

## All the Munros (‘Quod erat faciendum’)

The veteran Dundee climber, Eric Maxwell (recently referred to jocularly as ‘pop of the tops!’), keeps the roll of those who have climbed all the ‘Munros’. His printed leaflets bringing matters up to date appear fairly regularly, with the ‘Q E F’ Latin tag at the head. Recently, three Club members attained the distinction of qualifying for mention amongst this august company, and their reflections at this critical stage in their climbing careers are printed below.

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‘What! Spend Saturdays toiling up hills when I could be enjoying myself at tennis or badminton? You must be joking!’ Just a normal reaction from an ‘unbeliever’? Yes, but that unbeliever was myself – just 15 years and 277 Munros ago. It took my friends Alex and Moira more than a year to persuade me to sample even one day in the hills. Why they should have bothered in the face of off-hand, even rude, refusals is a mystery; but their unselfish persistence has left me ever in their debt.

Finally I succumbed to an invitation to a May week-end based on Derry Lodge – provided that the girls in the party did all the cooking! That first day we lay in the sun, having lunch by Loch Etchachan. Obviously there was something to be said for the hills after all. Just one half hour later the rain had arrived, steady and relentless. It trickled down the back of my neck, dripped off the end of my nose, made my spectacles useless and soon proved that my boots (army, officers for the use of) were not waterproof – at least not in Scottish hill conditions. We plodded over Creagan a’ Choire Etchachan and squelched down the Luibeg burn. It was terrible – so was my temper – it was a lousy way to spend a week-end; we were so wet that it became, oddly, slightly amusing; before the end it was, incredibly, quite enjoyable – I was hooked, hooked on the hills.

That is the story of how my first Munro was *not* Ben Macdhui. In fact that first day on the hills failed to break my duck – it was explained that evening, carefully but sympathetically, that Creagan a’ Choire Etchachan, 3,629 feet or not, just did not count as a Munro. Consolation came just a fortnight later on Lochnagar with a scorching day and a magnificent all-round view. I gazed enthralled – to the north Ben Rinnes near my home area, to the west loomed the bulk of Ben Nevis, but the most vivid memory is of a slim white pencil to the east which

could only be Girdleness Lighthouse! The group descending Lochnagar that day was very happy, perhaps a trifle tired and certainly lobster red.

The years passed; the Munros accumulated, slowly at first and then more and more rapidly – the 100th in 1961, the 200th in 1965, while the 250th (Liathach) came on the club all-nighter in 1967. In extenuation for all this 'Munro-bagging', I must emphasise that the old favourites were not neglected – Lochnagar was climbed again and again, I stood on the top of Creag Meaghaidh on two successive days during the sun-blessed Easter Meet of 1968, while the lesser heights of The Cobbler, Morven, Mount Battock, Ben Rinnes and Bennachie proved just as enjoyable. By 1969, the end was in sight, though first must come the story of the day that I did not climb my last Munro, the day the Inaccessible Pinnacle lived up to its name.

That July week at the Memorial Hut in Glenbrittle, though the company was good the weather certainly was not – most of the time it was a struggle to see even the foothills. Robin had unselfishly postponed his final Munro so that we might finish in a contrived dead-heat, but it looked as though he might regret it. On our last possible day of that trip it started damp and windy and in Coire Lagan we couldn't even see the loch for the mist. Robin led us round to Sgurr Mhic Coinnich (my 276th) and back to the foot of the I.P. Here we were an hour late for a rendezvous with Pete Thomas – fortunately Pete had taken Terry up by Window Buttress and was just five minutes ahead of us. Pete was essential to nurse me up the last 40 feet, since I am a complete tyro on rock and had never before even had a rope tied to me!

The wind blew and the rain dripped down the rock (and our necks). Pete looked round at his motley crew, gave some last minute instructions and set off a little reluctantly up the 'short edge' of the Pinnacle. The wind still blew and the rain dripped down the rock more than ever and the one awkward step, the outward sloping ledge, was certainly not my idea of heaven! Fortunately for my peace of mind, Pete after one or two goes at the ledge decided (to the relief of most of us) that he would be daft to take any risks just to get a few 'Munro baggers' to the top, and a damp party retreated in good order to the glen.

The happy ending came just seventeen days later on our return to Skye when Pete took us quickly, efficiently and pleasantly up what in the dry and placid weather seemed no more than a scramble. The confirmatory photographs were taken – the end of an era for Robin and myself.