lower Coire Riabhach, cross the floor of the corrie, then climb more steeply over increasingly rocky and stony ground to gain a shallow subsidiary corrie, middle Coire Riabhach, below the pinnacles of Pinnacle Ridge. Cross the corrie to where it ends at a rocky ridge and a wide scree and boulder-filled gully containing a burn that flows down from the foot of Sgùrr nan Gillean's east face, directly above.

Do not cross the burn, but ascend beside it on an increasingly obvious path towards a large arrow-shaped overhang about halfway up the gully, from where a rocky ramp on the left is climbed to its top, NG476251, on the edge of upper Coire Riabhach. This upper corrie is a featureless place, littered with big boulders, and finding the best route through it requires care, especially in poor visibility. Ascend leftwards to avoid as much bouldery ground as possible, then zigzag up



scree paths to a small col on the south-east ridge at NG474250.

Scramble up the crest of the ridge or follow the path on its right side, towards steeper rocks breached on their left by a short scramble up a narrow slot with an awkward exit. Above this, continue weaving up through rocky steps to the final rocks of the summit tower. There are now two options.

(i) Ascend a short corner on the frontal prow, followed by an exposed slab leading to easier ground before the final narrow summit ridge.

(ii) Skirt the initial summit rocks via slabby rock ramps to the left, then gain sloping slabby ledges below a tower-like block on the skyline and ascend via some awkward steps to easier ground before the final summit ridge.

Either way, the final narrow horizontal section is incredibly exposed and often nervously shuffled across by various means to gain this most fabulous and airy of summits (6km; 960m; 3h 15min). It is worth sitting down a while to take in the extraordinary situation and the impressive view down the west ridge to Am Bàsteir and Bruach na Frithe, as well as composing oneself for returning the same way.

If descending in poor visibility, care will be needed to find the cairned start of the rampline connecting upper Coire Riabhach with the middle corrie below (12km; 970m; 6h).

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





WHO BELONGS IN THE HILLS?

As the conversation around women's experiences in the mountains continues, instructor Jess Williams adds her voice to the mix...

In the previous issue of *Scottish Mountaineer* an article by Dr Richard Tiplady prompted a large response from both our members and, after being picked up by national media, the wider mountain-using community. The article stimulated much discussion and debate around women's experiences in the hills and prompted many people to share their views and opinions on the piece, as well as both positive and negative examples from their own experiences. We shared one such response from Cat Marcol (of Waymark Adventures) in the recent issue of our digital magazine, *Mountain Matters*, and were also contacted by freelance mountain instructor, Jess Williams, whose article you can read here:

I'm a keen mountain runner, climber and skier based in the Scottish Highlands, where I currently work as a freelance Mountain Leader/Instructor. I grew up in the mountains and have spent my whole life exploring: in winter and summer, by foot and on ski, on rock, snow, ice and water. I love the freedom of running, the simplicity of scrambling, the sheer joy of skiing and the satisfaction of climbing. I love being out in the wilderness for days on end, totally self-sufficient. I work in the mountains, I play in the mountains... my whole life is based around them, so it's unsurprising that this is where I feel totally at home and at peace, where I'm at my happiest, where I feel most like myself, where I belong. Unfortunately, not everyone sees it that way.

I am a woman. A relatively young woman with blonde hair – not that it should matter. I have lost track of the number of times I have been approached by men while I'm out in the mountains and asked if I need help or if I'm lost.

I have developed a nervous tic where I will put my map away as soon as I see a man approaching to try and remove any opportunity for these assumptions and questions. I have been told where to go, told I shouldn't be doing something, told that because I'm a woman I have to work so much harder to walk uphill at the same pace as a man. I have been told outright that I was a "rescue waiting to happen". I have been told by a group of men coming down off a summit that it's too wild for me up there and I should go down. While out walking and camping in winter with two female friends a group of men asked us with surprise if we were "out by ourselves". A passing man in the hills has advised me not to run on steep technical terrain

"It affects me when my presence in the environment in which I spend most of my time in, both personally and professionally, is constantly questioned and undermined."



anymore. I have been told that skiing gullies is "not for girls". I have been asked, in surprise, if I go climbing even when my male partner isn't "taking me out." When my partner and I are out skiing or climbing the questions: "What line did you ski?" or "What route did you climb?" are directed at him, even though I am by far the more experienced and skilled skier and while he is the stronger climber, we climb as equals.

"Big day out" for girls

I was leading a group of four women over the iconic summits of Stob Coire Sgreamhach, Bidean nam Bian and Stob Coire nan Lochan in Glencoe. We were having a great day out, the sun was shining and conversation soon passed beyond small talk to putting the world to rights. The four clients hadn't known each other beforehand but they quickly bonded and, as often happens with groups of women, they all looked out for each other, making my job of managing the group much easier. I quickly realised they were

all experienced, strong and competent so, I could relax and enjoy sharing the mountains and my local knowledge with this lovely group.

We stopped on the summit of Bidean nam Bian to enjoy the view, take some photos and have a second lunch. A man who took our photo on the summit came past us as we were picking our way down the loose path and, as I moved to the side to let him pass, he stopped and said to me: "Well done, this is a big day out for you girls." He knew absolutely nothing about us apart from what he could see. I could see one of my client's jaw drop open in surprise behind him. She was dressed head to toe in pink and purple with a flower in her hair, set a fierce pace uphill and had almost completed the Munros. I was the youngest in the group, enjoying the rare Scottish sun in my t-shirt and shorts, hair in its usual wild tangle around my face. The 15km we did that day was a small part of my 90km week of mountain running and the last time I had been up these mountains in summer was when I ran the full Glencoe Skyline.

The man proceeded to tell us that he'd been stopped by two older men (who had just passed us all in the opposite direction), who had asked him if he was our guide. When I explained that I was the guide he looked a bit confused, unsure, not knowing if I was having him on and he walked off without another word. We were all shocked, outraged by both of those comments and assumptions, but soon fell about laughing as we imagined having the audacity of saying to him: "Well done this is a big day for an old man." I was most hurt by the two older men who had stopped the only man in our vicinity to check if he was our guide, because the group of five women surely couldn't possibly be out by themselves, heaven forbid one of them is actually in charge...

Unsolicited advice

On another occasion, a friend and I had just come up the Dubh slabs and ridge on a decidedly uninspiring day. It was damp and soggy, one of those days when it never actually rains but you end up soaking from just being in the cloud. We set off that morning from the Glenbrittle campsite, frustrated at another wet day but getting restless as our main aim of the Cuillin ridge traverse slipped further away with each day of bad weather. We'd had a good week regardless, squeezing in some classic rock routes (and abseiling



Photo credit:
Hannah Petrie



off others when the torrential rain came in early), but with only two days left I was getting angsty and wanted to do something a bit more adventurous. Padding up the damp Dubh slabs with the mist swirling atmospherically around us certainly satisfied this need and, unsurprisingly, we had the route to ourselves, which added to the experience and feeling of complete isolation in the remote Coruisk valley. The slabs were spectacular but short lived and we made good time up the rest of the ridge, working our way quickly up the greasy, mossy, wet rock.

We exchanged pleasantries with the numerous guided groups who came and went as we ate our mac-and-cheese pies on the summit of Sgurr Dubh Mor; the notable exception being Mr Yellow Jacket who greeted us with "Hiya girlies" and proceeded to give us totally unsolicited advice about what he thought we should do. Eventually he left, tugging his two clients behind him and we breathed a sigh of relief to be alone again. We descended into the thick mist, excitedly chatting about a weather window that a patch of phone signal had just informed us was opening the following day, and with it the potential for a full ridge traverse. We knew there was a point on the descent where we could easily go in the wrong direction, so we stopped to double check the map, then carried on happily isolated in our own misty world.

The distinctive voice of Mr Yellow Jacket broke our peace: "You're going the wrong way." The directness and confidence of it shook us. We got the map out again, double, triple checked that we were correct. "Umm well errm I don't think we are buuut..." I stuttered. "Loads of people go that way by mistake then end up out all night and have to call

mountain rescue," he replied. Shocked but able to speak again, I tried to justify our decision: "Okay but we are just going to drop down from the col, which is actually the most direct route back, and one we are familiar with." He didn't say anything, just turned his back on us and carried on smoking while his clients shivered in the damp.

Mountain rescue waiting to happen

I was so shaken, it was the first time someone had confronted me so directly, and given he clearly had strong opinions about what we were doing, I asked: "Now you know where we are heading, are we going in the right direction?" No answer, followed by: "As a professional in the mountains and a member of the mountain rescue team it is my duty to step in when I see people doing things which will lead to them needing a rescue." We were both gobsmacked. A rescue?! He thought we were going to need to be rescued! We walked away as quickly as we could, following our intended route which, as expected, led us easily back to the campsite and not to a long, cold night involving mountain rescue.

We again made light of the situation, laughing and thinking of all the clever things we could have said – my friend's: "You should stop smoking, it's my responsibility as a doctor to step in when I see people doing things which will put a burden on the NHS" a top contender. I have no idea why he thought we were going to need to be rescued. There was nothing we had done or said that day to suggest that was the case: we had done a fairly serious and committing route in bad weather (which he knew), we had easily navigated the complex terrain without any visibility, we were safe and totally comfortable the whole time, and most of all, we had fun. Days like that are the most satisfying and rewarding because they test and validate skills built over the

Continued overleaf ►

From previous page ►

years. They rely on being self-sufficient, being able to totally trust your own judgement, and being confident in your ability to deal with anything that happens – both individually and as a group. To me, that's what being in the mountains is about. Mr Yellow Jacket clearly didn't see this in us. Maybe my Arc'teryx trousers were the wrong shade of blue. Maybe my hair is too blonde. Or maybe he didn't want his female clients to think that 'girlies' can go off and do things like that without him.

We didn't see Mr Yellow Jacket the next day as we scampered along the full Cuillin ridge in under 12 hours, the rough gabbro wearing down our shoes but filling us with joy. Our day was all the better for it, but the part of me that still had something to prove wished that we had met him again.

Undermining women's abilities

I try to not let it affect me, to just brush it off and carry on. I know my worth, my skills, my experience, and that is what matters. But of course it affects me when my presence in the environment in which I spend most of my time in, both personally and professionally, is constantly questioned and undermined. I used to feel a need to prove myself, as if by climbing harder or running faster it would change how these men view me and my place in the world. But often they know nothing about me – my skill and experience are irrelevant, and trying to prove myself to these anonymous men just leaves me feeling emptier, like I have lost a little part of myself in the process. Every time it happens, I am surprised – it catches me off guard because it couldn't be further from how I am feeling at the time. I can be feeling strong, confident, capable, excited, happy and free, only to have it totally undermined by a complete stranger.

I always struggle to know how to respond – I'm normally so taken aback I don't know what to say. I just want to get away from the situation and get on with my day, I don't want

“I have also had many positive interactions with men in the mountains, but the negative experiences occur with an alarming frequency”.

to have to explain myself to a total stranger. I used to try and think of clever, sassy things I could say in return, but often the men who have said these things are being so genuine and intend no harm that a sassy comeback just doesn't sit right. It's the part which upsets me the most, that the subconscious biases lie so deep and unexplored that they truly believe they are being helpful and encouraging. The comments that come from a place of ego, of a need to prove themselves or put me down, while more unpleasant at the time, are easier to understand and rationalise. It's the men who look at me and just assume that I'm lost or need their help, or that I'm having a big day out when in fact it's a pretty standard day's work, that cut the deepest. They know nothing about me apart from what they can see and what society has already told them about me.

I am sharing my experiences in the hope that they get people thinking, rather than just assuming. If I make even one person stop and think before they say something to the woman (or group of women) out by herself in the mountains, then that is a step in the right direction. I am sharing my stories because I know I'm not the only woman who has had interactions like these, my experiences are sadly not unique. But mostly, I am sharing these stories because I know some people find it hard to believe that things like this still happen, and perhaps don't appreciate the implications they can have on the people who experience them.

Continuing the conversation

I am lucky that I have grown up with mountains in my blood, and that I have so many inspiring and encouraging female role models, my mother among them. Without these added layers of resilience it would be easy to take these comments and experiences to heart and to believe

what I am being told, that I don't belong in the mountains, not as much as a man does, anyway. It is worth mentioning that I have also had many positive interactions with men in the mountains, but the negative experiences occur with an alarming frequency; they are not isolated events.

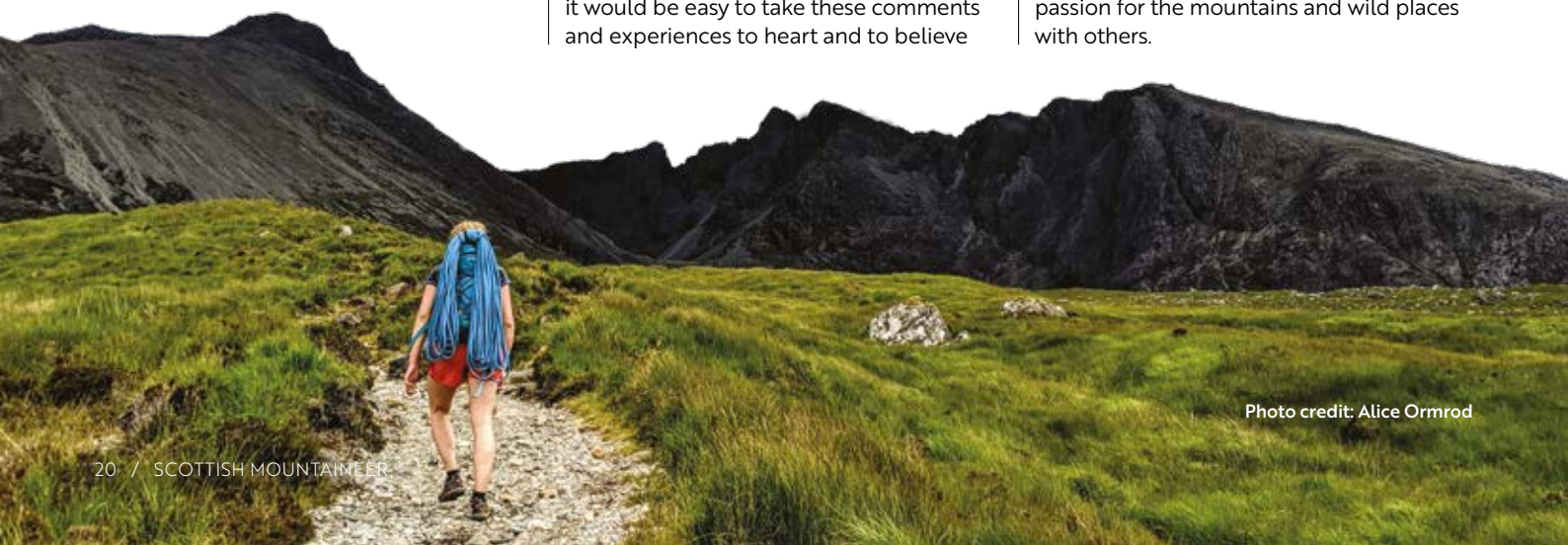
The conversation around barriers to female participation in the outdoors has had great traction lately, with so many positive outcomes, organisations and schemes developing, and with more and more women getting involved I think it is important to address the barriers that not only stop women from getting involved, but that still affect us while we are out. They are harder to define perhaps, subtler, and take so many different forms, but ultimately perpetuate the same ideas relating to expected or stereotypical gender roles and validate the major barriers relating to confidence and self-doubt.

We have come a long way over the past few generations; as women in this current age we have a freedom that our grandmothers could only dream of. But there is still a long way to go. I hope that the next generation of women live in a world where they are free from the judgement and bias that we still live with. Where they can go climbing and be seen as climbers, go skiing and be seen as skiers and just exist in the mountains, where they belong. 🏔️

About the author:

Jess Williams grew up in North Wales where she developed a deep love of the mountains from a young age. After a brief career in biomedical research, she moved to the Scottish Highlands where she works as a freelance summer and winter Mountain Leader. She loves sharing her passion for the mountains and wild places with others.

Photo credit: Alice Ormrod





MOUNTAIN
EQUIPMENT

Live for
the challenge
the connection
the freedom

Live
for the
line

ROCKING THE CASTLE

A LOOK BACK AT REALROCK 2024... AND A WORLD FIRST?!

BY ROBERT MACKENZIE, REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, CLIMBSCOTLAND

Can you remember a time when you had just learnt a new set of skills, and recall the excitement that came with your first chance to try them out? The anticipation you felt the morning before, and the adrenaline building on the journey there? Imagine, then, the gut-wrenching disappointment when you arrive and someone says, 'not yet!'

Ella has been coming on ClimbScotland RealRocks for years, learning sport climbing skills and recently trad climbing skills. This year was her year! Her year to take that big leap to her first lead climb on trad. She had worked hard to get there and was ready to put all her knowledge and skills to the test, only to turn up to Auchinstarry Quarry to find the crag soaking wet and rain still falling. "Not yet, we have to wait till the crag dries."

But this provided an opportunity. A chance to let Ella do her first official trad lead, placing her own gear, building a safe anchor and bring up her second, and maybe, just maybe getting a world first in the process.

Auchinstarry Quarry is home to some of the central belts' best single pitch climbing, but it is also home to one of the best kid's play park castles I have ever seen. Auchinstarry Castle is a three-level fortress

"As cool as it may be, I'm sure Ella was rather confused when I suggested we go play in the park while the crag dried!"

with slides, tunnels and monkey bars. But, as cool as it may be, I'm sure Ella was rather confused when I suggested we go play in the park while the crag dried!

All started to become clear, as the rope got flaked out at the castle entrance and Ella got racked up with all her trad gear. Tied in, belay on and with a final "climb when you're ready", Ella set off on a 30-metre pitch first ascent, meandering through the castle, placing plenty of protection on her way, all the way to the highest turret. Here she built a textbook anchor, got herself safe and comfy, and belayed her partner as they followed on through the castle halls. Every step of the way was expertly executed, so as a final victory prize, we all took the helter-skelter slide back to the ground. By this time Ella had proven that she had the skills, and the crag had dried, so Ella took to the rock and did some 'real' trad climbing.

What do you reckon, a first ascent trad lead through a kid's play park... and a world first?

Despite a tough year with weather and handful of our sessions being cancelled as a result, we still had a successful year, and this was not the only 'first' we achieved.

Just under 70 young climbers joined us for some outdoor climbing fun in 2024, with sessions still taking place as this magazine goes to print. This included two bouldering sessions, five roped tasters, six learning to lead sport climbing days and five learning to lead trad climbing days. We even managed an awesome multipitch day in Glen Nevis, courtesy of the amazing Kirsty Pallas from Mountaineering Scotland's Mountain Safety team.





Our RealRock sessions offer young climbers across Scotland the opportunity to take their climbing outdoors and learn new skills to develop them into safe and independent outdoor climbers and become good role models for our sport. We are hugely proud of how our programme has developed over the past 20 years, but we also know that we need to keep evolving and growing our programme to make it as good as can be and offer places to any young person that wants to get into outdoor climbing.

So, what other 'firsts' have we managed, what's new?

Access rights

With Mountaineering Scotland's continued effort to fight for our access rights across Scotland, a lot of that means better education around what our access rights are, why we have them and how do we protect them. This year we have introduced a conversation about access rights in every one of our RealRocks, seeking to educate not only the young climbers but any parents present. Aiming to make sure

the next generation know what the Scottish Outdoor Access Code is and how we can behave to protect our 'Right to Responsible Access'.

Mountain Training Skills Courses

We have partnered with Mountain Training to become a provider for its Rock Skills courses. Rock Skills courses are designed to provide structured nationally recognised training opportunities for people who want to learn more and become independent climbers. This also gets young people started on the Mountain Training pathway, including a DLOG and access to qualifications. This year we ran a learn to lead trad climbing course that, despite some awful weather, went brilliantly, and is something that we will continue to offer going forward.

Growing the programme

2024 saw two firsts for growing the programme. The introduction of a new venue and bringing in external providers to run more sessions.

We had originally intended on

introducing three new venues to our programme this year, but with the summer weather not being... well summer, we only managed to introduce the Barry Valley Boulders to our repertoire. This Highland, roadside bouldering spot offered a full day of fun and adventure for two psyched young climbers, with a good range of bouldering at a huge range of grades.

The RealRock programme started many moons ago with volunteers giving up their time to run these crucial opportunities. But in recent years, due to many factors, we have only been able to offer these with in-house instructors. 2024 saw us being able to build a new team of external instructors to help us offer more places and run more sessions to those who want to get into outdoor climbing.

So, with a lot of 'firsts' this year, the 2024 RealRocks have been awesome, and we are as excited as ever to kick 2025 in the same style. Although, I don't think we will ever top the Auchinstarry Castle first ascent! 🏔️

Visit www.mountaineering.scot/activities/outdoor-climbing/realrock to find out more.

HAMISH MACINNES: A LASTING LEGACY

Scottish Mountaineering Trust receives substantial donation from MacInnes estate



Renowned mountaineer Hamish MacInnes is celebrated not only for his significant first ascents and daring mountain adventures, but also for his pivotal contributions to mountaineering equipment, rescue techniques and the training of future climbers. His life's work extended well beyond personal achievements, impacting the safety and education of countless mountaineers.

Following Hamish's death in 2020, his trustees sought a way to ensure his legacy would continue to help others experience the mountains he cherished. They ultimately decided to donate his substantial estate to the Scottish Mountaineering Trust (SMT), an organisation that closely aligned with Hamish's values. The SMT was glad to accept this responsibility, viewing it as a privilege to perpetuate the memory of the great man through the mountain activities his money will support.

Hamish's legacy is extensive. His journey as a climber began with his solo ascent of the Matterhorn, a remarkable feat for a postwar teenager who made the challenging journey from Greenock to Zermatt. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, he accomplished many winter first ascents of classic routes, particularly in Glencoe and Ben Nevis. Notably, he was part of the

"His life's work extended well beyond personal achievements, impacting the safety and education of countless mountaineers."



Brian Robertson, Dave Crabb, Hamish MacInnes and Tom Patey, after the first ascent of the Cuillin Ridge in winter

team that achieved the first winter traverse of the Cuillin Ridge, which he considered 'the greatest single achievement in British mountaineering'. He also explored greater ranges, undertaking expeditions to Rakaposhi, Everest and the Caucasus.

In 1961, Hamish founded the Glencoe School of Winter Climbing, which introduced a new generation of climbers to the mountains he loved. His influence extended to mountain rescue; he established the Glencoe rescue team and led it for three decades. In 1965, he co-founded the Search and Rescue Dog



“He designed the first all-metal ice axe in the 1960s and created the lightweight alloy Maclnnes stretcher, now in its seventh generation.”


Association with his wife, Catherine, and authored the *International Mountain Rescue Handbook* in 1972, a resource still in use today. His efforts in 1988 led to the creation of the Scottish Avalanche Information Service, enhancing safety for climbers.

His contributions to equipment were equally impactful. He designed the first all-metal ice axe in the 1960s and created the lightweight alloy Maclnnes stretcher, now in its seventh generation. His 'Terrordactyl', developed in 1970, remains influential in modern ice climbing tools.

Hamish also wrote a lot of books – Scottish walkers' and climbers' guides, mountain rescue (notably *Callout* in 1973), expedition tales, and even fiction! They still sell, and their royalties will contribute to the Trust funds in the future. He also

worked on a number of films as climber, climbing-double or safety officer – notably being trusted with Clint Eastwood's life in *The Eiger Sanction's* most hair-raising scene.

SMT Chairman David Broadhead explains: "We are delighted that the Maclnnes executors have decided to pass Hamish's estate to the SMT. We recognise that this is a big responsibility, as Hamish was a complete individual steering his own course through life, and the SMT will ensure that his values and memory will live on through the projects we support."

You can find out more about the man and his adventures in *Hamish MacInnes: The Fox of Glen Coe*, published by the Scottish Mountaineering Press. 

www.thesmt.org.uk

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE LISTS

As a two-time SMC Full House compleatist, Mountaineering Scotland President Anne Butler knows a thing or two about hill lists. Here, she takes a look at the people behind the names, from Munros to Marilyns and everything in between

The listing of hills falls broadly into three main categories. Traditional or eponymous lists are named after their founder, the person who compiled the list, such as Munros. Relative lists, such as Marilyns and Simms, are prominence-based – hills are classified based on their relative height in comparison to the surrounding terrain as opposed to their height above sea level. Hills such as Corbetts and Grahams are a combination of the two; they are named after their founder(s) but also have a relative height definition.

Munros and Munro Tops

Munros are Scottish mountains that are more than 3,000ft (914.4m) in height. A Munro Top is a subsidiary top of a Munro, also greater than 3,000ft (914.4m).

Munros are named after Sir Hugh Munro, a founder member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) who became the club's third President in 1894.

He was born in Eaton Place, London, in 1856 and was educated at home in Worthing and Charmouth. After an early diplomatic and military career, he settled down to run the family estate of Lindertis, near Kirriemuir.

Sir Hugh was well-travelled, making trips to Europe, Asia, North America and Africa. Although not renowned for his technical climbing ability, Munro was an enthusiastic hillwalker, undertaking long expeditions into the hills, often in winter. His first recorded ascent of a 3,000ft mountain was on Ben Lawers in 1879.

In 1891 Sir Hugh was asked by the SMC to list the mountains in Scotland of more than 3,000ft. His *Tables, giving all the Scottish mountains exceeding 3000ft in height* was first published in the *SMC Journal* no. 6 in 1891. The list comprised 538 hills; 283 separate mountains (Munros) and 255 subsidiary Tops, outliers to the main summits but still felt by Sir Hugh to have significant topographical merit and therefore worthy of inclusion.

The list became known as *Munro's Tables*. Sir Hugh did not define any objective criteria for classifying Munros and Tops and this has led to lots of debate over the years. In his notes he wrote that "the decision as to what are to be considered distinct and separate mountains and what may be counted as Tops, although arrived at after careful consideration, cannot be finally insisted upon".

Sir Hugh regarded the *Tables* as a single list and was aiming to climb them all.

The *Tables* are divided into 17 sections based on the natural geography of the Highlands. Sir Hugh used Ordnance Survey one-inch to the mile maps; these showed only 250ft contour intervals and six-inch to the mile maps, which showed spot heights but did not include contours. The maps were often inaccurate and incomplete. He also utilised Admiralty

Mountaineering
Scotland President
Anne Butler



charts and an aneroid barometer to measure summit heights. Over the next 20 years, Sir Hugh worked to refine his list, constantly rechecking data and redefining summits and this tradition has continued, with the list of Munros and Tops being revised in 1921 (based largely on his own refinements) and again in 1974, 1981, 1984 and 1997. The 1974 edition of *Munro's Tables* was the first to be published in metric units, when 3,000ft became 914.4m. The list of Munros is maintained by the SMC and the total now stands at 282 Munros and 226 Tops.

Sir Hugh did not manage to climb all the hills on his list. He died on 19 March 1919 at Tarascon, France, during the post-war influenza epidemic while he was running a canteen for Allied forces. He died with three summits still unclimbed.

In 1901, the Rev. A. E Robertson became the first person known to have climbed all the Munros, famously kissing the cairn and then his wife after reaching the summit on Meall Dearg in Glencoe. Robertson's summary of the 10 years he spent climbing the Munros is something many modern-day Munro baggers will relate to: "I look back upon the days I have spent in pursuing this quest as among the best days of my life."

Another cleric, the Rev. A. R. G Burn, followed in 1923, becoming the second person to climb the Munros and the first to climb the Munro Tops. Mrs Paddy Hirst became the first woman to complete the Munros in 1947.

During the early part of the 20th century hillwalking

“Early pioneers walked exceptional distances... and relied heavily on the goodwill of Highland folk to put them up.”

was the preserve of the professional or privileged classes. Sir Hugh and his contemporaries often walked at night to avoid disturbing stalking or grouse-shooting activities. Early pioneers such as Sir Hugh, Robertson and Burn walked exceptional distances, often on multi-day, cross country trips. They stopped overnight with families living in remote glens and relied heavily on the goodwill of Highland folk to put them up and feed them. They made extensive use of the rail network and mail buses and Robertson sometimes used a bicycle to reach remote hills.

When a person has climbed the 282 Munro summits listed in *Munro's Tables* they are said to have 'completed' or 'compleated' the Munros. A person who has completed the Munros is known as a Munroist and the SMC maintains a list of all those who register their completion. Between 1960 and 1971, Eric Maxwell began to compile a list of people known to have climbed the Munros (Munroists) and Munro Tops (Toppers). Maxwell stated that it was "important to make some distinction between the Munroists and the Toppers", adding: "It is clear that the Topper does about twice as much as the Munroist and sees twice as much. In some cases, such as An Teallach, he gains immeasurably, and although a few Tops are admittedly as dull as ditchwater, he gathers a much more detailed knowledge of the hills and at the same time has much more enjoyment."

An argument, if one was needed, that climbing the Tops as well as the Munros is a worthwhile undertaking.

Maxwell's list was originally published in the *Grampian Club Bulletin* and the SMC took over management of the list once the number of registered Munroists reached 100. The list of completers is available on the SMC website, smc.org.uk

Continued overleaf ►

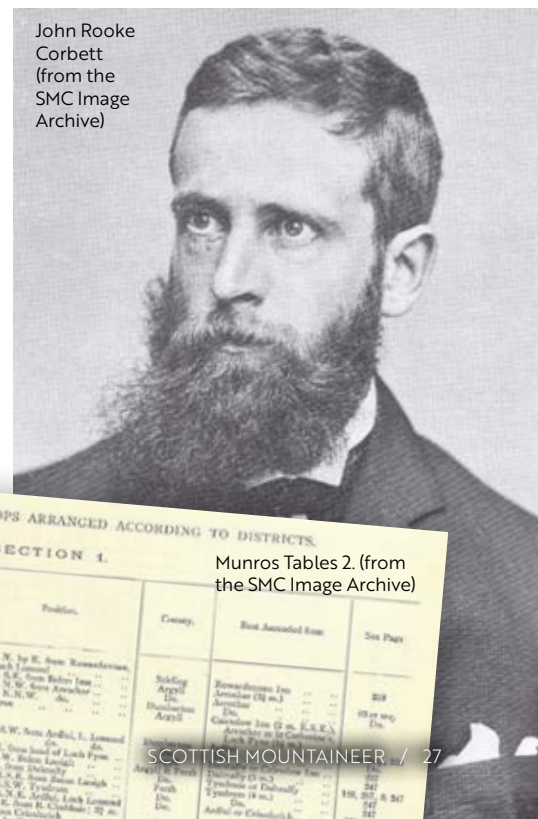


Sir Hugh Munro. (from the SMC Image Archive)

Munros Tables 1. (from the SMC Image Archive)

TABLE II
THE 3,000 FEET TOPS ARRANGED IN ORDER OF ALTITUDE.

No. of Mountains in order of Altitude	No. of Top in order of Altitude	HEIGHT.	NAME.	Section in Table I.
1	1	4008	Ben Nevis	5
2	2	4296	Ben Macduin	14
3	3	4245	Binn Bhan	14
4	4	4244	Ben Macduin (N. top)	14
5	5	4241	Cairn Toul	14
6	6	4187	Binn Bhan (S. plateau)	14
7	7	4085	Top of Coire an Spair Dheirg (Ben Macduin)	14
8	8	4083 (sp.)	Sgor an Lochain Laine* (Cairn Toul)	14
9	9	4084	Cairngorm	14
10	10	4083	Aonach Eagach	5
11	11	4085	Binn Bhan (Top above Loch Coire an Lochain)	14
12	12	4012	Cairn Mòr Dearg	5
13	13	3909	Aonach Mòr	5
14	14	3869	Top of Coire an t-Saighdeir	14
15	15	3864	Ben Lawers	5
16	16	3863	Top of Coire an Lochain* (Cairngorm)	14
17	17	3861	Cairn Dearg (Ben Nevis)	5
18	18	3854	Beinn a' Bhuid (N. top)	14
19	19	3888	Beinn Mhàrthainn	14
20	20	3887	Cairn Eige	5
21	21	3875	Cairn Dearg Meall nan Tarmachan	5
22	22	3875	Sron na Leir* (Binn Bhan)	14
23	23	3862	Ben Alder	5
24	24	3860	Ben Alder	14
25	25	3858	Ben Alder	5
26	26	3856	Ben Alder	5
27	27	3848	Ben Alder	5
28	28	3843	Ben Alder	5
29	29	3837	Ben Alder	5
30	30	3811	Ben Alder	5
31	31	3766	Ben Alder	5
32	32	3738	Ben Alder	5
33	33	3736	Ben Alder	5
34	34	3729	Ben Alder	5
35	35	3727	Ben Alder	5
36	36	3727	Ben Alder	5
37	37	3726	Ben Alder	5
38	38	3708	Ben Alder	5
39	39	3707	Ben Alder	5
40	40	3703	Ben Alder	5
41	41	3700	Ben Alder	5
42	42	3700	Ben Alder	5
43	43	3700	Ben Alder	5
44	44	3700	Ben Alder	5
45	45	3700 (sp.)	Ben Alder	5
46	46	3700	Ben Alder	5
47	47	3700	Ben Alder	5
48	48	3696	Ben Alder	5
49	49	3689	Ben Alder	5
50	50	3689	Ben Alder	5
51	51	3685	Ben Alder	5
52	52	3676	Ben Alder	5



John Rooke Corbett (from the SMC Image Archive)

Munros Tables 2. (from the SMC Image Archive)

TABLE I.—THE 3,000 FEET TOPS ARRANGED ACCORDING TO DISTRICTS.

SECTION 1.

No. of Mountains in order of Altitude	No. of Top in order of Altitude	HEIGHT.	NAME.	District.	County.	Best Ascended from	See Page
1	1	4008	Ben Nevis	Ben Nevis	Highland	Ben Nevis	2
2	2	4296	Ben Macduin	Ben Macduin	Highland	Ben Macduin	14
3	3	4245	Binn Bhan	Binn Bhan	Highland	Binn Bhan	14
4	4	4244	Ben Macduin (N. top)	Ben Macduin	Highland	Ben Macduin	14
5	5	4241	Cairn Toul	Cairn Toul	Highland	Cairn Toul	14
6	6	4187	Binn Bhan (S. plateau)	Binn Bhan	Highland	Binn Bhan	14
7	7	4085	Top of Coire an Spair Dheirg (Ben Macduin)	Binn Bhan	Highland	Binn Bhan	14
8	8	4083 (sp.)	Sgor an Lochain Laine* (Cairn Toul)	Cairn Toul	Highland	Cairn Toul	14
9	9	4084	Cairngorm	Cairngorm	Highland	Cairngorm	14
10	10	4083	Aonach Eagach	Aonach Eagach	Highland	Aonach Eagach	5
11	11	4085	Binn Bhan (Top above Loch Coire an Lochain)	Binn Bhan	Highland	Binn Bhan	14
12	12	4012	Cairn Mòr Dearg	Cairn Mòr Dearg	Highland	Cairn Mòr Dearg	5
13	13	3909	Aonach Mòr	Aonach Mòr	Highland	Aonach Mòr	5
14	14	3869	Top of Coire an t-Saighdeir	Top of Coire an t-Saighdeir	Highland	Top of Coire an t-Saighdeir	14
15	15	3864	Ben Lawers	Ben Lawers	Highland	Ben Lawers	5
16	16	3863	Top of Coire an Lochain* (Cairngorm)	Top of Coire an Lochain*	Highland	Top of Coire an Lochain*	14
17	17	3861	Cairn Dearg (Ben Nevis)	Cairn Dearg	Highland	Cairn Dearg	5
18	18	3854	Beinn a' Bhuid (N. top)	Beinn a' Bhuid	Highland	Beinn a' Bhuid	14
19	19	3888	Beinn Mhàrthainn	Beinn Mhàrthainn	Highland	Beinn Mhàrthainn	14
20	20	3887	Cairn Eige	Cairn Eige	Highland	Cairn Eige	5
21	21	3875	Cairn Dearg Meall nan Tarmachan	Cairn Dearg	Highland	Cairn Dearg	5
22	22	3875	Sron na Leir* (Binn Bhan)	Sron na Leir*	Highland	Sron na Leir*	14
23	23	3862	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
24	24	3860	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	14
25	25	3858	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
26	26	3856	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
27	27	3848	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
28	28	3843	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
29	29	3837	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
30	30	3811	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
31	31	3766	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
32	32	3738	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
33	33	3736	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
34	34	3729	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
35	35	3727	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
36	36	3727	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
37	37	3726	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
38	38	3708	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
39	39	3707	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
40	40	3703	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
41	41	3700	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
42	42	3700	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
43	43	3700	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
44	44	3700	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
45	45	3700 (sp.)	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
46	46	3700	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
47	47	3700	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
48	48	3696	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
49	49	3689	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
50	50	3689	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
51	51	3685	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5
52	52	3676	Ben Alder	Ben Alder	Highland	Ben Alder	5

From previous page ▶



Cir Mhor from Caisteal Abhail, Arran

Corbetts

John Rooke Corbett compiled his list during the 1920s. A Corbett is defined as a hill between 2,500ft (762m) and 3,000ft (914.4m) in height, with a drop of at least 500ft (152.4m) between each hill and any adjacent higher one (though Corbett himself did not specify this criterion). Corbett, born in 1877, worked as a district valuer in Bristol and was a founder member of the Rucksack Club. He was a member of the SMC and in 1930 he became the fourth person – and first Englishman – to complete the Munros.

Corbett's list was not published until after his death, when his sister passed the list to the SMC. In 1939 John Rooke Corbett became the first person to have climbed all the hills on his list and was therefore the first recorded Corbetteer. Corbett also listed hills in England and Wales but since its adoption by the SMC, the Corbetts are regarded as a Scottish list.

The designated drop between each Corbett makes them a much more clearly defined list than Munros and ensures that they are quite distinct hills. The list has changed over the years as a result of resurveying and now contains 222 Corbetts.

It is wrong to think of Corbetts as 'lesser' hills, giving shorter or easier walks than the Munros – many walks are long, remote and over pathless, demanding terrain. The drop criterion means there are very few instances where three or four can be combined in long traverses, as is the case with Munros.

Grahams

A Graham is a hill between 2,000ft (609.6m) and 2,500ft (762m), with a drop of 150m or more on all sides. The list was first published by Alan Dawson in *The Relative Hills of Britain* in 1992. Fiona Torbet (née Graham) published a similar list later in 1992;

she compiled the list while recovering in hospital after a skiing accident.

Torbet's list had a vague definition, containing a defined drop criterion of 150m or the highest point for 'about two miles' and did not include any hills south of the Highland boundary fault. The two lists were combined, refined and defined by Torbet and Dawson and became known as the Grahams.

The official Grahams list is maintained by Alan Dawson and was updated in 2022. The list now includes 231 hills between 1,968ft (600m) and 2500ft (762m).

Alan Dawson was born in Liverpool and did not start climbing mountains until he was in his 30s. He trained as a cartographer with the Ordnance Survey, drawing plenty of maps of hills but not actually climbing any.

After finding books on the Welsh 3,000ft mountains, the 2,000ft hills of England and Wales and the Munros, he started studying hill lists more closely and began to find anomalies and omissions, realising that there was scope for improving the existing lists.

He began to work on a new type of hill list based on relative heights that would eventually become the Marilyns.

Fiona Torbet was a trained musician, a keen sailor, hillwalker and environmental campaigner. In 1993 she went missing while on a hillwalking holiday in Kintail and her body was found a year later. She had been murdered by the owner's son while staying in their B&B and had been buried in the garden.

After Torbet and Dawson combined and rationalised their separate lists, they became known as the Grahams, after Torbet's maiden name. Dawson felt that having a list of Corbetts and Torbets would prove rather confusing.

The majority of Grahams do not have defined paths and the highly vegetated terrain can be particularly challenging. It is unusual to meet other walkers on most of the Grahams and the lower elevation often provides some of the best views of their higher neighbours.

Donalds

Percy Donald's regional list of *Tables Giving All Hills in the Scottish Lowlands 2,000ft in Height or Above* was first published in the *SMC Journal* in 1935.

Donalds from the sublime Glen Sax



While compiling the Tables, Donald climbed every hill in the Scottish Lowlands higher than 2,000ft (609.6m) during a five-month period beginning in December 1932. He used mainly public transport and walked alone, climbing all the hills wearing a kilt.

Donald worked as an engineer in Edinburgh, Egypt and Dumbarton and joined the SMC in 1922. He served as Slide Custodian for four years, during which time he labelled each slide and catalogued the whole collection. He died while hillwalking alone and was found drowned in a pool below the Eas nam Bealach waterfall on the Allt Coralan in the hills south-east of Auch.

SMC Vice-President Sandy Harrison's obituary for Donald contained the elegant insult that "few people who dealt with him could have remained indifferent to him".

Donald's *Tables* are set out in a similar way to those of Munro, with summits classified as Donalds or Donald Tops. He lists 141 summits, 89 Donalds and 52 Donald Tops.

Donald developed a cumbersome and complex formula to distinguish between the summits he classified as Hills and those he considered Tops: Tops are all elevations with a drop of 100ft (30.48m) on all sides and elevations of sufficient topographical merit with a drop of between 100ft (30.48m) and 50ft (15.24m) on all sides.

Grouping of Tops into Hills, except when inapplicable on topographical grounds, is on the basis that Tops are no more than 17 units from the main top of the hill to which they belong, when a unit is either one twelfth of a mile measured along the connecting ridge or on 50ft contour between the lower Top and its connecting col.

Donald's *Tables* are seen as a complete entity and since 2018 people climbing a round of Donalds must climb all 141 hills on the list.

Furths

The Furths are the 3,000ft (914.4m) mountains in the British Isles 'furth' of (further of, or outside) Scotland.

The first list of Furths was published by James A. Parker in the *SMC Journal* in 1929. Parker called

"Eleven people are known to have climbed all the Marilyn's on the official list."



Percy Donald 1928.
(from the SMC Image Archive)

Percy Donald death notice, from the SMC Image Archive

the hills the 'British Threes' and included four English, 12 Welsh and seven Irish hills on his list. The term Furth was first used by Eric Maxwell in the *Grampian Club Bulletin* in his article *Furth of Scotland*, published in 1959. Maxwell persuaded his son David to produce the first formal listing of the Furths and his *Tables giving all the 3,000ft Mountains of England, Wales and Ireland* was published privately in 1959.

Maxwell's list contained 11 Irish, seven English and 14 Welsh summits. The first recorded Furthist was J.A Parker, who completed the Munros in 1927 followed by the Furths in 1929.

The Furths list is maintained by the SMC and now contains 34 summits – six in England, 15 in Wales and 13 in Ireland.

Marilyns

A Marilyn is a hill of any height with a drop (relative height or prominence) of 150m on all sides, regardless of distance, absolute height or topographical merit.

The list of Marilyn's within Britain and Isle of Man was compiled by Alan Dawson and was published in the book *Relative Hills of Britain* in 1992.

Dawson set out to compile a metric, prominence-based list of all summits in Great Britain, regardless of elevation, with the sole criterion for inclusion being a drop of 150m on all sides. Dawson believed that, in Great Britain, a drop of 150m was proportionate to the size of the hills and 'felt right'. He appreciated the precise definition of Corbett's list more than the vagueness of the Munros and Tops, so he used a similar definition for relative height to that used by Corbett.

The list of Marilyn's is maintained by Dawson and there are 1,556 hills on the list. The list contains all the Corbetts and Grahams plus 202 Munros, therefore, as almost 50% of Marilyn's are more than 2,000ft (609.6m), they should not be regarded as lower hills.

Eleven people are known to have climbed all the Marilyn's on the official list. Rob Woodall became the first when he climbed the remote sea stacks of Stac an Armin and Stac Lee on St Kilda in 2014, followed on the same day by Eddie Dealtry.

Simms

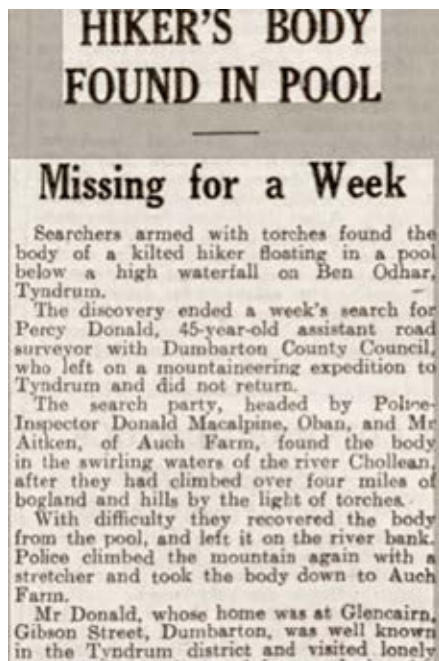
A Simm is a 'Six-hundred Metre Mountain' in Britain. To qualify, a hill must be over 600m in height with a drop of at least 30m on all sides.

The list was introduced by Alan Dawson in 2010 as a means to consolidate several other relative hill lists (Murdos, Hewitts, Corbett Tops and Graham Tops). The list is maintained by Dawson and it contains a total of 2,530 hills.

Even if all of the above lists are not enough to keep even the most obsessive bagger busy, there are plenty of other lists; Humps, Tumps, Dodds, Highland Fives and County Tops.

So many lists, so little time...

Details of all hill lists and summit grid references can be found at www.hills-database.co.uk 



MAKING A DIFFERENCE ON BEN LOMOND: TAKITHAME DAY 2024



Mountaineering Scotland, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and the National Trust for Scotland teamed up on Sunday 29 September for the first TakItHame litter pick event on Ben Lomond.

Staff, volunteers and members of Loch Lomond Mountain Rescue joined together to raise awareness of littering in the hill, and managed to clear a fantastic 10 bags of rubbish from Ben Lomond's slopes over the course of the day.

Mountaineering Scotland President, Anne Butler, said: "Not only did we leave the mountain path in a much better state than we found it, but the event enabled us to engage with, and educate, the hillwalking community on the importance of personal responsibility and creating a culture of environmental protection."

The day wasn't just about clearing litter, it was about raising awareness too. Volunteers took time to chat to fellow walkers, encouraging them to do their part by packing out their rubbish and offering free reusable #TakItHame bags.

David Allsop, Ben Lomond Ranger at the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), said: "The NTS proudly supports Mountaineering




"Bringing a bag to take litter away is one of the easiest ways visitors can protect nature and wildlife in the National Park."

Scotland and its TakItHame campaign. It's great to see so many partnership organisations working together and raising awareness of the importance of keeping Scotland's landscapes and countryside litter free, and Ben Lomond is reaping the rewards from it following the recent 'spring clean' as a result!"

Kenny Auld, Head of Visitor Services at Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, added: "It is vital that we encourage visitors to act responsibly and sustainably. Bringing a bag to take litter away is one of the easiest ways visitors can protect nature and wildlife in the National Park.

"We are proud to support the TakItHame campaign and will continue working with our partners to ensure visitors are informed and inspired to make climate- and nature-friendly choices."

A huge thank you to everyone involved! We hope to see you all again next year for TakItHame Day 2025! 

To find out more about the campaign, visit www.mountaineering.scot/conservation/campaigns/tak-it-hame



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WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE

Glenmore Lodge, sportsScotland's National Outdoor Training Centre, is thrilled to announce a partnership with the Martin Moran Foundation (MMF).

The partnership is aimed at delivering opportunities for programme participants to develop their skills and pursue qualifications with scholarship support.

MMF is a charity that specialises in providing support to young people with a passion for adventure but who face barriers to accessing the mountains independently. They may belong to an underrepresented community with limited opportunities to explore the outdoors, face financial barriers, struggle with their mental health, or have limited family support to pursue their passion.

Glenmore Lodge is sportsScotland's National Outdoor Training Centre. Founded in 1947, it exists to support individuals in accessing the outdoors safely and responsibly through delivery



Our visitors get the chance to enjoy the great outdoors




those who face barriers to accessing the outdoors in overcoming them and look forward to seeing how we can continue to grow this partnership."

The relationship between Glenmore Lodge and the MMF is ongoing, with new courses and opportunities on the horizon. The first course, a Climbing Wall Assistant Award, was delivered earlier this year and enabled the participants to develop their rock climbing skills, build their confidence and achieve a professional qualification.

Hazel Moran, Director of Communications at the Martin Moran Foundation, said:

"The scholarship scheme is designed to support the young people we work with and help them continue their passion, feel competent and independent, and grow in confidence. At MMF, we are passionate about continuing to support the young people

we work with and are delighted to be teaming up with the skilled team at Glenmore Lodge to deliver this." 

For more information about the Martin Moran Foundation, please visit: www.martinmoranfoundation.co.uk

of skills training courses and National Governing Body Awards. Glenmore Lodge also works extensively with our partners to support initiatives and programmes that strive to make the outdoor community more inclusive, accessible and diverse.

The MMF provides an initial week-long mountain adventure and a scholarship scheme that allows programme participants to stay connected with the charity for support and funding assistance. Under the new partnership, Glenmore Lodge will help deliver the scholarship scheme through providing fully funded courses that enable participants to gain and develop valuable skills and professional qualifications. This will support participants to pursue their aspirations in the outdoors.

Shaun Roberts, Principal at Glenmore Lodge, said: "This partnership with the Martin Moran Foundation is a valued opportunity for Glenmore Lodge to support young people in developing their skills and pursuing professional qualifications. We're thrilled to be facilitating the MMF's work in helping





Trail running



NAVIGATION FOR MOUNTAIN RUNNERS: PART 2

With Ian Stewart of Trail Running Scotland

Photo credit: Ed Smith Photography

When moving through mountain terrain at a quicker pace, it can be harder to keep track of our position, as subtle landmarks are harder to spot and recognising distance travelled by time or pacing can be unpredictable or impractical.

Technology can play a role in our navigation but be aware of its limitations – battery life and GPS accuracy can't be 100% relied upon.

GPS watches are getting easier to use to follow a route, with some now giving reasonable mapping but, again, this comes with a limitation. If you need to adjust your route part way through, would you have enough detail to navigate an alternative route. A watch can also give useful information such as distance travelled and your altitude.

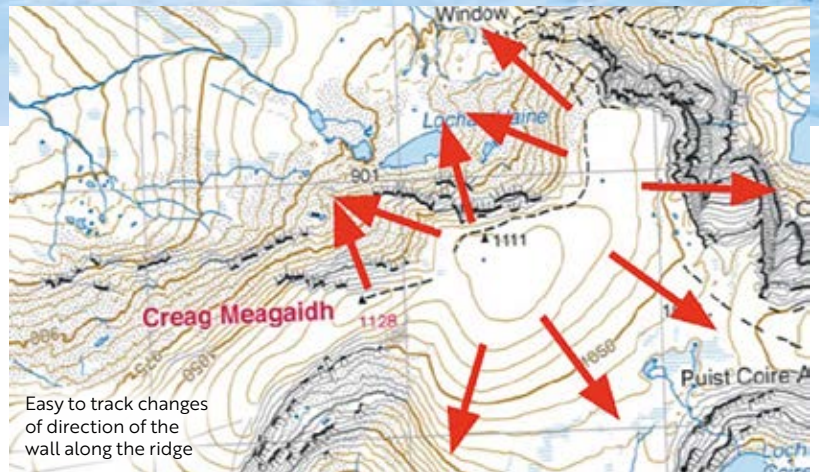
Whether as your main tool for navigating or just a backup, the ability to confidently use map and compass navigation is still essential.

Some features we use for navigation are instantly recognisable, such as large lochans, summit cairns or rocky tors. But the majority of the time, we have to plan our navigation strategy to link places on the map where something measurable changes. There are three things that might change: direction of linear features, slope aspect and slope gradient.

Often, so long as we are heading in roughly the right direction (with or without a compass, depending on visibility) we will get to a measurable catching feature. But like everything in navigation, they are only obvious if you know what you are looking for:

Linear features

Paths, roads, walls, steams and forest edges can all be considered linear features and treated the same. By checking the compass direction of this line – see Navigation for Mountain Runners part one in the previous issue of *Scottish Mountaineer* – you can confirm which linear feature you are on. Moving along the line to a change in the direction or



Easy to track changes of direction of the wall along the ridge

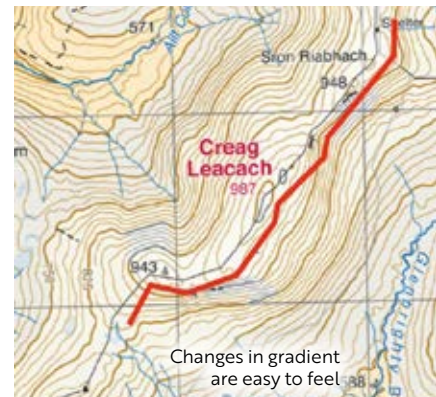
a junction will then give you an opportunity to pinpoint your position as it is unlikely that a similar bend, with exactly the same orientation exists close by.

Slope aspect

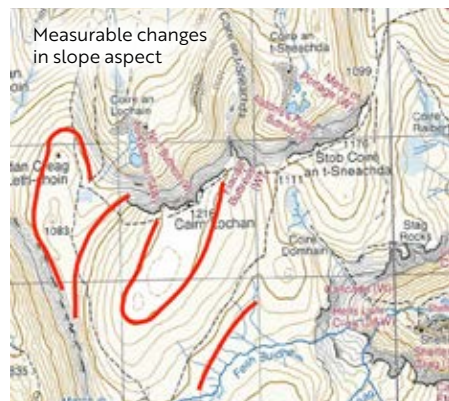
This is the direction the slope faces, i.e., which compass direction is directly downhill. Your slope aspect is easy to measure with your compass in the same way we test a line feature, you just have to imagine the line, crossing directly downhill perpendicular to the contours. Once you know which slope you are on, contouring until that aspect changes gives you another catching feature.

Slope gradient

Changes in gradient are observable on the hill as horizons on convexities and easy to feel in your legs on concave slopes. On your map these will be identifiable as changes in the contour spacing. Sometimes we might climb for 40 minutes before hitting a significant change in gradient. If you haven't seen and felt it yet, just keep going.



Changes in gradient are easy to feel



Looking to improve your navigation skills this winter? Mountaineering Scotland is running Night Navigation courses in November. Find out more information at www.mountaineering.scot



ScotWays

A NEW GUIDE TO CLASSIC SCOTTISH HILL ROUTES

By Neil Birch, Access Officer (Outreach), and Tim Simons, Director, ScotWays

On 28 September, a motley group of friends, acquaintances and stragglers assembled in Colinton, southwest Edinburgh, for a circular walk in the Pentland Hills. All were members and volunteers of the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays) and their purpose was to celebrate the publication of the sixth edition of *Scottish Hill Tracks* by walking two of the routes.

Crossing under the city bypass, we reached the Pentlands, then ascended the steep track up Howden Glen to the pass west of Allermuir, a route with a history of contention – technically, we think, not a right of way, but well used by the public for many years. At the summit, we caught our breath and admired the views north over the city to distant hills and south over Midlothian, with a few trees just starting to yellow with the coming of autumn.

We dropped to Glencorse Reservoir and ascended again by Phantom’s Cleuch, a route named for an anonymous path repairer in the late 20th century. This route certainly is a right of way: it became one of the main ways into the Pentlands in the 19th century, when walking for leisure became a mainstream way for all sorts of people to spend their increasing, but hard-earned, leisure time. At the summit, we enjoyed again

“Smith spent as much time as he could in the hills and mountains, often with the Scottish Mountaineering Club – however, his main interests lay in the glens, passes and historic routes rather than the summits.”



the view to the north, described so well by former ScotWays Director, Walter A. Smith, in his 1885 guide, *The Pentland Hills: Their Paths and Passes*: "There, over the wooded undulating plains, Ben Vorlich and his neighbours, towering beyond the green Ochils, stand sentries to the mountainous north-west... the bright blue Forth opens out to the east, rejoicing in the sunshine."

Smith's Pentlands guide was published to coincide with the erection of ScotWays' first signposts, many of which asserted rights of way through both the Pentlands, for the benefit of the public. A further number of signs were installed that same year in the Cairngorms by a party led by Smith (in his 30s) and not all were welcomed by the landowners. Our sign at Glen Doll, for example, led to a protracted and very expensive legal battle that eventually vindicated the public right of way over the drove road from Braemar, now known as Jock's Road.

Throughout his working life, Smith spent as much time as he could in the hills and mountains, often with the Scottish Mountaineering Club. However, his main interests lay in the glens, passes and historic routes rather than the summits. In 1924, after retiring from his career as an actuary, he compiled and published *Hill Paths in Scotland*, a pocket-sized paperback of 187 routes, designed to be used alongside Bartholomew's half-inch-to-the-mile maps. It is fitting that a century on from that first Scotland-wide guide, ScotWays, in conjunction with the Scottish Mountaineering Press, has published a new and modernised sixth edition of the classic book, *Scottish Hill Tracks*.

Many of the routes are already well-known to

Continued overleaf ►



mountaineers and hillgoers, while others may have used them unknowingly: perhaps taken for granted as lower-level options for bad weather days, or as approaches to remote crags and summits. Together, the 350 routes in *Scottish Hill Tracks* form a network of rights of way, historic routes and some more modern tracks that criss-cross Scotland through glens and bealachs, from the Cheviots to the Isle of Lewis. The book includes detailed descriptions of all the routes, amounting to 7,600km in length, plus a further 175 variant routes. As well as being a great source of inspiration for day trips, the connectedness of many of the routes offers innumerable possibilities for creating unique and varied multi-day adventures.

The new, sixth edition of *Scottish Hill Tracks* retains the same structure and purpose as Smith's original book. However, the descriptions in the new edition are much more detailed, thanks to recent surveys of all the routes by a fantastic team of 130 volunteers. The book is enhanced by dozens of stunning photos taken by our volunteers, and a new set of maps by the Scottish Mountaineering Press which combine digital cartography with watercolour artwork. Each route description has a header with crucial route information and links to our Heritage Paths website for historical information.

Scottish Hill Tracks is an essential companion for walkers, runners, cyclists and equestrians who have a keen interest in Scotland's cultural heritage and for whom wide horizons, wild places and adventure beckon. It's available now in all good bookshops, outdoor shops and from scotways.com 



“The book includes detailed descriptions of all the routes, amounting to 7,600km in length, plus a further 175 variant routes.”



WE'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH

The 25 regional overview maps in *Scottish Hill Tracks* show how many of the routes connect with each other.

Anna Ciapska had used the fifth edition to plan routes for the TGO Challenge and she volunteered when she heard we were looking for help surveying routes for the sixth edition. She managed to survey two routes during a TGO Challenge, then later planned an independent, unsupported long-distance journey of 170km from Corrou Station to Braemore in Wester Ross, chaining together eight *Scottish Hill Tracks* routes that needed to be surveyed. In the end, circumstances caused her to split the journey into several chunks of a few days each, between points with public transport. En route she battled heatwaves, thunderstorms, invisible paths, locked gates and plentiful midges and other biting beasts, all par for the course for a Scottish summer of course – but she was rewarded by stunning vistas, solitude and the satisfaction of covering a long route through the hills.

If *Scottish Hill Tracks* has helped you to plan your own long-distance adventure, we'd love to hear about it! Share it with ScotWays at info@scotways.com or use the hashtag #ScottishHillTracks on social media.

ABOUT SCOTWAYS

Founded in 1845, the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays) is an independent charity which upholds and promotes public access rights in Scotland. We are widely recognised as experts in the law and practice of access and we advise on access problems, provide information and training, and maintain Scotland's Catalogue of Rights of Way and thousands of signposts. Membership is open to all who support public access rights and we rely on donations from the public to fund our work.

COTSWOLD OUTDOOR X MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND



WHEN TO REPLACE YOUR WATERPROOF JACKET

Cotswold Outdoor has shared with us a guide as to when you should wash, reproof, repair or replace your waterproof jacket

A waterproof jacket is an outdoor staple, so you must ensure that your jacket stays effective at keeping water out all year round. If you notice your waterproof coat's performance is compromised, it may be time to reproof, repair or replace it to ensure you're protected and safe from the elements for the many adventures yet to come.

When should I wash my waterproof jacket?

If your waterproof jacket isn't performing as well as it used to, the first thing you should try is washing it according to the label instructions. Over time, environmental pollutants, mud and general dirt will coat the inside and outside of your jacket, resulting in poor breathability and waterproof functioning. Try washing your waterproof coat according to the label instructions and follow our waterproof care guide on the Cotswold Outdoor website. We also offer an incredible selection of performance and technical cleaners specially designed for use on waterproof clothing.

When should I reproof my waterproof jacket?

Most technical waterproof jackets are treated with a durable water repellent (DWR) finish. This treatment is applied to the jacket's exterior and keeps the outer fabric from allowing moisture to enter. A working DWR finish will cause water droplets to bead and roll off. However, abrasion from rucksack straps, heavy usage, dirt and pollutants all unfortunately help to degrade DWR finishes over time.

How often you need to reproof a jacket depends on how much you use it and the activities and conditions you use



it in. As well as feeling unpleasant against the skin, a poorly functioning DWR finish can lead to condensation on the inner lining. So if your jacket clings, sags, or you find water sinking into the outer fabric, it's time to reproof your jacket.

If you wear your waterproof coat frequently in all weather, we recommend reproofing every three to four months. However, if you wear your waterproof jacket less regularly or are out in less extreme weather, we recommend reproofing your waterproof coat every six months.

For help on reproofing your waterproofs, check our waterproof care guide online for more advice, or shop our incredible selection of reproofing products specially designed for use on technical waterproof clothing.

How can I repair my waterproof jacket?

If your waterproof is ripped or has holes in the fabric, repairing it can restore its functioning. At Cotswold Outdoor, we're on a mission to keep outdoor clothing and kit out of landfill. That's why we have our very own repair and care service.

We believe the most sustainable product is the product you already own. That's why we want to do what's right for the environment, and prolonging a garment's lifespan helps to preserve our planet's resources, reduces chemical pollution and saves unnecessary carbon emissions. Find out more on our website at [cotswoldoutdoor.com](https://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com)

If your waterproof is ripped or has small holes in the fabric, repairing it with a repair patch at home can help restore its functioning. We recommend using a Patagonia worn wear or Gore-Tex patch. These patches are easy to use: simply fix a patch to the garment via an adhesive layer on the back of the patch. No sewing needed!

When should I replace my waterproof jacket?

Waterproof jackets do have their limits. If you've tried washing, reproofing and repairing your waterproof jacket and found none of these have restored your coat, then it's probably time to replace it.

Luckily, at Cotswold Outdoor, we have an incredible range of the best outdoor performance waterproof jackets on the market. From the best men's waterproof jackets for the morning dog walk to the best women's waterproof jackets for mountaineering, shop from the best brands in one place with our fantastic waterproof jacket selection, in-store or online at [cotswoldoutdoor.com](https://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com)

If you still need more help, visit us in-store for expert advice on the best waterproof jacket for your adventures.

Remember, if you're a member of Mountaineering Scotland, you can receive 15% off at Cotswold Outdoor, Runners Need and Snow + Rock. Please visit www.mountaineering.scot/members/members-benefits to find out more.

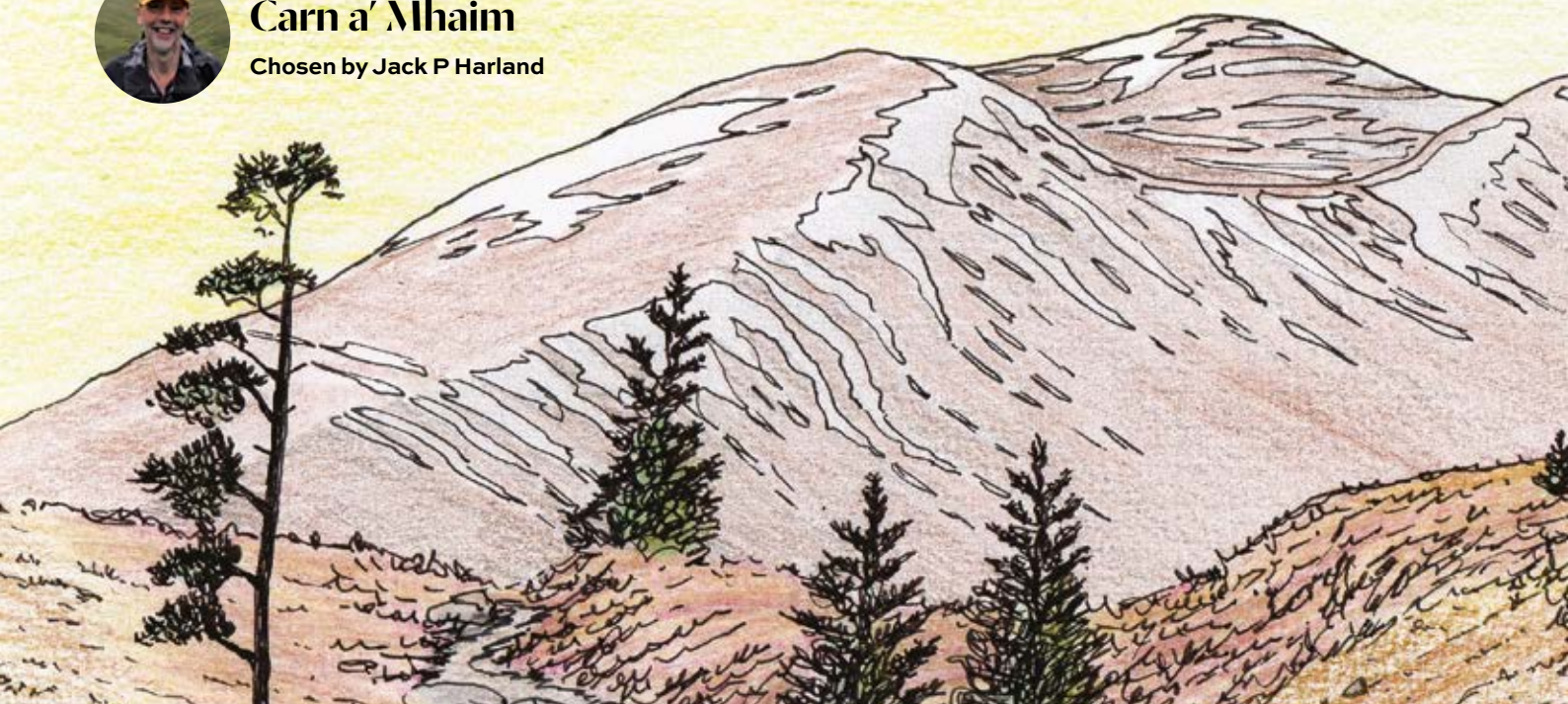
In our regular hillwalking feature, author Jack P Harland shares some of his favourite tales, hand-drawn maps and illustrations from his popular *Highland Journal* series.

Midwinter in the Cairngorms



Carn a' Mhaim

Chosen by Jack P Harland



James slowed his car beyond Inverey to allow a group of hinds, pale ghosts in the headlights, to step off the road. They were not in a hurry. A little further on a young stag pranced along in front of us before tossing back his head and jumping up the bank.

As the dawn light seeped into the sky, we lifted the bikes out of the car and attached ice axes to the rucksacks. Morag arrived in a flap, "My car spun right around on ice coming down from Glen Shee."

"Are you alright?" I asked.

"It gets worse," she replied, "I dislocated my jaw eating my breakfast croissant."

"Are you in pain?"

"I was, but it went back with a click."

We were soon cycling up Glen Lui, James setting a fast pace on his old bike. At one point, despite being last and struggling to keep up, I had to stop to look properly at the mountain we planned to climb, Càrn a' Mhàim (va-eem). It rose up, directly ahead, a colossal dark mass, streaked with brilliant white snow and ice. The sky was deep pink, with the single cumulus cloud even deeper pink. It was going to be a fine day.

The bikes were left at Derry Lodge and we enjoyed a pleasant walk through the Scots pines of Glen Luibeg. The sky was now pale blue, a perfect backdrop for the dark green crowns of the trees. Once over the Luibeg Bridge we followed the track for less than a kilometre before branching

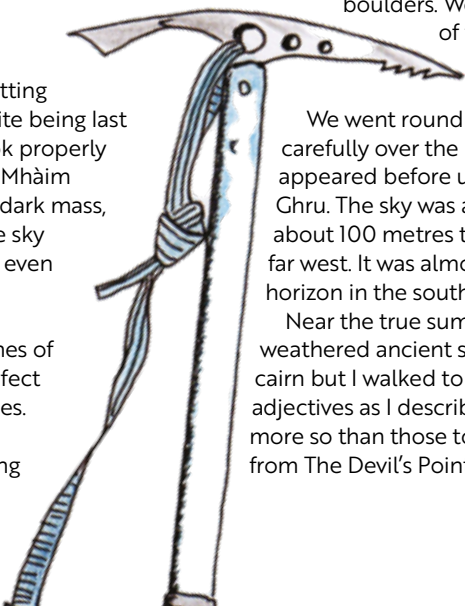
off to the right along a narrow but well-made path. This climbed steeply up the blunt south-eastern end of Càrn a' Mhàim.

There was not much conversation as we laboured up a demanding gradient, climbing over 300 metres. Again, James set a cracking pace. My heart was pounding and my knees were weak as we came up onto the crest of the ridge. Up there it was well below 0°C and the extensive snow patches were frozen as hard as rock; we tried to pick our way over the granite boulders to avoid crossing them.

I needed to sit down beneath the bare granite of the mountain's first summit, a massive tor which had fallen apart in a chaos of boulders. We broached our lunch boxes, my chunks of fruitcake giving me a much-needed energy boost. I was soon on my feet again with my similarly revived companions.

We went round the west side of this first summit, walking carefully over the icy boulders. The pyramid of The Devil's Point appeared before us and then the wide panorama of the Lairig Ghru. The sky was a thin ice blue, with a white blanket of cloud about 100 metres thick sitting above the mountaintops in the far west. It was almost midday but the copper sun was near the horizon in the south.

Near the true summit were curious granite standing stones, like weathered ancient sculptures. James and Morag sat down at the cairn but I walked to each point of the compass, running out of adjectives as I described the views. All were spectacular but none more so than those to the north and west. My gaze moved north from The Devil's Point to Cairn Toul, Sgor an Lochain Uaine and





then to the scalloped corries of Braeriach. I remembered sitting on the cliff edge above one of these corries on a warm summer day, my boots in the remains of the winter's snow cornice. My son, Tom, had pointed out Càrn a' Mhàim, remarking that it looked like a great ridge walk. I had agreed and added that the views would be first-rate on a fine day. Eight and a half years later, here I was to discover how true those observations had been.

A bitter wind sprang up out of nowhere, giving a wind chill so severe that my camera battery packed in. I skidded back to the others and we agreed to drop down to the lee of the boulder crown of this south-east top to eat lunch.

Our high platform was a perfect spot, with a view that included Beinn a' Ghhlò in the south-west and Lochnagar in the south-east. We were alone in this beautiful place and had barely seen a living thing since leaving the Linn o' Dee. There was a trace of warmth from the low sun, our shadows were long on the mountainside and all was serene.

Morag broke the silence to tell us that there had been an intruder in her big old house in the Borders.

"I keep an ice axe by my bed for that very reason," remarked James.

"Intruders would be making a big mistake entering your house."

"Yes," he agreed, adding, "and I keep a Malacca cane by my front door."

"Have you ever used it?" I asked.

"Only once," he replied, "when I chased a persistent Liberal Democrat candidate down my path."


As I have said, James set a demanding pace in the morning. As no one had died as a result, which would have thrown our timings,

we were well ahead of schedule. We could therefore afford to take our time on the return to Derry Lodge and properly enjoy this delightful day. We stood for a while on the Luibeg Bridge, watching the burn rush around boulders the size of cars. A little later, we drank tea under the twisted branches of venerable Scots pines.

All too soon we were back on the bikes and James was way ahead as usual. Where the track runs alongside the Lui Water there was a pool of fresh blood. "It must have been a walker with a Liberal Democrat badge," I remarked. Morag considered this for a moment then observed that there was no body. "James would have had time to tip a body in the water," I replied. When we caught up with him he was on the bridge, looking down into the water, perhaps to check on the progress of the corpse. "Why are you looking at my ice axe?" he asked.

"I'm just checking for blood."

"Oh," he said, "that's alright then."

We said goodbye to Morag and then drove down Deeside under a deep pink sky as the light began to fade. The winter darkness was cheered up by the twinkling Christmas decorations of houses near the road. Ballater was ablaze with fairy lights. We stopped there to have tea with Sheena. I had left my change of clothing and shoes in my car and was concerned about arriving in boots and a shirt that would have made its own way into the washing machine should I have peeled it off. "Don't worry," said James, "she's horsey so she won't mind." She did not mind, so she said, and we thawed out as we enjoyed her company and drank mugs of tea in her cosy sitting room. 

Adapted from a chapter in *Highland Journal, 2 In My Stride*, published by Troubador. Available to buy from the Mountaineering Scotland website, with all profits kindly going to the *It's Up to Us* campaign: www.mountaineeringScotland.simpleshop.com

About the author: Jack P Harland

Jack grew up in Northumberland and studied geography at the University of Dundee, where he met his wife. He went on to study geology at St Andrews and taught both his subjects, worked on national projects and with the BBC. After a few years working in the arts, he returned to teaching, becoming a Head Teacher in Aberdeen.

Now retired and living in Peebles, he is kept busy by his son, three daughters and seven grandchildren and enjoys writing, drawing, painting and making maps, finding inspiration in his beloved Highlands. It is never long before he is off roaming the hills again and he climbed his final Munro in 2015. His three books in the *Highland Journal* series, published by Troubador, have been a great success. Visit www.troubador.co.uk to find out more.

Club Spot

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

WORDS: SUSAN JENSEN



The Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) was formed in 1889 after WW Naismith wrote a letter to the *Glasgow Herald* inviting others of similar interest to start a club. The SMC was the second mountaineering club to form in Scotland, pipped to the post by the Cairngorm Club, which had been inaugurated a couple of years earlier.

The SMC's beginnings, until after the Second World War, were primarily the adventures of the professional classes. As an example, one of the founder members was William Inglis Clark, the first person in Edinburgh to own a motor-car. These were people with the time and money to have gained substantial mountaineering experience in Scotland and the Alps. The application form still reflects a high standard of summer and winter climbing competence, although that level is much more accessible these days, with modern equipment and greater transport options. Application for membership requires experience leading summer multipitch up to VS and winter to IV,4, plus a large number of Munros in both summer and winter.

Above: 2023 President's walk

The standards are intended to bring like-minded climbers together.

One reason for joining is still primarily to be part of the strong climbing community and the developing history of Scottish climbing and mountaineering; another reason is to have easier access to the Club's five huts across Scotland – in Glencoe, the Cairngorms, Torridon, the north-west

Below: 1906 Easter Clachaig. Picture courtesy of SMC photo archive



“Members have been on and continue to organise expeditions to mountains from Antarctica to Greenland, from Papua New Guinea to the Chinese Karakoram.”

and especially the Charles Inglis Clark (CIC) Hut on Ben Nevis, although the SMC also makes these available to all other clubs. Joining the SMC is often considered recognition of having reached a particular level of skill as well as inclusion in a community with whom you always find common ground for conversation over a pint, at the annual dinner or on a walk-in. Members have generally been climbing in parts of the world that you didn't know held things to climb on, as well as those you did; everyone is genuinely interested in hearing what other climbers have been up to. Members have been on and continue to organise expeditions to mountains from Antarctica to Greenland, from Papua New Guinea to the Chinese Karakoram. Having access to this knowledge, anecdotes and photographs is highly valued by Club members.

The publication of the annual *SMC Journal* by the Club, and production of climbers' and hillwalkers' guides by the Scottish Mountaineering Press (on behalf of the Club), are manifestations of that knowledge. Profits from activities of the Press go back into the Scottish mountaineering community via the Scottish Mountaineering Trust (www.thesmt.org.uk). One of the SMC's constitutional objectives is to maintain the definitive list of Scottish climbing routes; this has recently manifested in an online routes database (www.routes.smc.org.uk) for both submission and extraction of route information by



Above: Rock climbing at Reiff. Photo Ian Taylor

members and the public. The SMC also maintains the list of Compleators of Munros and other hills (www.smc.org.uk/hills/compleators); did you know that more people have summited Everest than completed a round of Munros? We know what a challenge is. All four people who have done a winter round of Munros in one season were SMC members, including the only female: Anna Wells.

The Club also has an extensive library and an archive of objects like Harold Raeburn's ice axe and a photo archive from members going back to the 1890s; both archives are often plumbed by members and other mountaineering writers for material for books, historical articles or museum exhibits. The archives have been used for publications such as the award-winning book *The Fox of Glen Coe, memoirs of Hamish MacInnes* published by the Scottish Mountaineering Press.

Continued overleaf ▶





From previous page ►

A remarkably high percentage of the early activists for developing climbs in Scotland's mountains and crags were SMC members: WH Murray, Jimmy Marshall, Tom Patey and Robin Smith, for example. More recently, the late Andy Nisbet and current pioneers Uisdean Hawthorn, Mike Barnard, Neil Adams and Iain Small are also SMC members. Notably absent from this very short list are the pioneering women climbers who were also out on the crags and mountains. The wife of WI Clark (of motor-car mention earlier), Jane Inglis Clark, was a founder member and the first president of the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club, formed in 1908. It would be interesting to know the domestic conversations at the Inglis Clark household about the demographics of SMC membership around that time; but then, since the Club was already a small slice of society, perhaps excluding women was just seen as natural, in spite of the fact that the founding men were climbing with these women.

After the Second World War, the working classes were making themselves very well known on the crags and mountains, with more mountaineering clubs popping up to serve as local hubs for climbing partners. Gradually the demographic of the SMC, as a national club, widened as more climbers were meeting the application standards and were interested in joining, though the Club is aware that what is now being laid down as history isn't

“Notably absent from this very short list are the pioneering women climbers who were also out on the crags and mountains.”


Above: SMC-LSCC meet, Easter 1909. Picture courtesy of SMC photo archive

Above right: Jane Naismith on The Screen, ca 1989. Photo Chris Watkins

Below: Andy Munro eyeing up the next bit of Python. Photo Susan Jensen

representative of the current activity of climbers in Scotland. For a start, of the 500 or so members, only about 40 (about 7%) are women.

There are various initiatives afoot to rectify this lack of representation, acknowledging that it is a long path. Within the SMC is a small working group of women members, including the first two to join in 1991 after the rule excluding women was deleted (following a few AGMs with heated debate) in 1990. The objectives of this group are a) with the anecdotal evidence that winter climbing to sufficient standard is a major barrier, create environments where women can push their winter climbing grades with other like-minded women and b) understand what other barriers may be deterring applications from women and to demolish them as far as possible. If you, dear reader, are a woman climber who is interested in the SMC, contact Oonagh for a chat at women@smc.org.uk.

For everyone else, you can say hello or ask questions via the SMC's website at www.smc.org.uk/club/contact_us 



Paul Russell: Senior Team Leader for Tayside Mountain Rescue
Team and Training Officer at Scottish Mountain Rescue

MAKING THE MOST OF LATE AUTUMN ADVENTURES



During autumn in the Scottish mountains the weather and terrain undergo significant changes, which can present unique challenges for hillwalkers and mountaineers.

Although mountain rescue teams are busy throughout the year, with the summer months being the busiest, there is certainly a 'spike' in the autumn. Tayside Mountain Rescue Team had a record year in 2023, completing 95 call-outs, with 25% of those call outs coming in the autumn months.

Daylight rapidly decreases in autumn, especially after the clocks change, so plan your walks to ensure you have ample time to complete them in daylight.

Check sunrise and sunset times and allow extra time for unexpected delays. Begin your walks as early as possible to maximise daylight hours. This is especially important for longer or more challenging routes. Let someone know your plans, including your route and estimated return time. This is especially important as daylight decreases.

Before setting out, check the local weather forecasts and be prepared to alter your plans if conditions are poor. Autumn weather in Scotland can be unpredictable. Be ready for sudden changes, including heavy rain, strong winds, and lower temperatures.

There are excellent resources available, but two common weather websites are www.metoffice.gov.uk and www.mwis.org.uk 

“Tayside Mountain Rescue Team had a record year in 2023, completing 95 call-outs”

Tips for autumn adventures

- Low clouds, mist and early dusk can reduce visibility. We would always recommend a map and a compass, and GPS devices to navigate. You also need to know how to use them, be it the traditional methods or technology. It's also helpful to be familiar with your route and have a backup plan.
- Always let someone know your planned route and expected return time. In case of an emergency, this information will be crucial. Have a means of communication, such as a fully charged mobile phone or a satellite unit such as a Garmin inReach or SPOT. Inform someone of your plans and expected return time.
- Ensure your equipment, such as maps, compasses, and safety gear, is in good working order. Autumn conditions can be harsher, so having reliable gear is essential. Always have a reliable headtorch or handtorch with extra batteries in case you end up walking after dark. A substantial amount of call-outs is due to the lack of equipment.
- Wear moisture-wicking base layers, insulating mid-layers, and a waterproof, windproof outer layer. Layers allow you to adjust your clothing based on the changing weather and your activity level.
- Carry essentials like a first aid kit, a whistle, a map, a compass, and a fully charged mobile phone. An emergency bivvy bag or survival blanket is also useful.
- Autumn walks can be more strenuous due to the weather and changing daylight. Choose routes that match your fitness level and experience.
- Drink plenty of water and bring snacks to keep your energy up. Walking in cooler weather can still be dehydrating, and you'll need fuel for the physical activity.
- If you do get into difficulty, call 999, ask for the police, then mountain rescue.

Your View

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

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 to share here, including the winning image from **Matt Dent and son Laurence**, who will receive a SIGG Gemstone Food Box (RRP: £33.99).

To be in with a chance of winning 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 2MB in size) to info@mountaineering.scot before the 1 April 2025. 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.

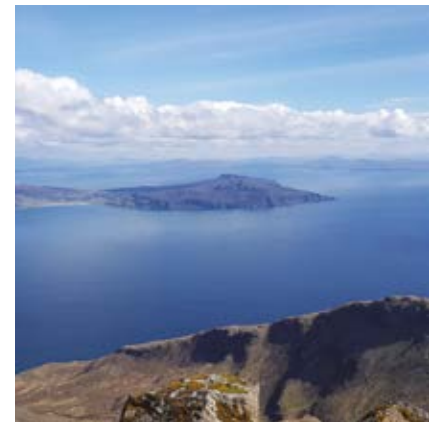
SIGG 



Michael Rolls captured this fantastic shot from Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich in August, looking towards Loch Cuaich as the cloud began to lift.



Sabrina Lecam shared this photo of her favourite bothy exploring trip, taken at the Tomslieibhe Bothy on the Isle of Mull, earlier this year.



A stunning view towards Eigg from the summit of Askival on Rum, submitted by **Willie Dunbar**, taken on a trip to the island with his hillwalking club, Aberdeen & Shire – HSHC.

Bluebells in bloom in Ballachulish! Taken in late spring 2024 by member **Debbie Riley**.





Winner

Winner **Matt Dent** took this photo of his son, **Laurence** (aged 11) topping out on Sgurr Mor, after a round of the eastern Fannichs and camp below An Coileachan at Loch Gorm.



John Kay took this picture of a fine summer's day on the Aonach Eagach Ridge, noting it had been around 45 years since his last visit!



In memory of Basil, who summited Gleouraich, his 100th Munro with **Keith Linstead**, on 1 June 2024.



Iain Young snapped this great shot of Kenny Brookman enjoying the sunshine after an ascent of The Nose of the Fhìdhleir, in the Coigach mountains.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR OLD HILLS:

#1 MULLACH COIRE AN IUBHA

BY DAVID JARMAN

Once upon an innocent time, there was a series in this magazine called *New Twists for Old Hills*, much loved by a few. It took delight in going off-piste, in round the back, where normal hillgoers rarely tread. Although we gave several club shows on them, we only ever met one person who had actually tried a suggested route. So, once we had covered every area in Munro's tables, we retired gracefully.

Ageing rock-fondlers returning to the stage are never a pretty sight, especially when their comeback is in anger. For the first in this new series is not a celebration of little-known wild delights, but an outraged lament at an unfolding onslaught on our hill-lochs and their girdling Munros from Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) schemes – a desecration on a scale unprecedented since the Big Dams era.

The proposed 'Earba' PSH scheme – which might already be approved by the time this appears – is ginormous, 1800 MW compared with our only existing PSH at Cruachan, 440 MW. It exceeds the only other mega-scheme, Coire Glas (1300 MW), long approved and finally under way above Loch Lochy. Although that perforates a Lochy Munro, it doesn't alter Loch Lochy, and its new upper reservoir occupies a bleak



Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain, with the dam and raised shoreline (with daily drawdown zone in brown), and the permanent access track. Photo below from Carn Dearg by Nick Kempe

trough seen by few, with access roads cutting no pony-paths or skylines. Mullach Coire an Iubhair won't be so lucky...

Mullach Coire an Iubhair

First up, where is Mullach Coire an Iubhair? It is the proper name for one of the numerous Geal Charns, now actually on the 25k map, one of the Ardverkie Three. The standard 'round' is a circuit from Luiblea at the foot of Loch Laggan. It is chiefly about conquering the brutish sprawl of Beinn a' Chlachair, with the Mullach hardly noticed as a deviation on the way to the bonus pimple of Creag Pitridh and the trudge back out. The Mullach deserves better, with its lovely corries and old pony paths – see them now, before the 'dozers move in and destroy them.

Lochan na h-Earba

It was almost unknown to us until this May, and now rather wishing it had stayed that way. The west end is a popular camping spot, a rare asset in this range. We bike up from Luiblea and along to the remarkable green fan-delta of Am Magh which divides this well-hidden ribbon loch. For our evening stroll, one of the lovely enclosing Binneins. And for our repose, by the shore as the moon arced high above our tent, eventually snipe drummed – one of just three nesting pairs here.

All this will be drowned when the loch is raised 20 metres as the base reservoir for a massive PSH scheme. With the stony shore oscillating daily, snipe will not drum here again.

Mullach Coire an Iubhair awaits – from Binnein Shios across Lochan na h-Earba, Binnein Shuas on the right, Creag Pitridh is the pimple. The pony path heads up from the green camping grounds of Am Magh, which will entirely disappear.



Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) schemes in our hills

David Black, Access & Conservation Officer, Mountaineering Scotland

This need for large hydro dams to balance the variability of wind power generation is a difficult issue for many people. What scale and extent of development is required and what mitigation would be acceptable? And where would such development be acceptable to hill-goers and local communities and where not?

At the end of last year our members were consulted on their opinion on the Earba scheme alone. Those who responded were equally split in opinion: 43% in favour, 44% against it, with 13% unable to bring themselves to decide one way or the other.

Good reasons were put forward for why the Earba scheme was essential, it's in the national interest; and for why it should not go ahead, the environmental impacts here outweighing the purported benefits.

A notable section of opinion is conflicted by this proposal, seeing the national need for this type of project, but equally concerned with ecological and visual impacts, and loss of land with wild qualities – once gone, long gone.

It becomes clear that a strategic overview is needed, and not left merely to market forces and financial interests to propose where and how many. Our national planning system is reactive in this respect and can only assess what comes forward. Approval may have to be given to projects that would best serve national interests if designed differently or placed elsewhere.

A national conversation needs to be had to balance the competing interests of power generation, economic return and the environmental impacts on fragile and vanishing resources.

We call on the Scottish Government to facilitate this and plan how many large concrete and rock dams are needed to respond to the loading of wind power on the electricity grid, and where are they best placed to be effective and to limit disturbance to well-loved mountain landscapes.



1:50,000 map with Ardverikie Munros and proposed dams – reservoir extents and access roads not shown. ©Crown copyright 2024 Ordnance Survey. Media 065/24

Coire an Iubhair and its pony-path

From Am Magh, an old made path struggles up a gullied burn, until it climbs onto the moor and angles into the saddle north of the Mullach, making light of the ascent. Here it crosses over into Pattack, but an obscure branch cuts behind the brow and then traverses the corrie wall, a neat delight of skilful pick-and-shovel work. This May – as once before – the cut path slanting out on to the plateau is barred by a long remnant snowpatch. Last time, we chickened up the north shoulder; this time, we kick up the one weak point – and move off the entire Ardverikie herd, 165 hinds and calves, from their cooling promenade.

This is the way to appreciate the Mullach. For now.

Loch a' Bhealach Leamhain and its pony-path

Another unsung name, scarcely glimpsed from The Round, but the largest and finest corrie lochan in the Ben Alder massif, a shapely pearl attested by many an online photo. And one of the finest pony-paths in the Highlands exploits a natural shelf that splits its backing crags, well worth the wee detour, with a branch zigzagging up onto Chlachair to turn the awkward nose.

Savour it while you may, for the lochan will double in size when a massive dam is thrown out before it, conspicuous from the far Drumochters, and lose all its beauty as it empties through the day. Permanent industrial-scale tracks will cross the col 800 metres up, scarring the skyline and destroying that stunning path.

Drowned paths and campgrounds

While the Mullach will have a tunnel under its col, Creag Pitridh will be thoroughly perforated, with an industrial roadway zigzagging the flank the Ardverikie

Round descends, and a power station on its Earba shore.

And if you drill down into the barrow-loads of documentation, there lurks a section listing the 'Options' from which this scheme was composed. One would lengthen Lochan na h-Earba, drowning even the west-end campgrounds. That would increase its capacity to include another Option – damming our secluded Coire an Iubhair to create an artificial hill loch and drowning our miraculous path. The developers do not deny that these options may well be added in later, to make the initial scheme more viable, in the usual foot-in-door way.

New challenges for old hills #10, #20...#50?

We undoubtedly need some PSH schemes to balance the grave 'intermittency' problems posed by over-reliance on wind, water, or sun. Other means of storage – hydrogen, battery farms – are contentious too. Managing domestic power use and storage is helpful but cannot possibly cope with exponentially growing demand from datacentres, artificial intelligence (AI) (chatbots and all), cryptocurrency, and who-knows-what energy guzzlers will leap up next.

An energy supply and transmission expert, Norman McNab, says scores of big PSH schemes will be needed (see his recent piece in Wild Land News). That means no corrie in the Highlands is safe – they have all already been scanned by developers for their energy potential, and for how easily they can link into the Grid – so it seems this New Challenges series, sadly, has a long way to go... [SH](#)

You can find the full version of this story on Parkswatch Scotland website, visit: parkswatchscotland.co.uk

Book reviews

Doubling Back: Paths Trodden in Memory

Linda Cracknell

SARABAND RRP: £9.99

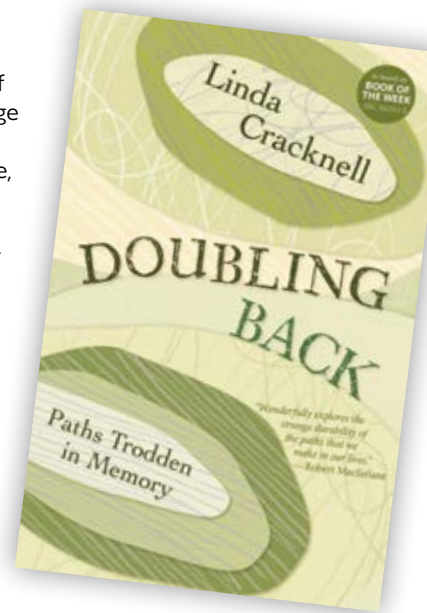
Linda Cracknell's *Doubling Back* is a fascinating exploration of memory, place and the link between our personal history with the landscapes we inhabit. In this new edition, which includes a new route through Scotland's Flow Country, Cracknell takes readers on a journey as she revisits familiar landscapes, blending her personal history with the natural world around her.

A key theme in *Doubling Back* is the way memory and place intertwine. As she revisits each journey, Cracknell uncovers the

emotions they hold – moments of happiness, sadness and the passage of time. Each piece reflects her deep connection to the landscape, whether she's recalling her childhood in the Highlands or her life in more urban areas or further afield, and serves as a meditation on the relationship between human experience and the environments that shape it.

Cracknell's writing style creates a voice that is both engaging and approachable. Each piece stands on its own, yet together they form a powerful thread about the value of returning to our roots and understanding how place shapes who we are, prompting us to think about our own connections with our special places.

Helen Gestwicki



WILD: Climbing all of Scotland's Munros in a Single Winter

Kevin Woods

POSTHOLE PUBLISHING: £35.00

What could be better than reading about someone else's suffering from the comfort of your armchair? *Wild* is the story of Kevin's winter Munro round, we are out with him in all weathers following the literal and metaphorical ups and downs plus the logistical and physical challenges he faced every day.

It is a compelling read, written with

enthusiasm, a big glossy hardback with the photos clearly showing how tough the walk was.

It is evident that the weather dictated the journey with endless rain and storms and we share moments of triumph when Kevin has pushed himself to the limit.

Anne Butler

Kevin Woods will be giving a special talk on Mountain Connections at this year's Mountaineering Scotland AGM, taking place on Saturday 23 November at Birnam Arts, near Dunkeld. His talk will explore the links between hillwalking, climbing and connection to the landscape through the lens of film and music. Find out more and register for the AGM by visiting www.mountaineering.scot



Scottish Hill Tracks (Sixth Edition)

ScotWays

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING PRESS, RRP: £25.00

Scottish Hill Tracks is an essential guide for anyone keen to explore Scotland's historic paths and routes. This sixth edition covers 350 carefully detailed tracks spanning the country, from the Borders to Caithness and the surrounding islands, making it an invaluable resource for walkers, cyclists, riders and runners.

The book offers an in-depth exploration of Scotland's diverse landscapes, including farmland, forest, moorland, dramatic coastlines, high plateaux and glaciated glens. Notably, this edition includes six new routes in the Western Isles, expanding the already extensive network to more than 7,600km of paths and 194,000m of ascent.



Many of the routes are designated Heritage Paths, following the historic footsteps of Roman soldiers, medieval pilgrims and cattle drovers, and providing a deep connection to Scotland's cultural heritage. With all routes fully resurveyed, the book ensures precise and up-to-date information, making it a must-have for outdoor enthusiasts.

Accompanied by an inspiring foreword from Paul Murton, *Scottish Hill Tracks* invites readers to experience the freedom and adventure of Scotland's great outdoors, offering a unique opportunity to connect with the land and its rich history.

Fiona McNicol

NEW RELEASE

SMC Journal 2024

The Scottish Mountaineering Club

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING TRUST, RRP: £19.95

The latest *SMC Journal* is now available to order. This edition features an array of compelling stories and achievements from the club members. James Milton's "Swinging High" recounts the challenging first winter ascent of Trapeze on Aonach Dubh, described by his partner as the toughest climb they've faced. Mitch Millar's solo venture on the Eiger's Nordwand, after his companions turned back, is a testament to the enduring spirit of exploration. Closer to home, Mike Watson and his team break new ground with Steeple, now a classic E2 climb on the Shelter Stone Crag.

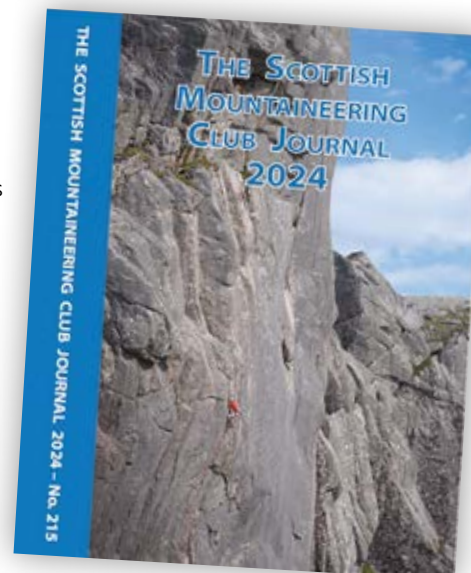
In a more reflective piece, Stephen Reid's "Far from

Nowhere" offers an illustrated account of a winter walk through the Galloway hills. Kenny Brookman shares his journey across 54 Scottish island high points, while Simon Richardson introduces Catherine Destivelle to the allure of Ben Nevis, and Bob Reid and Ken Crocket review their favourite VS rock climbs.

This issue also documents more than 800 new climbs and celebrates completed rounds of Munros, Tops, Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds. Regular features include a summary of the winter climbing season and reviews of 16 recent books, including the Raeburn biography.

All profits from the sales of SMC guidebooks go to fund the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

To order your copy, contact David Broadhead: 17 Drumdyre Road, Dingwall IV15 9RW or email davidbroadhead@btinternet.com



Gear Review

SPONSORED CONTENT



One piece of exceptional engineering

New from DMM for winter 2024/25 is its top-end ice tool, the Cortex. A standout feature is the eye-catching one-piece exoskeleton. The I-Beam shaft and handle are CNC milled from a single aluminium billet, removing unnecessary metal, to achieve an optimal strength-to-weight ratio while delivering a perfectly balanced swing. The upper and lower handles have a textured polymer over moulding for grip and insulation.

Utilising a confidence inspiring fully T-rated modular pick system, you can choose from an Ice Pick, Ice Tech Pick, or a burly dry tooling pick. The Cortex comes with removable pick-weights, a Micro Hammer and the Ice Tech Pick as standard. Alternatively, you can fit a Compact Hammer or Adze, sold separately. The handle has an attachment point that accommodates 5mm cord for clipping leashes such as the Revo XSRE.

DMM athlete, Brette Harrington, validating the ice tools last winter, had this to say: "I've been super impressed by its fluid swing, sharp bite, comfortable handle and basically everything about it. If anyone is curious to try out a new tool, I highly recommend it."

RRP £750/PAIR

WWW.DMMWALES.COM

Pawfect gift for your pet: Mountaineering Scotland dog bandanas!

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Whether you're treating your own furry companion or looking for the perfect gift for fellow dog-loving hikers, these bandanas are a must-have. Grab yours today for just £8.50 at mountaineeringscotland.simpleshop.com





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