

SECTION 9:

“Catalogue Aria ”: Munros, Scotland And Lists - To 2019



The Gwydyr magazine, Stardate August 2015. This saw the first full colour media appearance of Bryn Robert and Teresa Peddie’s stellar Munro campaign, that coincided with and helped power a vibrant period in the Club’s Scottish activity. Melanie Day writes:

“This is an account of when Teresa, Bryn and I went to Assynt at Easter and did Conival and Ben More Assynt in the snow.

The weather had been atrocious in the days leading up to our adventure. Teresa and Bryn had tried to do the Dears near Ullapool but only managed one as strong winds and torrential rain added to the snow underfoot and then the pub called them back! I met them in Ullapool and we stayed the night there talking to the guy that ran the hostel and who had just completed all the Munros. The next day Teresa and Bryn went off to do Ben Hope, the most northerly Munro, while I made a pork pie- as you do! I had done Ben Hope a couple of times and preferred it with a view.



Bryn, Teresa and Melanie on ice

Then finally, after another dump of pre-Easter snow, the weather broke and we had a fantastic day to do the two Assynt Munros. We even did some of it in tee shirts. The route up from near the Inchnadamph Hotel got very boggy after following the river and heading upwards to Conival. After that we had steep ice slopes to negotiate and a double cornice ridge on the way out to Ben More. We only saw one other person the whole day and that was the very same guy from the hostel in Ullapool, who kindly took our photo. It really was a great day out, made special by the pork pie at the summit, and some wonderful views!”

One of the greatest pleasures on the hills is sharing a sense of discovery with companions, so “first Munro” days are always good days. On our trip Knoydart in May 2014, staying at Inverie, Jane Webster did hers with Hew McDermott and I. Meall Bhuidhe by its SE ridge from Mam Mheadhail, a great bright day of sun and shifting clouds. We had all round views of Knoydart, including Chris Harris surging towards us from the distant north, having done Luinne Bheinn as well. I also collected about 30 ticks – shorts again!

Chris’s walk that day was comparatively short as some very big



Hew on Meall Bhuidhe

days were done on the Munros. Teresa and Bryn had tough walks to reach their target peaks, including a 14 miler, twice touching sea level, to ascend the pinnacle of Sgurr na Ciche. In contrast Hew, Jane and I were joined by John Simpson on a relaxing coastal walk, with superb island views, venturing barefoot across the sands to the magical Eilean Shamaladain.



Knoydart Chez Nous – Geoff Brierley and Milly Wright

Our fine bunkhouse had a hot tub, a garden with ten million midges, and on a warm week the sweatiest kitchen ever. To the tune of “Tragedy” the song was “Inverie/I think this mountain weather’s got it in for me/In this kitchen global warming is/Reality, ooohhh...”

Over this period there was plenty of Scottish activity outwith the late May holidays, with at least three other big trips, two of which we’ll recall in this section.

I for one reckon Scots Youth Hostels are more attractive – with a simpler and clearer offering – than English ones, and we again used them as a base at Easter 2015. Geoff Brierley organised a meet to Crianlarich YH for a party of eight. We were as keen as mustard to get going – in one case down

memory lane – as Pete Mann relates in the May 2015 Newsletter:

“Dave Gray and Jane Webster broke the journey up to Scotland by doing Ben Chonzie, one of the most southerly of the Munros, on the way to our destination. I took the opportunity to do Tinto Hill, a Graham, just south of Lanark. I had first tried to do this particular hill as a ten year old boy with my father and sister many years ago only to be defeated by the weather. I had always planned to go back and finish it so I took advantage of a fine day...[Tinto] is only six miles from the...M74 and is a good choice if you want a quick hill on the way north.

Good Friday was not a great day in terms of weather, nonetheless Geoff [Brierley], Neil [Metcalf], Kevin [McEvoy] and John Simpson travelled down to the Arrochar Alps and did Ben Ime and Ben Narnain in difficult conditions...

The weather had improved a bit by Saturday...Lindsey and I did Meall Nan Tarmachan. This is only one Munro but there are a further three tops on the Tarmachan ridge and it is well worth doing even if we did not really have much in terms of views. The heavy snow conditions, with a tricky section where we had to down climb with the aid of ice axes, made for an interesting day out...

Easter Sunday was a glorious day, warm sunny and the summits were cloud free at last. Dave and Jane tackled Ben Challum. Lindsey and I joined forces with the lads and did Ben Lui and Ben a’Chleibh. The approach to Ben Lui involved a river crossing, which at this time of year was freezing, a wet, boggy path through the forest and then a long slog up the north west shoulder of the hill with increasing amounts of snow and ice as we approached the summit. Still the views from the summit were spectacular. We could see just about all the southern and central highland hills including Ben Nevis, Ben More on Mull, the Paps of Jura, Arran and the southern uplands. Worth all the effort and the disappointing weather of the previous two days... One of those days in the Scottish hills that will remain long in the memory”



Meall nan Tarmachan range in snow - and sun!

Bryn and Teresa organised two large houses, one with a bar, for our May 2015 meet at Ullapool. Pete Mann wrote in the June 2015 Newsletter:

“It is supposed to be spring, however, the conditions, particularly on the summits of the hills, were positively wintry with strong winds, rain, hail, snow and a wind chill factor of minus 14 at times!...It is pleasing to see that once again we have a very committed group of members who are actively bagging the Munros and who are prepared to suffer all the weather Scotland can throw at them to complete the list... On one particularly wet day with poor visibility we had a total of fourteen members in two separate groups on An Teallach, one of Scotland’s finest and most iconic Munros and probably my favourite Scottish mountain.”

Pete also mentioned another iconic hill that was done by nine members, Suilven from Lochinver - “a very long walk in over very boggy ground”. You said it Pete; when I did that trip in good conditions years ago I camped out overnight!

My own sharpest memory is being with Lindsey Fooks, Helen Grant and John Simpson on the 2,191’ top of Beinn Bhreac above Inverlael, all of us encased pure white in driven wet snow from head to foot. In the breaks in the weather we had fine, stark views of Coigach, the Fannichs and Fisherfield.

Mull and Skye were the double act for 2016.

Reg Cromer found us a snug berth in MacQuarie House on Mull. In the May 2016 Newsletter David Lane-Joynt gives some detail. Glenn and Helen Grant, David, Hew McDermott, Pete Mann, Angela Price...

“...decided on Saturday to climb Ben More by the more adventurous route up the A’ Chioch Ridge. This is [classed] as ‘straightforward scrambling’ in some descriptions, but with slushy wet snow all over the place, it was anything but that. Glenn managed to fall over more times than he cares to remember, and had the bruises to show for it. When they got to the narrow bit of scrambling, Hew and Angela decided that discretion was the better part of valour and descended from the ridge in completely the opposite direction to the cars. They were saved a long walk back...by Pete, who came looking for them.



Hew, Angela, Pete and Helen on Ben More

[Over the course of the week] we all took the ferry over to the beautiful island of Ulva. We visited Sheila’s Cottage, a traditional thatched cottage where apparently Sheila McFadyen lived until the early 20th century. She must have been tough as it is very basic.

We then split up into small groups to walk around the island and enjoy the stunning sea views, before visiting The Boathouse (the island tearoom)”



The Ulva ferry terminal



The south coast sea views



And the Boathouse tearoom

Ronnie Davies and I had our own epic on the Sunday. Not liking the stream crossing involved in getting to Corra Bhein, we did the fine shapely Graham of Beinn Fhada from the SE. Just after the descent of the NW ridge started

my arthritic right foot seized up in pain. Ronnie did a fine job of navigating us both, and coaxing me, down the steep ridge to the road. Perhaps sensibly, James Allen, Bob Chamberlain and Reg focused on fishing for the week, and Janet Coates and Milly Wright did some fine coastal and lower level walks.

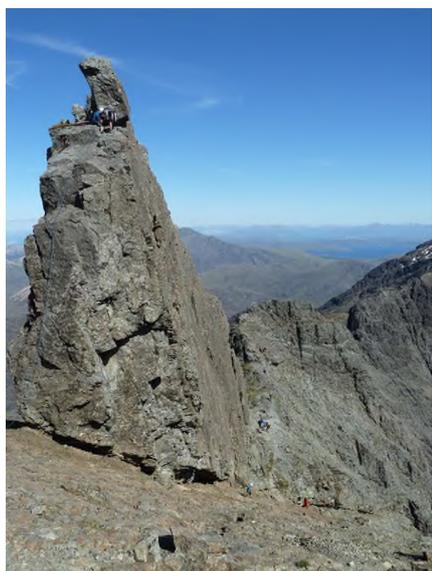
Teresa arranged great accommodation for 26 of us later in May near Sligachan on Skye. In incredibly good weather lots got done!

In the same Newsletter, Teresa gives sound advice on the Ridge:

“Nothing will prepare you for the Cuillin ridge. We researched, read, you-tubed, and asked those who had done it before...But that didn't prepare us... The technical difficulty, the exposure, the concentration, the physical and mental exertion, the complex route finding

And yet it is the best thing I have ever done.

Don't under estimate it, respect the terrain, be well equipped and prepare...and you stand a chance. They say the In Pin is the most difficult Munro...several of the other Munros on the ridge are equally or more challenging. Our



The In Pinn

initial goal was to traverse the ridge in one day, however we soon reviewed our goal to suit the difficulty of the terrain...as long as we completed it in the week, we would be happy with that achievement.”

She and Bryn succeeded over three intense days, and added Sgurr nan Gillean, from which weather had driven them, on the final day to complete their Skye Munros. They benefited from the support of Simon Clark who's a very strong rock climber. She describes what is perhaps the most spectacular piece of the route, on their first day:

“We then headed towards the TD [Thearlaich-Dubh] gap, where a grade 3 scramble with several 100 m of vertical drop lay below us...very scary.

The Gap itself required an abseil and a climb. The slippery chimney with no handholds was beyond me, and after half an hour of trying, and with very bruised legs, I accepted defeat and sought the bypass route, down the steep and loose TD gully, and up round the back of Alasdair.

From Alasdair, Sgurr Thearlaich stood between us and the next Munro, Sgurr Mhic Choinnich. A challenging grade 3 scramble took us to the summit, but the descent required two abseils, down steep sloping slabs into a gap. To ascend Sgurr Mhic Choinnich, we had the option of a climb, (King's Chimney), or a scramble, (Collie's ledge), We chose Collie's ledge, which was relatively simple although exposed in places, and a short scramble then took us to the summit. The descent was straightforward.

A hard pull up Sgurr Dearg lead us to the base of the awesome In Pin. The two guys before us going up without a rope persuaded us to try the same. However in the end, I needed the security of a rope part way up! The flat platform at the top was a welcome sight after the exposure of the ridge. The In Pin actually wasn't technically difficult; you just need a head for heights! The abseil down was straightforward and the small overhang at the bottom posed no problem.

So thirteen hours after we started we had reached only half way [on the ridge]!!!”

A second strong team of John Simpson, Tara O'Reilly (an Irish friend of the Club), Chris Russell, Geoff Brierley and Mike Dagley attempted a full traverse and got as far as Sgurr Alasdair, where they had a spectacular bivvy over a cloud sea at the Stone Shoot. Unfortunately Geoff felt unwell and had already retired, and as the cloud did not appear to want to shift in the morning after the bivvy the others decided



The Bivvy

retreat was the wisest move.



Tara in the morning sun, Sgurr Alasdair



Kev McEvoy on the Inaccessible Pinnacle

Loads was done on this trip: for example Tara, Chris and John did the north part of the ridge, Bruach na Frithe to Sgurr nan Gillean, and Chris and David Lane-Joynt took Kev McEvoy and Helen Grant over the In Pinn (above). Ray Baines and I, not great scramblers, managed Bruach na Frithe – Ray took the mickey and his whispered advice to me on top, as two svelte Aussie girls approached closer, was “do *try* to look manly”!

Elsewhere on the island I did Marsco, a long held ambition, with Alan and Helen Bartlam. Pete Man and Lindsey Fooks joined me on yet more Grahams -Sgurr na Connich and Beinn na Caillich from Bealach Udal; we had fine all round views over azure seas.

For its 2017 regular May meet the Club crossed Scotland to Aviemore. Chris Harris recalls a Munro-rich holiday:

“Janet and I climbed Geal Charn, A'Mharconaich, Beinn Udlamain, and Sgairneach Mhor in Drumochter Pass on a lovely day with Fiona Langton and John Watson; Dave Edwards and Lindsey Fooks picked up two of the hills as Lindsey had a train to catch. Our views were of Ben Alder and Bheinn a Bheoil where Bryn and Teresa had cycled in along Loch Ericht to walk their hills.

Earlier on Dave and Fiona had joined us doing Braeriach from the Sugar Bowl: Cameron McNeish's book says it's a seven and a half miles round trip, I got into trouble 'cause the GPS said fourteen!”

And May 2018 saw a total change, Nigg on the east coast where Teresa found a splendid house at Pitcalzean – this one had its own cinema! In a perverse Scottish role reversal the coast suffered from sea fret, but inland was biscuit tin blue. There were a few long drives!

Sonja Grigor and Barbara Richards enjoyed their first Munro on Ben Wyvis, and a party went even further east to do battle with the wastes of sprawling Am Faochagach.

To my total shame, I rather misled a large party of Sonja, Barbara, Doug Florence, Glenn Grant, Linda and Tom Humphreys, and John Watson on the remote Graham of Carn a Choinn Dearg. We had a beautiful day but the going was long and rough in parts, and only Tom, Doug, John and myself made the main summit, the others did the south top. Glenn had had to retire with a sore ankle and saved the day by driving back up the estate track in the glen to pick up the drivers!

More relaxing were coastal walks: Golspie to Littleferry was misty, salty and atmospheric with loads of seals, deer and birdlife, and Reg Cromer, Jane Webster and I had a very pleasant sunny circuit of Tarbat Ness.

Slightly earlier on, in the February of 2018 Chris and Janet Harris started their very popular hotel meets at the comfortable Ben Nevis Hotel, run by a hotel group that actually recognises that single travellers exist! In 2018 the “big day” was an ascent in beautiful weather of Aonach Mor and Aonach Beag (see below) – the party looked over to the Carn Mor Dearg to try to spot Bryn and Teresa on their route.

My own abiding memory of an excellent short break was visiting the Bothy (since closed) and deserted village of

Peanmeanach on the Sound of Arisaig, with Mark Barley. We took all day to do a very rough seven miles and had a swollen stream to cross kneecap deep and barefoot. Mark had been studying the geology and on the return I feared he might meet A Victorian Doom, swept away by the weight of his own rock samples!

In 2019 we went again to the Ben Nevis but the weather was foul: Mark and I picked up the classic Graham of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh by Loch Ness – a 126 mile round trip meant we escaped the torrential rain and got views on a bright showery day.

Da-da! On 25 April 2019 Teresa emailed David Lane-Joynt to report:



On Aonach Beag – looking to Ben Nevis

“Bryn and I have today ‘completed’ the Munros’...the last one being Sgurr a Chaorachain (or in English pronunciation sgoor a hoorahen!!). Fantastic weather, fantastic hills (we did Sgurr Choinnich too), and quite an emotional end to an epic 6 year journey.”



Bryn and Teresa complete the Munros

And in the October 2019 newsletter David wrote:

“At the end of May twenty six of us gathered for the Late May Scottish Meet in Aviemore. To celebrate Teresa and Bryn’s achievement, we all trekked up to the top of Cairngorm carrying suitable bottles to drink their health. The weather was suitably Scottish (wet!)

Despite the mixed weather this year, a whole range of walks were achieved, ranging from Chris Harris’s epic Carn Toul–Braeriach traverse to something more modest. [A fast] group of Chris, Helen Grant, Richard Smith and Mike Wallis set out on a 24 mile circuit up the extremely rough boulder field in the Chalamain Gap, and then on to include the four Munros of Bod an Deamhain

(The Devil’s Point), Cairn Toul, Sgor an Lochain Uaine and Braeriach. They were followed by Teresa, Bryn and John Simpson... It sounds as though it ended up as a race, but they certainly achieved a very challenging walk.

On the final day most of us finished with an ascent of Sgor Gaoith (1,118m), with fine views across Loch Einich towards Braeriach. Chris then led some of us on to the neighbouring (well relatively) Munro of Mullach Clach a Bhlair (1,019m) to complete an 18 mile day.”

As this Scottish account closes we were still doing Munros, even me! David, Helen Grant, Janet Harris and I had a very full day on the main Monadliath plateau, doing three fine remote summits in a vast wild area. Margaret Blakeborough, Linda and Tom Humphreys went up the Allt Cuaich with me to claim Meall Cuaich, rich with birdlife including ptarmigan, and on the last day I joined up with Nicky Hickin and Fiona Langton to do the fourth Monadliath Munro, Geal Charn. We watched huge showers surge over Ardverkie Forest.

Currently Geoff Brierley, Adrian Dolan, Glenn and Helen Grant, Pete Mann, and John Simpson have “live” ambitions to finish the Munros. And Andy Chapman is doing some very big Scottish hill days too. Otherwise, listy attention in the GMC is focused on the Wainwrights, the 214 Lake District hills in AW’s books, an eminently accessible list.

So far Christy Miles, and also Jon Murphy have completed, as have Kay and Richard Smith, who began their walks before they joined the Club. They finished with their 214th peak, Pillar, in 2016 and Richard commented:

“We walked a few fells about 20 years ago and didn’t know about the Wainwrights...until we saw the classic guide

books in the shop! Then we got hooked on trying to complete them all. The great thing about doing them, despite it being a list ticking exercise, is that it takes you to parts of the Lake District you wouldn't normally go to. You start off on the honey pots like Helvellyn - but then it draws you to places like the Northern Fells beyond Skiddaw and Blencathra, where not many people go – it's peaceful and it's beautiful.”

Currently, Helen and Glenn Grant are about 60-70 summits away from their goal and Chris and Janet Harris need around 25. Helen and Glenn told me that:

“The best bits for us were some of the big rounds, like the Newlands round, where you start early and finish in the dark. And we had another day like that around Martindale, starting on Loadpot Hill and coming past Angle Tarn Pike in a beautiful pink sunset. We ran out of daylight and should have checked there was some life in the headtorch batteries first!”

They reckon their hardest day was a winter conditions ascent of Helvellyn and then on to the narrow summit of Cat Sty Cam, where it was so windy Glenn lost his rucsac cover to the gale and nearly got blown over.

As Glenn weighs in – now it can be revealed! – at 100kg, maybe we should end this section with a another warning to watch the weather forecast first!

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