



The Munro Society NEWSLETTER

No. 63, April 2025



Looking north-west from Beinn Challuim South Top in early January. A couple of days later, the snow was gone.

Derek Sime



Sunrise over Strath Fillan (D Sime)

For me, the Scottish hills in winter are full of promise too often, sadly, unfulfilled. This is a result of living a full day's travelling from the hills. Plans are made in the autumn when I assume, optimistically, that the weather in mid-December in Arrochar or mid-January in the Borders will be better than my previous visits. I book train travel and accommodation and from two weeks prior to departure, start looking at the forecast. My dates usually coincide with severe weather warnings, and this winter was no different. I narrowly missed the worst of Storms Darragh and Éowyn and my days on the Luss Hills and in the Southern Uplands were cut short. However, photographs from friends in the same areas taken the week before and after, show

perfect winter conditions. I will continue to plan in the hope that, one year, I get it right. For those who could and did make the most of the winter just gone – well done.

When unable to get into the hills, I get stuck into maps, guidebooks and past Mountain Reports to plan my trips for later in the year. Long stands the debate as to whether a hill list to complete helps or hinders such plans. For me, the Munro Tops certainly provide a focus for plans this year, so I remain in favour of hill lists; though the idea of not returning to an area because everything is 'ticked' on my current list dissuades me from sticking too closely to such planning. The time taken for me to complete Munro Tops was starting to drift so I have committed to completion during the Glenfeshie meet in September. Tom Dubh, a Top of Monadh Mòr,

will be my last. I have a few long days and distant Tops to tackle between now and then.

Apart from planning trips for later in the year and to escape the storms that rolled through, and the low cloud and rain that then settled over south-east England this winter, I went with my wife and friends to Colombia in South America in February. This trip included a four day walk to the 'Lost City of Colombia' or the Ciudad Perdida, in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, an archaeological site of the Tairona people, believed to date back to ca800AD, pre-dating the Inca settlement of Machu Pichu in Peru by about 650 years. Abandoned in the 16th Century, it was uncovered by looters in 1972 and, since then, about 40% of the area has been restored with support from the Global Heritage Fund. Sadly, in the '80s and '90s, the area fell under the control of various para-military groups. After eight foreign tourists were kidnapped at the site in September 2003 and held by the National Liberation Army for three months, the Lost City unsurprisingly fell out of favour with many visitors. That is all now in the past and with only a restricted number of visitors



permitted at any one time, combined with a 62km walk in/out climbing up and down some 3,000 feet each day in tropical temperatures; the trip does not appeal to everyone.

When we arrived at the site, we felt

privileged to see something of an ancient culture and a very different lifestyle; one that is still followed by some of the indigenous people and is as alien to us as ours is to them. We were left reflecting on which is better. I will write further and separately about the Lost City for a later Newsletter.

Turning to Society matters, the question of membership has been exercising the committee since the last AGM in April 2024. After considerable thought and discussion, the committee agreed on two proposals to put to all members at the AGM on

5th April 2025: one to amend the purpose of the Society and one to broaden the criteria for membership. You will have received notice of these resolutions by email in February. By the time you receive this Newsletter, the results of the voting will be known so I will not repeat the arguments for and against change here. Whatever the outcome, the committee will accept the view of the 2/3 majority of the members who vote. If you didn't vote; I can only say that I'm sorry you decided not to do so. I assume that you are content to accept the majority opinion of those who did.

You have also had the opportunity to vote on the proposal to combine the AGM and Annual Dinner into a single function in the autumn. This is driven mainly by the need to keep our costs down. We (the committee) feel that the current subscription remains excellent value for the benefits of membership, especially the printed rather than digital copy of the triannual Newsletter. The Society does not have large reserves and is very aware of the regular increases in the cost of postage: 32% over the last year. The level of subscription for this year will be determined at the AGM. As ever, we must do all we can to control our costs.

Two new members have joined the Society since December, to whom we extend a very warm welcome, one of whom completed their round in 1982, twenty years before the foundation of the Society. I should also correct a statement in my last report about our (then) youngest new member and, it was believed, the first black man to complete all the Munros. It has been pointed out to me by several members that Charlie Ramsay, the renowned fell runner, who completed his round of Munros in 1991, was probably the first. I have also been reminded that there is no definitive list of all completers. Many congratulations to all completers, whether registered with the SMC or not. Sadly, Charlie died in February this year.

We have three meets organised for this year: Kintail in May (now fully booked), Ballater in July and Glenfeshie in September, details of which are published on page 33, and also on the website. I look forward to seeing all those booked in for those meets and to anyone planning to attend the Robin Campbell Memorial Lecture and Dinner on Saturday 25th October in Grantown. Depending on the outcome of the vote at the AGM on 5th April, this might be the first combined AGM/Annual Dinner.

TMS

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April 2025

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Editorial

by Derek Sime



We have the usual eclectic collection of articles in this edition, starting with Bill Wheeler's report on items to be lodged with the TMS Archive this year, including some papers left by the late Robin Campbell (our first Honorary President) which include the text of a talk he gave a few years ago about Hugh Munro.

Malcolm Peart writes of an encounter with a poet on Liathach and a sleepover below Moruisg, then Andrew Fraser reflects on some of the many mountain bothies which he has visited over the years. We have two reports on rounds completed – reflections on a round of Corbetts by Jan Drye, and completing a 'Full House' on a Donald Top by Alf Barnard, while Phil Massey aspires to complete the 29 Irish hills listed in TMS member Barry Smith's book (*The Top 500 Summits*).

Roderick Manson treads warily in his local hills around Blairgowrie and Mike Weedon starts a new five-part series on his early adventures in the Cairngorms, recalling his first visit in a snowy winter.

Findlay Swinton takes us on a continuous Mullardoch Round, and, back in the Cairngorms, Alan Rowan compares a walk he did 30 years ago with another in February this year.

All that is followed by the Lindertis Diary, meet dates for your own diary, a review of a new book on The Ribus, your letters, and also the winning entries from last year's photo competition.

Please send material for the August issue by **21st June 2025** to simed44.ds@gmail.com (max. 1,500 words). As always, the earlier an item is received, the better the chance of it appearing in the next Newsletter.

Photos should be sent as separate jpg files (**max. 2MB per photo**), with suitable captions (preferably in the file name) and not as embedded files. Also, why not drop a line to the Postbag section – we like to hear from you!

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