



# *The Munro Society* **NEWSLETTER**

No. 13, July 2008



*View from Beinn Bheoil towards Loch Ericht. Photo: AM Foot*

## **The President's Blog**

▣ No apologies for the title – the “blog” has become an established way of communicating and is even used by chief execs of large companies and BBC newscasters to name but a few. The fact that this Newsletter appears on the TMS website seems justification enough for the term, and

it has, after all, a rather friendly, down-to-earth appeal about it, so blog it is.

It was with not a little trepidation that I accepted the nomination, since all my predecessors have been retired, with time at their disposal. However it was a great honour and privilege to be asked and I know that I will receive all the help I need from the new Executive Committee.

The *Society* has come a long way from its humble beginnings, with the membership now at around 230 and continuing to grow, with members as far afield as Holland, Cadiz (in southern Spain), and Ireland – a truly international organisation. In the past couple of years under Iain's leadership, we have celebrated Munro 150 both on the hill and at a special annual dinner, seen the publication of the first TMS Journal, and successfully carried out the "heightings" of Beinn Dearg and Foinaven. This is indeed a hard act to follow, and thanks are due to Iain for his selfless commitment to the *Society* over the past 7 years. Thanks are also due to Bill Taylor, who has stepped down from the committee.

So where do we go from here?

I think the time is right to consolidate the work which has been done on the MQI project to date, and publish a Phase 1 report. It has been under the leadership and guidance of John Burdin since its inception, and John is happy to continue in this role for the next two years. Thanks to John's tireless efforts, interest in the project has been expressed by various influential bodies, including McofS, BTO, SNH and JMT. This project is at the very heart of what we do, as it monitors the state of our oft-abused hills, by different routes, in different seasons of the year, and in different conditions, by different people. It is designed to be fairly objective, and it is gratifying to note that where MQIs have been submitted by different people on the same hill, the scores are often markedly similar. The project therefore has no end, as it will be necessary to go on monitoring, indeed the need will possibly increase as pressures mount on our upland landscapes and habitats, in the form of "renewable" energy schemes, bulldozed tracks, memorials, "developments" and the like. I therefore intend to set up a sub-committee to progress this important aspect of the *Society's* work.

In publishing a Phase 1 report, I think it is important to have at least one report for each Munro, and we are now well within

sight of that goal, with only 7 still to do (details elsewhere in the Newsletter). However we should be aiming to get at least one report for each hill in each season, and while this would not be realistic in the timescales for publication of a first report, it remains a clear aim. I would therefore encourage all members to participate in this worthwhile exercise – it really is quite simple, and can also be very rewarding, adding an extra dimension to your day on the hill, and even increasing your powers of observation. The guidelines (Appendix 1) and report form (Appendix 2) can be obtained by contacting the Hon Secretary. And of course the excellent book "Hostile Habitats" published by SMT, is essential background reading. It's a great way of getting involved in the *Society's* activities, without having to set aside a lot of your valuable time.

The *Society* has already had two very successful "revisit" weekends this year, to Strawberry Cottage in Glen Affric (see the write up later in the Newsletter), and Backpackers' Hostel in Braemar, with another planned for the Lake District in September, and it is important that these activities continue, being a good way for *Society* members to meet up both on and off the hill. There are some fairly exciting and ambitious plans for future meets, and although numbers are, of necessity, limited on each meet, all are encouraged to participate, so that over the years, we should have a good cross section of members able to come along to one or more of these meets. The Annual Dinner is also a great occasion in the *Society's* calendar, and after much debate, it was decided to go back to Strathpeffer this year. Although other venues, such as Portree and Inverness were suggested at the AGM, it was felt that Skye was perhaps too far for some to travel for a weekend, and no hotel there would be big enough to take our numbers, for accommodation at least; Inverness was considered by some to be too much of a city venue for a society such as ours. With

recollections of the excellent quality of the meal and service last October at the Ben Wyvis Hotel, the decision was taken to return there. I trust that this meets with your approval and hope to meet as many as possible in October - for details see elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Good hill days to all.

Derek Sime

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### News about Members

❑ Congratulations to Robert H. MacDonald (375) who completed the ascent of his 2000th Munro on 23rd Dec. 2007 when he reached the summit of Ben Vorlich (Sloy).

❑ Congratulations also to Derek Sime (685), our President, who completed his 1500th Munro ascent on Am Bodach, in the Mamores, on a fine day in March with good winter conditions.

### ❑ An appreciation of Don Green 1922 - 2007

Don Green was born on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1922 in Blairgowrie where his father was employed at the Burn House, now a conference centre catering for students from Universities and Colleges throughout the UK. The family moved to Dundee when Don was 14 and he eventually completed his schooling at the Morgan Academy. After school he commenced his journalistic career with DC Thomson in 1940.

During the Second World War he served with the RAF as a bomb aimer and flew against Japanese targets in Burma and Siam. After demob he rejoined DC Thomson and, in all, he was employed by them for a total of 47 years, retiring in 1987 as Editorial Manager.

His love of the hills and wild places was a constant theme throughout his 85 years, beginning with his childhood in Glen Esk. He met his wife, Jean, when they were both on independent cycling holidays in Scotland and they met up by chance at Glen Nevis Youth Hostel.

Don joined the Grampian Club in 1949 and quickly became a more than competent performer as hill walker and rock and ice climber. As a winter climber, he never owned a pair of crampons and stuck to tricouni-shod boots which he reckoned were more versatile in most situations. He completed the Munros on Beinn Dorain in 1966 being the 69<sup>th</sup> recorded person to do so. He finished the Furths in Ireland three years later and was the 46<sup>th</sup> recorded person to

complete the Corbetts in 1992, commencing with Morrone in 1949 and finishing on Beinn Odhar.

Not content with this impressive list he began an ascent of the Donalds with Ben Cleuch in 1992 and completed on Tinto Hill in 1998, the 60<sup>th</sup> Completist. At a party to celebrate the last event, Don was presented with a tankard engraved with a list of his climbing achievements to date.

In addition to his membership of the Grampian Club, Don often climbed with the Perth section of the JMCS, now the Perth Mountaineering Club, and was admitted to the Scottish Mountaineering Club in 1963. He was also an enthusiastic member of the Munro Society and was one of five climbers who appeared in a DVD produced by the Society featuring Early Munroists.

In the course of his long climbing career Don amassed a large collection of slides and photographs - many of the highest quality and several have been reproduced in various climbing guidebooks. As befits his training as a first-rate journalist, his photographs, as were his climbing log books and diaries, were catalogued meticulously and are an object lesson in how such information should be presented. I always looked forward to the arrival of the Greens' Christmas card that, invariably, had a photograph of me, taken over the course of the previous year that depicted me in a humorous or embarrassing situation.

When the Grampian Club rented Inbhirfhaolain, their climbing cottage in Glen Etive from the Forestry Commission in 1962, Don volunteered his services as the first Custodian, a post he was to hold for 20 years. To begin with this involved

organising the considerable amount of work that was required to convert the building so that it could be used as a climbing cottage both for Grampian Club members and for visitors from kindred clubs. Over the two decades that he was in charge, Don attended to the booking of places, and to the maintenance and improvements of the property and, in this, he set standards that

future Custodians found hard to equal. The Club's debt to Don and to his wife Jean was and is immense and, in recognition of the contributions that they both made, they were made Honorary Members in 1981. As an additional accolade Don was elected to the post of Honorary President in 1982, succeeding the legendary JHB Bell in that capacity.

Don contributed many articles on climbing and the outdoor scene to several publications, articles written in his inimitable style with beautifully constructed phrases and with absolutely no grammatical infelicities! He continued hill walking, albeit at a slower pace, right up to the end and his final Munro was on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March of last year when he, with several dozen others, on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first outdoor meet of the Grampian Club, ascended Mayar, in Glen Doll. He was assisted on the ascent by Dougal Roy and others and his delight at reaching the cairn was a joy to see. This delight was only equalled by his relief in making the subsequent descent in a trouble-free manner!

The respect by which Don was held by fellow climbers, ex-work colleagues and family friends was emphasised by the large numbers who attended a celebration of his life which was held in Discovery Point, Dundee on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January when various people, both friends and family, spoke publicly of the affection in which they held Don. He will be sadly missed as a husband, father, and grandfather and as a climbing companion with whom it was always a pleasure to be with on the hill. FLS.

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