



The Munro Society

Mountain Quality Indicators Bulletin 3 December 2011

Introduction

The MQI Committee, looking to stimulate and maintain interest in the MQI project, decided earlier this year to produce a regular bulletin. It includes data on progress, topics of interest arising from MQIs submitted and, hopefully, articles from those contributing to the project. This is the third MQI Bulletin and covers the Autumn period of September to November 2011. You are encouraged to submit articles, photographs and comment for inclusion in future editions.

Autumn 2011 Data

When MQIs are received they are checked and individually referenced using Munro's Tables and then entered on a database. This database comprises a listing of all MQIs received from inception of the project and includes information on date completed, season, who completed and assessment given. From the database MQIs are also recorded in the MQI Tracker, which appears on the website and in the newsletter, and is intended as a progress update on completion of the MQI project. The following information shows the number of MQIs submitted since inception in 2002 to year 2010 and for 2011 by season. The years quoted are based on the four seasons Spring through to Winter (March to February).

MQI Submitters	Total 2002 to 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Autumn 2011
Butterfield I	13	-	-	-
Breaden G	54	-	1	-
Burdin J	44	-	-	-
Grant K	3	-	-	-
Jessett J&P	1	-	-	-
Robertson I A	128	3	-	-
Ross J	6	-	-	-
Sime D	358	15	21	7
Allan J	1	-	-	-

MQI Submitters	Total 2002 to 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Autumn 2011
Campbell A	16	-	-	-
Hunter E	9	5	3	4
Urquhart M	15	-	-	-
Ward F	4	1	-	4
Bunting D	36	-	-	-
Milner A	4	-	-	1
Willimott P	1	-	-	-
Brook A	17	8	3	-
Sharpe S	2	-	-	-
Walter C	11	-	-	-
Batty D	82	18	38	10
Manson R	2	-	-	-
Murray C	1	-	-	-
Cran D	5	-	-	-
Foot A-M	1	1	-	-
Butler A	-	6	37	13
Green J	1	-	-	-
Jones M	5	-	3	3
Other	6	-	-	-
Total	826	58	106	42
Submitters	27	9	7	7

We have received or have been promised 42 MQI reports for Autumn 2011. This is much lower than the 106 we received for Summer which was a particularly good level. Perhaps it is not too surprising that hill activity is lower in Autumn. The number of individuals submitting in Autumn was similar to previous levels but is still too low. It was encouraging to get 7 MQIs for the Furths. As stated in the last Bulletin not everyone can be expected to be so active but a few more contributors would be appreciated. As previously mentioned it would be a great help if those only able to submit a few during the year could target some of their Munro days out to the hills still requiring MQIs so we can progress our goal of at least one completion for each Munro for each season by around 2015.

The Tracker shows the status for unique MQIs received. At the end of Autumn 2011 (i.e. end November 2011) this was:

Tracker	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Total
<i>Munros</i>					
Total Count	223	228	181	87	719
% Complete	79%	80%	64%	31%	63%
<i>Furths</i>					
Total Count	1	6	29	6	42
% Complete	3%	18%	85%	18%	31%

We have 1,030 MQIs in total of which 761 are firsts, the other 269 being repeats. Of the 42 Autumn MQIs received 35 were firsts. The Tracker is published in the Newsletter and on the Website so information as to what still needs to be done is readily available. The figures illustrate that a lot of winter MQIs are still required

Autumn 2011 Observations

Bird Sightings



A scan of the 42 Autumn MQIs received showed sightings of: Ptarmigan 5, Ravens 6, Buzzards 4, Large unidentified Raptor 1, Dipper 1. In addition there were sightings of a wide selection of smaller birds and wildfowl.

Ben Vorlich Completion



On 12 November, 2011 there was another second round completion when David Batty was joined by his son, Stuart and Munro Society members Eleanore Hunter, Iain Robertson, Peter Willimott, Stewart Logan, Alan Brook and Alex Thomson on Ben Vorlich, Arrochar. It was a very good day with lots of sunshine. The picture shows the party about to set off from the car park at Loch Sloy. The MQI was also an Autumn “first” for that mountain.

For the record the MQI for this ascent is now the fifth by a TMS member which coincides with a completion, the others being:- Meall nan Tarmachan 7.10.06; An Stuc 15.09.07; An Socach (Affric) 25.07.09, Derek Sime’s second round completion; Schiehallion 18.06.11, Colin Walter’s second round completion.

Vice President Eleanore Hunter was also on a completion in early October on A’Ghlas-bheinn. She was with a friend, David, who was completing, his two sons and grandchildren and his brother. David is 76 with a heart condition and two knee replacements! So, no excuses please about not being fit enough to get out in the hills!

A Lesson in Bivouacking



Some mountains are quite remote and knowledge of good bivouacking technique can be a blessing. On my last bivouac at Ben Alder I forgot to take my mat and had to make do with a thick bedding of dry grass, which was fortunately in good supply. So it was with interest that I read recently of the technique adopted by poachers in the 1850’s. “When a party of them sleep out on the hill side, their manner of arranging their couch is as follows: If snow is on the ground, they first scrape it off a small space; then they collect a quantity of the driest heather they can find. The next step is for all the party excepting one to lie down close to each other, with room between one couple for the remaining man to get into the rank when his duty is done; which is, to lay all the plaids on the top of his companions, and on the plaids a quantity of long heather; when he has sufficiently thatched them in, he creeps into the vacant place, and they are made up for the night.

The coldest frost has no effect on them when bivouacking in this manner. Their guns are laid dry between them, and their dogs share their masters' couch." I still like my gortex bivvy bag!

Dundee Mountain Film Festival



The Society was represented at the DMFF in Dundee at the end of November. We had a stand which depicted our activities on the Heightings and on MQIs. An important visitor to the stand was David Gibson, Chief Officer of The Mountaineering Council of Scotland. David had a good look at the material on display for MQIs and was impressed with the examples of the reports on display. I believe it would be fair to say that he hadn't appreciated how much worthwhile information we are capturing for future generations of hill walkers and others and encouraged us to keep up the good work.

News from the Furths

We received Autumn MQIs from Fred Ward for Scafell, Scafell Pike, Ill Crag and Broad Crag and from Marion Jones for Scafell Pike, Ill Crag, Broad Crag. I mentioned in the Summer Bulletin that Marion's prose is always enjoyable and I am delighted to say she has submitted a piece about an earlier winter ascent of Scafell.

Scafell in Winter



It must be conceded that the scenery, mountains and crags of The English Lake District have inspired poets and artists, challenged rock climbers and provided pleasure and adventure for walkers for many generations. But what can it offer in the way of wildness, compared to the vast expanse of Scotland? How can such an intimate landscape provide a sense of remoteness when many of the summits can be reached from several different valley bases? I don't know how it can be but, for all the relative closeness of major cities and motorways, there is solace and quiet to be found in the Lake District's mountains. And challenge too. I must admit to having suffered worry and concern when the weather has turned against me, forcing me to stumble on in a whiteout, buffeted by strong winds, not knowing exactly where I was. Reminiscent of conditions in the Cairngorms? The appeal of the Lake District is you can select whatever challenge you feel up to on the day.

I began completing MQIs last year and, as I love the Lakes, I wanted to select routes that would show the mountains in their most favourable light. The Scafell Range is the district's wildest terrain: long approaches from valleys other than Wasdale, steep buttresses falling away from the summits, ridges over 3000 feet attracting low-lying cloud. The mist can hang about the tops, swirling in and out of the gullies, deceiving the eye and brain with a false perception of distance. I ascended Scafell in such conditions earlier this year. My intention had been to complete a winter MQI report and, because of the short day, I had selected a route from Wasdale Head.

Walking alone, I chose a rarely frequented path following the old Corpse Road to Eskdale, branching off at Burnmoor Tarn on to a shoulder leading up to Scafell. As I climbed higher I reached the lowering cloud and the snow line. The temperature dropped dramatically and, as the slope became steeper and the surface of the snow harder, I donned crampons to make the going easier. There were no cairns to mark the route so I picked my way up the slope tending to tack from side to side to ease the strain on the calf muscles. The wind strengthened considerably, making me swap a walking pole for an ice axe for security. I was beginning to feel a little unsettled when I recognised the exit from Lord's Rake, a path that sweeps up through the crags on the face of Scafell. At last, a fixed point where I could take a bearing! I sheltered behind a rock and took stock: the wind was gusting strongly, visibility was severely limited but, I was so close to the summit and if I missed this opportunity I wouldn't complete the winter report this year. I decided to resort to pacing and gave myself half an hour before I would have to turn back.

I thought I knew Scafell well but I was constantly deceived. Rocks loomed out of the mist, plastered in snow and plated with ice crystals growing into the wind. I couldn't make out any cairns, there were no tracks to follow and now the wind was sending spindrift into my eyes. I could only trust the compass and my pacing and eventually my persistence paid off, and just inside the time limit I reached the summit. I didn't linger long, if at all, and set the compass to "west", away from all the crags - there were no paths to follow anyway so it seemed pointless to try and retrace my steps. After a short time I dropped out of the cloud, heaving a big sigh of relief as Wastwater appeared at the foot of the fells. The wind had eased and everything was right with the world!

Marion Jones

Wainwrights



You may wonder why Wainwrights get a mention in the MQI Bulletin. TMS member Fred Ward, a former Treasurer of the Society and a regular contributor of MQIs in the Lake District where he resides, recently completed his second round of the Wainwrights. The Wainwrights comprise all 214 of the Fells as described in the 7 volumes of A. Wainwright's "A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland

Fells". Amongst these fells lie all six English Furths listed in the Munro's Tables.

Many Wainwright 'baggers' these days also turn their attention to Nuttalls situated in the Lake District. These are summits of 2,000ft and above which rise above their surroundings on all sides by at least 50ft, (metrically 610m and 15m respectively) There are 169 of these located in the Lake District of which 115 appear in Wainwright. The picture shows Fred near Red Tarn, with the Crinkles and Bowfell (far right) behind him. Congratulations Fred!

MQIs go International

Immediate Past President Derek Sime took the opportunity to complete a MQI for an Alpine Peak when on holiday in Chamonix in summer 2011.

IQM (Indicateur de Qualité de Montagne) : Mont Buet (Haute Savoie)

When in the Chamonix area last summer, I spent a day climbing Mont Buet, and thought that it would be interesting to complete an MQI (or should that be *IQM?*), to note any contrasts or similarities with the Munros. Mont Buet seemed an appropriate choice for this exercise, being a relatively isolated peak at the northern end of the Aiguilles Rouges, and a mountain which, by the normal route, has no permanent snow other than the odd patch of nevé which would not be out of place in the northern Cairngorms in a cool summer (although there is a small glacier in the eastern “corrie”, and two other even smaller ones on other approaches). At just over the 3,000, the “hill” also just makes it into the “Tables”, although which tables, I’m not sure. We are of course talking metres, not feet. The “IQM” is attached. It will never get into the Munro Society MQI archive – we have our work cut out just doing our own 3,000-ers, even with the best endeavours of the Heightings (“Lowerings”?) team striving to reduce their number!

Derek Sime

Winter Targets for MQIs

The Tracker shows which mountains still require a Winter MQI. As far as MQIs are concerned, to obtain a winter MQI for all the Munros is undoubtedly our greatest challenge. Sections 10, 12, 14, 17, Ireland and Wales have none. Section 4, where the hills are nearer to hand, only has 2 with 32 still to receive an MQI. Overall 229 Munros still need a Winter MQI. If the weather is like last year we are unlikely to see many new MQIs. But if the weather is kinder to us it would be good to see some inroads into that figure.

For Winter the numbers required by Section are:

<i>S1</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S5</i>	<i>S6</i>	<i>S7</i>
1	8	18	32	0	8	4
<i>S8</i>	<i>S9</i>	<i>S10</i>	<i>S11</i>	<i>S12</i>	<i>S13</i>	<i>S14</i>
14	5	26	17	15	7	19
<i>S15</i>	<i>S16</i>	<i>S17</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Welsh</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Total</i>
6	4	13	4	15	13	229

Is there anyone willing to take on some of these and do Winter completions? Even better, is someone willing to “adopt a section”? Also, how about completing some of the outstanding Winter Furths? I would welcome contact from anyone willing to take up the challenge of particular mountains or sections.

Next Edition

The intention is to issue the next edition, following the “Winter MQI Season”, in March. Please let me know what you think of this edition and, if you feel so inclined, offer your submissions, comments and/or photographs for inclusion next time. As I have said before, if this Bulletin is to continue on a regular basis it needs your support and input! Be inspired by Marion’s contribution.

David Batty, MQI Co-ordinator

Contact details: Telephone: 0131 3353604 e-mail: dsbatty@btinternet.com

Mountain name and Section:	Mont Buet		-
IGN Map, Grid reference & height:	3630 OT	03338 50990	3096m
Date of ascent:	Monday 22 August 2011		
Brief note of route followed: From le Buet station (gare SNCF) followed the Tour du Pays du Mont Blanc (GR5) path to the Refuge de la Pierre à Bérard. Continued up steep path to Col de Salenton, and from there up the zigzag path, latterly by the Arête de la Mortine, to the summit. Returned by same route.			
Distance – 9.5 miles	Total ascent – 1,806m	Time taken – 9 hours	
Brief note of prevailing weather: Clear blue sky and continuous sunshine most of the day. Clear visibility but with heat haze. Build up of cumulus over the Mont Blanc massif from c1,400, base c4,000m. Became more cloudy with sunny intervals from mid afternoon, cloud becoming very dark and threatening by 18.00, but with continuing sunny intervals. One light shower in late afternoon. Generally very hot. Brief , tornado-like , phenomenon at summit manifested in a twisting column of dust. Footnote – thunder heard by 18.40, and heavy rain by 19.00, after the walk was complete.			

MQI	Notes	Level
1 <i>Access</i>	No access restrictions. Obvious path (part of the Tour du Pays du Mt Blanc, GR5) way-marked by occasional signs in the valley, and by cairns and occasional paint flashes above the refuge.	3
2 <i>Fauna</i>	Glens / Lower Slopes: Flies, butterflies, crane flies, grasshoppers, ants, spiders. Chamois seen on the path on descent. Montane Zone: Eagle seen soaring in the thermals below the summit, and alpine chough at the summit.	3
3 <i>Flora</i>	Glens / Lower Slopes: Mixed forest at first. Heather*, harebell ("Scottish bluebell")*, lady's mantle*, alpine lady's mantle*, bearberry, blaeberry, fir clubmoss, parsley fern, juniper, rosebay willowherb*, birdsfoot trefoil*, wild raspberries, mountain azalea, alpine thistle*, yellow saxifrage*, hawkweed*, thyme*. Montane Zone: Very little vegetation above 2,300m other than a few very small flowers, alpine thistles* and dwarf willowherb*.	3
4 <i>Drainage</i>	Appeared natural above 2,000m, although only two small streams (trickles) encountered above the refuge. The main river in the valley (l'Eau de Bérard) has various sluice gates (presumably connected with the Franco-Swiss Emosson hydro scheme).	2
5 <i>Human Influence pre 1900</i>	Chamonix valley a long established communications route. Settlement at le Buet. Little other evidence noted.	3
6 <i>Human Influence post 1900</i>	Good walkers' path with signage in the valley, and marked by cairns and paint flashes higher up. A nature reserve. In the Chamonix valley, road, and mountain railway (dating from 1909). Climbers' / walkers' warden hut (Refuge de la Pierre à Bérard), sleeping 40, and also providing restaurant / café services to passers by. Solar powered radio antennae at the fore-summit on the Arête de la Mortine. Small concrete survey station (c10cm by 10cm) at the true summit, and large cairn nearby. Part of the French long distance footpath network (Grande Randonnée). Path erosion locally up to 750mm deep.	2
7 <i>Degree of wildness</i>	Little sense of wildness in the valley, although appears to be natural forest. Waymarked path. Above the refuge, the sense of wildness increased significantly as the trail passed through a chaotic boulder labyrinth then over a band of <i>roche moutonnée</i> , and onto almost un-vegetated loose stony ground to the summit. Sense of remoteness moderated by the significant number of walkers above the refuge (although few encountered below it). Enhanced also by the sight of the eagle, and the alpine chough (which maintained a stance about 2m from the summit. There are no cable cars or other mechanical assistance, and the entire 1800m must be climbed from the village.	3
8 <i>Aesthetic / physical response</i>	A strenuous day on an easy path below the refuge, but one which required much concentration above the refuge, especially on the chaotic blockfield. With the ever-present threat of thunderstorms in the late afternoon, a constant eye was kept on the weather. Not a particularly aesthetically pleasing mountain from this approach, the summit block resembling a slag heap in appearance, but set amidst a magnificent mountain range. Summit views included the Tour and Argentiére glaciers, Mt Dolent, Aiguille Verte, les Drus, Aiguille du Midi, Mt Blanc du tacul, Mt Maudit, Mont Blanc, Dôme de Goûter, Aiguille de Bionnassay, the Aiguilles Rouges, and, far below, the town of Sallanches. Well worth the effort.	3
MQI Total		★★★ 22