

SECTION 8:

“Catalogue Aria ”: Munros, Scotland And Lists - To 2013



It's very easy to get swept into the game of hill lists! In “The Gwydyr 18” magazine we can actually witness Lin Jensen slipping over the line as she reviews her 2001 walking year...

“Mileage was down this year...however a new god reared its head! Not distances covered or heights climbed but the number of tops and summits over 2,000' achieved. This growing obsession is still in its infancy according to Dave Gray who now has honoured me with the title of 'baggerette'...”

These lists – provided one doesn't get *too* obsessed – can be great fun. They give a goal, and also tempt one away from the familiar towards the unknown and untrodden. In Britain's hill lists Scotland is leader: with Munros, Corbetts, Grahams, and Donalds; south of the border we have Nuttalls and Wainwrights. Given that balance, these next two sections will hang a lot of other Scots Club activity on the hill list line.

Top of the shop, *Munros*, an objective/subjective list of Summits (282) and subsidiary Tops (227) over 3,000'. Pete Mann used to dust off his best Scots accent to growl at me “You're nae doin' the Munros unless you're doin' the Tops!” but most people find 282 hills enough!

In 1999 we had one Club Munroist, Melinda Walker, who'd completed them before she joined. I finished in July 2000 on Ben Cruachan, together with old friends and fellow finishers Hazel and Al Rogers, with Bob Gwynne with whom I'd started off in 1980, five others from their family, and from the Club Helen Beddows, Neil Harris, John Huxley and Christine Smyth. I wrote in “The Gwydyr 17” magazine:

“It was amnesiac city as we tallied the forgotten gear – Chris' mug, Bob's spare trousers, Helen's overtrousers, my food and for a horrible minute Janet's car keys. At the base of the mountain we were joined by Neil Harris who'd just accomplished what was surely the only Porsche based UK open roadside bivvy in 2000. As Neil emptied his Louis Vuitton boot bag the day took on extra dimensions. Out tumbled Sue's size 3 boots! A soaking loomed.”

We all got totally soaked anyway as it rained all day, but we saw an eagle, did our hills and had fizz, and ate a fine meal later in the hotel.

Subsequent Club aspirant Munroists have included Geoff Brierley, Adrian Dolan, Pete Mann, John Simpson, and of course Teresa Peddie and Bryn Roberts (the Younger) who finished in May 2019 after a splendid campaign.

Our many Scots trips have helped along these efforts – and other list ambitions - over our period. The other lists being: *Corbetts* (an objective list of 221 summits of 2,500'-2,999' with 500' reascent all round) and *Grahams* (2,000-2,499' summits with 150m reascent). Let's look at a few Scots highlights.

Before we plunge too far into baggerism, its worth saying that coastal and lower level walking in Scotland is as, and sometimes, more rewarding than summits. Lin Jensen reminded me of our trip to Durness in May 2003. Not only did we do the magnificent Cape Wrath-Sandwood Bay trek, but we also – having spent two hours placing cars

– did a big cross country route on stalkers’ paths. Across Reay Forest, from Achray south of Arkle to Glen Golly south of Loch Hope. The group was Helen Brady, Reg Cromer, Bryan Gilbert, me, Lin and Paul Jensen and Ross Mc Graw. We got views of all the far NW summits. Unexpectedly, in the Tory politician Alan Clark’s diary there is a fine account of a similar “great walk” in this area, and his comment could sum up our day: “a wonderful taste of the remote glens”.



Andy Williams, Reg Cromer, Helen Brady, Bryan Gilbert and Sarah Williams at Poca Buidne

In May 2006 a group of us including the above team, less Ross but plus Andy and Sarah Williams were based in Gairloch. We did Slioch, which for my money is the best of the Munros. It was a superb day and my log says “views, views, views” – Torridon, Fisherfield and right up to and beyond Ullapool. By then I’d emerged as a Corbett bagger: in Flowerdale Forest Reg and I picked up Beinn an Eoin; on another day we ventured there again with a bigger party and we had a splendid fine day on Baosbheinn, walking in past the Poca Buidhe bothy.

For a few years afterwards, a good number of trips were focused on the Scottish islands which have superb hill and coastal walking, and climbing, and often get better weather than the mainland.

In May 2007 Reg Cromer, Mike Davies and I had a week in the Tarbert bunkhouse on Harris. We became the resident members, and (sipping continuous Cointreau) lorded it over the here today gone tomorrow cyclists who came through. Total highlight was the ascent of Clisham: one of the lady cyclists called Val Wray had come with us, saying “I hope you boys will wait for me”. She and Reg rushed off like bullets leaving us two behind. It chucked it down with hail on top but a lifetime moment was the clearance: far out to sea the stacks of St Kilda gleamed in the sun. I was also secretly bagging Grams at this time and we did a good number, the finest being elegant Tirga Mor.



Mike and Reg below Sron na Scorst, descending from Uisgnaval Mor on Harris



The Club surveys the Old Man of Hoy from the stack.

Reg ran a big Club trip the next year to Orkney where we stayed in three cottages. In good weather we did a mix of historic sightseeing and coastal walking. Highlights were the “Gloop Loop” on Mainland, and then another lifetime jobby – going across to Hoy and walking over St John’s Head with its huge cliffs, right opposite the Old Man of Hoy sea stack. On the ferry back at the end of the holiday, the whole ship made one massive Brocken Spectre against a wall of sea mist right by



The GMC on the “Gloop Loop”

More mountainous was Mull, visited in May 2011, again staying in cottages hired by Reg and enjoying great weather. We – David, Laura and Mark Barley, Christine Smyth and Sue Taylor did the Munro of Ben More, by the tourist path. A couple of days earlier the same party less Sue had allowed

me to claim the scalp of Corbett Dun Na Gaoithe, another day of eagles and fine views. A group also crossed the low tide channel to visit the island of Erraid, made famous in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Kidnapped"; and visited the strange white signal station built to flash messages to the lighthouse of Dubh Artach, built by his family.



Christine Smyth on Ben More



Mark Barley, Sue Taylor and Reg Cromer on Iona off Mull

Reg and I had a magical wildlife moment standing outside the house in the dark, listening to the calls of corncrakes all around.

We had a smaller trip in 2012. Five of us – Geoff Brierley, Reg Cromer, me, David Lane- Joynt and John Simpson, going to Torridon Youth Hostel. We had incredible conditions: solid sun. See section 11 for some more stories; for now we can highlight that between us we did all three end to end classic scramble ridges on Beinns Alligin, Eighe and Liathach. Way too much for me but I repeated the Munro of Maol Chearn Dearg with John and Geoff.

Arran is often called "Scotland in miniature" and we stayed in three houses right by the sea in Corrie in the May of

★ 2013, Chris Harris organised the meet. Allan McDonald gives its flavour in "Apr/May 2013 Newsletter":

[The first full day] saw two parties head to the hills in much cooler, cloudier weather. One party braved the Witches Step within the Sannox Horseshoe while the saner and majority headed for the highest peak on the island – Goat Fell.

The Sannox Horseshoe people (Geoff [Brierley], Pete [Mann], Kev [McEvoy], John [Simpson] and David [Lane-Joynt]) had a long, interesting and at times scary day negotiating / avoiding some tricky sections of the Witches Step, only returning late in the day after 'bailing' out of the final section due to the lateness of the day.

The remainder had a great day on Goat Fell where the scrambling sections proved easily avoidable to those that wished to do so. The summit was very busy though thankfully the majority seemed to have headed up from Brodick, while we enjoyed much quieter paths heading up from Corrie village itself. Beth [Hines] and I raced down from the summit ahead of the others as we wanted to make a Sunday dinner with all the

trimmings, so an urgent visit to the Co-Op was essential. We didn't realise it at the time but Mike McEneaney & John Simpson were mightily grateful as there was enough left over for them to join us – they not being in the mood for cooking after such a long day"



Kevin on the A'Chir Ridge later in the Arran trip

My secret list of Grahams was boosted with an ascent of Beinn Bharrain in blazing sun with Carol Boothroyd and Lindsey Fooks (see next page). Also, a party of John Crosby, Bethan Hines, David Lane-Joynt, Allan McDonald Mike McEneaney, and John Simpson, traversed the "three Beinns." Being Beinn Nuis, Beinn Tarsuinn & Beinn

Chliabhain, which Allan reckoned was “...a great circular walk and somewhat tiring”!



Carol on Beinn Bharrain

2014 Newsletter).”

About this time Teresa Peddie and Bryn Roberts (see below) began their rugged, determined and successful Munro venture. This coincided with and was the principal driver of one of the Clubs most intense periods of Scots activity which we’ll chart in the next section.

Not all Munro campaigns were based on big trips; with family and work commitments Adrian Dolan racked up his score via shorter surgical strikes, his progress in the middle years of our period being charted by Allan McDonald:

“Adrian has had a Munro-bagging trip to the Highlands tackling Ben More and An Chasteil, he got good weather and his score now stands at 29! (Oct/Nov 2012 Newsletter)

Adrian... has had a successful trip to Scotland –5 Munros in 2 days on the Ben Lawers range and his total is now around 35. (Oct/Nov 2013 Newsletter)

Adrian's been up to Glen Lyon in Scotland, doing a further 4 Munros in the Carn Mairg group plus Schiehallion, his tally is now 40. (May/Jun

As someone who’s completed both Munro summits and the Corbetts (over 20 and 30 years respectively), I know what a challenge long lists in remote Scotland are. Just the driving! I reckon that for a lot of people English and Welsh lists are a more practical proposition.

So arriving back south of the border, as far as I’m aware only two GMC people, Lin and Paul Jensen, have finished the Nuttalls, these being 446 English and Welsh hills over 2,000’ with 15m reascent. There are various low level “list wars” smouldering between rival guide-book writers, but this list is as good as any for the 2,000-ers.

In her article in “The Gwydyr 18” magazine Lin Jensen wrote of her and Paul’s Welsh days:

“I have discovered many new areas...such as the Arenigs, Dovey Forest and other minor rather obscure peaks e.g. Y Garn III. I have really enjoyed these lesser hills and found both beauty and solitude, which is often missing when you visit the main peaks.

There have been a few tedious days namely in the Berwyns. Paul and I had a day trip in July where we bagged eleven tops. The main ridge was fine but many of the minor tops had us trailing over tussocky grass forever looking for a few white stones which marked some insignificant summit!”

Lin and I did the Hirnant hills together in November 2001. The main top Cynriau Nod is easy, but some of the rest are not. Cefn Gwyntog is engraved deep as its own heather on mine and Lin’s hearts!

Lin put her finish date on the Meets Programme for September 2003; she managed that date despite having broken her leg earlier in the year, doing all the twelve tops in the Black Mountain on an early May trip. She finished on Tryfan, writing up the meet in “The Gwydyr 20” magazine:

“Then came the embarrassing bit; the presentations! Bryan [Gilbert] and Helen [Brady] produced a trophy complete with commemorative plaque, and Ronnie and Chris [Harvey] presented me with an amazing designer T



Bryn and Teresa on the MV “Western Isles, Mallaig 2014

shirt with a picture of Tryfan and the date...We descended quickly in summer sunshine and soon retired to the pub...

So what now? NEWSFLASH! March 13th 2004: Thirteen members of the GMC were sighted circling grassy hummocks on Fountain Fell South Top...It's not clear yet but there is some circumstantial evidence to suggest a new campaign is underway in Northern Britain."

Paul Jensen finished his own Welsh 2,000's at the same time as he and Lin continued their English travels. Her article in "The Gwydyr 23" magazine tells the story leading up to their 2006 finish:

"We rented a cottage in Alston...to specifically finish off the Pennines. It has something of that 'final outpost' feeling...a lot of tough looking women drinking pints and rolling their own, a bit like the GMC in the old days!...One of the highest summits is Meldon Fell at 2,516'...the usual heather, bog and tussocks...not a soul to be seen until we spotted a quad bike on the snowy summit. A local young farmer stopped to chat, or should I say shout in the wind and immediately said 'You must be doing the English 2,000's...nobody else in their right minds would be up here!' Too true!"

Richard Kinsman helped with the climbing of Pillar Rock, and in the Lakes they had a high camp trip to Sprinkling Tarn and then...

"A glorious day...certainly my toughest route since the Carn Mor Dearg arete and the Ben. In order to complete Sca Fell Pike, Sca Fell and all the other tops we had to descend to and cross Mickledore twice! We had left Great End until the end, and on a beautiful summer evening we phoned Huxley from the summit...As we descended our little tent came into view; it really was a welcome sight. It was a beautiful evening, clear and cold but calm and peaceful. The moon was bright and it was easy to watch the partial eclipse. As we snuggled up in our bags sipping brandy, it was probably one of the best 'feel good' experiences I have ever had."

I think that pretty much sums up the potential rewards of a-list celebrity! There were 21 of us on Great Whernside



Great Whernside finish

for their finish, on a Club weekend in September 2006, with more cake and trophies.

[Return to Contents page](#) or [Go to next Section](#)