

# HILL BAGGING 2018

Relative Hills Society members write about their hill-bagging year: *List completions; HuMPs first completion; island bagging; kayaking; climbing; backpacking; history; adventures at home and overseas*

**To jump to an item, click on its title.**    **Press Ctrl+Home at any time to return to top**

## Contents

Completions .....	2
Baglogs 2018 - Britain.....	3
Anne Butler - 2018 Baglog (Grahams; SMC Full House).....	3
Alex Kelso - Rounds with a View (Grahams; Corbetts).....	4
Andrew Finnimore – Baglog (Donalds & Tops; SMC Full House; Atlantic outliers; snow patching; Indian islands) .....	4
Eric Young - Adventures and Experiences 2018 (Skye scrambles; Munroing encounter) .....	5
Campbell Singer - Rubbish report; London Boroughs; Counties through the ages .....	6
Alan Whatley - 2018 Totals (Counties; HuMPs completion) .....	7
Barbara Jones - Keep Off the Land (Military manoeuvres) .....	7
Bert Barnett – Baglog (Third Full House).....	8
Colin & Isabel Watts – Baglog (Donalds done).....	8
Robert Poole – 2018 Bagtotals (Corbetts complete; Harris; Coigach) .....	8
Audrey Litterick - Marilyn Baglog for 2018 (Backpacking; Scarba; Suffering for the JMT) .....	8
Alan Caine – Baglog (1000 <sup>th</sup> trig; sunny North Wales; southern England; SQUIBs).....	9
Marion & Alan Mitchell – 1200 <sup>th</sup> HuMP; Rescued on Mull .....	10
Andy & Val Moffat - Hill Report 2018 (Grahams completion) .....	11
Dave Broadhead - Baglog 2018 (Western Isles; Gatliff Trust hostels completion) .....	12
Margaret Squires - Reaching the Wall on Lewis.....	12
Norman Wares – Baglog (Sibbing; motorhoming; a bereavement; 3 celebrations).....	13
Tony Kinghorn - Baglog (Wild weather; Cuillin; Knoydart; Munros 2 <sup>nd</sup> time; Bass Rock) .....	14
Charles Everett – 2018 Baglogs story (Welsh Hogmanay; Skye project; Azores) .....	15
Dave Beaumont – Baglog (Corbett completion; house and dog duties) .....	16
David Levey – Baglog (Marilyn corridor; grouse moor misgivings).....	16
David Stallard - Annual Return for 2018 (1000 <sup>th</sup> Marilyn; HuMPs; Simms; Dodds; eagle) .....	16
Donald Shiach – Baglog (Wainwrights done; Scottish Marylins; Nigg niggles).....	18
Eddie Harwood – Baglog (Fractures; Western Isles relapse) .....	18
Gill Stephens – Baglog (Wales complete; 1100 <sup>th</sup> Marilyn; Scottish nest-building) .....	18
Henry Marston – Biog and Baglog.....	19
Jean and Bill Bowers - Marilyn and Humps Update (Mull; Scourie; Outliers).....	20
Liz and Peter Hastie - The Luck of the Weather (Western Isles; Cape Wrath newcomer) .....	21
Jen and Rick Salter - Bag Log 2018 (Climbing; dog-walking; running; whisky; wedding).....	21

Jonathan Appleby – Marilyn Baglog 2018 (Arran; Flowerdale; Wyvis close call) .....	23
John Henderson - Bag Totals and Report (LDWA; Bishop Isles; Pennines; Mournes) .....	23
Jonathan de Ferranti – Bag Totals 2018 (Mad bagger; Stacs obstruction) .....	24
Martyn Dougherty – From the Sublime to the Ridiculous (Wrath; Kilda; Crowborough) .....	24
Neil Stewart - Reflections on 2018 (HuMPs; Gairloch; Ochils; in praise of TuMPs).....	25
Ron Bell - Baglog for 2018 (Skye; Gorms; Kilda; Harris; Fisherfield) .....	26
Pete Ridges – Baglog (Zoo; Islands; Skye; guerrilla gardening) .....	27
Peter Wheeler - Baglog for 2018 (Marilyns; everything in Edinburgh) .....	27
Phil Cooper’s Report (Rum; Knoydart; contemplating Nirvana) .....	27
Dave Irons - Marilyn 2018 (1200 <sup>th</sup> Marilyn; Andes anniversary) .....	28
Obituaries.....	29
David Batty (1944 – 2018) .....	29
Eddie Wilkinson (“Grumpy”) 1954 – 2018 .....	30
Baglogs – Britain and Overseas .....	31
Tove Illing - RHSoc Report 2018 (Skye, Far North; Suilven celebration; Snøhetta) .....	31
Peter and Frances Wilson - Marilyn – Britain (Somerset; North Devon).....	33
Peter and Frances Wilson - Marilyn – Ireland (Tipperary; Galway).....	33
Ian Hill – Baglog (Grahams; Ireland).....	34
Sue & Trevor Littlewood – Baglog 2018 (homeland repeats; Picos; Dolomites) .....	34
Colin Green - Baglog 2018 (Back on the hills; birding abroad; jaw dropping Jordan).....	35
Denise McLellan - My Hill Bagging Year – 2018 (Tumps; hostels; Turkey; Canada; Japan; Azores; Colorado 14ers; Cornish kayaking; South Africa snake dodging) .....	36
Graham Illing - 2018 Bagging Report (Skye; Norway; Ecuador) .....	38
Julie Brown – Baglog (IOM, Skye, Ardnamurchan; Lakes; Indonesia) .....	42
Daniel Patrick Quinn - Baglog from Indonesia .....	44
Rob Woodall - Baglog & Totals 2018 (HuMPs completion; Welsh mainland TuMPs; kayaking; Tanzania; Zimbabwe; Oman; Turkey; Canada; 100 <sup>th</sup> P2000m; Mexico).....	44
Articles.....	48
The Man with the False Beard – by Eric Young (John Rooke Corbett).....	48
Imagine – Alan Dawson.....	52
Taking the Humff with Humps – Eric Young.....	54
Beginners A-Z of The Relative Hills Society - Anne Gray .....	55
A Grand Day Out – Tony Kinghorn (Sgurr nan Coireachan and Sgurr Thuilm, Jan 2018).....	57
Shetland and Orkney Islands – Barry K Smith .....	58
A Day Out on the Old Man of Hoy - Richard McLellan.....	59
HuMP Stacks Roundup – Rob Woodall (Mow Cop; Sheep Rock; Mingulay stacs; Hoy).....	62
Bagging by Kayak – A Sutton, A Brown, D Broadhead, D & R McLellan, R Woodall .....	65
Western Turkey Ultras - Rob Woodall .....	69

Tanzania and Zimbabwe Ultras – Rob Woodall .....	71
Oman - Long Days and Moonlit Nights – Rob Woodall.....	74
Northeast Mexico Ultras – Rob Woodall.....	77

## Completions

*Compiled by Chris Watson and Rob Woodall.*

Eric Young	SMC Full House; Britain & Ireland P600s
Anne Bunn	Britain & Ireland P600s
Anne Butler	Grahams; SMC Full House
Bert Barnett	Grahams 3rd round; 3rd SMC Full House
Andrew Finnimore	Donalds; Donald Tops; SMC Full House
Robert Poole	Corbetts
Denise McLellan	Corbetts
Alex Kelso	Corbetts; Grahams-with-a-view
Andy and Val Moffat	Grahams
Colin & Isabel Watts	Donalds
Rob Woodall	HuMPs
Alan Whatley	HuMPs; Administrative County Tops 1974 - 1996
Campbell Singer	London Borough Tops, the Current County and UA Tops, the Administrative County Tops 1974 - 1996 and the Historic County Tops.
Donald Shiach	Wainwrights

*Eric Young writes:* The Scottish Mountaineer Autumn 2018 edition reports Anne Butler’s Graham completion on Fiarach on 15 September 2018. Significantly it gave her an SMC “Full House”. This comprises recording completion of the Munros (282), Munro Tops (227), Corbetts (222), Grahams (219), Furths (34) and Donalds (89). Anne is the 53rd known person to have achieved this.

Coincidentally Eric Young completed the Munro Tops on Creag Coire nan Each on 27th May 2018. Interestingly that also meant he had an SMC “Full House”. As he lackadaisically didn’t report it until the autumn he’s the 54th.

Both he and Anne Bunn finished the Majors (P600) of Britain and Ireland on Knockboy on 22nd July 2018.

*Chris and Rob add:* In August 2018 the SMC decided that a Full House should include everything in their Munro's Tables publication i.e. including the 51 Donald Tops as well as the 89 Donalds.

## Baglogs 2018 - Britain

### Anne Butler - 2018 Baglog (Grahams; SMC Full House)

For me 2018 marked the end of a 20 year journey, one that I never intended making when the journey started.

We lived in Devon when I climbed my first Munro (Ben Lomond) in 1998. At the end of the holiday we had climbed 11 Munros and I was already hooked. Then 7 years later I stood on the summit of Sgurr Eilde Mor as a Munroist. The Munro blinkers were well and truly on. Molly - the - Collie and I deviated a bit from the Munro obsession with a Corbett completion each but the blinkers were reapplied and on we went, eventually completing 5 rounds.

At the end of 2014 Molly injured her shoulder and after a long lay off from the hills we were ready to go again. But the Munros had lost their appeal, I am a bagger through and through and I needed a new challenge. So, what was it to be? Even though it is sacrilegious to say so on these hallowed pages I was not drawn to Marilyn's, HuMPs or island bagging. Many friends had been climbing the Grahams and sung their praises, whereas others were not so complementary, they were fondly known as the 'DGs or Dull Grahams'. But I began chipping away, many of the Grahams proved ideal for building Molly's fitness up again after her injury, and slowly I crept over 100.

David Batty had mentioned achieving a 'Full House' once he had completed his Grahams and set an idea in motion. Could I? Nothing too challenging about the actual hills but logistically more of a problem. Long winter evenings spent poring over maps and websites paid off when the Munro Tops, Donalds and Furths were completed in 2017 and then all that remained were those pesky Grahams.

So that brings me to the story of 2018. In March I had boldly set a date for my completion in mid-September and all that stood between me and a Full House were 35 Grahams. Sounds easy? Well I had climbed all the straightforward hills and the ones closest to home when Molly was recovering and whilst training new dog Ralph. Arran, Jura (yes I had climbed Beinn and Oir twice and omitted the Grahams either side), 4 on Mull, plus ALL the challenging ones, Beinn na Lus and Meall Garbh, Ben Armine, Beinn a' Chasgein Bheag, Beinn Gaire, Croit Bheinn, Mullach Coire na Geur-oirean, An Cruachan, Slat Bheinn and Meall nan Eun.

During the long summer heatwave, after 135,000 highland miles, my car begun to make some rather ominous noises and my knee begun an unhealthy relationship with Brufen; I wasn't hopeful that either would make it through to the end. But miraculously they did.



I don't think Fiarach sees that much footfall so it must have been very surprised when 55 humans and 10 dogs joined me on my final Graham on the planned date in September. There was cake, lots of it and bucket loads of champagne, followed by more cake, so much in



fact that we were in danger of developing diabetes by the end of the day.

And that was it. The Full House complete almost 20 years to the day that I climbed my first Scottish hill. I admit to feeling very proud of my achievement. It may not be a relative hill list but we climb hills for many different reasons and all have varying personal goals. Whatever the list we enjoy what we do.

I was hoping to get to 700 Marilyns by the end of 2018 but events overtook me and it wasn't to be and my total stalled on 696.

And I can confirm the Grahams are definitely not dull!

### Alex Kelso - Rounds with a View (Grahams; Corbetts)

2018 was without doubt the most challenging I have ever had, on a personal level. However the hills have been one source of peace. Completion of the Graham round with a view, and also completing the Corbetts were achieved by the summer. There remain 2 Corbetts to complete the round, but it was nice to receive a certificate! A change of location and a house move from our longstanding base in the Fort to Bonnybridge has brought me nearer to the border hills, so inroads have been made with a view to completing sections 27 and 28, and for the Donalds. Good to have a reintroduction! Section 26 already finished for Marilyns. So, overall total for the year TuMPs 1582, HuMPs 1094 and Marilyns 963, completions only Munros, Corbetts and Grahams.

### Andrew Finnimore – Baglog (Donalds & Tops; SMC Full House; Atlantic outliers; snow patching; Indian islands)

My year was dominated by completing the Donalds and Donald Tops in order to achieve my SMC's "Full House". Although this is not strictly a relative hills matter, in doing so it did boost my Sims and Tumps totals, and my frequent trips down to the Southern Uplands fitted in nicely with visiting my new grandson in Edinburgh (I've already identified his first Marilyn - Arthurs Seat, and Hump - Corstorphine Hill!)

This year's highlights were undoubtedly the trips to Atlantic outliers, courtesy of the organisers Mervyn Jack and Darren Giddins, which included the Flannans, Monachs, Garvellachs and, most importantly for me, getting to bag the Marilyns on Scarp, Taransay and Pabbay. For a couple of days it was the nearest you can get to a Hebridean heatwave. Wonderful!

One of my toughest climbs of the year was trudging up the long path to the summit of Beinn Dearg (Ullapool) in late August to photograph the last remaining patch of snow for Iain Cameron's annual survey. Incidentally, only one snow patch survived through to the winter in 2018 - on Aonach Beag - and for a couple of weeks Ben Nevis and the Cairngorms were completely devoid of snow, unusual but a sign of the times for sure.

Last but not least, I finished off the year with a spot of island-hopping down in the Indian Ocean - which made a change to Sibs out in the Atlantic. Mauritius, the Seychelles and Reunion were all visited (though no Ultras were bagged I'm afraid!).

In 2019 I hope to tick off some of my remaining Scottish Marilyns, eg the Shiant and Ailsa Craig, and add to my Sibs total. Oh and my wife and I are hoping to go to the last place on our "retirement bucket list" - New Zealand, where I have some definite aspirations to add to my current meagre tally of Ultras!

## Eric Young - Adventures and Experiences 2018 (Skye scrambles; Munroing encounter)

As a mere scrambler there are some Simms I may only dream about. When Anne's brother and two friends arrived on Skye and offered to take us climbing we leapt at the chance. Clach Glas did not disappoint. We ascended over Sgurr nan Each with ever increasing interest and challenge to reach a surprisingly spacious top with two rock prominences. The descent was every bit as good. Roped down by The Imposter we found its ragged base cracked and shattered by a lightning strike. The cone-sheet rock colour change is noticeable at the arete. Exhilarated we reached The Putting Green. Climbers have it good naming features. Us mere hillwalkers name unnamed tops by compass direction and distance from parent hill.



*Sgurr Dubh Beag looking back down Dubh Slabs to Loch Coruisk*

Emboldened we sailed into Coruisk from Elgol to follow a scramblers route on to Sgurr Dubh Beag. You can reach above the Dubh Slabs by a grassy gap and scramble up giving awesome views into the Coruisk basin entrapped by the Cuillin ridge. Peaceful and remote. Not any more. Such is its attraction it has become a must do wedding venue. Rather incongruous to see fine wedding dresses and best tartan plaid in the remote location of the Coruisk jetty. The boatman had 70 wedding bookings this year alone.



*Allt a'Choire Dhomhain, Mullardoch – Eric Young*

The Mullardoch boatman Angus Hughes kindly dropped us at Coire Domhail. Magnificent secretive waterfall. The graded stalkers path once found is never to be forgotten. We traversed over Frith an Achaid Mor (our first new Simm today), now renamed Creag na h-Eige and around the corniced corrie over umpteen tops to reach Toll Creagach. We finished with a fine descent through pinewoods from Creag a'Bhaca (our second new Simm) back to the hydro dam. We reckoned we'd climbed 7 Simms and 3 Munro tops.

We'd approached The Saddle south ridge from Glen More traversing three Simms to reach the West Top. We'd noted one solitary walker whom we met returning from Sgurr Leac nan Each. So how was his Munro count?

"Just Carn a'Chlamain to go but I've four Munro Tops first so my completion will be Sir Hugh's full listing". A Scottish accent. Soon?

"Probably next year. I lost two years through a major internal operation and am only just getting back to full fitness". We told him we were doing Simms and explained.

"And there's these things I've heard of called Murdos. What are they exactly?"

"Interesting that you ask. 3000 foot tops with a minimum prominence of 30 metres. So not all Munro Tops are Murdos, and curiously not all Murdos were Munro Tops. Worth checking out. We asked the Scot whose name should we watch out for?

"Well it's a good one for a Scot", he replied. "Bruce Wallace".

## Campbell Singer - Rubbish report; London Boroughs; Counties through the ages

### What a load of rubbish.

In April last year I was bagging the Merthyr Tydfil Tumps, a varied bunch of hills with wild moorland and industrial heritage (old coal tips) in abundance.

Mynydd Cilfach-yr-encil, involves both of those environments, the approach by car being through some of the largest remaining tips in South Wales and the walk to the top over some pleasant heathland.

Sadly the approach to the hill from the north involves going along a kilometre of single track road which doesn't just have fly tipping but has domestic rubbish as two continuous ribbons along it's full length. In places the baths, doors, kiddies' bikes, sofas, mattresses, plastic bottles, car wheels and beer cans are two metres high and three metres wide on both sides of the road. To add insult to injury, there are even numerous abandoned wheelie bins!



What possesses the people of Merthyr to behave in such a way? Any ideas?

Next on my list was Mynydd Aberdar, on the opposite side of the Taff Vale. Walking up the steep lane from Heolgerric there was once again plenty of evidence of modern society's abandoned materialism. It resembled a gigantic and perverse altar to Ikea, B & Q, Toyswereus and Travis Perkins.

As I approached the top of the lane I was overtaken by a pick up truck full of bags of rubbish. Three big men were in the cab. In a very limited area, they managed to turn the truck round as if very well practiced at such a manoeuvre. I stood there with my arms folded and stared as threateningly as I thought wise at these habitual tippers. However, the fact that they were big and three and I am one stopped me from challenging them. So I memorised the registration number for reporting purposes and waited for Barbara to arrive five minutes later.

By this time one of the men had left the cab and disappeared into a small wood, obviously looking for a spot to offload the bags of rubbish.

Barbara arrived and I whispered to her about what was going on. Quickly assessing the situation, she then kindly and politely pointed out that the truck and the bright yellow jackets worn by the men had Merthyr Tydfil UA printed on them.

"Campbell, would fly tippers have a lorry with a big flashing light on the top?"

Just at that point, the man emerged from the woods bearing a piece of paper.

"Got a name and address," he announced to his colleagues.

These were the good guys, collecting evidence for prosecution purposes. Once again, I had picked up the wrong end of the stick.

PS Barbara insists that I add, "Once again, I (Campbell) was so lucky to have Barbara to help me to stop digging myself in further."

Marilyns	11	1550
Humps	26	2175
Tumps	528	3735
SIMMs	29	1099
Dodds	10	320
SIBs	7	83

In addition, during 2018 I completed all the London Borough Tops, the Current County and UA Tops, the Administrative County Tops 1974 - 1996 and the Historic County Tops.

As Secretary to the computer illiterate, Mr Alan Whatley, I have been asked to provide the following:

#### Alan Whatley - 2018 Totals (Counties; HuMPs completion)

Marilyns	0	1557
Humps	9	2984
Tumps	177	4145
SIMMs	34	2005
Dodds	13	444
SIBs	7	122

He also completed the Administrative County Tops 1974 – 1996, and, of course, the completion of the British Humps with Rob Woodall at the summit of The Old Man of Hoy, an amazing achievement by both.

#### Barbara Jones - Keep Off the Land (Military manoeuvres)

Another year of nul pointes on the Marilyn front. We sold the boat in the spring so we were not in Scotland as much as in the past. I did however spend a week on the North Coast of Scotland.

I had fun walking just inland of Dounreay alongside the razor wire fence with its CCTV cameras. I was sitting by the roadside having a cup of coffee when a police car drove up. Two coppers got out, one fully armed! Who was I? Where was I from? What was I doing there? My day sack had rung alarm bells! Ten minutes of quite fierce questioning followed with the armed chap doing the bad cop bit and his more friendly mate doing the good cop bit. How had I got where I was that morning? Bus out from Thurso and then across the fields. You walked across the farmer's fields! Yes, this is Scotland and there is a right to roam. They looked a bit put out at that. Had I any ID? Yes, here's my driving licence. Bad cop withdrew and I heard him asking, via his radio, for someone to check me out. Eventually they were satisfied and I went on my way eastwards.

I soon came to the old air station concrete runway. There were notices. 'Police firing range. No admittance if red flags are flying and red lights are flashing.' They weren't so I stepped onto it. I hadn't gone 20 yds when my 'friends' drew up. Where are you going? Over there I said, airily waving vaguely eastwards towards the visitors car park outside the perimeter fence. We'd advise you to walk along the road to the main road and then along the main road. Thanks very much but I going this way. Well we can't stop you. Indeed they couldn't.

Back home I read that they can only insist on seeing your ID if they have reasonable grounds to believe you have committed a crime. Next time it happens I shall enjoy querying whether I am obliged to show my ID.

### Bert Barnett – Baglog (Third Full House)

2018 was mostly spent repeating Grahams and Corbetts, and was marked by a third set of the Grahams on Hill of Wirren which completed a third "Full House" of the Scottish Mountaineering Club hill lists. I stopped collecting new Marilyn's in 2009, but since then have repeated 100 Marilyn's on average each year. A significant planning factor in recent years has been the convenient coupling of adjacent Corbetts and Grahams which usually resulted in a more worthwhile day.



*Arkle from Meall Horn - Photo: Bert Barnett*

### Colin & Isabel Watts – Baglog (Donalds done)

Totals as below. Please note that we are only bagging Marilyn's from your lists and if we do go up another category of hill you record, we probably are unaware of it and don't record it. That's not to say we ignore all other hill categories having added 17 Munro Tops, 25 Donalds (including completing them on Carrifan Gans on 30 June 2018), 1 of the Trail 100, and 27 of Wainwright's Outlying Fells during 2018!

Marilyn's:

Colin Watts: End 2017 total 1,060, 38 bagged 2018, end 2018 total 1,098.

Isabel Watts: End 2017 total 1,060, 38 bagged 2018, end 2018 total 1,098.

Yes, we are doing them together!

### Robert Poole – 2018 Bagtotals (Corbetts complete; Harris; Coigach)

My end of year summary - a good year with visits to Harris, completion of the Corbetts and perfect conditions for camping in the Coigach mountains.

Category	Total	2018
Marilyn's	1209	50
Humps	1807	86
Tumps	2866	223
Simms	1327	95
Dodds	342	32

### Audrey Litterick - Marilyn Baglog for 2018 (Backpacking; Scarba; Suffering for the JMT)

(+ 4 = 1135). The number of new Marilyn's for me this year is again low, mainly because I can't be bothered driving far and am happiest in the areas that hold the biggest mountains and the wildest land (which I have already visited and bagged all there is to bag). I simply can't face the long drive to Wales (where I still have

over 190 unbagged hills) and where I have been unpleasantly “GOML”d on several occasions. Having now got a dog (albeit an increasingly well-behaved one), I am sure my forays into the land of Welsh, sheep-infested Marilyn's will be even more trouble prone. I continue to thoroughly enjoy exploring the Munros from their less frequented sides and am almost finished my third round. The fourth is already beckoning.

Highlights for me this year were:

Backpacking - A tough but rewarding trip with pal Tony Kinghorn, carrying “our homes on our backs” over the Munros from Gairich west to Sgurr na Ciche in Knoydart. Perfect weather, great views, quiet mountains and no midgies.

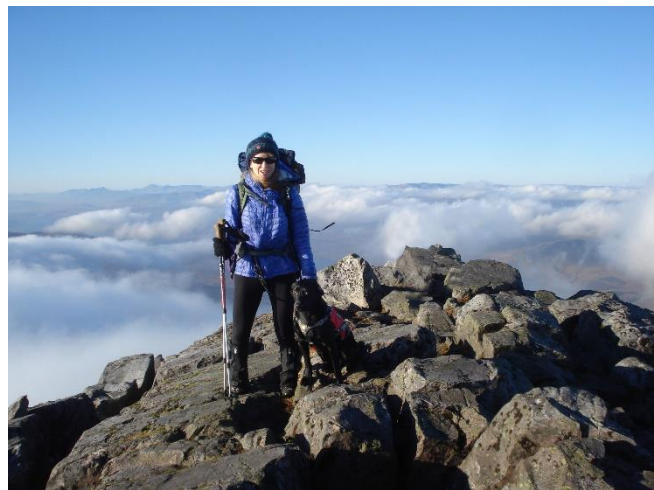
Backpacking - A delightful high level camping trip with husband Andy up and over some of the Mamores. Again perfect weather, with next to no midgies in late June and lovely quiet mountains. Thankfully most people seem to prefer to walk from about 8 am till 5 pm and that can leave the hills gloriously peaceful outside these hours. Andy rarely enjoys carrying heavy rucksacks but surprised himself by actually enjoying this trip.

Scarba – Joined around 10 others on a trip to Scarba organised by a “Summits on the air” (SOTA) bagger and enjoyed/endured temperatures of over 25oC as we ascended the Marilyn, Cruach Scarba, then wandered over to look at the straits of Coirevreckan shimmering under deep blue skies. Some had time for a swim, some a paddle, some to bag other hump/tump targets before meandering back to be picked up by the boatman. Does Scarba ever get hotter than that?! A truly memorable trip.



*Jura from Scarba, across the Straits of Coirevreckan*

A 6-day sponsored expedition in terrible wet, windy, claggy weather in November to raise money for the John Muir Trust to do much-needed repairs to the Schiehallion path, with my young black lab, Hector. We walked over Beinn A Ghlo, Beinn Vrackie, the high ground including two Corbetts of Farragon Hill and Meall Tairneachan, then over the Marilyn of Duncoillich (which is owned and managed by Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust, the chairman of the Trustees being my husband, Andy), over Schiehallion, then down to our house in Glenlyon. A total distance of 60 rough miles and 4,600 m of ascent. Because he was young, we took it easy, with no more than 7 hours walking on each day but it was still quite a challenge, given the weather. We were magnificently supported by Andy in the campervan and have so far managed to raise over £1,600, so thanks to those baggers who found out about our efforts and sponsored us!



*Audrey and Hector on Schiehallion*

[Alan Caine – Baglog \(1000<sup>th</sup> trig; sunny North Wales; southern England; SQUIBs\)](#)

The start of the year saw me making a mad dash to reach 1000 trig pillars before the Minnigaff meeting. My 1000th pillar celebration was on Ailsa Craig in beautiful weather in cracking company. Many thanks to Gill Stephens for making the arrangements.

After the Beast from the East had passed through, we had one of the best Spring and Summers in many years. So every weekend saw me travel to North Wales to bag as many of the mountains as I could. Also the family holiday this year was in Bude so gave me the chance to bag Yes Tor, High Willhays and Brown Willy.

Of the many highlights of the year was a boat trip to Piel Island, off the coast of Barrow in Furness and also a walk out in low tide to the lighthouse of Plover Scar near Heysham. This SQUIB is only 1 metre above Sea level but is in a glorious location.

My main aims for 2019 are to finish Region 35B (3 to go), finish the Wainwrights, and some county completions.

[Marion & Alan Mitchell – 1200<sup>th</sup> HuMP; Rescued on Mull](#)

*Marilyn numbers for 2018 = 66 making a total of 1136.*

*Now reached the magic 1200 for Humps. At 31 December on 1253 and I think the 1200th could have been Calf Top which to us is 'south of the border'.*

Sitting wet and miserable on the hillside for three hours was the last thing we expected to be doing that day. All had been so different in the morning when our gang set off to climb Cruach Choireadail, a Graham on the island of Mull in early May. The mist was down on the hill as we set off up the steepish slopes and we duly arrived at the summit without any difficulty. As we headed downwards it all changed as Alan did a somersault after a straightforward slip on the wet grass. There was obviously something seriously wrong with his right leg and as he had heard a crack as he flew through the air we all surmised he had broken his leg.

First thing was phone the Mountain Rescue but to do this Gordon had to reascend to the summit area to gain reception. Adrienne and myself busied ourselves making Alan as comfortable as possible by digging into our sacs and producing emergency bags and polythene sheet which had not seen the light of day for 20plus years. All of this time I was thinking 'this is not really happening to us'. Well MRT duly notified we then just had to sit down and wait and around an hour later we heard the sound of a helicopter overhead but the mist prevented landing. We then had word back that the helicopter would fly over to Oban to pick up a ground rescue team. We sat on discussing what the rescue folk would be saying about four 70plus year olds out on the hill.

At one point Alan started shivering so much that Gordon lay down at his back to cuddle him and Alan commented later than although this improved his own shivering he could feel Gordon starting to shiver behind him. The rain was on by this time and we were all making an effort not only to keep Alan warm and comfortable but to keep ourselves warm as well.

Eventually we heard the helicopter once again and knew that the team had been dropped off below the mist and were on their way. After what seemed an age we eventually heard voices and my instinct was to shout yoo-hoo but Gordon stressed that they knew exactly where we were as they had sent us an app by phone and we had to respond by pressing a button which gave them our exact grid reference. We had been quite proud that we had given a good grid reference but modern technology has reached mountain rescue and in many rescue cases this cutting of rescue time must be invaluable.

They seemed to come out of the mist in a line spread out over the hill and immediately attended to Alan. The leader confirmed that the symptoms did not fit in with a normal break in the leg and sure enough when in the helicopter it was diagnosed as a tear of the quadriceps tendon above the knee. Alan was put on a lightweight sled affair and duly whisked at a whopping pace down the hillside to reach the helicopter. By around teatime we were in Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock and Alan was set for a repair operation the next day.

What struck us was how the rescue services were so co-ordinated and we will always be so grateful to Oban Mountain Rescue team for their professionalism and care to all of us. By the way by October Alan was back on the hills with the help of his physio whom he said had the most beautiful eyes.

### Andy & Val Moffat - Hill Report 2018 (Grahams completion)

2018 represented a landmark year for us. Despite completing only four Marilyns bringing our total to (795) but they were significant as three (Grahams) represented our final Marilyns over 2,000 feet. In glorious weather during mid-May we rented a holiday cottage at the very remote Glenkinglass Lodge (50 NN 164 381 Landranger Sheet 50) to ascend Meall Garbh and Beinn nan Lus. These two hills are normally a long walk in but from the lodge – they are literally on the doorstep. Handy for a few other hills too. We left our car at the forest track carpark near Inverawe Smokehouse and the very friendly and helpful keeper Alasdair Ross ( [glenkinglass@gmail.com](mailto:glenkinglass@gmail.com) ) drove us up the 12 mile track to the cottage in his Land Rover.

The cottage was very comfortable with all mod cons, including excellent satellite WiFi and is on mains electricity too! Everything except TV. A few mice however do get in from under the outside door but were not a problem. Mousetraps provided. Available Feb to end June. We stayed for a week. Ascended both hills in the first two days and spent the rest of the week relaxing and catching up with some geology field trip preparation and did not see another human being for the duration!

At the end of May our final 2,000 ft Graham was Croit Bheinn (663 m, NM 810773 Landranger Sheet 40) in Moidart. For us, this was the culmination of nearly half a century of hillwalking having completed every summit, and point over 2,000 ft in England and Wales and in Scotland - the Munros, Munro Tops, Corbetts and Grahams plus a number of hills under 2,000 ft, many of which are Marilyns.

The ascent of Croit Bheinn was not however without incident. On the walk in, the 6 km Glen Moidart has to be negotiated gaining all of 59 m in height! Reputedly the boggiest glen in Scotland – more akin to a swamp in places even after a prolonged dry spell. Jumping across a bog pool, the bank edge sheared off throwing me backwards – into smelly sludge up to my neck. Everything soaked including keys to our camper van. Luckily, they were not contactless keys. Lesson learned: use waterproof bags for everything in your rucksack!

The photo montage was put together by friends!

On the walk out, we realised we would not get through the bog before nightfall. So, just before Glen Moidart we found a spot by a stream hemmed in by boulders. Got the bivy bag out (not much use except to sleep on) and midge hoods. I slept on grass and heather, Val slept on a sloping, but flat rock outcrop. Woke up at 04:30 hrs to a serenade of cuckoos. Our choice of sleeping surfaces was educational. Val had 1 tick, I ended up with 40! We made it back to the camper van in a 29 deg C heatwave with an additional, though fortunately minor 'bog encounter.'



Our fourth and final Marilyn for the year was the superb Bidein Clann Raonaid (466 m NH 054592 Landranger Sheet 25) above Glen Docherty en route to Kinlochewe. We now regularly take family and friends who visit up there as not too far from our home. On a good day the views are stunning for minimum effort.

So, what next? We will never complete the Marilyns as would have to tackle St. Kilda! For the time being we will stick to the 2,000 ft benchmark as we have some Donalds to tackle. We may then finish off the sub-2,000 ft Wainwrights as an excuse to make good use of the excellent Lake District pubs when away from our home in the north of Scotland.

And after the Donalds and Wainwrights? Age and arthritis in my ankles due to a legacy of past injuries and infant polio is slowing us down a bit but we will continue to enjoy the hills in our dotage most of which will be sub 2,000 ft Marilyns.

### [Dave Broadhead - Baglog 2018 \(Western Isles; Gatliff Trust hostels completion\)](#)

Marilyns 2018 = 50; Total = 896. New Year started on North Uist's lowly Crogary Mor (1523 180m) and I was back on South Uist a couple of months later, escaping the "Beast from the East" to find bogs frozen beneath clear blue skies, perfect conditions despite a bitter East wind. A circumnavigation of Loch Snigisleit taking in Arnaval (1443 256m) and Stulaval (1254 374m) and various bumps in between gave a great day. Returning to Lewis in September introduced me to the rugged Uig hills, with the slabby west flank of Griomaval (994 497m) a particularly enjoyable route. A mission to camp out at least one night each week in the pre-midge spring gave some very good days in Sutherland and Argyll, as far down as Kintyre. The wee biters were thankfully late but the dry summer brought a plague of clegs instead. I was fortunate to enjoy an extended stay on Skye at the start of the dry spell where only Scalpay's Mullach na Carn (1212 396m) still awaits my attention. Another day for the kayak. While the skies above Skye seemed to be filled with Sea Eagles and the roads with tourists, the most unusual sighting of the year was on the summit of Beinn Mhialarigh (887 548m), an outlier of Beinn Sgritheall where I could only surmise that disturbance of the summit rocks and fresh deep gouges in the surrounding earth had been caused by a lightning strike? My tally south of the border was boosted on a thousand-mile road trip as far as Derbyshire, with various stops en route, though in the Lakes I am finding it increasingly difficult to find Marilyns which also feature on that other grumpy guidebook writer's list! Back again to the Western Isles for New Year, finishing my round of the three excellent Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust properties, the south-east ridge of Toddun (921 528m) was another gem, literally from the door of Rhenigidale Hostel on Harris.

### [Margaret Squires - Reaching the Wall on Lewis](#)

We had finished 2017 with not many Marilyns left that we could do, having written off the sea stacks on account of general cowardice and lack of foresight (i.e. that maybe we should attempt them before we started falling to pieces). So with everything left on our Marilyn to-do list on or around Lewis we polished off the New Donalds early on in the year and having discovered that our Wainwright tallies weren't as bad as we thought due to many being Marilyns, we headed for them in July to December with a week at least bagging trip in



*Near the summit of Uisinis*

each month (End year tally 119 each, though this will not concern readers of this publication).

At the end of May we made for Lewis where Mervyn Jack had organised a substantial island bagging trip. We persuaded him to leave us on Pabbay and Taransay for a day each time so we could savour the experience and bagged Ben Raah and Beinn a Charnain . Then we moved onto Lewis itself and into Pairc. We had nibbled away at Pairc for several years, the task made easier by discovering that Shaun at the Scaladale Adventure Centre would take us across Loch Seaforth. This time we made three trips to the end of the road at Eishken to bag consecutively Muaithabhal and Gormol finally getting the last Marilyn we could bag (number 1551) with Uisinis. Roger was so pleased that he thought my long absence at the petrol station was because I was looking for something to celebrate with, but what I had wanted was upstairs, which I didn't know existed, so this was all the celebratory liquid he got

Alas, they don't seem to produce any for making women feel heroic.

That, however, is not the end of Marilyns. We now have to work out a way of getting Roger's deeply unco-operative knee to Beinn Dearg. Why couldn't they just discover a new drive-by?



### [Norman Wares – Baglog \(Sibbing; motorhoming; a bereavement; 3 celebrations\)](#)

The wonderful thing about bagging hills on any list is that it will inevitably take you to places you might not ever have visited. So it was for me in 2018. My intention was to try and bag as many Island Marilyns as I could, and my travels took me to Shetland/Orkney in the North down to the Isle of Man, via many of the Hebridean summits, including a day trip to Hirta (St Kilda).

Despite the 2018 summer weather being unusually dry and hot, this was not always the case on the islands. The boat trip I organised to Barra Head in May had to be postponed for a few days due to high winds, and in Shetland it took me three attempts to get to Fair Isle by plane, whilst my day on Foula was cut short due to incoming fog. Scarba was very wet, and it was a howling gale on the Isle of Man in November. However as the year progressed, normally boggy ground became drier underfoot and eased progress.

Whilst my main target was Marilyns, inevitably I got drawn into bagging smaller island summits, thanks to trips organised by Mervyn, Darren, and Alan Holmes. I had some incredibly enjoyable days and managed to bag 35 Sibs which were not Marilyns – I can appreciate how island bagging is becoming so popular.

Early in the year I realised that the unwieldy motorhome which I owned was not conducive to parking on very minor roads, and in its place I now have an elderly little campervan which has been put to good use. In November four of us enjoyed an hour of laughter and chat over lunch in the van whilst a heighting survey was progressing on Dugland near Carsphairn. Sadly, within an hour of this, one of the four, David Batty, a member of the Marilyn Hall of Fame, collapsed and died a short distance away. The three of us attended his funeral where his family expressed their appreciation that we had been there for him, although the reality was that there was nothing we could do other than to call the emergency services. The fragility of life was brought home to us that day.

On a happier note, I attended three celebrations – Anne Butler's SMC Full House completion in September, Chris Bienkowski's P01-06 Tump completion a month later, and finally Fiona and Stuart Clark's 600<sup>th</sup> Marilyn event. Altogether a memorable year, including attending the RHSoc dinner in Aviemore where I enjoyed the company of fellow members. Regrets? Not being able to bag Saxa Vord despite being only metres away – this due to extreme security around the summit area. Roll on 2019 !

## Tony Kinghorn - Baglog (Wild weather; Cuillin; Knoydart; Munros 2<sup>nd</sup> time; Bass Rock)

(+12 = 928). 2018 was dominated by a successful push to complete the Munros for a second time- successfully accomplished in September, a mere thirty years after the first time. As a result, the baglog of new hills has only increased only slowly, with a dozen Marilyn's and the odd HuMP or two.

The first part of the year was dominated by the wind- many wild days, including Am Faochagach (15A) at New Year and a memorable outing over Sgurr nan Coireachan and Sgurr Thuilm (10D) in January (see "A Grand Day Out").



*Sgurr nan Gillean from Sgurr a'Bhasteir (17B) – Tony Kinghorn*

It was also really windy in Glen Strathfarrar at the end of March, but we had some great days out on the Farrar Four, Sgurr na Lapaich and An Riabhacan (12B).

Thereafter the weather improved- a superb day in the Cuillin on Bruach na Frithe (17B) was truly alpine, while only a few weeks later warm dry summer weather prevailed on Sgurr an Gillean.



*Loch Quoich from Gairich (10B) – Tony Kinghorn*

A real highlight of the year was a three day backpacking trip from Gairich (10B) to Sgurr na Ciche- the weather was superb, the mountains were still harbouring bits of snow and the air was sparkling clear. These are superb mountains- rough, remote and spectacular. The only snag was finding

enough water- we had to go well down the corries to find any, a novel experience in that part of Scotland!

As we all know the dry weather persisted and an unusual experience was bagging Kinder Scout (36) in July with the peat bogs dry, crumbly and blowing away in the wind. Amazing.

Another highlight was finishing the Munros for a second time, this time on Sgurr na Sgine (10A) in Glen Shiel in September. Six of us enjoyed a lovely day, with superb views which only deteriorated when the rain came on late in the afternoon. By then we were well down the hill and, due to the summit celebrations, largely oblivious. The day was rounded off with an excellent meal in the Glenmoriston Arms Hotel.

As autumn came on, the winds returned, but I was lucky enough in a lull in December to get out to the Bass Rock. Most of the others who went on the trip had tried many times before- this was my first attempt! The captain of the boat, the "Braveheart", considered the landing conditions "marginal", but we got ashore (and back!) and enjoyed the very interesting topography of the rock. Mind you, gannets do not seem to be houseproud- they had left their summer home in a real mess! Many thanks to Alan Holmes for making all the arrangements for the boat.



*On Bass Rock (28A) – Tony Kinghorn*

*( Marilyn's: Scotland 845, England 82, Wales 1, IoM 0 ; HuMPs: 1063 )*

### Charles Everett – 2018 Baglogs story (Welsh Hogmanay; Skye project; Azores)

My year started and ended in Wales. YHA South of Brecon. Seven bearded baggers together on Hogmanay. Kicked off New Years day with two HuMPs with Adrian Rayner and a solo Marilyn Fan Nedd. On to stay with Adrian Dust for few days more S. Wales Marilyn's, Humps n tumps. Gathered a new PB of 487 TuMPs in the year and ended up final two days near Builth Wells and on Hogmanay 2018 two Marilyn's Carneddau and Aberedw Hill with Iain Brown +all the nearby tumps. In November reached 3000 TuMPs and 1200 HuMPs.

After blitzing to 292 tumps of Skye's total 316 in 2017 there was important agenda there to get over 300 and still six high Cuillin Simms unclimbed and the first completion of a Skye topo region Y02 in my sights with only 3 left but including Sgurr nan Each and a finish on Clach Glas which was a bit of a scary unknown.

Knights Peak came unexpectedly when I was heading up Gillean tourist route on way to Sgurr na Uamha when I inadvertently strayed off route up scree slopes too far right under Gillean and there was Knights peak above the top snow slope, looking eminently do-able from this side and yes with euphoria found myself up on its summit. First ten days May on Skye weather was fairly poor. Decided to go to Raasay for first time. Managed three quarters of its hills and though clouded day one, was glorious for walk out to Dun Caan day two.

Up in Trotternish failed on the rather scary Dun Dubh only 5 metres from summit on north ridge in swirling winds and feeling very unsafe, retreated.

Glorious couple of weeks on west Argyll Islands organised by Darren Giddins.

Up in June and into the heat wave, after week in n around Aberdeen, headed back to Skye via a glorious tiny concert in a wee cafe called 'The Jammy Piece' where a few other artists from Ireland and Canada + my new fave Rachel Sermanni was playing, who is first seen on Sleat on Skye, November before. Big treat.

Back on Skye hot dry rock Caisteal a'Garbh Coire, Dubhs ridge to Sgurr Dubh Beag, Sgurr na h'Uamha from the watershed in Glen Sligachan and then the completion of Y02 on Clach Glas with protective helmet and solo nervousness but I found a route and Y02 had a first completer. Yabbadabbadoo.

Also helped Chris Bienkowski complete Edinburgh and a big topo region by breaking away some gorse close to a cliff edge that had halted him years before with vertigo freeze.

Steep Holm cancellations in Bristol Channel stopped completion of NW Somerset, but now closing in on Oxfordshire.

Excellent mixed year including high point of Sao Miguel Island biggest of the Azores on 1st September.

### Dave Beaumont – Baglog (Corbett completion; house and dog duties)

Not had a very good year bagging, Mora my Shetland Sheepdog passed away in January. I completed the Corbetts in the spring with a marathon 22 miler from Glencalvie Lodge (no bike). Rest of year spent on house maintenance (OK now for another 15 years!) and raising the new puppy. Doing some Pennine humps with her (hill training) and back to Scotland in the spring.

### David Levey – Baglog (Marilyn corridor; grouse moor misgivings)

+69 = 560 Ma, +73 = 724 Hu, + 165 = 1513 Tu,

After many years of wandering hills and mountains in the UK and abroad, I finally started bagging Marilyns about 2 years ago and since then I have increased my total by 160. I hope to be able to enter the Hall of Fame during 2019

But scars lurk amongst my many fine 2018 hillbagging memories. Scars associated with the way grouse moors are managed. I sadly witnessed a mountain hare cull. I saw grotesque animal traps and also found a large trap designed for crows

In my view many grouse moors have the wrong ecological balance with too many grouse and too few other species such as raptors.

### David Stallard - Annual Return for 2018 (1000<sup>th</sup> Marilyn; HuMPs; Simms; Dodds; eagle)

Marilyns +27 = 1002      HuMPs +38 = 1343

The weather was so kind to hill-walkers from May on this year that it's hard to remember now what it a cold, late Spring it was. I turned back twice from planned, local walking trips in March because the lying snow here in the North of Scotland meant there was nowhere I could safely get my car off the road and be confident of getting back onto it later. On one of those occasions I was very grateful for the help of three police officers in a passing Range Rover who gave me a helping push when they saw I was in difficulty, after trying out a lay-by and getting stuck. The summer, autumn and early winter have offered such long spells of good walking weather that, like most Relative Hills Society members I expect, I've largely forgotten that and look back on 2018 as an exceptionally good year.

My two most satisfying achievements this year were reaching the 1000 Marilyn mark and completing the Marilyns on the mainland north of the Highland Boundary Fault.

My thousandth Marilyn was Brown Carrick Hill in Ayrshire on 18 August. It's hardly a spectacular hill but was chosen as in reach for a family outing to include my wife, my son (who has come up my last Munro, last Corbett and last Graham with me over the years), his wife and his 23-month-old daughter. He lives in Glasgow and we'd planned a day from the long-range forecast several days earlier which promised clear, dry weather. This was, of course, not to be. My long-suffering, patient, non-hill-walker wife and I travelled to Glasgow the day before and we woke up to low cloud and rain. We all set off, hoping for a clearance, but the

rain got heavier if anything as we drove to the coast. We started walking in full waterproofs. We were very grateful for the tarmac road as far as the MoD masts on the east top of the hill but had to use the compass to guide us to the actual summit. This can, I know, offer fine, wide-ranging views of the Firth of Clyde, Kintyre and Arran but not today - with visibility of about 50 yards. At least it did stop raining for a while. We celebrated with a drink and family photos at the summit and a meal in Ayr on the way home.

I've had an ambition to go up all the mainland Marilyn's in the Scottish Highlands since completing those north of the Great Glen in 2014 and have been chipping away at these since. Two trips based in Oban in 2017 left me with one still outstanding in Section 1 and 23 in various parts of Section 19. The sun shone and I made three trips to Argyll over the late spring and summer, staying in Oban, Lochgair and Carradale. This is a very rewarding area which I didn't know at all well. Sections 19A and 19B lack any Marilyn's above 600 metres and are therefore off most walkers' priority lists. So you get to walk up interesting hills, generally without meeting anyone else. The price you pay for this is that you're often walking on trackless ground but it's worth it. Ben Cruachan, the Paps of Jura and Arran are dominant features of the horizon down here, varying in apparent prominence as you move around but always fine features of the landscape. The way long sea lochs deeply penetrate between the hills gives memorable views. Looking across Campbeltown Loch and the Firth of Clyde from directly above the town on Beinn Ghuilean to Arran on a bright, sunny day is a memory I treasure. Looking out across the sea against the evening light to Ireland from Beinn na Lice on the Mull of Kintyre is another.

Exceptions to my general experience of meeting no other walkers when out on these hills came in May. I coincided with a Marilyn-bagging trip by a group closely involved with RHSoc. Approaching the top of Carn Breugach on the island of Kerrera, off Oban, I was surprised to see two other walkers - particularly as it was a very windy day and the ferry operator had warned us he probably wouldn't be able to operate beyond lunchtime because of the forecast. Charles Everett greeted me by saying; "you must be a Marilyn-bagger!" Two days later coming off the fine but little-visited hill, Beinn Bhan (also 19A), I used Charles's words to greet the woman I met coming uphill. She turned out to be Gill Stephens and part of the same group. It had been almost too windy for Charles and I to hear each other speak but Gill and I had an interesting chat about Marilyn's we both knew.

Humps Those trips to Argyll focused on Marilyn's reduced progress on these. I only managed 11 new non-Marilyn Humps this year, all in the Northern Highlands. But these trips gave me some long, good days in little-visited areas. I have an ambition to complete the Humps in the Northern and Western Highlands but with 77 left and some of these very remote, that is going to take quite some time and I may or may not manage it.

Simms I finally got around to checking the Simms tables in March and working out how many I'd been up. The answer turned out to be 1437. I had been collecting Graham and Corbett Tops for some time, using the TACit Press lists, so I wasn't sure whether to be pleased or disappointed by this number. However, gaining entry to the Simm Corridor looked not too far out of reach and I've started to include Simms in walk plans. Like the Humps, pursuing Simms gives new interest to walking and takes you on some good expeditions. One trip in April in the eastern Monadhliath took me to four Simms and a Corbett over 12 hours, finishing well after dark, and took me to rewarding places I would never have gone to otherwise. In total I added 33 Simms this year, bringing me up to 1470. I suspect I'm never likely to reach 2000 and full Simm Hall of Fame status but the Simm Corridor is in reach now and I hope to reach it in 2019.

Dodds I was interested to read about this new hill category in the 2018 Relative Matters and have worked out which ones I've visited. As with the Simms, they give a new interest and I've started to include them in possible walking objectives. When I checked the list I found I'd been up 241. I've added 14 since to give 255 to date. I had a fine day in Upper Strathconon in Ross-shire on a ridge made up of four of them in October. At nearly 69 and only halfway through this list, I doubt I'm going to be bothering the Dodd Hall of Fame compilers!

One striking moment this year was putting up a Golden Eagle from the ground less than 20 metres away when I topped a rise on the approach to Beinn Ghlas, just north of Inveraray. They are VERY BIG birds when you see them from that close. Another was seeing my first Sea Eagle in Knapdale. All in all it's been a very good year out on the hills for me.

### Donald Shiach – Baglog (Wainwrights done; Scottish Marilyns; Nigg niggles)

The highlight of 2018 was completing the Wainwrights on the last day of February. The relative hills part of this story is that we had the grace to finish on a Marilyn - Hallin Fell on the first day of the easterly gales (aka the Beast from the East). I am delighted to say there are still plenty Lakeland Marilyns and Humps which are not Wainwrights and which will call for return trips in future years.

All other trips were in Scotland, including a very good week in Tayvallich to explore hills from Loch Awe to Loch Fyne as well as two of the coastal hills. Cnoc Reamhar takes a bit of getting to, especially if you start from Crinan as we did, but is a fine viewpoint; so is Cruach nam Fearna NW of Kilmelford, and it has a lovely green road leading to it from Ardunstur.

I spent three very hot days in Moffat in July, and picked off wanted hills from Criffel in the south to Nutberry Hill in the north. I was going to say "outstanding" rather than "wanted", but even Tina Turner couldn't make Nutberry City Limits exciting.

Hill of Nigg on the penultimate day of the year was supposed to be a stroll, but is a classic example of what the map doesn't tell you. The plateau between the Trig Point and the true summit 1km SW is a nightmare of barbed wire, gorse and windblown trees, so I ended up coming down in the gloaming and straight into a herd of highland cattle. Fortunately they were not in a curious mood, so I did not suffer the ignominy of injury on a 205m hill!

### Eddie Harwood – Baglog (Fractures; Western Isles relapse)

Total 835 +13

Whilst 2017 was an almost total write off due to a doubly broken big toe which the x-ray department were inexplicably unable to spot twice leading to me not letting it mend, 2018 was followed by an ankle stress fracture just as I was getting back to fitness.

However I had a fabulous trip through the Western Isles just as I was starting moving again in amazing weather where I managed 10 new hills although a day over Hecla, Ben Corrodale and Beinn Mhor proved to be too much for the ankle more or less ending the bagging aspect of the trip.

The other 3 hills were odd opportunist ascents in England and Wales.

### Gill Stephens – Baglog (Wales complete; 1100<sup>th</sup> Marilyn; Scottish nest-building)

Marilyn: 250, total 1107.

Hump: 263, total 1272

Other hills: Tump 337, Simm 39, Dodd 57, SIB 25

Another good bagging year. Early in 2018, I thoroughly enjoyed various trips to mid- and South Wales to bag the remaining 80 Welsh Marilyns, staying in all sorts of pubs, hostels, hotels and cottages at bargain, low-

season prices. One of the highlights was a train trip to Cardiff, using the railway lines along the valleys to get to the hills. Splendid. After completing Wales on Carneddau in April, my bubble was burst when Myrddyn P. demoted Cynriau Nod and promoted Foel Cedig during the summer. Fortunately, Alex C. had had the foresight to book Llanfyllin Workhouse for the Bagger Rambles in November, so I managed to recomplete Wales alongside Richard McL. and a great many other friends. So far, my England completion on Muncaster Fell in June has not been supplanted. This is a good thing, given that it's hard to beat a day out on the Ravenglass-Eskdale railway and a linear walk back, interspersed with pies, cakes and ice cream and topped off with damson gin at the summit.

In May, I bagged my 1000<sup>th</sup> Marilyn on Beinn na Gainimh, which provided wonderful navigation practice in the rain and mist. Various marker stakes turned out to be perfectly aligned with the correct bearings and a half-arsed box search yielded the cairn. In June (and perfect weather), I bagged my 1200<sup>th</sup> Hump on Mellbreak. Other highlights included a hot and steamy trip to Morvern and Ardnamurchan for a "my treat to me" 60<sup>th</sup> birthday present, and a very fine and sociable bagger's trip to Barra and its islands. Progress slowed down after moving to Rothes in July, mainly because of the exceptional heat and a focus on longer walks on bigger hills, but a superb trip to Shetland with Jon G. in August yielded a whole bunch of splendid and unusual Marilyns. Somehow, a few Tumps, SIBs and trigs also sneaked in during the year, mainly due to the bad influence of Jon G. and Sharen K.

Progress has more or less stalled since picking up the keys to my new house in Strathdon in September, as I've been frantically trying to make the place habitable, so most of the 250 Marilyns for 2018 were bagged before that. Even so, I have almost finished the Marilyns in sections 7, 9, and 21 and I managed to bag my 1100<sup>th</sup> Marilyn in October on Allermuir Hill. I was very pleased to turn the newly habitable half of the house into a Baggers' Nest over Christmas, when 4 of us did a great deal of eating, drinking and bagging.

Things are looking good for Scottish Marilyn bagging trips during 2019. The only trouble is that there are so many good hills around Strathdon that I might get distracted by Simms, Munro tops and my second rounds of Munros and Corbetts. Wouldn't that be horrible? Not.

## Henry Marston – Biog and Baglog

### My first report on hill-bagging progress

My introduction to serious hill walking was with the Derby YMCA Scout group, in their Easter Camp (for experienced campers) in Snowdonia, in Glaslyn. While we were there, the highlight was to climb Snowdon by the Watkin path, the first Marilyn I can identify as having climbed a mere 60 years ago, when I was a cheerful 12 year old. We then moved to Lichfield where I resurrected interest in mountains (as well as rock climbing) with the arrival of a new physics master, D.K. Jones. In successive years he led small groups over the Welsh 3000's and Lake District 3000's. The school also had a 50 mile in 12 hour challenge that I met on 3 occasions – all good for stamina.

My move to Sheffield University later proved not to be great for Marilyn bagging (but no-one had heard of them then). But OK for developing mountain craft. Our young family would undertake mountain walks, bagging such Marilyns as 9 Standards Rigg and Buckden Pike, until the difference in walking pace of the youngest and oldest turned our attention to Orienteering. Nevertheless, festival events took us round the country, and we/I managed a number of scattered hills. These were often in Scotland, and I did wonder about tackling the Munros, but the task seemed daunting. Our first Munro was Ben Lomond, after an orienteering event in Scotland in 1984. Once the youngsters had fledged, my wife Pat and I would regularly head north for extended May Day, Whit and August bank holidays, in our camper for serious Munro bagging – I'd got hooked. Quite a few overnight camping expeditions were involved, in Affric, Lurg Mhor, Seana Bhraigh and hills from Corrour. Skye was the missing link, which we first visited when I was hobbling after the South Glen Shiel ridge. Returning, my earlier rock-climbing experience enabled me to get up most Skye

Munros. Then, with a short list of premium peaks to conquer, I teamed up with Mike Milmo (met in the prestigious Round Rotherham 50 mile event), a more experienced climber who helped me on some tricky expeditions. Initially, the In Pinn and Ben Nevis via Tower Ridge, but elsewhere by having 2 vehicles to facilitate ridge walks. Final Munro was Beinn Bhuidhe just short of 30 years after Ben Lomond! Pat has now got to 195 Munros, but unfortunately 5 more to get to 200 seems unlikely.

What to do now? Although I'd tried to pick off Munro Tops as I went, the remaining ones were too scattered to be a realistic option. I'd also done around 60 Corbetts and 25 Grahams, often when Munro options were inappropriate. It seemed unlikely that I'd have time to complete either category before time caught up with me. But I would have a chance of getting another 200 Marilyns to get to the 600 required for the lower HoF, so that became my target. When I was free to do so, I undertook serious expeditions in Scotland, collecting the hands of 5 Corbetts and Grahams, and Beinn Bhreac amongst others. For domestic reasons, a short walk from the camper is now favoured so following careful map checking) I've been collecting the 'low hanging fruit' amongst the Marilyns, e.g. in SW England, Fife, the Borders, Orkney, Shetland.

On the way to Anfield, we managed to do Winter Hill on the second attempt, following the summer fires and realising we could drive almost to the TV station – could have driven further, but we did want a bit of a walk! Superficially, there was not much evidence of the fire. That was Number 564 in my bagging list of Marilyns. I hope to do a circuit of SE England to make a dent in the 36 remaining for the HoF target; the best options for the balance seem to be in Wales or Dumfries and Galloway.

Data: 2018 Marilyns: 54 (all first ascents) Total: 564 First: Snowdon, Easter 1959

2018 Humps: 54 (all first ascents) Total: 647 (subject to re-assessment of non-Marilyn Munros, etc) First: Snowdon, Easter 1959

## Jean and Bill Bowers - Marilyn and Humps Update (Mull; Scourie; Outliers)

### Marilyns

Bill Bowers Total Marilyns climbed 1,034.  
Increase of 10 in 2018.

Jean Bowers Total Marilyns climbed 660.  
Increase of 11 in 2018.

Highlights during the year were –

A week on Mull in April. Jean had a sunny day to climb Ben More for the first time but there was snow and cloud on the top.

Climbing Meall Horn in good weather while

staying at Scourie for a week in May.



*Sgurr Dearg, Mull 741M – Jean Bowers*

### Humps

Bill Bowers Total Humps climbed 1,216. Increase in year 17

1,200th Hump Scout Scar, Section 34D 25th February 2018

First recorded Hump Ben Nevis 15th August 1961

As our nearest unclimbed Marilyn (Fell of Fleet, Section 27B) is 467 kilometres from home (as measured by Grid References) and Jean and I have climbed all the English and Welsh Hewitts and Sub-Hewitts and the

Wainwrights, we decided to look for other unclimbed hills that were a bit closer to our home in north Essex. I decided that I was now sufficiently old and decrepit to climb Wainwright's Outlying Fells which contain a few Humps. The 'Beast from the East' arrived 3 days after climbing Scout Scar which curtailed our activities for the rest of that week.

I can recall climbing some Humps before 1961 on the Malverns, North Downs and Shropshire hills but as I have no records of the dates I have not included them in my total.

### [Liz and Peter Hastie - The Luck of the Weather \(Western Isles; Cape Wrath newcomer\)](#)

Years ago we would have walked in any weather that was safe, to complete the hills we wanted to do. Now we tend to pick and choose the days that we walk. This year weather was particularly important in allowing us to access some of the island Marilyns. We were late in becoming aware of a possible trip to the Bishop's Isles, South of Barra, and were lucky to get the last place (but for L or P?) available on the boat organised by Norman Wares. The weather turned out to be lucky for us, and unlucky for many others, when it became impossible for the boat to go on the planned dates, due to high winds. Being retired, and able to stay on Barra for additional nights, meant in the end we both got places on the boat as did some others able to make last minute plans. We had a lovely day of buzzing between the islands, and great views from each summit. The puffins and seals were an added bonus, and the remains of habitation on the islands a focus of interest that did make us wish we had a little more time to explore. Maybe a return to at least Mingulay is something for the future. We were also lucky with Scarp, as we had been beaten by the weather on this one last year. This time we stayed at a cottage at Hushinish beach, and were in the right place to take up the kind offer of a lift to Scarp, on a day when the weather was just calm enough to go. It was a small boat, and any higher winds would certainly have beaten us again this year. Our final island of the year and also our last Welsh Marilyn, was on Bardsey Island. We had a lovely day there with friends, lucky because it had had to be booked well in advance, with no knowledge of the forecast.

We also did some New Donalds this year, and a walk in the mist over Cairnsmore of Fleet, to reach Meikle Mulltaggart, reminded us that misty weather can be pleasant, especially when you have some forest walking. The mist added an ethereal touch, and higher up it didn't detract from the walk, as there was little wind. When it comes to weather, the wind is definitely a key element in the experience on a hill, and sunshine not always an essential.

We are coming to the end of the Marilyn list, and the appearance of a new Marilyn out on Cape Wrath initially seemed like an annoyance, but in the end was a wonderful experience. Again good weather played its part. We didn't want to do the long walk out to Beinn Dearg in poor weather, so we booked a cottage for a week out at Achriesgill near Kinlochbervie, and hoped for a good day. It was November, so a bit of a gamble. Fortunately for us our first full day there had a great forecast. We walked from the A838 up by the Allt na Creige Riabhaich, so not repeating any route we had used for other Cape Wrath Marilyns. The views from the summit to all the other Marilyns in the area were excellent, as well as views to Durness and to Am Buachaille. So in the end we'd say 'thanks for finding the new hill', as it was well worth the walk, and lovely to be out there.

Liz has now completed 1552 Marilyns and will not complete the remaining 5. Peter has 1554, and still hopes to do Boreray out at St Kilda. Then there are the two stacks, and who knows about these!?

### [Jen and Rick Salter - Bag Log 2018 \(Climbing; dog-walking; running; whisky; wedding\)](#)

If 2017 was a year of adjustment after our gut-busting big Marilyn year in 2016 then 2018 was a real contrast. Early on the resolution was made to get back into rock climbing for us both, particularly for Rick with the Old Man of Hoy beckoning later in the year, but also to satisfy interests of other members in

climbing Napes Needle and ours of summiting the Old Man of Mow. Trips to the climbing wall began early in the year therefore, and the newly discovered Bram Crag Quarry near Threlkeld became a regular visiting point. Note to Editor: zero metres prominence, not on Hill Bagging, fortunately.

In addition to the rock climbing we focused down from Humps, Simms, Donalds and Cumbrian Tumps to just the Humps and occasional Cumbrian Top. Distractions had arisen from a lethargy felt in RHSoc, our efforts to organise the annual dinner/AGM at Aviemore and our bag log reporting last year. Nevertheless things began brightly in 2018 climbing hills in Cumbria, then an extended trip to Shropshire principally Hump bagging. My birthday week in late January was spent in the whisky capital of Scotland, Dufftown where Humps and Distilleries were enjoyed in equal measure. Through March an extended trip to North Wales saw us wrap up Humps in that area and contribute to our total of near 200 Humps in the year, over that if repeats are included. Bryher herself recorded more than that as most were first ascents.

While Jen did a lot of training on the road in preparation for the Keswick half-marathon, Bryher and I took the time to climb a number of Lake District Wainwrights, getting her total over 50 by the year end. Then through April and May we travelled extensively ranging from Mount Manisty, the Tayvallich area of Argyll, the Slate Isle marvels, our wedding on the 27<sup>th</sup> April and a honeymoon in Grasmere, then an extended tour of the South of England after a niece's wedding in Kent. Travelling right through to Cornwall we completed the 20 plus Humps we needed to finish off those Sections, and enjoy several days in Dartmoor too, Bryher climbing Hound Tor being a highlight. The coastal walking around the Lizard peninsula was superb, before heading back to the Scilly Isles for week of island hopping and fine walking. Sadly the remaining Tump out there, Man o'Vaur East remained elusive. We spoke to the boatman Martin Jenkins, who had taken us around last time about this; 'no chance' was his reply!

Early June saw us back in Argyll sailing to the Garvellachs off Oban on a fine, misty day. Then a return to Barra and a successful boat out to Mingulay and a hard climb and first ascent of 'Lost Shepherd' VS 4c to bag Lianamuil. A great day with other intrepid climbers, some more prepared than others! In June the rock climbing intensified, Castle Rock, Black Rock (Troutdale Pinnacle), Shepherds Crag and Napes Needle under Gable gave practice that led to the superb trip to the Orkney Isles late July. An initial poor weather window allowed Island Bagging opportunities, before a truly wonderful if very windy day on the Old Man of Hoy with good friends. At E1 the grade reflects the one hard second pitch, with its classic Coffin pitch, a tight overhanging groove, easy to wriggle into, and as in life, not so easy to escape. The final airy corner crack with views right through the top of the stac was the most memorable; as was sitting on the top of the rock feeling it trembling every now and again through the seat of one's pants as the wind buffeted against its flanks. I think that we were all glad to begin the abseil off. A fine contrast was the evening teas of scones, cream and home-made strawberry jam we enjoyed, the jam courtesy of Valerie on Gairsay Isle, all from home grown produce out there.

The climbing practice was put to good use with an ascent of the Old Man of Mow in August, relatively straightforward after Hoy. There was a bit of down to earth when we arrived home from there to find out that a Hump out on the Cape Wrath peninsula had been promoted to a Marilyn after surveying; we had driven past the area only a few days before. Jen decided we'd go back up end of the month and tidy that one up, opportunity was made of the visit to pick off another 10 Humps up there including all outstanding on the Wrath peninsula. Early in September we completed the northern Sections on Glendhu Hill, before a long trip out to Crete and Gavdos Isle for a deserved bagging break.

We were fortunate to attend a 600M party on Newtyle hill towards the year end, the first for a while and thoroughly enjoyable. Either side we returned to Section 38 and 39 to complete outstanding Humps. Just 9 in Section 36 stand between us and an English Hump completion.

The rock climbing will continue into 2019, Arnamuil and Sheep Rock remain to be climbed, then 800 or so Humps for a completion. If that's now the target, time will tell!

## Jonathan Appleby – Marilyn Baglog 2018 (Arran; Flowerdale; Wyvis close call)

I managed 15 new Marilyns in 2018, bringing my Marilyn total to 662. Not a great year numerically, but that was more than made up for by the quality of the hills themselves.

**Highlights:** Two days stand out from 2018. The first was a traverse of Beinn Tarsuinn, Caisteal Abhail and Cir Mhòr from Lochranza in August. A memorable day out in a grand setting, clouds skimming the summits, good paths to follow, and some enjoyable scrambling. The second stand-out day was a September traverse of Beinn an Eòin and Baosbheinn from Am Feur-Loch (beside A832). A big day in the hills, with hints of autumnal colours appearing in the vegetation. Our lunch spot was at Loch na h-Oidhche, beside Pòca Buidhe bothy – now sadly closed to the public. (see photo)

**Lowlight:** I've climbed Ben Wyvis many times – it is our nearest Munro – and usually get to the summit several times during the winter, when the trig point is often just poking up through the snow. My third ascent of last winter, in mid-March, was a little more adrenaline-packed than I like. I got to the top ok, but my descent route was a poor choice, and I found myself inching my way down glazed sheet ice, with no ice axe and only microspikes over my fell shoes. For perhaps 100m I was in a situation where a slide would have resulted in a high speed luge to lower slopes. Not good. Lesson: Treat Ben Wyvis with respect. It's only had one fatality so far (back in March 1985); let's keep it that way.

**High Point:** Ben Nevis yet again, twice. Continuing in my quest to find unusual or alternative routes up and down this complex hill. No climbing was needed, but going off the beaten track introduces an air of wilderness into the experience, and takes you away from the crowded main paths.

**Low Point:** Greabhal, Harris (280m). A small hill with a big view, and when climbed on a wild and windy day it feels much higher than it really is. In April we stayed for a week in a cottage at the foot of this hill, and the steep power-walk up to the summit really got the heart rate up.

## John Henderson - Bag Totals and Report (LDWA; Bishop Isles; Pennines; Mournes)

### Bag Totals for 2018 are:

Marilyns: 31 Total 1138

Humps: 32 Total 1265

### Report

Not a great year for hill bagging as my focus was on planning, organising and leading LDWA events – but it did help greatly with fitness levels! Highlight of the bagging year was the boat trip to the Bishop Isles (24D) in May, organised by Norman Wares. In glorious weather, our party of 9 managed to summit each of the 5 Islands during the 11 hour trip. It will certainly live long in the memory. In early June, I spent 4 days on Lewis and



only managed 4 Marilyns due to the extremely hot weather. Later in June, I spent another 3 glorious days walking over the various summits and paths of the Mourne Mountains.

The longest bagging trip of the year was 8 days in August to the Northern/Central Pennines area (35A/B). It was over 30 years since I last walked in this area, and I managed to do 18 Marilyns (2 repeats) in mostly great weather. One of the hills was Cross Fell (893m), which I will be crossing again in May 2019, during the annual LDWA 100 mile event! In September I was back again to the Mourne Mountains, to walk the 22 miles of the Mourne Wall. We did this over 2 days starting from the Silent Valley Reservoir each day and walking down to Newcastle. Two long days on the hills, but the Guinness did replenish the body and the soul at the end of the day! My final trip of the year was to Dumfries & Galloway in October to do 6 Marilyns in section 27C. Criffel should have been a highlight with great views from the summit, but typically the cloud started to lift only when I was most of the way back to the car park! It is however, a horrible wet and boggy slog to get those views!

### [Jonathan de Ferranti – Bag Totals 2018 \(Mad bagger; Stacs obstruction\)](#)

Marilyns: +256 = 1296 (or 1302 if 6 on the island of Ireland are included)  
Humps: +266 = 1468 (may try to complete in the unlikely event of staying fit enough for 15 more years)  
Tumps: +384 = 1877 (no record of my 1500th)  
Simms: +113 = 778 (FWIW, I dislike height restricted lists)  
Dodds: +46 = 221 (ditto)  
SIBs: +5 = 64 (including Bass Rock, well done Alan Holmes :-))

I make no apologies to anyone for the year of Marilyn bagging madness. I did not set out to top the 2018 league table but it appears to have happened. I drive a small car, own no second home, have not been abroad since 2004 and work long hours collecting and creating free digital elevation data. I do not know how many years of adequate fitness I have left and I intend to complete the Marilyns to the best of my capacity. If I do not find the physical capacity to climb the St Kilda stacs then so be it. But if I am thwarted by the NTS, then I will feel thoroughly bad about it.

I can see no legitimate reason whatsoever for the extension of the stac landing restrictions beyond early to mid October. Gannets are not a threatened species, and any that are still on the stacs by mid October are unlikely to make it to their winter destinations. If the stac ban extension is not lifted by next autumn then I will have to conclude that these NTS guys are motivated by pervasive anti-bagging sentiment.

Still on the subject of the St Kilda Marilyn stacs, can anyone tell me why these are neither sibs nor squibs, while smaller and lower, ergo less significant, islands (e.g. Levenish) are sibs.

My mentality is such that if I stopped bagging hills, I would stop climbing hills. And if I stopped climbing hills I would become a couch potato.

Live and let live. That's what I say.

### [Martyn Dougherty – From the Sublime to the Ridiculous \(Wrath; Kilda; Crowborough\)](#)

I had never been on the Cape Wrath Peninsula until February last year.

Whilst on the ascent of Fàrmheall (1113 521m) I heard a wild screeching sound above me and my heart skipped a beat. Looking up I caught a glimpse of a large striped cat. It was my first sighting of the elusive Scottish Wild Cat. As evidence I captured a clear photo of the cat's paws in the snow. I presume the cat was seriously peeved, I had invaded his solitary territory.

With Portmadoc as a base Glenys and I had a good solid week's hillwalking in north Wales. Moelwyn Mawr (1994 770m) was found to be the most impressive of the hills we climbed rewarding us with expansive views over Blaenau Ffestiniog and the mostly redundant slate quarries whose slag heaps now provide alternative adventures for the mountain bikers whose bikes are conveniently transported up the mountain for them to ride down.

On our return north we headed for Lochcarron in May where we successfully completed sections 13A and B including the recent addition of Sithean Mor (979 383m) in gale force winds.

Our annual visit to Harris and Lewis was particularly eventful, having booked a trip to St Kilda from Leverburgh. Climbing Conachair (1636 430m) on Hirta was special. Our return excursion included rounding Boreray and the awe inspiring Stac an Armin (1639 196m) and Stac Lee (1641 172m) which we have left for later.

Returning again to Cape Wrath, with bike in tow, I accessed and climbed the two northern hills, Sgribhis Bheinn (1118 371m) and Fashven (1116 460m). The wait of 2 hours for the ferryman rewarded me with my first life sighting of an otter swimming near the concrete jetty.

Having focused the majority of our hillwalking north of the border Glenys and I decided to have a go at Region 42. There's not much climbing involved for these hills, Crowborough (2913 240m) is a real joke! Most of the effort required is sitting in the car driving around overcrowded roads and deciding how best to cross motorways, which effectively act as barriers to progress. However we did succeed in completing twelve of the total fifteen.

### [Neil Stewart - Reflections on 2018 \(HuMPs; Gairloch; Ochils; in praise of TuMPs\)](#)

I suppose that it had to happen, what with increasing age and all that that brings with it. In the eighties and nineties, my hill days were spent on the high tops and ridges, mostly Munros and Corbetts and some Grahams. In the mid-noughties, I bought Alan Dawson's book and discovered Marilyn's. In 2010, I entered the Marilyn Hall of Fame. Now, I've swapped Liathach (953) for Leven Seat (14000), and (gulp!) Gairich (741) for Gartshore Bing (19258). Yep, I'm climbing HuMPs and TuMPs, and it's all good.

Different viewpoints, different perspectives. For example, I've parked in the car park at Invergeldie in Glen Lednock about a dozen times. On almost every occasion, I've headed up the path to Ben Chonzie (1). Arriving in the car park on a beautiful day in July, I instead headed up the glen in the direction of the reservoir and the little TuMP of Creag nan Eun (8063). A delightful short climb and I was on a superb perch overlooking the loch and down the whole length of the glen.

May saw me in Gairloch for a few days combining TuMPs with beach walks with my dog, Ben. I also ticked off one of only two new Marilyn's for the year, the moorland "peak" of An Cuaidh (980). The other new Marilyn, Airds Hill (231), was climbed in October. I had been leaving that one until they cut the trees down; my thought when climbing it was that I would never have found the top if they hadn't. It now has a great view by the way.

In previous times I had visited all of the higher hills in the Ochils, now I am steadily ticking off the rest of those in the Relative lists. They are just as good and without the crowds. 6 were visited in 2018 and I hope to complete them all, if not this year then next. I also have my eye on a completion of the Relative tops in the Pentland Hills and the Campsie Fells.

Climbing the TuMPs has taken me to places that I would not have visited otherwise. Inchcailloch Island (8173 and 8178) in May was magical as was Inchcolm Island (13093) in October. Walking along the spine of the Rosneath peninsula would not have occurred to me had there not been a couple of TuMPs- Airlig (8125) and Clach MacKenny (8121).

I would like to continue to increase my Marilyn, HuMP and TuMP total for as long as I'm able, but I have no intention of going out in all weathers or fighting my way through dense undergrowth. I remain a fair weather walker, as interested in photographing hills and the views from them as I am in getting the "tick" (well, almost!).

Climbing the lower Relative hills has certainly pushed up my total of hills climbed. For the first time since the mid-eighties, my yearly total got into 3 figures- 111. It has also kept me active all year. I was never a fan of climbing hills when they were covered in snow and ice but the lower hills mostly do not have that problem. So if you are finding the big hills a bit too much, try the HuMPs and TuMPs. They are certainly prolonging my walking career.

### Ron Bell - Baglog for 2018 (Skye; Gorms; Kilda; Harris; Fisherfield)

2018 saw me get nearer to my objective of completing the Scottish Marilyn-Simms, plus Tump bagging with my wife near our home in the Scottish Borders. I climbed a total of 27 Tumps, of which 19 were Marilyn-Simms.

My knees are becoming an increasing problem, culminating with a lamentably slow ascent and descent of the notorious 500m high boulder field on Beinn na Caillich (1280 732m P696) on Skye. I am due to have a knee replacement operation on both knees soon. This will cause a late start to the 2019 season – but hopefully a higher rate of achievement thereafter.

The 2018 season started in January on The Buck (1495 721m P255) in NE Cairngorms on a sunny but freezing hard Winter's day. The windblown snow cover at the summit was gorgeous.

My most memorable ascents were during a week of wonderful weather in the Western Isles in late May. This started with a day trip to St. Kilda with an old friend and his daughter, now living in California. The seas were calm and the sky was sunny! We landed only on the main island of Hirta and most of the visitors made it to the island's summit of Conachair (1636 430m P430). From here, there was a superb view of the island of Boreray with its two sea stacks – both Marylins, of course, but way above my pay-grade! The later boat trip around these stacks, amongst countless soaring sea birds, was the highlight of the visit.



*Conachair summit - Ron Bell*

I had climbed Clisham (1587 799m P799), the highest point of Harris, in driving rain on a previous visit. On this trip, I completed the remaining three Marilyn-Simms on Harris in bright sunshine – too hot, really, for hill-walking – and then on to South Uist to bag the highest point, Beinn Mhor (1608 620m P620). The week saw my SIB total increase from 10 to 12 with the addition of Hirta and South Uist.

My most remote hill of the year was Beinn a'Chaisgein Beag (1034 682m P173) in the Fisherfield forest. This involved a bike ride of 16 km total over a rough track and a walk of 13km. I had previously walked past it without making the summit due to lack of time in 2015, after climbing its big brother, Beinn a'Chaisgein Mor (1027 856m P345).

## Pete Ridges – Baglog (Zoo; Islands; Skye; guerrilla gardening)

Marilyns: +27=569

Humps: +40= 756

Tumps: +150= 1512

Someone told me I should stand on one foot when I clean my teeth. This might sound ridiculous, but it's been really good for my balance. In turn that meant that I was braver around heights in 2018 than for a long long while.

The first Tump of the year was Dudley Zoo Castle, which was sort of open in the morning before it was open. I picked a good day because there was no escaped Snow Leopard to deter baggers.

A big thanks to all the boat-trip organisers: Ailsa Craig, Garvellachs, Craigleith. We salute you.

I keep going to the Skye Cuillin and then drifting west to the delightful little tumps of Minginish. No-one seems to go there except me and Charles vegibagger. But don't let that put you off.

Favourite Marilyn of the year may be Meall an Doirein, west of Loch Maree.

Weirdest Tump experience ever was an hour on Touchadam Craig, starring Jonathan Woods and his machete, supported by Rob and Richard and Russell. If you're bagging in Borneo, this is the place to practise.

## Peter Wheeler - Baglog for 2018 (Marilyns; everything in Edinburgh)

A good year hill bagging for 2018, 9 new Marilyn's, written below, 47 new humps & 100 new tumps plus 4 done before Marilyn's, two in both England and Wales. So 158 hills done in 2018. My life totals are: Marilyn's 676 & Humps 1,061. I have not worked out the total of Tumps done in my whole life as I only started including these totals over the last one or so years following reading the excellent hill baggers yearly magazine.

These are the new Marilyn's done in 2018 all in Scotland, BEINN NAN OIGHREAG 2,982ft, MEALL NAN SUBH 2,645ft, CREAG GARBH 2,091ft, MEALL NAM MAIGHEACH 2,555ft, MEALL BUIDHE 2,359ft, CAM CHREAG 2,828ft, BEN LEDI 2,883ft, MEALL GAINMHEICH 1,856ft & BEINN DEARG 1,400ft. One of my completions for the year was all status summits, Marilyn's, Humps & Tumps in Edinburgh, something I have not completed in the City I was born, Birmingham.

## Phil Cooper's Report (Rum; Knoydart; contemplating Nirvana)

Rum has certainly changed since I last visited 39 years ago: now there is a roll-on/roll-off ferry with a big landing ramp to match, whereas previously the Small Isles boat took us within a short distance of the island, then we had to transfer to an even-smaller boat to land at the very small pier. And you had to get permission from the Nature Conservancy in Edinburgh. The Calmac timetable showed that Saturday would be the best day to do a long daytrip from Mallaig as this time I really couldn't be bothered with setting up camp or staying over in accommodation on Rum when you can enjoy a 10.5 hour day visit. Fortunately or maybe not, my annual late-May week coincided with 'hot' weather so this was the perfect time to soak up those outstanding Marilyn's requiring boat trips, plus trips to some isolated hills requiring long days just to visit a single mountain. It would be sunhat, sunglasses and suncream all the way. So my Rum day was a carefully planned circuit on the northern half of the island to do the 4 hills omitted on the first visit; 2 Marilyn's and 2 Humps: Mullach Mor, Sgaorishal, Orval, and Ard Nev. A brilliant day's outing with those superb views of the other Small Isles. On a Saturday using the same ferry you could alternatively spend 8.5 hours on Canna, but I

didn't need so long, so Wednesday was the day for Canna: 2.5 hours each way on the ferry and 2.5 hours on Canna: plenty of time to do Carn a' Ghaill as my 1500th Marilyn then a quick visit to Sanday which is bridge-linked. So after the 1500 it's sure to be an easy downhill run to completion of this list.....

I had never done the Mallaig to Inverie boat ride, although back in the day I had walked in to Inverie from Kinloch Hourn whilst doing Knoydart Munros and Corbetts. So a third superb boat ride in these summer weather conditions, to do Druim na Cluain-Airighe on a 15-mile circuit of remote west Knoydart including the Airor coast. One Region 10D Marilyn had eluded me for years, no wonder, given its remoteness. Of course one can hire a boat to ride up the length of Loch Morar but who would do that when a rough, tough day walk opportunity comes up? So it took me 10.5 hours to bag An Stac from the road at Loch Eilt, with so many water stops needed at the various burn crossings to keep me going in the heat. I'm a big fan of Loch Beoraid with its isolation and deep setting but on my return route, the path marked on the map along its north shore proved to be almost non-existent, so I was more than happy to reach the hydro plant at the loch's outfall, now well on the way back to the roadside.

On the final day, a walk from Kinloch Hourn - another wonderful location which I hadn't visited in decades since my Munro and Corbett heyday. This time, a 9 hour visit to Meall nan Eun and Slat Bheinn which is quite a tough 2-Graham walk in any conditions. On 10 November 2018 the access road became blocked by some 9000 tonnes of rock and soil near Loch Quoich dam which I'm glad to have avoided. So 'only' 11 Marylins done on this trip but all superb and remote ones; leaving the Far North-West and Lewis as remaining areas for my attention in my ambition to achieve Marilyn Nirvana at 'X-4' before I reach 70 years. ['X' is the current total number of Marylins and Nirvana is a place of perfect peace and happiness; the highest state that can be attained, where one's individual desires and suffering are gone: the ultimate spiritual goal.]

[Dave Irons - Marylins 2018 \(1200<sup>th</sup> Marilyn; Andes anniversary\)](#)

Scotland – 27

Wales – 6

England – 6

**Total + 39 = 1,201**

A moderate year for me on the hills. I just managed to creep over the 1,200 Marilyn's mark. My final Marilyn of 2018 was Mynydd y Lan, 385m in South Wales. This is a fair hill which I ascended via a public footpath from Wattsville. This turned out to be an interesting and attractive route, up a wooded valley to the broad hilltop ridge. This walk I did on New Year's Eve 2018 and I remember thinking of the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1988, the day I reached the summit of Chimborazo, the highest mountain in Ecuador at 6,310m (20,700ft). This magnificent peak is the highest Marilyn I have ever climbed!

## Obituaries

### David Batty (1944 – 2018)

*Anne Butler writes:* President of The Munro Society, David Batty, died suddenly on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018 whilst descending from Dugland in the Carsphairn Hills. He was taking part in a heightings survey with RHoB members Alan Dawson, Norman Wares and Charles Everett.

Throughout his life David had a natural affinity and love for the Scottish Mountains and described himself as an inveterate ticker of lists.

He was born in Manchester and moved to Glasgow as a child before qualifying as an accountant and having a very successful business career, eventually becoming Director of Finance at Rosyth Royal Dockyard.

David's early love of the hills grew as he accompanied his father on rock climbing trips. His first experience of hillwalking took place aged 15 on Ben Venue in the Trossachs whilst wearing his school shoes as he didn't own any walking boots. This was soon followed by a walking holiday in the Lake District staying in Youth Hostels and the seed was sown.

David was always a man driven by goals and set himself the task of completing the Munros by his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. He achieved this on Meall nan Tarmachan in the Lawers Hills with a week to spare.

Hill walking took a back seat at the turn of the century when David caught the running bug and during the next 5 years, he ran 7 marathons and 7 half marathons, achieving a personal best marathon time of 3hrs 35 minutes, aged 60.

David joined the Munro Society in 2007 and threw himself into the affairs of The Society. He never missed a meet and forged lasting friendships formed through a mutual love of the hills. He joined the Executive Committee in 2010 and served as Treasurer, Secretary and Vice President before becoming President in April 2018. David played a key role in the Munro Society's 'Mountain Reporting Project' which monitors the changing state of Scotland's mountain environment. He developed an extensive knowledge of the Scottish hills and became a skilled mountain photographer simply by spending days travelling through the landscape and taking time to appreciate it.

After the death of his wife in 2009 David realised that the best therapy would be a return to the hills. After a chance comment from Lady Anderson (the 2<sup>nd</sup> woman to complete the Munros), 'I don't consider a hill climbed until the whole hill is climbed' David decided that he would undertake a 2<sup>nd</sup> round of Munros and this time climb the Munro Tops as well and it was during this time the seed of an idea to complete a 'Full House' begun to form. (A Full House is the completion of the six lists recognised by the SMC in Munros Tables: Munros, Munro Tops, Corbetts, Grahams, Donalds and Furths). David went on to complete his 2<sup>nd</sup> Munro round on Ben Vorlich in 2011 and then strolled over to its North Top to complete the Munro Tops. Following trips to Ireland and Wales the Furths were finally completed on Broad Crag in November 2012. David's Corbett completion in April 2014 on Beinn Odhar was remembered for some appallingly cold, wet and windy weather. The Donalds were completed on Cauldcleuch Head in September 2014. Finally, in October 2015, accompanied by several friends from The Munro Society David climbed Carnan Cruithneachd in Kintail to complete the Grahams and became the 39<sup>th</sup> person to complete a Full House.

## Eddie Wilkinson ("Grumpy") 1954 – 2018

*Jeanie Clabbie writes:* Eddie came late to hillwalking, climbing his first Munro, Meall Chuaich, in November 2001 aged 47 and completed all 284 by August 2004. Prior to this he was a confirmed "couch potato" spending his weekends watching sport on TV. Once he got the bug there was no stopping him and every weekend we would pack up the car from our Edinburgh home and set off regardless of the weather to tick off another hill. Initially he had no intention of completing the Munros due to his fear of heights and felt that the In Pinn and Aonach Eagach were a step too far. Our 100<sup>th</sup> Munro was on Buachaille Etive Mor on a beautiful sunny day with a full inversion below us. This inspired him to set his sights on collecting the "full set" and with guide, George Yeomans, he conquered all the Skye Munros. Our final Munro was Sgurr Fiona on An Teallach on Eddie's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.



*North Berwick Law – Jean Clabbie*



*Cairn Pat – Jean Clabbie*

Now fully captivated by the hills Eddie needed another target so we set off to complete first the Corbetts (2009) and then Grahams (2011) plus all the Furths. With those under the belt he discovered the Marilyn's and was well on the way towards completing the Scottish ones. However due to a painful hip walking was limited to easier hills. He believed that his hillwalking days may be coming to an end so he set his sights on making our 1000<sup>th</sup> Scottish Marilyn, Conachair on St Kilda.

Unfortunately in June last year his hip problem was diagnosed as kidney cancer and within a week of being diagnosed and out of hospital he insisted we reach the

1000 Scottish Marilyn target. He scoured the internet for an easy one which just happened to be at the other end of the country from our home in the Highlands! On a beautiful sunny day 29<sup>th</sup> June, we climbed Cairn Pat near Portpatrick. He was happy to have reached this target with every one of the hills climbed together. Just over a week later Eddie was readmitted to hospital and passed away on 26<sup>th</sup> July at the Highland Hospice in Inverness.

## Baglogs – Britain and Overseas

### Tove Illing - RHSoc Report 2018 (Skye, Far North; Suilven celebration; Snøhetta)

**Marilyns** = 704 (New Marilyn's in 2018 = 40)

What a difference a year makes... This summer could not have been more different to last year when it was so cold and windy that the celebratory whisky blew out of the glass, this year the whisky would probably have evaporated in the heat! This resulted in some great trips to the Highlands in 2018. One of my favourites was climbing Blaven, which rewarded us with panoramic views of the Cuillin Ridge, the sea and the surrounding islands. The route included a couple of obscure Simms too to keep Graham happy, and a chance to scout out Clach Glas. With this insight, I opted out when it was on offer despite the perfect day for it (see Graham's report for the photos).

Another highlight was a stay in Inchnadamph Lodge bagging some new Marilyn's and reascending Suilven, this time by the 'Edie route', which I much preferred to the traverse we did 16 years ago! A local Scottish mountain guide leading an international group up the summit ridge seemed pretty surprised and impressed as we appeared from a direction he did not expect. I have also taken the editorial advice seriously, so below is a photo of the fruitcake I made to celebrate the climb and Roger's 60th birthday. Maybe not a Mary Berry masterpiece, but who cares after a 10-hour walk and the summit ridge was made of pure marzipan!

I must also mention the various cycling trips to Iron Lodge climbing the Marilyn's in the beautiful wilderness of the Glen Eicheig, finally seeing the road where "allegedly" Graham's famous Highland cow story took place (why not ask him about in a pub some time!). To be fair, there are lots of Highland cows camped out in the middle of the road



With "locals" at Gленаig Lodge. Photo: Graham Illing



Suilven Birthday Cake - Keith Craig



Descending Suilven's summit ridge - Keith Craig

around a bend posing a potential "danger" to cyclists in a hurry. So maybe it is true after all...?!

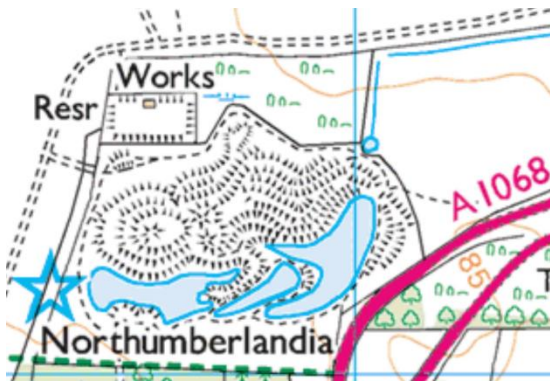
The stay in Aviemore attending the Annual RHSoc dinner meant we also climbed Cairngorm on a sunny June day, and it was a delight to watch a lonely brave snowboarder manoeuvring on the only snow slope still left on the hillside.

The photo above is from another Highland trip and another bike ride to the remote Glenuaig Lodge posing with “the locals” before climbing Maoile Lunndaigh.

**Tumps** = Unknown

While I do not record tumps, one of the last tumps of the year is worth mentioning for several reasons. Check the 1:25 000 street map for anatomical detail and yes, she really is a proper Geordie tump!

**Ultras** = 32 (1 new Ultra in 2018)



*“The Lady of the North”. - Julie Brown*

2018 proved a strange year weather wise, whilst Tenerife and Mount Teide had too much snow and ice and the park authorities closed the mountain (despite the UK trekking company claimed it was ‘never a problem’!); the Norwegian Ultra ‘Snøhetta’ (meaning ‘snow hood’) had no snow at all on the route, which is equally unusual. The latter was therefore a straightforward climb, despite the trepidation and advice to the contrary from our Norwegian friends when Graham and I insisted on a trip to Dovrefjell this year.



*Snøhetta - Tove Illing*

We added on some great summits in Trollheimen, an area well worth visiting for its spectacular mountain scenery and well-equipped mountain huts. The Trollhytta hut has provisions brought in twice a season by helicopter, but when the crisps run out (an important item to accompany your beer or wine) it is brought in via the closest road head, followed by a 1-hour boat ride and after which a member of staff picks it up with a large rucksack in 2-hour round walk. This is what I call proper customer service, but I won't mention the cost of a packet of crisps...!

## Peter and Frances Wilson - Marilyns – Britain (Somerset; North Devon)

Wills Neck (Section 41) was the only new Marilyn of the year and was memorable more for the bus journey than the walk. We were based near Minehead with a group walking the Somerset and north Devon section of the South West Coast Path. On our day-off from the coast we decided that Wills Neck was do-able using public transport (i.e. the Minehead - Taunton bus). We waited beside Minehead railway station, not realising that the bus started its journey half a mile to the east, at the entrance to a certain 'holiday camp', and that it was timed to connect at Taunton with north- and south-going trains, and that half of the holiday campers were making their way home on that day and on that same bus. It was over-full but the driver took our fares and we squeezed in beside numerous suit cases, folded prams, wailing children, and several adult passengers who cleared had not washed for a few days. The thought of standing for the 45-minute journey to Bicknoller immediately lost its appeal – but we persisted. As the bus threaded its way through Minehead the driver allowed others to board, making a mockery of the limitation on the number of standing passengers. I did wonder if he was going for the record of the number of sardines in a tin.

At Bicknoller we managed to escape and made our way through the village and up into the coombe, and so to the ridge. The cloud was low, the rain came on and it got a bit windy. We began to wish we were still on the bus. But as we reached Wills Neck the cloud dispersed, the rain eased and the wind dropped. We had our lunch with extensive views all round and then decided to retrace our steps to Bicknoller and see the ground we had covered but had not actually seen. The Bicknoller café provide tea and cake before we headed to the main road to wait for the Minehead bus. It did occur to us that the bus might have connected with trains at Taunton and be bringing a new crop of holidaymakers, but our prayers were answered when a virtually empty bus arrived and we had a choice of seats back to Minehead.

## Peter and Frances Wilson - Marilyns – Ireland (Tipperary; Galway)

Although we have lived in Northern Ireland for more years than the Marilyns list has been available our progress has been far from rapid – there are other hills to climb, places to go and things to do, especially as our bicycles and Nordic skis need to be exercised occasionally. However, during the year past we recorded our highest annual numbers of 6 and 7 respectively, for several years.

The first few came in early July as Ireland basked in a heatwave and water restrictions applied in Dublin (hard to believe in the Emerald Isle). We had based ourselves in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, with the intention of completing those summits above a height of 610 m with a prominence of 30 m (The Hewitts) and 600 m with a prominence of 15 m (the Vandeleur-Lynams) in the Knockmealdown, Galty, and Comeragh ranges. This we managed to accomplish and in doing so our Marilyns totals went up slightly.

The other three Marilyns were done in October under more normal weather conditions when we attended the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering in Clonbur, Co. Galway. Knocknashee (hill of the fairies) was a short detour from our route to Clonbur and has the distinction of two Neolithic passage tombs and the remains of 50+ roundhouses or hut circles, in two clusters, on its extensive plateau. Ben Shléibhe (aka Benlevy), above Clonbur, was ascended one afternoon after we had cycled around its base on crap hire bikes. A pedal disintegrated and made it more than a little difficult to manoeuvre, and the gears weren't up to much either. The hill is the central feature in a mountain access project (access in Ireland is not as simple as in the UK). On our journey home we stopped off to climb Bricklieve Mountains (locally called Carrowkeel). In spite of its lowly height (321 m) this is one of the most remarkable hills in Ireland. Scattered across the summit ridge and flanks are 14 Neolithic passage tombs with their covering cairns more or less intact. They were excavated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with explosives being the tool of choice. Much damage was done, but the entrance passageways and chambers can be 'inspected' if you are prepared to crouch and crawl a

short distance. Why so many in such a small area is something for the archaeologists to explain. Many Irish hills are crowned by archaeological structures of one type or another – it would be an interesting exercise to establish the prominence of this subset and coin a name.

### Ian Hill – Baglog (Grahams; Ireland)

Given that at my age [72] I have no chance of completing all the Marilyn's in the UK, I set myself some time ago the more limited aims of climbing all the 2000ft + Marilyn's of Scotland, Wales and Ireland plus all the Marilyn's and Hewitts in England, as well as many Humps and Tumps in the North of England. To this end in 2018 I had two trips to Scotland, firstly a week of super weather in the Cowal area where I managed 9 Grahams, one new Corbett and a demoted Graham whose drop has turned out to be 40cm short of 150m. This is rather a shame as its summit was the most attractive of the week. I then returned to what was my first Munro 29 years earlier, Ben Lomond, along with approximately 500 others on a fantastic Saturday in May. In the previous week I'd seen nobody. From there I went north to the lonely Graham Cruinn a' Bheinn followed by a long trudge back to Rowardennan. In August I made a longer trip round the NW Highlands using my bike to get closer. Highlights included An Cruachan 15 miles up Glen Elchaig and Meall Mheinnidh beyond Slioch. I had 2 trips to Ireland [see elsewhere] and several around England, including 9 Marilyn's in Kent, Surrey and Sussex and various Marilyn's, Humps and Tumps in Northern England. Wales had to miss out, but will definitely be included in 2019.

I returned twice to Ireland in 2018. The first trip in April was to magical County Mayo. I started badly - halfway up Croagh Patrick the wind blew me over and then blew my glasses off and away. I aborted the climb, but went back for a second attempt later in the week and searched for them on the way down. I didn't find them, but did find 4 woolly hats, a scarf and a pair of gloves. I had a lot of wet feet that week, but I managed 7 2000ft Marilyn's, with some wonderful views on some days. The weather was also mixed in October when I went to climb some of the Wicklow mountains, followed by Slievenamon and others in the south-centre. The Highlight was a day in the Comeragh mountains, with beautiful weather and dry bogs! The photo is of Slievenamon from there.



*Slievenamon from the Comeragh Mountains*

### Sue & Trevor Littlewood – Baglog 2018 (homeland repeats; Picos; Dolomites)

For some years the Littlewood baglog/report has begun with the tale of '*another very active year in the hills*'—same again for the year 2018! Unfortunately though, despite large numbers of baggable hills being visited in all categories, relatively few were *new* ones and in the most wanted groups—Corbetts & Grahams—the tally of those reads as..... '*nil points*'!

Weeks, several of them, were passed in the Highlands. We spent time based near Blair Atholl and Blairgowrie when various Munros, Grahams and Corbetts were revisited in ascents accompanying other folk.

Another visit was made to Mull which saw the taking of three new Marilyn's—Creachan Mor (1326), Beinn Chreagach (1321) and Beinn na Sreine (1313). Cruachan Min is now our only missing Mull Marilyn.

Relatively few Marilyn's south of the Great Glen remain untrodden and their number was reduced by two with the gathering of the Hill of Persie (454) and Craigowl Hill (1665). The first of those gave a rather modest outing and the other, whilst just a low peak in itself, gave a long-distance romp taking in a number of lesser, but totally tickable tops.

Welsh activity saw just two Marilyn's gained—Maesglase (2145) and Esgair Ddu (2173). The latter was climbed from the minor road in Cwm Tafolog, which was notable for its remarkable pheasant density. There were colossal numbers, the sky almost darkened as we motored, it was like a plague! Maesglase gave us a splendid day with additional Nuttalls and TuMPs, but the expected easy descent on its eastern side wasn't one. Not recommended!

In England, there was nothing new to trouble the scorers on the Marilyn front. But there were HuMPs. Knott (5302) the actual summit of which had been missed when the trig was bagged some years ago and Dunstable Downs (5389); surely the easiest bag of the year as the summit trig point is virtually within touching distance of a car as it's driven to be parked.

Activity abroad was in the Picos de Europa and in the Dolomites. The most notable ascent in the latter group was to the 3152 m. summit of Piz Boe. Shamelessly a bus and two lifts were used to raise us to within a couple of thousand feet of the summit, but redemption came in the use of a (simple) via ferrata on the ascent. Shame however came when we wandered off the summit along *not quite* the intended path line—well, our map didn't extend far enough. An alternative descent was needed to the one planned!

In the UK again a number of Humps new to us were given ascents and there's been an increasing interest in TuMPs. But in times ahead if we've any serious intention or hope of completing the Corbett or Graham lists, some serious inroads will need to be made soon into the relatively few, but mainly awkwardly located peaks, required in these groupings! *Tempus fugit*, don't you know!

## Colin Green - Baglog 2018 (Back on the hills; birding abroad; jaw dropping Jordan)

Scotland 565

England 165

Wales 141

Total 871 which is +11 on last year.

The year started with a January club trip to Coppermines Valley where there was a circuit of Levers Water and an ascent of Coniston Old Man. In February the club were on Lochlomondside again where there were various walks but for me only Fiarach was new.

Over the last few years I have reported various issues with plantar fasciitis but it seems that for now at least, I am free of the dreaded affliction. The only issue is that when you're in your 60's you can get out of the habit of getting up early on cold mornings and you also no longer seem to be quite as fit as you remember being before.

I remained fairly active in March and then in April there was a return to Mull where Cruach Choireadial was followed by Beinn na Sreine and Beinn Chreagach.

I have also been abroad five times this year: to Portugal and Latvia in May, France in August, Jordan in September and Madeira in November. The experiences at Jerash, Petra and Wadi Rum in particular will remain with me for all time.

In the UK there was Glaramara in June, the North Yorkshire Moors in July and Malvern in August. In early September I was on Arran with my club where there was a nice linear walk on the north coastal path, Fionn Bhealach, Beinn Tarsuinn, Mullach Mor on Holy Island and Mullach Buidhe.

The regular October trip to Scotland saw us based north of Blairgowrie where there were ascents of Hill of Persie, Badendum Hill Mount Blair and also a cycle ride.

November saw a circuit of the Alwen Reservoir in Wales and also a convoluted ascent of Creigiau Gleision.

Although there were no mountain epics, with less significant days and other activities as well, quite a full year. May there be many more of them.

[Denise McLellan - My Hill Bagging Year – 2018 \(Tumps; hostels; Turkey; Canada; Japan; Azores; Colorado 14ers; Cornish kayaking; South Africa snake dodging\)](#)

	<b>Total 2018</b>	<b>Lifetime total</b>
<b>Marilyns</b>	11	1077
<b>Humps</b>	75	1374
<b>Tumps</b>	458	2588
<b>Sibs</b>	14	95
<b>P600m</b>	34	289
<b>World Ultras ( P1500m)</b>	18	220

Although, for many, 2018 will be notable for its heat, my bagging year is memorable for its coolth!

Richard and I commenced with a bitter weekend in the forest of Bowland where we enjoyed frosty vegetation, clear skies and stars – inevitably walks finished in the dark. A highlight was Wolfhole Crag 527m P39m (3639) with trig, amongst whose large weathered boulders we could imagine hungry wolves might be hiding! Later in January, we were returning from a quick bag of the outcropping Moatlow Knob 232m, P49m (16718) only to be frantically flagged down by none other than Douglas Law who happened to be in the area. We assured our walking friends they had done no wrong; this was simply a traditional hill baggers' greeting.

As January progressed, the days seemed to lengthen quickly, and green shoots of spring arrived. One of the delights of regular bagging is to be able to observe the tiny changes of the seasons and the difference a few hundred miles north or south makes. Particularly memorable was Hesworth Common 69m P 34m, South Downs (18617) – we watched sunrise amongst new shoots and frost tipped heather as skeins of geese flew overhead before returning to a log fire in a pub for a full English breakfast.

This was a sharp contrast with our February Trip to Teesdale Youth Hostel, an exclusive hire to celebrate Richard's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday with friends. We may have achieved a record with 21 persons on the obscure tump: Dine Holm Scar 414m, P45m (16374)! Winter was in full force there with snow covering everything.

Later that month we joined Rob Woodall and others at Kings Youth Hostel, Dolgellau to celebrate another amazing achievement: his last mainland Welsh Tump. Spring was in the mild, damp and greening air. Here, I also met Maisie for the first time- under 10 years old but an enthusiastic trigger - and shared her delight in uncovering a hidden buried block. Her mother looked on with utter incredulity at the whole group as they touched the rivet.

Frozen bog in February gave an opportunity for a painless crossing of the Hail Storm Hill, 477m, p 244m, (2817) and its tussocks and other hills around Howarth- the Youth Hostel there is a lovely Victorian building.

It was March before we left UK shores with a trip to Turkey. The purpose was a ski ascent of our first ultra of the year-Uludag Tepe 2543m. This we accomplished on the single good weather day; the rain was so heavy we subsequently retreated from the ski slopes to explore Istanbul.

A March trip to Llandrindod Wells reminded us that winter had not left. After remote walking through sheltered pines and boggy moors, we struggled driving home through snow.

The trip to Minnigaff Youth Hostel (Newton Stewart) for a baggers' meet provided an opportunity to catch up with lots of news as well as to practise my breakfast -cooking skills. Under blue skies and cool sun, we enjoyed superb views over forests and lochs.

A series of weekends with poor weather curtailed our usual sailing itinerary but, as our boat is based in Plymouth, it did result in a high number of bags in Devon and Cornwall- 81 tumps over the year.

Our first camping of the year was unusually late: April, where we recommend the coastal Aberafon campsite on the Llyn peninsula. We had a lovely coastal tump- and- trig walk. Camping was distinctly colder and wetter on the west coast of Scotland around Easter where we bagged a series of island tumps waiting for a call that eventually came about calm weather around the Mingulay stacks. It was a great triumph to land on and then ascend and depart from the barnacled slabs of Arnmauil 121m, p121m (4980), followed by scrambles on and off of 4 other, rarely visited but less technical island tumps. With Rob, Alan, Colin, Richard and I plus Angus McNeill with Jessica Kate, it was a great team.

In May we swapped our usual Scottish trip for Vancouver (Canada) and, third time lucky, we successfully ascended Rugged Mountain, 1861; P1571m, Ultra. This involves a steep thrash through mature forest, up a snow couloir and then a critical snow bridge onto the final snow and rock summit ridge. I can still feel the exhilaration felt on top- somehow being forced to turn back before made the achievement sweeter.

We missed much of the really hot weather in the UK by sailing to the Channel Isles but did sleep out on the Malverns to see sunrise on Midsummer's day- the skies were actually clear for once.

We were soon on a plane again, this time to Japan. This three-week trip in July was a highlight of our bagging year with 8 ultras bagged, with reliance on the 100% punctual Japanese railways and Google maps.

A quick trip to the verdant Azores followed, the game being to visit as many islands and high points as possible *despite* the public transport system- totally laid back- unlike Japan.

We managed to squeeze in a quick ascent of Old Man of Mow, Staffordshire 337m, P143m (18980) with Rick, Jenny and Alan on a lovely warm evening amongst the purple haze of heather

In September we spent a fortnight bagging in Colorado, USA. Air France/ Delta lost all our luggage. We only collected Richard's rucksack as we departed, but we learned that one needs less kit than one thinks to climb 'fourteeners,' sort of like the Munros to Americans except a bit higher. Unexpectedly, we had fresh snow. Out of pity over our baggage, Delta facilitated a stopover in Atlanta, from which, in 24 hours, we ascended the North and South Carolina and Tennessee State High Points, including Mount Mitchell, ultra, before running ahead of the hurricane to fly home.

Altitude- fit from America, we had some speedy ascents of delightful grassy limestone P1000ms in central Italy in September before finally spending a few nights in our beds in Birmingham.

We watched autumnal leaves mature from various UK locations: NW Scotland after joining Sharen Kingham et al for their 1000<sup>th</sup> trig at Smugglers' Hostel, Tomintoul; Cornish coastal walks including hair raising kayak trips to Mullion and Godrevy islands in mild weather; a 2 day cycle perambulation of Oxford with diversions

to the spectacular Wytham Woods and Harcourt arboretum; an adventurous exploration of St Austell bings and surprisingly pleasant scenery around Basingstoke.

Our final ultras of the year were in South Africa, based in Cape Town: both involved long days and 1600+m of ascent on rarely used routes. Despite causing some anxiety to helpful members of the South African Mountaineering Club, we avoided being mugged and bitten by snakes and have agreed to provide route descriptions for their members to follow. The weather was unseasonably but comfortably cool. Table Mountain creates a unique city-scape, rising from the white sand beaches and a city of 5 million rich and poor inhabitants.

Our year ended at one of my favourite bagging locations- the Lakes in Winter, where, based at Eskdale Youth Hostel with 40+ ex university friends and their grown-up children, we enjoyed mild, dry days. This culminated in a 'best ever' ascent of Scafell, 964m, P132m (2360) on New Year's Day in winter sun with hunting hounds baying.

Next year I plan more tumps and ultras and hopefully more Munros and to finalise English and Welsh Marilyn and Nuttalls.

### Graham Illing - 2018 Bagging Report (Skye; Norway; Ecuador)

Here are my figures / report for 2018.

Marilyns = 1554

The figure remains the same as last year but is relatively one down and one sideways move (Foel Cedig which proved an interesting bonus as I met young members of my old school out on their Gold Duke of Edinburgh expedition). I have plans for Beinn Dearg in the New Year! As for the St Kilda stacks, I continue to await a suitable opportunity!

Tumps = 3469 & Humps = 2067

I remain an incidental TUMP & HUMPer although I proudly display my Upper Hall HUMP badge in my study!

Simms = 2010 (Including IOM) 2009 (excluding IOM)

Simms remain the focus of my UK bagging with all effort deployed in Scotland. I managed 6 one week trips this year. Success was greatly enhanced by the great weather this summer served up.



Highlights included a trip in April to the wintery challenge of the Monadhliaths whilst trying to avoid the extensive engineering works building a massive wind farm and a trip round to Beinn a' Bhathaich Ard



*Beinn a' Bhathaich Ard – Graham Illing*

Can you name this Simm with its gnome guardian?

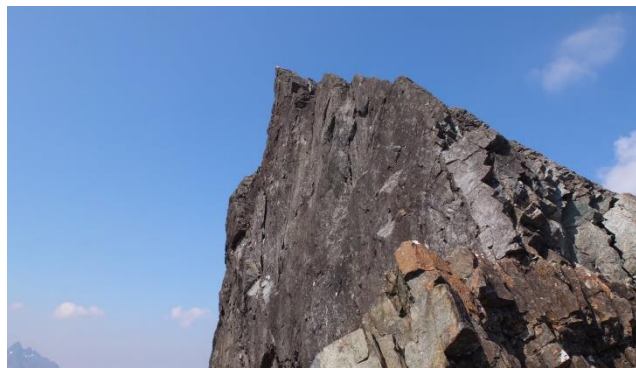
May yielded memorable walks on the pinnacles under Beinn Bhan and a climb of Clach Ghlas with David Armin (See pictures). Clach Glas was ascended via the Putting Green. We were lucky to meet an expert climber on his way down who gave us some key tips for the top. Hopefully the pictures below will help others.



*Sgurr a' Ghlaisein – Graham Illing*

While there is a summit cairn David and I were surprised at the snooker table sized plateau to relax on and contemplate the way down!

\*



*Clach Glas - Graham Illing*

A week of perfect weather in June swelled the Simm totals bagging the Cairngorms before meeting RHSoc members at the very successful AGM.

To help my friend Roger cope with his 60th birthday we climbed Suilven after making the first DoBIH recorded ascent of the Tump Cnoc a' Choire Mhoir (we hope you enjoyed the tongue in cheek report of the ascent). At least I have climbed Suilven as many times (three) as I have named houses after the mountain.



*Cnoc a' Choire Mhoir - Graham Illing*

The failure of en-suite furniture and its need for replacement foiled plans to repaint our bedroom giving me an unexpected pass out for a week in early December based in Ballater to push the Simm total over the 2000 barrier (Knockie Branar, 4/12/2018). An early morning start gave amazing views of Ben Avon painted by the pinks and oranges of the sunrise. Being buzzed by a golden eagle and a close encounter with a large herd of stags was an extra bonus for skiving DIY.

Just as I finished the trip I picked up the complementary Simm of Foel Penolau having already bagged the Nuttalls.

### Ultras = 45

The year started frustratingly when a second attempt to climb Pico Teide was thwarted by the Park Authorities closing the mountain due to ice to all regardless of experience. A rematch is planned for 2019.

A challenging week in Norway added the 2286m Snøhetta to the tally. In addition to magnificent cliff views the summits hides a geocache of weird artifacts. To the amusement of all the bus to take us home was delayed by a recalcitrant musk ox determined to dramatically slow the rate of progress of the traffic!

The main climbing trip of the year was to Ecuador. Six peaks in total were climbed including the Ultras of Cayambe, Antisana and Chimborazo. Much better than my initial visit in 1998 when conditions didn't even allow us to set foot on Chimborazo! Cayambe and Antisana yielded dramatic climbs with big snow ramps / seracs and scary snow bridges. In 1998



*Snøhetta - Graham Illing*

I tried to climb Cayambe and arrived at a point I thought was ~50 metres from the summit. I was taken aback that this time it took a further 2.5 hours to go from this point to the summit through the complex serac field. Chimborazo provided challenging conditions including heavy rain before the 5,300m high camp and an exhausting and unrelenting 40 - 50 degree slope that ploughed on for 700 vertical metres. We were very grateful when the angle finally relented and the summit came into view. At least we had climbed through the cloud around the summit to get the closest view of the sun you will get stood on Earth. A 20 year itch had been scratched! Tove converted the Tee shirt I bought in 1998 into an expedition flag!



A digression between climbs saw us visit the “official” Equator line. It was ironic to see a few metres away that the tamperers had been busy and moved the current line from the position established by early European surveyors.

P600 = 168 (incl UK); 74 (excl UK)

P1000 = 63 (incl UK); 60 (excl UK)

Dodds = 582



[Julie Brown – Baglog \(IOM, Skye, Ardnamurchan; Lakes; Indonesia\)](#)

[Marilyns \(+54 = 917\)](#)

This is my second most successful year for Marilyn bagging to date with 54 acquired in the year.

Highlights of the year included a trip to the Isle of Man at Easter to Bag the 5 Marilyn's there, my 5th trip to the Isle of Man, but the first 4 were to play badminton matches so never made it out bagging. Some great walking across there if you have never been.

Then there was a trip to Avernish in May in which the excellent weather allowed for some fantastic Graham bagging, the Beinn na Caillich. Beinn Dearg Mhor horseshoe on Skye and the cycle down to Iron Lodge

followed by the walk to bag the remote peaks of An Cruachan and Carn na Breabaig and also Druim Fhada above Loch Hourn amongst others. This was an outstanding trip with unprecedented Scottish weather.



*Panorama from Druim Fhada*

This was shortly followed by the trip to Aviemore for the dinner where again the weather was at its best. The Hills of Cromdale and Cooks Cairn were the highlight walks from that weekend.

In August I took a trip with the family to Ardnamurchan which provided for some smaller interesting Marilyn bagging as well as the remote Graham of Croit Bheinn. A good year underfoot to be trekking around the boggy summits of Ardnamurchan.

With all of the above and some other short weekends I have climbed 17 Grahams this year so only 31 to go (completion in 3 years maybe depending on progress on a few awkward ones). In addition a couple of trips to Wales this year including a recent visit to the Brecon Beacons means I have also made some further Welsh Marilyn Progress with 10 Welsh 610m+ bagged now leaving only 14 remaining. 610m+ remains the focus of my bagging though I did manage to acquire 27 smaller Marilyns as well during the year in addition to a few new Donalds and Wainwrights. I have been gradually ticking off my remaining outstanding Wainwrights and with only 10 to go have a mission to complete them in this year, as a 50th birthday present to myself. After all I have only been doing them for about 42 years and have done many of them several times over. My best UK photos of the year I believe was taken on the walk to Raven Crag in Jan 18 (See Sunset over Thirlmere below).

#### Humps (+79 = 1068)

Hillbagging says I have done 1,068, but for all I have been logging any new HuMPs in 2018, I have definitely not captured all HuMPs done historically (the ones logged are a byproduct of other lists, (i.e. Wainwrights, Marilyns and Donalds) so this is to be my start point in heading towards 1200.

#### Ultras (+1 = 17)

In October I had a great trip with KE adventure to Indonesia, although the trip underwent several redesigns with volcanic activity shutting Lombok, several volcanoes on Java and Bali were climbed although only one Merbabu on Java resulted in an ultra bag, taking my ultra total to 17. The original trip had included Mt Rinjani and Mt Agung which we couldn't do and for all we reached the crater of Mt Raung the actual summit is a more serious proposition. Sunrise on Mt Bromo provided the best photos of the trip.



*Mt Bromo at Sunrise*

## Daniel Patrick Quinn - Baglog from Indonesia

I almost crossed paths with a lot of disasters here in Indonesia in 2018 while out bagging Ribus and other interesting peaks. 2017 ended and 2018 began with a few hikes in the Palu area of Central Sulawesi including Gunung Gawalise (2029m, prominence of 719m). Months later a 7.5 earthquake followed by a tsunami and liquefaction resulted in over 2000 dead in and around the city. A Batik Air flight just about managed to take off at dusk as the earthquake hit, though a brave air traffic control operator died in the incident after having made sure the flight was safely airborne. This was the same flight I had taken several times in the previous months, looking down in the beautiful late afternoon sunlight over the narrow bay as we rounded the peninsula and headed back to Makassar and then on to Jakarta. Luckily, my local student guide friends survived but they are most probably traumatized.

In August I finally managed to bag Bukit Raya, the remote, highest mountain in Indonesia's portion of the island of Borneo, and my GPS supported suggestions that it is indeed over 2300m rather than the 2278m figure published locally. The second half of my summer trip, which included a plan to bag the obscure Olet Sangenges (1840m, prominence of 1773m), the second most prominent peak on the island of Sumbawa (after the famous Tambora which has an immense 6.5km wide crater) had to be aborted after the Lombok earthquake meant my guide was busy helping victims in nearby eastern Lombok. The likelihood of landslides and further earthquakes meant postponing was the only sensible option. I had been hiking Gunung Abang (2151m, prominence of around 905m) in Bali the morning of the first foreshock and had initially worried that I had drunk too many Bintang beers the night before as the earth began to shake beneath my feet as I hiked alone in the forest at just after 6am.

I made a second attempt to reach the obscure 705m highpoint of Bangka island off Sumatra in July, but various factors meant we didn't make it. A few months later, the same early morning Lion Air flight from Jakarta to Bangka island that I had taken for this trip crashed into the Java Sea, killing all passengers and crew. It was the worst air disaster of the year.

Later in the year, with Anak Krakatau's increasing activity providing visitors to the neighbouring islands with a dazzling display of lava-related fireworks and ejecting boulders the size of cars down into the ocean, I decided it was time to have a relaxing beach weekend camping on Rakata, at 813m the highest and most significant remnants of the original Krakatau volcano. We had a wonderful time swimming in the ocean, drinking pleasant beverages of an intoxicating nature, and watching the volcano erupt every 15 minutes or so. Just a few weekends later, on a late Saturday evening, the southwestern face of the volcano catastrophically collapsed into the ocean. The tsunami wave left over 400 dead on the mainlands of Sumatra and Java, including all but the singer of a local pop band who were performing on the beach at Tanjung Lesung, with no idea that a wave was hurtling towards them and their audience. My friend Oystein was staying in Anyer on the Java coast that night and had to run for higher ground with his family. Reports suggest that our campsite on Rakata beach would have been hit by a wave of between 15 and 30 metres in height in under a minute. Even the monitor lizards wouldn't have stood a chance. Luckily it appears nobody was camping there that night but reports are emerging from local fishermen who were in the vicinity, some of who managed to survive. Anak Krakatau is now only 110 metres high, previously having been approximately 338m. To say reading news reports was sobering is a great understatement.

I'm hoping for a calmer 2019 in which I reach a total of 90 Ribus in Indonesia, Malaysia and East Timor.

[Rob Woodall - Baglog & Totals 2018 \(HuMPs completion; Welsh mainland TuMPs; kayaking; Tanzania; Zimbabwe; Oman; Turkey; Canada; 100<sup>th</sup> P2000m; Mexico\)](#)

**Marilyns** – no new ones bagged this year, but #1117 Beinn Dearg's promotion to Marilynism presented me with an armchair tick – one of 10 Hills of Wrath linked on an October day in 2001. And Foel Cedig had been included as an impromptu diversion from the cross-Wales Leventon Line in 2008. Lucky, that.

**Humps** (+18 = 2987/2987). These were my main focus in 2018. Firstly I had some determined catching up to so, as Alan Whatley had opened up quite a lead. My outstanding hills were mostly relatively remote Simms, resulting in some good days out. I even got ahead of Alan at one point - he needed to schedule a Channel Isles trip in the spring. Persistence got us the two Mingulay stacks on two choppy days in Spring and Summer. The date we'd booked for the Old Man of Hoy, turned out to be just after a long settled spell had ended, and our climb was decidedly breezy, with a dawn start to beat the afternoon rain. Somehow we two old codgers managed to be injury free on the day and enjoyed a memorable and fulfilling climb, with Rick Salter and Richard McLellan, led by Tim Hamlet. What better way to finish this hitherto uncompleted list. Subsequent to our July completion, the Tamperers added a further 7 Humps and relocated another – fortunately I'd managed to already get round the relevant SubHumps before Hoy, so they were armchair ticks. Bagging all the P99s also gave me the 3000 most prominent summits in Britain. The latest mapping suggests there are two as yet unrecognised stacs attached to the west coast of Hoy – a Hump and a Marilyn. There is some scepticism, and it remains to be seen whether they are real, or simply data artefacts. Anyway – Humps complete 😊.



*Old Man of Hoy - Topping Out (Photo: Tim Hamlet)*

**Tumps** (+552 = 12055); **SIBs** (+28 = 452). My main Tump target this year was a Welsh Mainland completion. We made a weekend of it – a group of us enjoying a pleasant stroll around Llynau Cregennan, a gem of a spot below the crags of Cadair Idris. I vaguely recalled that I'd possibly been up one of the two Tumps Bryn y Gregennen and Pen Llynau Cregennen many years ago on a family holiday, and could recall being struck by the beauty of the place all those years ago. There were 3 further Welsh Mainland recompletions during the year, the most memorable being a weekend trip to the Llyn Peninsula with a kayak which was the key to #14858 St Tudwal's Island East and #18644 Ynys Gwylan-fawr (and -fach) – two SIBs which had eluded me on a couple of occasions. These islands, challenging in quite choppy conditions, sealed a long-awaited Gwynedd Tumps completion. This was my only County completion of the year. The following weekend, Richard M led Denise, Jon and I up P41 Gannets' Rock, a fairly easy tidal Lundy stack, and the following day I took the kayak to Torbay (UA) to settle a score with P34m Ore Stone, in nice conditions, followed by a breezy paddle out to P59m Great Mew Stone.



*Ynys Gwylan-fawr - Gwynedd completion – Rob Woodall*

Wales done, and Devon and Cornwall being a long way from home, rather curtailed my Tumping activities this year, although Scotland never disappoints, and a Western Isles trip included a SeaHarris trip to the Flannan Isles, halfway to St Kilda and nearly as swell-prone. We were lucky with conditions and choice of boatman, and managed to our amazement to bag all 8 of its SIBs, in reasonable swell conditions. The remaining three 3 P30s aren't SIBs, although mini-Stac-Lee lookalike P54m Brona Cleit doesn't look too hard. A memorable October SIB bagging weekend was enjoyed, with the McLellans and Jon Glew, in 3-star surfing conditions kayaking out to Mullion Island and Godrevy Island. The landings were Interesting, as was surfing back ashore with surfers scattering as we approached!

My last Tumps of 2018 were in Scotland, over an extended Christmas weekend, in benign weather. It was milestone supremo Jon (on his way to clinching his record SIB and Tump annual totals) who spotted I'd bagged my 12,000<sup>th</sup> Tump on 22 December – the landmark hill was traced to #6509 Carnis Mhor – with just a

snow bunting for company. I must try to make a better job of celebrating my 13,000<sup>th</sup>, which is the last step on the TumpHof Fibonacci ladder.

**Simms** (+46 = 2293) and **Dodds** (+29 = 1111) – a few collected in passing, mainly while Humping, including a good long day south of Glenfinnan, the day after a red deer stag had put the last nail in the coffin of my old black Skoda.

**P2000m Peaks** (+5 = 101), **Ultras** (+33 = 290), **Ribus** (+41 = 376) and **Majors** (+49 = 654). The overseas year was soon underway with a January trip to **Tanzania** and **Zimbabwe** for 6 ultras. 2948m Gelai and 2871m Kitumbeine are in Maasai lands with daily big game sightings. 3417m Hanang (P2047) in the west was in its wet season, but we had a dry day for the ascent. 2464m Shengena and 2301m Sungwi in the east are forested peaks, the latter unknown even to our local guide – a good team effort with Sean studying the Kirmse worldwide P300ft fusion-table page on his phone, me hand-levelling the 5 widely spaced summit candidates and the guides dealing with some heavy-duty vegetation. Visiting Zimbabwe soon after President Mnangagwa had taken over from Mugabe, was fascinating, pleasingly straightforward, and 2592m Inyangani the national highpoint is a nice hike with wildlife aplenty.

In early March I spent a week in **Oman**, climbing three of its four ultras, characterised by long day hikes to remote summits, rugged terrain and compelling desert scenery. The fourth ultra is in an enclave within UAE, involving several border crossings – and the summit is in a military compound – not worth the extra time, expense or arrest potential, I decided.

A July week with Adrian was just enough time to bag my remaining 10 **Western Turkey** ultras. With good information from previous McLellan and Bjorstad trips, this was an entertaining trip, with a range of good looking and generally easy to reach peaks.

August was spent, for the second consecutive year, in **Canada**, collecting 8 new ultras plus a couple of repeats. The first week or so was spent with Pete and Greg on Vancouver Island, starting with the straightforward but impressive 1671m Hkusam. 2197m Golden Hinde the island highpoint by contrast took 3 days, the views sadly curtailed by smoke from forest fires on the mainland. The peak involves some good scrambling, as does 2159m Victoria Peak which we climbed a couple of days later. Back on the mainland we joined forces with Petter and Aake for 2749m Overseer Mountain, then James made it a rope of 5 for 2892m Wedge Mountain (P2249) – two impressive challenging peaks. Wedge was my 100<sup>th</sup> P2000m summit – we don't seem to have a name for these yet. Then we headed north to the town of Smithers, level with Alaska, for 2096m Kispiox and 2396m Cronin. With weather closing in, we scrapped a planned attempt on Mt Perseus and enjoyed a challenging day on snow-plastered 3363m Mt Edith Cavell (P2023), which, in common with my local hospital at Peterborough, is named after a WW1 nurse, who was executed by the Nazis for being overly humanitarian, on the day this peak received its first ascent. Further ultra-bagging was curtailed due to crevassed glaciers covered in fresh snow. Rather than spending our remaining week falling into crevasses we made our way back towards Vancouver with 2 easy ultras (repeats for me) 2250m Morton and 2155m Tod, together with some good P1000s and P600s.



*Wedge Mountain - P2000 #100 – Rob Woodall*

My final overseas trip was in November, to north-eastern **Mexico**, linking with Petter and Adam for a week around Monterrey. 2640m Cerro Tia Chena (optimistically listed as 2700m) is a good long hike with a little bushwhacking. Then, unseasonal snow led to a swift re-plan and used up a spare day I didn't have. 3117m

Cerro el Centinela promised to be a 2-day affair, but finding a marked trail made it a short day, getting me back on schedule. 2400m Picachos el Fraile (pessimistically listed as 2300m) is an impressive limestone peak with good scrambling and impressive exposure in places. 2200m Sierra Gomas, only recognised as an ultra following some mapwork just before our trip, was a peak too far, necessitating a worrying retreat. 3720m Cerro el Potosi was an early-morning 5-hour round-trip drive-up – ironically my highest peak of 2018 - before my afternoon flight home.

During 2018 I bagged my 5000th P300ft (P91.44m) summit worldwide – the milestone being achieved, as I later worked out, on peak-of-the-year Old Man of Hoy. With only 4301 P300-footers listed in the UK and Ireland, this is necessarily a worldwide list. The other 6 folk known to have passed the 5000 mark are all USA based – they do have a lot of summits there. Recent entrant Alyson Kirk has written a book – *On My Way Up* - a gripping tale of obsession, peakbagging and climbing – and survival.

## Articles

### The Man with the False Beard – by Eric Young (John Rooke Corbett)

John Rooke Corbett (27 September 1876 - 13 August 1949) Pioneer of Relative Hills



J. Rooke Corbett. Photo Rucksack Club Archives

Rooke Corbett was a tall, bespectacled, bearded bloke who gifted us relative height. His concept of hill-listing by both height and prominence was unique in its day. One obituary claimed Corbett "was probably the greatest hill walker of his generation" (1). This article seeks to explore how these features came together in this single and singular individual through his own words and through those who knew him.

Corbett was an original bagger and original member of the Manchester-based Rucksack Club (RC) at the age of 26. Following his graduation with a first class degree in mathematics from St John's College, Cambridge he took up a life-time employment as a civil servant firstly based in Manchester as a District Valuer. It was from here his love of all things mountainous grew.

Having been Convenor and continued serving on the RC's Rambles Sub-Committee, Corbett introduced the overnight "moonlight ramble", though they were often unlit. On 21 Sept 1907 a group of 8 members and two sons left Penistone bound for Bamford. They rested at the Cutgate Hotel at 2.30am before proceeding across the trackless moor to the Angler's Rest, Bamford in time for breakfast. On producing a full bottle of Bushmills the offering member found he had 7 teetotal companions. Commenting on the overnight hike Corbett believed "to find out what a piece of moorland is really like one must cross it on a misty night".(2) The "moonlight ramble" became an annual feature of future RC programmes.

In 1911 Corbett produced an article for the thriving RC Journal (RCJ) entitled "Twenty-Fives" (3). In it he listed the hills in England and Wales over 2,500feet to feed "a new craze or hobby...(:)a special form of the old passion for 'peak-bagging'." To complete a mountain list. He examples The Cheviot illustrating why the list bagger will not only visit the main hill but also Cairn Hill, Bellside Crag and a nameless 2547' point. His interest in British County tops leads him to advise "a short detour to the Scotch border will add the highest point in Roxburghshire to his list."

Corbett was in good listing-for-fun company. His peers in the RC listed 7843 "Munros" in Europe...and Corbett found two more.

Pursuing County tops takes him in 1920 to Shetland. "Fortunately Ronas Hill is higher than The Sneug on Foula as the boat to Foula only runs once a fortnight"(4). He admires "the great cliff of The Kame 1,200ft in profile despite 35 miles distant" at 1am (BST) having walked from Scalloway to Ronas Hill via "the pip" of Scalla Field, ending his day at Hillswick "where I knocked up the hotel at 4am in broad daylight and obtained a bed for the rest of the 'night'." A distance in excess of 40 miles. Next he's on Orkney heading for Ward Hill in a little petrol engine boat from Stromness as "Burra Sound is still blocked up with sunken ships."(5) Adventures indeed.

Ambitious plans were executed by Corbett and 2 fellow members in May 1913 to climb all the 4,000ft Cairngorm Munros in a single trip. They alighted at Blair Atholl at 11.30pm from the Manchester night train determined "to stay up until our task was completed." (6) They walked through Glen Tilt to Inverey. Onward to Derry Lodge via the Larig Ghru to Devil's Point, Carn Toul, Angel's Peak and Braeriach where "if the cairn is at the summit ...then the snow must have been very deep, for the highest point on the snowfield ... was some yards further east." The detailed observation of a true bagger. With lanterns lit shortly after midnight the trio continued over to "Ben Muich Dhui" and Cairngorm descending to Glenmore Lodge where they met a friendly keeper and thence to Aviemore station by 11am, under 36 hours later. In 1919 he completed the

first continuous round of the Welsh 3,000fters in the company of Eustace Thomas and an unnamed club member(7). Tireless walking indeed.

It was his often solo pursuit of Munros that marked him out. He would use his annual fortnights holiday to foray into Scotland. Armed with his trusty bicycle strengthened with a second middle bar, and aneroid (of which more later) he cycled from Manchester to Inverey and back taking in Corserine (his final Southern Uplands 25), Mount Battock (the most easterly) and 17 Munros in-between in as many days pedalling 961 miles. The fare was "1s 9d; 9d for the Tay Ferry and 1s for the Forth Bridge (train)." (8) He declared "I acted altogether on R L Stevenson's principle that 'to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive'." It may be this traverse that sparked another quirk.

In considering how best to tackle Ladhar Bheinn and its 2 attendant Munros in Knoydart he made a curious choice. He would approach from the Tomdoun Hotel by bike and on foot. "For many years I have kept a record of my walks on a map in red ink; and if a mountain is on the mainland of Great Britain I do not consider that I have done my duty by that mountain until this map shows at least one continuous red line from the summit to my home in Bristol" (9) He records that the red line reached the coffee lounge at Tomdoun where he booked in for a week. So he cycled to Kinlochquoich (pre-hydro dam) and walked from there to Ladhar Bheinn, the weather being so good he just kept going over Luinne Bheinn and Meall Buidhe, eventually arriving back at Tomdoun in time for breakfast the next morning. An adventurous walker indeed.

Commenting later on his philosophy to bagging, Corbett wrote: "Being over military age and having learnt what rheumatism feels like I prefer after a wet day on the hills to have more dry clothes than I can comfortably carry. I did not therefore adopt the plan of walking across the hills from one keepers cottage to another but made a practice of settling down for a week at a time at some convenient centre and taking a bicycle if it was necessary to extend my radius of action. For the same reason I do not camp or bivouac but I can still enjoy a walk which lasts all night if I can keep moving and do not rest long enough to become chilly." (10)

In 1923 he moved to Bristol and also joined the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC). "His application form states that he had climbed Ben Nevis by seven different routes between 1907 and 1914 and by December 1923 he had completed 92 Munros" (7) He completed in 1930 on Buachaille Etive Mor with his sister "lying down at the top to eat our oranges instead of drinking champagne" (1) Excusing his lack of celebration he later quipped : how could a fellow celebrate properly "with a sister - and two maiden aunts in the car below." He had just completed 543 Munros and Tops, the second person and first Englishman to do so. It would be another nine years before the feat was repeated by Cram.

The record suggests up until 1923 Corbett's bagging had been multi-listed and varied. There was no singular focus on Munros alone. He used County Tops to explore the further corners of Britain in much the same way as we might use Marilyn's today. "The love of the Scottish mountains was with him pure and abiding" (11) and perhaps it was this that spurred his interest in completing the Munros and Tops during the next seven years, along with his meticulous recording of the Scottish mountains between 2,500 feet and under 3,000 feet. We cannot be certain but it seems highly likely that Corbett went on to complete bagging his own listing of these hills in 1939. (12) He was the first to do so - but then he had earned the advantage of prior knowledge of his own list.

His aneroid barometer was a constant companion: "his pocket liar". Corbett wrote a detailed article on the aneroid's potential and liabilities "but shows how the mendacity of the instrument may be ultimately outwitted." (13) His article covers but a few of his careful observations made on the heights of the tops in Munro's Tables. His revision notebook of Munro's list is detailed and thorough (14). It is little wonder it was he who was asked to carry out that task which he took up with a will. One of his key interests was in accurately measuring the hills he climbed for compilation purposes.

"What do you make it?" said Corbett who as the strong man of the party had got up first.

"260 feet below Mullach; that is 3,067 feet using the reading when we left the top, but 3,077 feet if we take the reading when we arrived."

"I make it 3,100" said he, "but as your gradations are wider than mine, I daresay yours may be more accurate." (15)

So writes J. Gall Inglis in 1929. He and Corbett were in Fisherfield checking on the exact location of the high point of Sgurr Ban. They'd then traversed Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair on to Beinn Tarsuinn. They'd just discovered a new Munro, one overlooked by Sir Hugh. But Corbett's interests went beyond the hills, their heights and their listings.

He had a keen interest and understanding of the geology underpinning his hills. In his listing of the "Twenty-Fives" he briefly describes the geological structure beneath each group of hills. The northern Pennines he notes "consist of a high escarpment of carboniferous rocks, dipping to the east, and cut off on the west by the Pennine Faults. The summits are all capped with millstone grit and bear a close resemblance to the highest points of Cheshire and Derbyshire." Commenting on the geology of Kinder Scout he notes that "feldspar and mica are only crystalline forms of clay and when they are exposed to the air they tend to convert themselves into that material." (16)

Photography interested him. The RC would have talks with "lantern slides" and Corbett was amongst the contributors. He discusses the merits of different photographic plates and notes their sensitivity to damp conditions.

He and Harry Scott would amuse themselves whilst on a long walk by playing mental chess as opponents in their heads engaging memory, planning and foresight.

A RC outing to Carnedd Dafydd on a crystal clear day was followed by a discussion as to what could be seen. "It was not long before we found ourselves setting to work with map, ruler and protractor to draw a diagram of the hills which should be visible from our peak." (17) He drew on his mathematics creating formulae to take account of heights, curvature of the earth and refraction of light. This led Corbett to create a "table of depths" indicating what would be visible at 250 foot height intervals from Carnedd Dafydd and left the formulae for application elsewhere. Meticulous calculations typical of his recordings. He believed that Ordnance surveyors had obtained readings from Axe Edge to Snowdonia in one direction and to Lincoln Cathedral in another "using powerful heliograph or searchlight" (17)

As a rule Corbett did not carry water. He drank the water resource he found fearing neither dead carcasses or pollutants but noting carefully their possibility and averting as necessary. He would check colour, taste and surface bubbles. "The best drinking water ...has a taste like fresh air". "In the south of England...my rambles plan themselves so that lunchtime occurs within reach of a pint of shandygaff. But it is not an improvement on the mountain stream." He discusses the issue at some length in an article (18). He is careful in lead and copper rock-bearing areas. A walking colleague commented: "I knew that Pickstone and Corbett had the agility of the chamois and the tracking powers of Sherlock Holmes and that they never thirsted and only hungered at times convenient to themselves." (19)

As with baggers of today, Corbett was interested in maps. He liked the Bartholomew half-inch series with mountain delineation in clear graded colours so that he could see hill shapes "at a glance". The sheets overlapped. As a comparison he notes he needed four OS 1" maps to climb Stob Coire Claurigh. However, Bartholemews lacked high-ways, mountain tracks and stalkers paths and didn't even pretend to show bridges! More a cyclist's map. He notes in relation to Bodlyn Crag in Wales that "the ordnance surveyors in accordance with their usual custom anxious to keep foolhardy persons out of temptation had carefully marked every bit of the mountain except the one piece worth climbing." (20) So armed with his 2d pocket compass ("the cheapest compass in the Club") his navigational skills were all the more remarkable though not infallible. His sister records a winter outing: "Once they were rockbound on Haystacks of all places and had to be rescued after dark from Gatesgarth with lantern." (1)

He was a frequent contributor to the RCJ on a variety of interesting topics and produced some interesting descriptions. He perceived "the trident peak of Ben Loyal" and The Cuillin as "something ethereal, something unearthly". On a more grounded note he advises after a twixmas day in soft snow on Glyder Fach: "The important thing is to keep your feet close together; do not make a separate hole at each step, but make one continuous track by kicking down the snow in front, instead of trying to stride over it. It looks laborious but experience proves in really deep snow it is much the easier way." (21) His wry good humour comes through

his writing. He recalls his map showing a road running westwards from Loch Lyon down Chonoglais glen to the main road at Tyndrum. He advises "any cyclist who proposes to travel this road to provide himself with a rucksack large enough to carry his bicycle." (22)



So what was this all-rounder like as a person? The RCJ printed a tongue-in-cheek Who's Who series of member profiles one of which was "Suggested Titles for Popular Climbers : No.2 : Saint Rooke". It is a mixture of fact and fond fiction. Corbett is credited as an "original member of the Topographical Committee (1903), Chairman of Committee (1909-10), appointed Surveyor to Club on its flotation in 1911, canonised whilst still alive (by special dispensation) in 1917, climber, walker, cave-explorer and geological expert (the only man in the Club who can tell the age of a Market Street sett by tapping it with a hammer), special constable, authority on "twenty-fives" (vide infra) and inventor of the celebrated annual all-night perambulation or "nocturnal orgy".(23) In the accompanying "stained glass window" he is shown with halo, hammer and camera and the infamous beard. Another satire by a fellow member credits Corbett with authorship of "With beard and bicycle in the Grampians" by J. Hooke Torbett. Cabot Press Bristol 1927 42s net (delivered at any station).(24)

He was nicknamed "the man with the false beard". When a club outing disembarked at a Welsh wayside railway station in war troubled 1914 en route to Plynlimon, an over-zealous station-master reported six suspicious looking no-gooders including one with the false beard. A Manchester Alderman in the party appears to have rescued Corbett, the one with the beard, from possible arrest by the local constabulary. But the tag stuck.(25) He preferred to be known by his middle name of "Rooke". Corbett had been christened in memory of his father's younger brother who drowned in the River Irwell.(7)



*Crossing the River Severn on a trip to Plynlimon, 1914.  
Left to right, Harry Scott, Ernest Manning, William Walker, Rooke Corbett,  
Charles Pickstone. Photo Leonard Pearce - Rucksack Club Archives*

He was noted for his thoughtfulness and integrity. Clad in "tweed jacket and Jaeger helmet" (26) and "though quiet and retiring by nature, he was a good companion on the hills and it is typical of his cheerfulness and patience that his many friends were quite unaware of the gradual approach of a paralytic affection in his hands even as far back as 1935." (27) Walter Riley remembers Corbett as "quiet and very knowledgeable about the hills" (12) Corbett had a serious heart attack at the age of 65 though he continued working in "feeble health" until retiring at 70 to stay with his sister Catherine ("Katie"). As his sister's friend put it, "he was sufficiently a philosopher to endure the shackles that his frailty had imposed upon him and able to enjoy so many intellectual things that are closed to many." (1) He died aged 72 leaving us an invaluable legacy and example.

His sister donated his papers to the SMC and these formed the basis of The Corbetts. Robin Campbell's analysis of those existing papers suggests the consistent relative height was of 10x 50 foot contour rings guaranteeing greater than 450feet. He suggests it may be the SMC that rounded this to 500 feet. (28) Either way, Corbett gave us relative height within the defined height parameters now recognised as The Corbetts, the first relative hills list.

"Corbett was probably the best and most tireless hill walker of his generation and the love of the Scottish mountains was with him passion pure and abiding. Let his list therefore be accepted as a memorial to a personality genuine and likeable" (11)

And as Dave Hewitt expresses it "the one I would most have liked to meet". (29) If we can't meet him maybe we should celebrate him instead?

References: (1) RCJ 1950:249 (2) RCJ 1908:126 (3) RCJ 1911:61 (4) RCJ 1920:76 (5) RCJ 1921:228 (6) RCJ 1913:251 (7) RCJ 2005:31 John Hamer "John Rooke Corbett and his Legacy" (8) RCJ 1918:284 (9) RCJ 1928:236 (10) RCJ 1931:90 (11) SM CJ 1952 v25:45 (12) Corbett Tops and Corbetteers, TACit Tables 1999 Dave Hewitt p38 (13) SM CJ 1932 v20:113-4 (14) Notebook on revision of the Munros by Corbett in National Library of Scotland (15) SM CJ 1929 v18:269-275 (16) RCJ 1917:175 (17) RCJ 1918:242 (18) RCJ 1925:298 (19) RCJ 1907:128 (20) RCJ :1913:181 (21) RCJ 1908:92 (22) RCJ 1924:116 (23) RCJ 1918:192 (24) RCJ 1928:118 (25) RCJ 1915:68 (26) RCJ 1914:280 (27) SM CJ 1950 v24:244 (28) Munro Society Journal 2:2010 (29) Summit Talks 12.12.2002

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## Imagine – Alan Dawson

In 1971 John Lennon wrote and recorded one of the most memorable songs of all time. It has become so familiar that it is easy to overlook how radical the ideas were. "Imagine there's no countries, it isn't hard to do, nothing to kill or die for, and no religion, too". It didn't change the world but it did make a lot of people think, which is not easy, because most people seem not keen on thinking for themselves. That's probably one of the attractions of religion. Thinking is frustrating if you are hoping for answers and don't find them. What would the equivalent thoughts be if applied to hill bagging? Imagine there are no categories, it's easy if you try, nothing to climb a hill for, except to walk on high.

It is no secret that there has been discontent among some members of RHSoc because of a perceived lack of respect shown to some hill categories by the editor of Relative Matters. He dared to challenge the orthodox

view of categories held and written about by members. He even had the audacity to change some of the sacred words. There was an almost religious anger at his blasphemy. No-one threatened to behead him but several members wanted to be rid of the disrespectful dissident. Categories have become the belief system by which lots of baggers live their hilly lives.

The Relative Hills Society was set up with an original belief system. It did not abolish categories, because categories are useful for structuring the world, a way of making sense of confusing information. Categories have value but, like countries and religions, have the potential to constrain thought to the extent that some people will aggressively defend their own categories and beliefs.

The principles of RHSoc are simple. Everything is based on topography. Britain is one large island and a lot of smaller islands. Political and administrative boundaries are irrelevant to topography. Primary hill categories are based solely on relative height – Marilyns, Humps and Tumps. Secondary hill categories are also based on altitude or absolute height – Simms and Dodds, while islands may be based on height or area – Sibs. That's it. All hill categories can be expressed numerically with P for prominence and A for altitude: P150, P100, P30, A600/P30, A500-599/P30. So simple, so clear. These numbers refer to metres but the principles would not change if different units were used. The same principles can be applied worldwide with different numbers.

The topographic basis was made clear from the outset, so why have some hill baggers who chose to join this society been so annoyed? Perhaps some were taking categories too seriously. As well as definitions and lists it was supposed to be about enjoying ourselves, the freedom of the hills, encouraging others with similar objectives, helping others celebrate personal targets or reach awkward summits or islands. There is still a lot of support and goodwill on offer, so it seems a pity to get upset about some words and categories that are not relevant to the principles of the society.

Perhaps hill baggers are so proud of their achievements that they don't like to see them overlooked or reworded. It's understandable. The editorial keyboard may have seemed a little too dogmatic, over-zealous. Martin has evidently had the knack of annoying people, as did John Lennon. There were mass burnings of Beatles records in parts of the USA in 1966 to protest against Lennon's comments about Jesus. Annoyances are common in all areas of life. Martin's editing didn't make him the Devil's Point or the anti-Wainwright but some people refused to read the magazine in protest. Perhaps some really did burn it.

In 2017, RHSoc members voted for a motion, a more civilised way of dealing with disagreements than fighting or burning. It is worth repeating the wording of this to remind us all what was agreed:

*"The Relative Hills Society is primarily interested in recording and promoting the more modern relative hill lists including (but not restricted to) the Marilyns, Humps, Tumps, Simms and Sibs. In doing so the Society recognises, respects and values the historical contribution to hill bagging made by earlier hill-listers and their lists. This recognition includes (but is not restricted to) the Munros, Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds in Scotland and the Hewitts and Nuttalls in England and Wales."*

So that is currently official RHSoc policy. It respects the past but its main focus is relative hill lists that cover all of Britain. Grahams and Hewitts are referred to as historical even though they were defined after Marilyns. The policy does not challenge or change the fundamental principles of RHSoc, but it does assert that we should be inclusive to those who have not fully embraced hill bagging based on topography. Martin adjusted his editing accordingly for the second edition. References to other hill categories are not banned, and the achievements of hill baggers should be respected, but the main focus of the society and its magazine should be on relative hills. I hope we can all agree on that and accept it.

RHSoc is different to all other hillwalking societies in basing its principles on topography not tradition. This uniqueness seems to me to be a good reason for its existence and development. Not worth dying for, not worth fighting over, but worth supporting if you believe that it makes more sense to define hills by their topographic characteristics than by one man's word or one club's word; to categorise hills according to the

way the land is, not by what has been published in a book; to climb hills because they exist, not because other people climb them.

There is an even more challenging line in Lennon's song: "Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can". It is a tricky one. The equivalent thought experiment for hill baggers would be to imagine no collections, imagine no completions. No ticking, no bagging, no counting, no logging, just walking. Aaagh! That strikes fear into the brain of the committed hill bagger. No, please, not the comfy Rambler. I can imagine baggers getting panicky at the thought of losing all their records and coloured triangles. Fortunately, the key word is "imagine". I have imagined the idea and rejected it. I have imagined how many hills I would have climbed if I had not been bagging them. Not enough, that's how many, not nearly enough. Not enough summits, not enough experiences, not enough numbers.

I think it is good to imagine these things to question our activities, beliefs and motivations. RHSoc is not just about relative hills, it is also about relative hill baggers and their numbers, about sharing experiences and achievements as well as practical things like boats, ropes and holiday homes. Our collections and completions are important but perhaps, like possessions, it may be unhealthy to get too attached to them. Perhaps being first or second or tenth doesn't much matter. Perhaps completing a list or an area is not more important than doing as many as you can or as many as you want. Perhaps if something gets omitted from the journal it is not a personal slight, it is an oversight or the editor doing his job as best he can. Don't we mainly climb hills for ourselves, not to impress anyone else?

Being goal oriented is a key part of hill bagging, but so is having fun, respecting other people and forgiving their foibles. The Marhof gatherings and publications of the past were as much about celebrating the quirks of our game as about recording numbers and achievements. Things have changed now with RHSoc, it is more formal so we have to have rules, accounts, elections and so on. That's not a bad thing as long as we don't lose sight of what brought us all together in the first place. We have usually been a friendly, harmless bunch. Well, mostly harmless. So I hope that in future we can carry on celebrating and enjoying the things we have in common and do less niggling over categories and other things that divide opinions. Differences of opinion are healthy. Vitriol and animosity are not.

### Taking the Humff with Humps – Eric Young

I've enjoyed the Marilyns and am loving the Simms, that sub-set that top slices the three main British metric lists of the Marilyns, Humps and Tumps. Yet I'm uneasy.

When I'd all but completed the Marilyns (bar the fabulous sea stacks of Boreray) I was informed I'd qualified for the Humps Hall of Fame. I hadn't really given the Humps much thought. At best they were accidental (or do I mean incidental?) to my hill-walking. So I'd have felt a bit of a fraud if I were to have claimed my bottle of Aldi red so I didn't. My conscience problem is with double counting within these primary hill lists.

A century ago the same issue faced Rooke Corbett. Having chosen prominence as one criterion and hill heights above 2,500 feet should he incorporate hills already listed elsewhere above 3,000 feet which qualified? He decided to limit his list to unlisted hills between 2,500 and 2,999 feet. No overlap. (Incidentally he felt no such restrictions in drawing up the "25's" of England and Wales for the Rucksack Club). Similarly with the Grahams. You climb (in this example) a Scottish hill, enjoy the experience and it counts as one in only one list.

Would it not have been neater to have defined Humps as British metric hills with a prominence between 100 metres and 149.9 metres? Giving a unique list of approx 1426 hills distinct from the 1557 Marilyns. With entry to the Hump Hall of Fame at 600? If I ever find I've done 600 non-Marilyn Humps I'll register with Chris with an easy conscience. Scouts honour Chris.

Following such a redefinition trend the Tumps would have a prominence of between 30 metres and 99.9 metres.

That's my first problem. My second is with the Tumps. Not the hills themselves mind, but how we got here in the first place. The Tumps essentially bow to the old imperial measure of 100 feet. The list built on existing material available as Murdos, Corbett & Graham tops and Hewitts. But did logic and metric neatness not demand 50 metres as a minimum prominence for the next list beyond the Marilyn's and Humps? Introducing the Fumps (prominence of 50m – 99.9m), all 5,773 of them or thereabouts.

After which given the availability of modern measurement accuracies we might have had a list of hills with a prominence of between 25m – 49.9 m. Lots and lots of them. And no multi-counting.

Ah well. Water under the bridge.


## Beginners A-Z of The Relative Hills Society - Anne Gray

The foundation of the RHSoc is Alan Dawson's baby '*The Relative Hills of Britain*'. This book defines hills by drop/prominence which means they have a relative height as well as an absolute height from sea level and are measured using the metric, not the imperial system.

Back in the annals of time, famous hill baggers tended to group hills by absolute height and made a good estimate of height. They also came up with their own idea of what defined a hill. When the historic hill baggers died others got on their bandwagon and altered some of these historic lists.

As many of these hill bagging lists were confined to a local area eg Scotland, Lake District, Alan set out on his mission to create an inclusive list of all the hills in Britain (the SNP were not too happy!).

**A** – Alan Dawson is the guy with long legs that came up with the idea of Marilyn's and other hill stuff. He also uses fancy, expensive satellite technology to measure hills.

**B** – A very popular letter for baggers. You can see why by its close resemblance to a Marilyn  !!!

**B** – Bagger's Belly, a common attribute that is achieved by lots of chocolate biscuits and beer.

**B** – Baglog, a list of hills you have climbed, crawled or swam to in a year. Not to be confused with caramel log, a favourite Scottish chocolate biscuit which is good for developing a bagger's belly.

**B** – Badge, a little round thing that you get at primary school and at the RHSoc Annual Meeting when you've been very good.

**B** – Bing, a made-up hill put there by people not the Earth itself. Some baggers get very annoyed by these.

**C** – Cairn, a man-made pile of rubble at the top of hill. If you enjoy natural summits you might wish to consider dismantling them or, if applicable, help in the rebuilding of small eco-friendly ones.

**D** – Dodd, at least 500m high and under 600m, drop of 30 metres. Dodd is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means round or plump. When I was wee I used to have a dodd of bread with my soup.

**D** – Donalds, Donald Tops. Roundy hills in the non-Highland part of Scotland lumped together for clarity because no-one can tell the difference.

**D** – Drop, what baggers do to their trousers when climbing a little hill they don't like. The official term for these hills is wee shites. I didn't make that up!

**F** – Feet, handy for putting into walking boots or wellies. Also, a measurement banned from RHSoc!!

**G** – Guano (bird shit). If you like this stuff join the SIB baggers (Significant Islands of Britain) and climb the sea stacks and little islands even if they are not relative hills. Enjoy!!!

**H** – Hills. Oxford English Dictionary definition: 'A heap or mound of something'. Well, that just about covers everything! Other names include peaks/fells/mountains or anything else you fancy!

**H** – Humps are any height, drop of at least 100 metres. You may be lucky and spot a camel on them.

**I** – Imperial. ‘Relating to or denoting the system of non-metric weights and measures’ (ounce, inch, foot, yard, mile, pint (bagger’s favourite), rod, pole, perch etc). Loved by people who long for the days when Imperial Britain ruled the world and don't like fancy French measures.

**I** – Isle of Man. Not part of Britain!! You'll need to fork out a fortune for the ferry, so why bother!

**J** – Job. Best not to have one of these if you want to bag a lot of hills!!

**L** – List. Long set of names and numbers that gives meaning to Life. A League Table is a type of List that encourages baggers to drive thousands of miles and get very wet in and hope that they don't get overtaken by other baggers.

**M** – Marilyn's have a drop of at least 150 metres, regardless of height. These are very sneaky hills as they can be very big, very wee, very difficult to get to or very shitty!!

**N O** – a very good word, especially when it comes to hill bagging. I like this word!

**P** – Prominence. ‘A thing that projects from something, such as a projecting feature of the landscape or a protuberance on a part of the body.’ Well! Alan certainly noticed Marilyn's’ prominences!!

**Q** – Quartermaster. A person who is half as good as a halfmaster and looks after chocolate biscuits and islands and things like that.

**R** – Relativity. The greatest idea of all time. It means when you are at the top of a hill, time passes more quickly than when you are at the bottom. That is weird. I don't think it is why people climb hills though.

**S** – Simm, at least 600 metres, drop of at least 30 metres and also used to give a computer more memory. So good to bag these if you're getting a bit forgetful like me!!

**S** – Summit, the highest point of a hill, until someone changes it which annoys a lot of baggers who don't want to climb that hill again!

**T** – Top is a subsidiary summit so not really the top. Some call summits a top! So a bit confusing for beginners like me!

**T** – Tump is a hill of any height, drop of at least 30 metres. Not to be confused with Trump which has a bizarre, windswept top.

**U** – Ultras are all the world's peaks with a prominence of at least 1500 metres. Take your woolly socks when heading to Ultras in Antarctica!

**W** – Wainwrights are at least 1000 feet in a little bit of England, but Castle Crag which is a Wainwright is below 1000ft. Size isn't everything as some men say! But more importantly no drop needed!

**Z** – Zebra, an animal with black and white stripes. If you've spotted any in your hill walks in Britain, check your GPS cause you have likely strayed into Africa.

Letters waiting for an important role in RHSoc – **E K V X Y**. The end. Well almost!!

### **Extra Info for Beginners**

Historic hill lists such as Wainwrights and Munros don't suit RHSoc because they are defined by imperial height and author's choice, not defined by drop. Perhaps RHSoc could be fudged to fit them in? Best not, but fudge is good for bagger's belly!

Hill lists defined by imperial height and metric drop include Grahams, Hewitts and Murdos, all compiled by Alan Dawson, a busy boy. These are relative hills, but they don't suit RHSoc because they are not fully metric and don't cover all of Britain. They were fudged to form a bridge between old and new. Alan likes fudge, but these days he is not keen on fudged lists.

Munros are hills in Scotland over 3000 feet, compiled by Hugh Munro in 1891 and revised by him before he died in 1919. Munros do not depend on drop, but must satisfy Hugh's subjective measure. In 1921 there were 543 summits in Munro's list, which he subdivided into separate mountains and tops. As a result of

more accurate measuring and the removal of tops by the Scottish Mountaineering Club there now are only 282 official Munros!! Mmmmm!! 48% down on Munro's list! Even stranger, lots of those missing hills are higher than some of the 282 that are left, and they have promoted a top to a Munro that is lower than its neighbouring top! I'm wondering how keen these so-called mountaineers are on bagging, considering they have now changed the list to '*Mini Munros*'! They must be keen on fudge though!

### Websites

hill-bagging.co.uk – This site will keep any bagger entertained for the rest of their life!! The easiest way to remember this site is the Woolly Sheep Site. Careful when saying this too fast or if you're drunk!

walkhighlands.co.uk – Helps you to 'discover and explore the real Scotland'. I'm pleased to see that their inclusive policy recognises that the Lake District (Wainwrights), England and Wales (Hewitts) are now officially part of the real Scotland. I'm not sure if Nicola Sturgeon is a member of this site. I don't think she is too keen on fudge.

### A Grand Day Out – Tony Kinghorn (Sgurr nan Coireachan and Sgurr Thuilm, Jan 2018)

The forecast was, frankly, bad. Snow, cloud down to sea level, south-easterly gales. MWIS, in particular, was a portent of gloom.

The great advantage of the internet, however, is that if you look hard enough you can eventually find a better forecast. The most optimistic suggested that things may be slightly better in the morning, especially (perhaps) further west.

Thus buoyed by unwarranted optimism, a (ridiculously) early start was made. But optimism was rewarded- the cloud was NOT down to sea level as forecast, it was dry and the wind was negligible.

So, in the ghastly pre-dawn light, we set off from Glenfinnan up the excellent tarmac track to Corryhully. Pausing briefly to admire the Glenfinnan Viaduct (no drone flying permitted!) we made excellent progress, observed by numerous stags near the track and on the hillside above. Before long we arrived at the celebrated 'Electric Bothy'.

The tops were clear, although the high cloud showed plenty of the promised activity.



*The 'Electric Bothy' – Tony Kinghorn*

A brief stop, then on an excellent stalker's path (only partly marked on the map) we headed up towards Sgurr nan Coireachan. Higher up the snow became continuous and, in places, icy- traces of a previous party showed that they had suffered much softer conditions. We put on crampons and continued up the ridge.

These hills are close cousins of the 'Rough Bounds' of Knoydart and the ground is anything but smooth. Ups and downs, small rocky steps, but eventually we crested the ridge and had a splendid- but rapidly deteriorating- view into the wild hinterlands of Knoydart, Glen Pean and Glen Dessary. Now fully exposed to the rapidly rising wind, we reached the cairn and huddled down to pull on reserve clothing and have lunch. The climb from the bothy had only taken two-and a half hours, so we felt things were going well. Little did we know!

The ridge to the east was now into the teeth of the gale. The cloud descended, and visibility shrank to a few yards. Fortunately the crest, as with many hills in that area, is adorned with fence posts and these provided a welcome guide as we set off towards Sgurr Thuilm. The snow deepened and softened, and the going became extremely slow. We continued over several intermediate summits, sometimes briefly dipping below the cloud, but mostly in what was increasingly becoming a white-out. Maybe MWIS had been right after all!



*Nearing the top of Sgurr nan Coireachan – Tony Kinghorn*

The penultimate summit before Sgurr

Thuilm was steep hard snow, and fully exposed to the wind. Progress was agonisingly slow, mostly due to me suffering frequent attacks of Mountaineer's Foot (the inability to place one in front of the other), but also due to us having some difficulty in breathing due to the strength of the wind. We frequently just had to stop and hang on to wait for the wind to ease. As the angle flattened off, we left the fence posts and headed off by compass towards the top.

The summit cairn loomed up as we staggered towards it, buffeted by the wind. It was now 4.15 pm, some three and a half hours from Sgurr nan Coireachan- a measure of how hard the going had become. A momentary pause, then we quickly headed off into the rapidly gathering gloom, taking frequent checks of the compass. The plan to follow the ridge down was rapidly abandoned- it was far too windy, and there was a good chance of veering over the edge of the steep east face, where a cornice was barely visible. Instead we headed down the coire to the right.

Before too long we had lost the worst of the wind and were now faced just with deep, featureless snow. Just as darkness fell we dipped below the cloud, and caught a glimpse of the lip of the coire. The descent thereafter was fairly straightforward, but very slow- each step could be deep snow, rock, grass, slush, bog or sheet ice- there was no real way of knowing, torches were little help. Eventually we reached a track and thereafter we could relax. Down in the glen the wind was hardly noticeable, it was hard to believe what it had been like two thousand feet above.

Corryhully bothy beckoned. This splendid refuge not only has electric light, it even has an electric kettle- which we rapidly put to good use. Even better, two Danish lads were in residence, and had the fire on! So at 7pm we enjoyed our second lunch in comfort.

The stroll back down the glen was a pleasure, accompanied by some hooting owls (no doubt on their postal duties for Hogwarts!). The only thing we missed was a steam train crossing the viaduct.

## Shetland and Orkney Islands – Barry K Smith

Having discovered that there were more Marilyn's on the Scottish Islands (over 200) than in England or Wales (both under 200) I decided to visit the Shetlands and Orkneys, places I had never visited. There are 28 Marilyn's on these islands spread over 13 islands. Two days stand out, the first on Foula, west of mainland Shetland, and the second on the Isle of Hoy, just south of mainland Orkney.

## FOULA

Foula is the most remote inhabited island in the British Isles. Few people visit it, often Foula is cut off from mainland Shetland by winds, low clouds and high seas. There are no shops so, if you are a day tripper, you should bring your own lunch.

It was mid April when I visited (early enough to miss attacks by the Skuas) and, apparently, it was the first date in 2018 when it had been possible to complete a day trip to the island. The eight seater plane took off from Tingwall, near Lerwick, shortly after 9am with four passengers. We flew at a height of 700 feet and soon the island appeared ahead of us. After 15 minutes, we landed on a short gravel airstrip cleared of sheep for the occasion.

There are two Marilyns on Foula, Da Sneug and Da Noup (da is dialect for the). The walk begins directly from the airstrip and can be completed in around three hours leaving plenty of time to explore the rest of the island, have coffee at the school and maybe buy some memorabilia that the children make. A path led from the 'airfield' past a small chapel and continued up the wide east ridge of Da Sneug. The short cropped grass and heather made for comfortable walking over Hamnafield hill to the summit.

From Da Sneug I took direct aim at Da Noup and headed down grassy slopes, a descent of nearly 1,200 feet to the flat pasture land lying between Da Sneug and Da Noup. With each step the views became more impressive. Below, Da Sneck appeared, a deep trench in the rock abounding with sea birds. Then I was down, walking along the flat pasture land, wild Shetland ponies looking on.

The ascent of Da Noup was steep and ran close to the cliff edge. There was an abundance of seabirds perched on the cliffs. Giant Skuas could be picked out flying overhead as I climbed higher keeping away from the edge. The views all around were spectacular; to the west the sea, next stop Greenland or northern Canada, to the north the summit of Da Sneug and the onrushing sea beating against the cliffs (see below), and to the east a peaceful scene with houses dotted along the three mile single track road.

## HOY

A few weeks later I took the ferry from Orkney mainland to the Isle of Hoy. Showing a lack of ambition I started with coffee at the local cafe before heading for Ward Hill (it would have been possible to complete at least two Marilyns between ferries if I hadn't bothered with the coffee). I was advised on the best route by the manageress at the cafe. Following her advice turned out to be a mistake!

As I headed up Ward Hill from the south end of Sandy Loch, I noticed some large birds flying ahead. Maybe Hen Harriers I thought, didn't Giant Skuas only nest on St Kilda and Foula? Wrong, I was soon under full attack! A frightening experience with two Skuas coming in low, at great speed, with claws in front at a height of around four feet. Terrified, I ran up the hill in a crouched position holding my rucksack above my head! In retrospect I wish I could have managed a picture but it was not to be.

Having traversed Ward Hill, I descended to the Dwarfie Stone car park on the east side of the hill. The RSPB were positioned in the layby with a telescope trained on the opposite hillside. I was invited to look through it. It was a nesting Sea Eagle, a species wiped out in the UK when the last bird was shot on Shetland in 1918. A week later I read that two babies had been successfully hatched, the first on Orkney for 140 years.

On two separate trips spread over a week, I completed ten Marilyns so there is plenty of reason to return and visit other islands like Fetlar, Noss and Fair Isle.

## [A Day Out on the Old Man of Hoy - Richard Mclellan](#)

06:30 Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2018 - Braced against the wind, a group of us stands on the cliff top looking out at The Old Man of Hoy (4927), the classic sandstone sea stack immortalised by its televised ascent in 1967 by some

of the finest climbers of the day. I'd stood here twenty years previously but on a calm day in warm sunshine enjoying the magnificent views and harassed only by the occasional Bonxie. Then, as now, I'd picked out the standard route up the east face. At that time, it was with little more than idle curiosity for I'd enjoyed plenty of excitement and many a struggle leading Scottish VS climbs. A route graded at HVS/E1 was not a route for me. Today it looked every bit as steep and committing as I remembered.

Both Rob and Alan were in striking distance of completing ascents of all the British Humps and The Old Man had to be climbed. On the face of it, it was an easy target, with straight forward access by commercial ferries, no climbing restrictions and with a recognised climbing route. A little training, someone at the sharp end of the rope and a good weather day and it could be 'in the bag'. Rick was an enthusiastic participant to the venture and, having indicated an interest, I too had been roped in. Tim Hamlet was happy to be our climbing guide, and, in his words, was 'looking forward to be standing on the top again.' All we now needed was a good weather day.



Overnight the strengthening wind howled around the hostel and I woke in anticipation of the 04:30 alarm. The dawn skies were clear but a variety of debris swirled in the eddies outside the back door. It hardly seemed the best of conditions to climb the Old Man; but then, it wasn't that bad either. I could all too easily imagine difficulties in communicating on long pitches with a group not that familiar with climbing together. Tim, however, remained upbeat and here we were on the cliff top, the Old Man suddenly within reach.

Quoting from my log of that day:-

.....Continuing a short way north along the cliff top we reach an obvious descent path down an easy angled gully. The path makes a descending traverse over grass; the mud steps are pleasantly dry with little risk of slipping. Reaching the ridge line, the path steepens for the final descent to the ridge of boulders linking Hoy to the Old Man. A southwest wind gusts over the top of the boulders and we descend to the sea level rocks at the base of the northeast face where sheltered from the wind we gear-up.

Tim sets off with Rob and Alan while Rick and I set off to measure the height of the boulder col. Tim makes fast work of the initial pitch and taking Rob and Alan up simultaneously it seems wise we abort our col measurement and start climbing. Rick leads; it's a straight forward 20m pitch with good holds, solid rock



*Alan on Pitch 2 – R Mclellan*



*Alan at start of Pitch 4 – Richard Mclellan*

and is well-protected. We've soon joined Rob and Alan on the first spacious windswept stance in gorgeous warm sunshine, with lots of good belay points.

Out on the east face, Tim leads over the overhang and continues out of sight up the crux pitch, apparently without difficulty. I look down at the infamous and feared traverse. My eyes skim over the wall thinking I'm looking in the wrong place. It's a sandstone ledge some 6m long and half metre wide, perhaps an awkward step to access, but

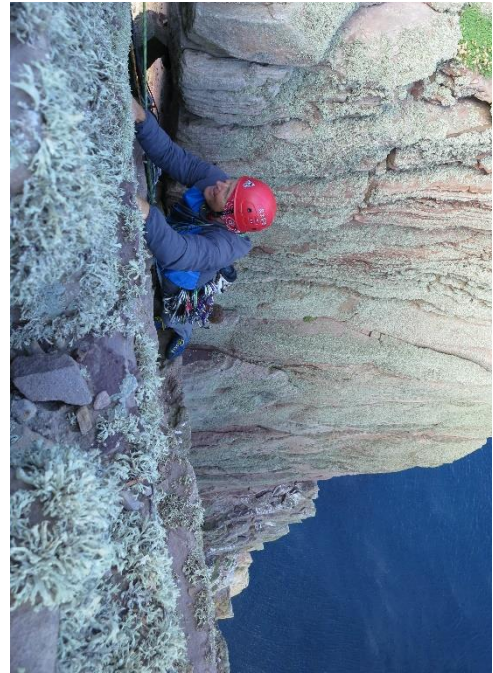
really little more than a scramble. We protect Rob and Alan across the traverse and in turn this back rope

provides our top rope. Rob and Alan move slowly up the crux pitch without stalling and disappear from sight. It's difficult to communicate in the wind but the top rope tightens and I follow. Easily across the traverse, I'm soon looking up at the crux crack line, starting upward the short chimney is awkward with sack but I'm soon able to move out on a good thin line of horizontal cracks to the edge and up over the overhang.

The pitch continues steeply and strenuously but there are lots of angular holds for both hands and feet and no shortage of protection if you've large friends. I'm able to see Rob and soon join him on the restricted corner stance and fine thread belay. Rob moves off and, enjoying the exposure, I bring up Rick, the rocks and sea now a long way below. Progress at the sharp end of the party has halted due to lack of gear so Rick follows Rob to resupply Tim with the collected gear.

The 20m third pitch is all very straight forward and soon we're all belayed on a spacious stance. I tuck myself into the corner of a high ledge to wait my turn for pitch 4 which Tim is taking his time over. I'm fourth up the 40m pitch, somewhat scrappy in places with vegetated, sandy, earthy ledges and thin veins of brittle-looking iron stone. A bundle of fluffy grey opens its beak and makes a poor attempt of puking vomit at me, failing to make the distance - a Fulmar chick. There is plenty of scope for route variation on this pitch and numerous belay options of rusting

bolts, pegs and degrading slings. I reach the good stance at the base of the classic final 20m corner pitch. Tim ropes me up the steep and strenuous pitch but it has good holds and ample opportunity for protection. This pitch felt harder to me than the crux pitch.



*Rick on Final pitch – Richard Mclellan*



*Old Man of Hoy - view from summit – Richard Mclellan*

So, at 12:15, I move from the shelter of the shady corner to the bright sunshine of the windswept summit of the lower tower. It's an ample level-ish area and I tie onto a long tail and clip into the belay. Rick arrives and Rob and Alan are given a rope over to the highest tower where there's more ample space, small cairn and the high point, which is a couple of rocks on a rock stool. Rick and I go next, touching the high point together, a fine achievement for all of us. The passing ferry gives a hoot on its horn; we just catch the sound before it's lost in the wind. There's a fairly continuous 40mph wind, bright sunshine, scattered cumulus and it's a memorable place to be.

I'm last off the summit giving good opportunity for a look around. There's no problem in finding a secure abseil point amongst the vast number of slings. The double 60m ropes get us down to the top of the 3rd pitch and, to our relief, the rope pulls through OK. A short abseil (doubled 50m rope) reaches the top of the crux pitch from where

we set the final, mainly free-hanging abseil on the double 60m ropes. Spinning slowly in mid air I descend to the

rocky beach at the foot of the east face. We are all safely down by 15:30. After a group haul, the ropes follow.

A fast ascent back to the cliff top leaves us gasping for breath. We look back at the Old Man which still looks impossibly steep; it's hard to believe we were standing at the top only a few hours ago. Skies rapidly cloud over and spots of rain are carried on the wind as we head back to the car.

Jenny greets us at the hostel with scones, jam and cream. We enjoy a fine meal of cheesy nachos with tomato and avocado starter, chilli and rice main with garlic bread and a very popular crumble and custard made from rhubarb we'd 'scrumped' yesterday. A very fine day out.....

It's very easy for me to say now, but if you're thinking of climbing The Old Man of Hoy don't be put off by the E1 grade. In my view it's not a particularly technical climb. It is, however, long, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and last pitches both continuous and strenuous. For most part the rock is sound, the holds excellent and there are plentiful opportunities for protection. You do need to be comfortable with the exposure and being competent at rope work is a pre-requisite. Most importantly, you need a good lead climber, a position which Tim fulfilled admirably.

My thanks go to Alan and Rob for their dedication in making this happen, Tim for the lead climbing, Rick for being an excellent climbing companion and Jenny for her support.

### HuMP Stacks Roundup – Rob Woodall (Mow Cop; Sheep Rock; Mingulay stacs; Hoy)

Apart from providing a fix, a hill list will get you to some interesting places. Some, admittedly, not worth a revisit. Some real gems. And some quite entertaining challenges. Among these are the sea stacks. The list of Marilyn's notoriously includes the two St Kilda stacs, Armin and Lee, way out into the Atlantic, which hold big colonies of gannets, meaning that access is only allowed in winter. With climbing barely exceeding V Diff, the crux is finding a calm spell for a non-summer landing. After a 12 year wait, a busy mid-October day in 2014 finally saw the 1557-summit list completed for the first time, by myself and Eddie Dealtry. Then another trip succeeded a year later. Then nothing. Then in 2018, National Trust for Scotland edged the window closed some more – November through March...

There's always another list – and for UK based prominence-orientated baggers, the next list is the HuMPs – 2987 of them (the list total as of the end of 2018) – the Marilyn's plus an additional 1430 summits. These include an additional 5 stacks. The best known is the Old Man of Hoy – its East Face Route an E1 5b \*\*\* classic. The others would involve some research, persistence and a bit of luck.

The **Old Man of Mow** - not a sea stack but a quirk of long-ago quarrying - was often climbed pre-1990 but is now out of favour. A friend of mine lives next door, and a friend of a friend was up for an adventure, so Paul, Geoff and I climbed it after work on a weekday evening in June 2011, by Spiral Route, VS 4a\*\*; the descent a dangly free abseil just after the sun set over the Cheshire plain.



*Old Man of Mow: Spiral Route - Phil Cooper*



*Sheep Rock: islanders route – Rob Woodall*

**Sheep Rock** is well known to any visitor to Fair Isle, that small rugged island midway between Orkney and Shetland. Staying at the Bird Observatory, as most visitors do, you can't miss it. For good climbers it is doable, without boat, from the main island (The Good Shepherd E3 5b, first ascent Dave Turnbull 1991 – beware loose rock). The islanders used to put sheep on it. Unclear why – there's plenty of grass on the main island – but they'd get a boat into the north-east corner and then, we'd heard, climb up some chains, rig a pulley, get the sheep up; same again later to shear them; same again in autumn to take them off for the winter. Getting hard info was tricky as the ascent route can't be seen from land. Would-be baggers had gleaned info from the Fair Isle museum, grabbed photos from the plane, speculated over how doable the route might be for mere hill-baggers. June 2016 – it was time to take a look. Alan Whatley and I found ourselves on Shetland, nervously waiting a couple of days for the *haar* to clear so that the tiny plane could take off. Sunday lunchtime we finally made it to Fair Isle – with a weather front coming in that evening! Quickly onto Stewart's tiny boat, nosing into a channel, jumping onto a rocky platform, sidling along a balancy ledge which used to be protected by a now rusted-through handrail. The pitch turned out to be a vegetated cliff – with the islanders' chains very much intact. No problem with the climbing then – apart from a few fulmars, which turned out to be surprisingly tolerant – we managed to avoid getting fish-oil-puked on. Stewart our boatman

used to do the climb himself, back in the sheep-grazing days, and must have wondered what took us so long and why all the climbing gear. But we were up and down and back in the Obs before the wind and rain started. A windswept Monday was spent ogling a dozen very serious looking Fair Isle tump stacs, before heading off the next day.

**Arnamuil** and Lianamuil in the Western Isles were pretty much unknown – they're so close in to the parent island of Mingulay that they're not easy to spot. The SMC's Kevin Howett knew of them and told me that both were visited in the old days by the islanders, but details were sketchy and there were no known modern ascents or recorded climbing routes – odd as Mingulay itself sees a lot of climbing activity. Lianamuil, he reckoned, had good rock and would go at about VS/HVS; Arnamuil was

however very unclear. In May 2017 we chartered a boat and headed out, on a decent forecast – but the swell was about twice the 1 metre predicted, and we failed to land on either of them. Arnamuil looked the easier proposition – our boatman recalled landing a couple of folk a few years ago. Lianamuil was clearly more of a challenge, and out of the question that day with its landing platform awash with waves.

April 2018 we were back. Frankly the swell was much the same as last time, but with a more determined boatman, we managed to land on Arnamuil, in 2m of swell, fitted microspikes over our shoes for a slimy 40m



*Arnamuil route – Rob Woodall*

traverse led by Richard McLellan, then once above the splash zone, enjoyed a good scramble, up right along a wide ledge, back left avoiding a puffin colony, then up a steep rocky spur to the spacious grassy summit. Lianamuil was awash (again) and a slimy VS somehow didn't appeal.

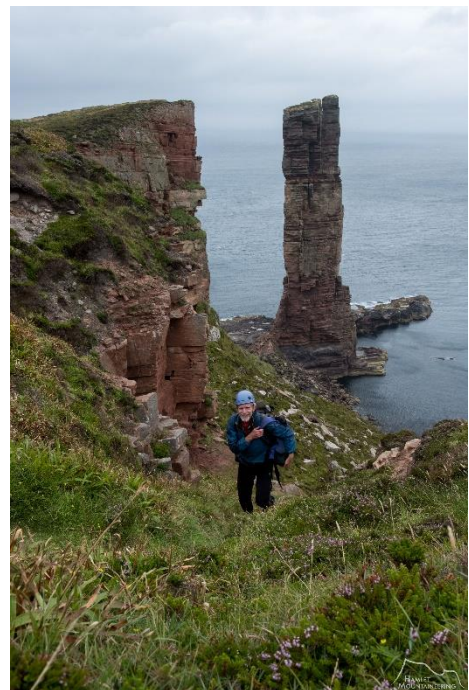
June 2018, back at **Lianamuil**, the swell was, as usual, about twice the forecast height, but less than 2 metres and with the rock dry(ish), with some difficulty we landed on the spacious rocky platform, got the dry-bagged gear ashore, and set about devising a route. Supposedly the islanders used to climb out of the roof of a cave. There are a few caves, including a big open-topped one, but a feasible route seemed to head up a steep ramp between the two big caves, then it should be possible to cross left to a fairly mellow looking corner. Rick Salter led the first pitch, mostly straightforward but without much protection available, and a couple of 4b climbing moves just



*Lianamuil – Lost Shepherds route – Rob Woodall*

before a belay. Somehow the planned traverse left didn't materialise, and mountaineering club friend Dan led the next pitch, whose 4b crux was an exposed move right, before moving back left to a small stance below a corner which looked a fair bit more serious than the one we'd had in mind. Dan led this too – smallish holds on excellent rock, solid VS 4c; a determined assault finally seeing him established on scrambly ground at the foot of the grassy upper slopes. A great lead and a new route, *Lost Shepherds* VS 4c. And a thrilling 50m free-hanging abseil descent across the face of a big cave. For Alan and I, this left just the Hoy stack. Recently climbed by an 80-year-old and an 8-year-old, how hard could it be....

We'd booked Tim Hamlet for a couple of days in 2017, but poor weather and my fractured thumb put us back to July 2018 – when we somehow caught a weather front at the end of a sustained heat wave. Rick, Richard, Alan and I assembled at the comfortable Hoy Centre, waiting out a wet windy Saturday. Sunday was due to be dry until 4pm, but very windy. Most of the route is sheltered from the prevailing southerly, but the first pitch was certainly breezy! On the walk-in, the top 20m of the **Old Man of Hoy** can be seen protruding improbably above the clifftop. After the obligatory clifftop photos, we carefully descended the sometimes exposed path to the connecting col, which consists of rockfall debris from the former arch (which was still intact in the 1600s). We were climbing by 7 a.m. Tim led, bringing Alan and I up on a rope each. Pitch 1 is mostly easy with a short 4b bulge, and a spacious stance above – The Gallery. From here a steep downclimb and short sketchy ledge traverse (good feet, not much for the hands – I was glad of a back-rope from Rick) leads to the notorious crux chimney (The Coffin). The crux is the move to exit the overhanging off-width chimney to gain the seemingly blank corner to its left - but I found ascending the corner itself harder, about 10m with sparse holds well-spaced and needing to be searched for, but all there. Very satisfying climbing - but it was good to reach The Haven! From this tiny stance, Alan belayed Tim up Pitch 3 while I



*Old Man of Hoy done – Tim Hamlet*

brought Richard up Pitch 2 before following Alan up Pitch 3; same story Pitch 4. Pitch 5 is just as good as they say, mostly

straightforward 4a but suddenly at halfway it's 4c, a little overhanging and briefly strenuous. Being able to see right through the stack for the last few metres is disconcerting – presumably the higher northern part of the stack is gradually peeling away from the rest, but it stayed upright for us despite the best efforts of the wind which was raging at the summit - we stayed roped on the very short walk to the summit cairn, Alan and I touching it together to record the first ever completion of the 2985-summit HuMPs list (which had become 2987 by the end of 2018).

There are plenty more stacks. Hoy itself has The Needle – 55m of sandy sloping-hold verticality (XS 5c, first ascent Mick Fowler); The Standard and North Gaulton Castle off Orkney Mainland look ~~tasty~~ alarming; Pembrokeshire has three tall good looking E1 stacks; England's only 30m+ chalk stack, off Swanage, is a feasible(ish) looking Mick Fowler route (E2 5b). Rumour has it that Hoy itself has two more stacs, Marilyn and HuMP respectively – but are they real, or just data processing artefacts? Just now, Alan Whatley and I are happy to celebrate a shared quest completed, with a host of memories of strange, wild and faraway places.

### Bagging by Kayak – A Sutton, A Brown, D Broadhead, D & R McLellan, R Woodall

*It's evident from the SIB logs on [hill-bagging.co.uk](http://hill-bagging.co.uk) that quite a few baggers are making self-propelled visits to islands. We all love tidal islands, but for the others, a kayak is sometimes an option. But what to choose – sea kayak? Sit-on? Inflatable? Baggers share their experiences.*

**Andy Sutton** - My kayak is a P&H Cetus glass fibre sea kayak.

The first island I bagged by kayak was Carna, for the Marilyn Cruachan Charna in June 2012. This was the first time I'd paddled solo after taking up kayaking a couple of years earlier, and I remember nervously leaving the safety of the shore of Loch Sunart to make the short crossing. Since then I've done 80+ SIBs by kayak as well as using it to access some remote Marilyns, e.g. those at the end of Loch Morar. I have plans for many more island kayak trips in 2019 including Shetland, Outer Hebrides; saves money

compared to chartering boats now that I'm an impoverished retiree :-). And sea kayaking has become a major hobby in its own right, with numerous trips to Anglesey, Dorset, Devon etc. and expeditions to Iceland, Sweden and Brittany.



*Eilean Subhainn on Loch Maree - Andy Sutton*



*Staffa - Andy Sutton*

Best experience was a trip to Mull this spring with two friends who fortunately didn't take too much persuasion that ticking off islands was a good basis for planning kayaking routes. We headed out via Ulva to Staffa and then on to the Treshnish islands where they rafted up with my kayak while I scrambled up the low cliffs of Dutchman's Cap. We camped among the puffins on Lunga before working our way north up the chain of islands to the castle on Carn na Burgh More and crossing back to spend the night by the beach on Inch Kenneth. Later in the week we enjoyed a sunset paddle on glassy seas from Loch Fidden campsite on the Ross of Mull with another 4 small granite islands summited.

**Andrew Brown** - I use a Sea Eagle SE370 inflatable kayak. Easy to throw in the car, no transport problems and quick to inflate (ready to go in 10 mins). They are very sturdy and I've never been worried about it

puncturing on rough rock. It is not as stable as the Sevylor models but cuts through the water better. Sea Eagle is available in the UK through [Spindrift.co.uk](http://Spindrift.co.uk). They do a better model called the Explorer which is better and very stable but is expensive. I mostly go with a couple of other people (DARRENG, nocksta and whituss) who also use inflatables (Sevylor and Decathlon own brand).

My most enjoyable trip to paddle was Puffin Island (14846) where we saw lots of seals very close up, as well as jelly fish. Walk to the top a nightmare though. Other islands include both St Tudwal's, Ynys Gwylan-fawr (solo), Cardigan Island and Thatchers Rock and Ore Stone. I also paddled into Ben Aden along Loch Quoich. The downfall of inflatables was found out after the wind changed direction and strength on the way back and I had to fight the elements for 7 hours to get back, taking only 3 hours to paddle in.

**Dave Broadhead** - Climbing hills has always been my main interest but way back in the 1970's I took the opportunity to gain some sea kayaking experience and even a qualification but I have only recently started using this to help bagging Marilyn's. For some years I owned a Canadian style canoe which was used for ascents of Beinn Lair (860m), Beinn Leoid (792m) and Sgurr an Fhuarain (901m) but although the open boat is good for carrying gear, it is much slower and harder paddling, especially in any sort of wind, so I now much prefer a kayak. My old faithful North Shore "Shoreline" has given good service over many years but is a bit tight for space for a multi-day expedition. The only 2 hills I have actually climbed from the kayak are Cruachan Charna (170m) in Loch Sunart and Gometra (155m) off the coast of Mull but there are plenty more hills on small islands off bigger ones to look forward to. As a member of a group it can be hard to persuade others to spend the time and effort flogging up through long vegetation in paddling gear, so many recent hills have been climbed on the way to and from Inverness Canoe Club paddling trips. At the start of the fantastic weather last summer I paddled with a small group from the Club from Glenelg to Barrisdale for a few days of hill-bagging which was a memorable trip, even though I was repeating hills!

**Ken Whyte** purchased his Point 65 Tequila sit-on-top in July 2016. It is sectional, bow and stern make a single while adding the middle section makes a Tandem as well as being easy to transport and store. Its first SIBs were the Islands of Loch Lomond over 2 days from Cashel campsite on the East shore. His most challenging paddle was the Irish Marilyn Puffin Island, Co Kerry which although not far off shore, a lack of suitable launch sites meant a long paddle in challenging seas and currents. The most satisfying bag was Eilean Mhor, Inverpolly to complete the Freshwater Islands topo section.

**Denise and Richard Mclellan** - Our first trip to an island by kayak was in calm sunny weather in May 2004 in the Outer Hebrides. I had a new 'Dagger 16' plastic sit-in kayak with spray deck- very stable and durable. Richard had an older, sleeker, lighter sit in glass fibre kayak- already much repaired. From the sandy beach of East Vatersay we kayaked south to Sandray and ascended the Marilyn- Carn Ghaltar and then to the rocky Marilyn island of Maol Domhnaich and then back, in increasing seas and excitement, to Vatersay. It was superb, with easy landing on warm sandy beaches.

A few days later we kayaked to Hellisay from Barra and camped overnight, with the highlight being a paddle across the Blue lagoon. We had not even heard of tumps then so it's lucky we felt the urge to climb the highpoints anyway- Beinn a Charnain and Meall Mor. On the following day, my birthday, we visited the trig and island high point Mullach a'Charnain (Gighay) before kayaking back.

One of my most memorable kayak trips was at the end of that week from Baymore (Grimsay). We paddled north up the sea loch, then ascended Eaval, paddled again up the loch, dragged kayaks into the fresh water Loch Dun an t-Siamain and then into Loch Obasaigh, paddled down into sea loch Euphort to ascend North Lee and South Lee in the early evening. Then we returned, now briefly ravaged by midges as we changed, followed by an idyllic evening paddle on golden flat waters surrounded by curious seals close to our kayaks. In the dark we nearly missed the narrow entrance back into Baymore where we hauled the kayaks out of the water at 22:15- an absolutely splendid day.

In May 2016 another spell of warm calm weather enabled us to kayak to a cluster of islands off the NW Scotland mainland- Tanera More, Isle Ristol, Isle Martin and Gruinard- especially interesting given its wartime history of anthrax infection. By this time Richard's original kayak was beyond repair and had been replaced with a Feelfree Nomad Sport sit-on kayak- probably safer but definitely slower, with wet bum guaranteed.

Another year we visited Taransay, Outer Hebrides by kayak- home of the BBC TV series castaway and were able to explore the pods and communal facilities.

In May 2016 we managed a trio of islands in one trip from the fish farm at Laga, Glenborrowdale: Risga, Cruachan Charna and Oronsay. In calm weather with careful selection of landing sites, these were a delight- apart from the thick vegetation that comes from rarely visited places.



*Ore stone - Richard Mclellan*

More recently we have enjoyed south coast trips from Torbay (Ore Stone and Thatcher Rock) and Cornwall. An unexpected spell of warm weather with low swell and wind in October 2018 presented an opportunity out of the nesting season to try some of the Cornish islands. Jon Glew and Rob Woodall agreed so we gathered at Coverack Youth Hostel with great hopes.

The Brisons were positively foaming the previous night so our first goal was Mullion Island. It's an easy launch from the Mullion Cove pebble beach at low water (LW neaps +2 for us) and the 0.75km paddle out keeps you quite close to land. We spotted a tiny natural kayak harbour between angled wave-washed slabs and with careful timing and agility managed to land and position the 4 kayaks safely. It was then an easy walk over guano and mallow to the obvious HP. As usual, disembarking is harder and you always feel a fraction off tipping out as you transfer from land to sea. In Rob's case, that fraction was on the wrong side and as he had volunteered to be last off, there was little we could do but watch him drip and try again. We enjoyed an extended paddle back- assessing the Vro and determining it was a serious scramble. With low water passed for 8 hours we reverted to the more predictable activity of walking.

The following day tide times dictated an early start so we gathered at sunrise at the front of the huge Gwithian Towans carpark, amazed to find it already busy with surfers (note- good surfing conditions generally mean bad swell for kayakers!). However,



*Back at the kayaks, Mullion Island - Richard Mclellan*

undeterred, we manhandled the kayaks down to the beach and individually braced ourselves to shoot c50 m of swell. We succeeded with only one capsize and a high thrill rating. It was then an idyllic paddle north over calm seas in warm sun for c 2 km to Godrevy Island with lighthouse. We paddled around assessing potential landing sites. We noted a low concrete landing platform on the E and decided this was as good as it was going to get, though would be submerged as the tide rose. One by one we waited for a

wave to lift us up and quickly disembark without paddle or kayak floating off. It was then an easy walk to the top, aided by a Trinity House ladder. Leaving was harder with the tide higher- timing is everything and its easy for the kayak to catch on the rocks and tip you out- I ended up in the water but having a group meant my paddle and kayak were quickly retrieved. A passing tourist boat evidently did not feel the need to call the coastguard! We then paddled back and prepared to cross the surf again. It's a question of keep paddling directly ahead but this is easier said than done as the wave's speed/power is greater than yours and it doesn't travel straight. I capsized again and released my spray deck easily but my kayak sank, luckily close to shore. We were exhilarated but that was it for the day.

Waiting for the right weather is a game of patience and transporting all the gear is a faff- but the rewards are high and we plan to do more.

**Rob Woodall** – I have a second-hand Perception Scooter sit-on kayak. My first – bad – experience of kayaking was with Jon Glew and Adrian Rayner in 2016 to tackle the two Torbay SIBs, 43m Thatcher Rock and 34m Ore Stone. We hired kayaks – Jon in a single, Adrian and I in a double kayak. The double was a beast to paddle, against the wind; 4km to Thatcher seemed to take an eternity; landing the heavy kayak on the rocky beachless island was awkward. The island itself was a fun scramble – over all too soon. We'd looked forward to paddling downwind to Ore Stone, but that was even worse – in the back seat I kept overtaking Adrian! We failed to land the cumbersome craft on Ore Stone, and headed back towards Oddicombe. Looking back, we saw Jon Glew at the summit – he'd managed to land his single. Then we realised we were drifting seaward with the tidal stream, and it was quite a fight getting back into port.

It wasn't until September 2018 that I ventured back to Ore Stone, by which time the McLellans had been out there, as had Andrew Brown & Co in their inflatables. This time with my own single kayak, on a nice calm morning, after spending a few summer evenings practising paddling at Nene Park at home, and having studied the swell forecast and tidal streams carefully (there are Apps). Even so, there was significant swell at the slabby south-eastern corner, which is the only feasible landing. After I'd hung around for a few minutes, the swell gently deposited me onto the slabs, and on departure I was just as gently refloated. The breeze had got up in the afternoon, as expected, but Great Mew Stone a few miles further west was beckoning. A short drive, a long trundle down steps (helped by fellow beach-goers) and across a stony beach, a quite tough paddle in a crosswind, but the landing was easy, on a sheltered stony beach.

My solo debut had been the previous weekend, with 36m St Tudwal's Island East and 33m Ynys Gwylan-fawr needed to complete the Gwynedd Tumps. This involved much studying of forecasts and tidal streams (Lleyn is complex - there is info online) and some good advice from sea-kayaking guru Andy Sutton. The Gwylans are accessed from Aberdaron, a surfing beach which as expected, was decidedly unfriendly in the morning. Abersoch was much more sheltered with an easy beach launch and a quiet paddle towards the Tudwals. However, the 4-foot waves rolling through the gap between islands and mainland were daunting, although the little kayak is nice and stable. I'd thought of re-landing 43m Tudwal's West, the only island in the group which I'd already visited – but the swell surging round the landing stage was unappealing. The east side of Tudwal East was however quite sheltered and a rocky shelf made a viable landing. In the afternoon, back at Aberdaron, the breakers were down to about 2 feet, and a brief determined paddle saw me through them and starting the 2km crossing. I tackled 18m SQUIB Ynys Gwylan-



*Great Mew Stone, Wembury - Rob Woodall*

back first, finding a rocky step to land the kayak for a little scramble up to the knee-deep sea-beet summit ridge. The SIB itself was more of a puzzle, with the nearest corner quite open to the swell. Paddling round the SE side, through confused, choppy waters, I was delighted to find the NW side sheltered, and allowed the swell to ease me into a little shelving rocky inlet, from which the departure shortly afterwards was even easier, and in half an hour I was surfing ashore on those lively little 2-foot breakers – Gwynedd complete!

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Patience and preparation are essential. Some collective wisdom:

- Sea kayaks are great for getting about but harder to land. Spray decks have pros and cons
- Sit-on kayaks are better for landing but harder to paddle
- Double kayak sit-ons are easy to get back into after a capsize but hard to paddle or to land or to steer downwind
- Single kayaks are easier to get about in - but learn to remount before you capsize
- Shorter/ lighter kayaks are easier to get onto car rooves and manhandle. Trolleys can help
- Rigid kayaks are heavy but robust
- Inflatables are lighter - but mind those sharp edges
- Use a wetsuit and buoyancy aid
- Assume you will capsize in considering kit i.e. is it tied on, including sun glasses, shoes, compass, sun hat, phone
- Very hard/ energy sapping to get back in kayak if you do capsize
- Always check tide times and potential current strengths (apps / online / guides)
- Pesda Press publish a range of sea kayaking guides which are excellent.
- Work gloves protect hands from barnacles as well as blisters when paddling.
- Pros and cons of attaching paddle to you and or your kayak.
- Throw line for emergencies.
- Labelling stuff with felt pen increases chances of return when it floats off
- Helmets when landing on rock with swell
- Kayaking in a group is more fun – and safer

## Western Turkey Ultras - Rob Woodall

*An entertaining 1-week 10-ultra trip, mostly with the TumpHofMeister*

July 2018. Adrian turns up at the airport at a day's notice, clutching a one-way ticket. It turns out he isn't defecting to Erdoğan but simply keeping his options open, an unusual plan which works surprisingly well. The trip gets off to a shaky start when we remodel the front of our hire car, spending the morning completing police forms and drinking hairdresser's tea, the afternoon hitching a ride back to Antalya with a delivery van driver and his rather irritating young son, then a bit of a wait while the hire company try to work out where the police have hidden hire car #1. So

Sunday involves hire car #2, and 2 ultras, playing catch-up. 2635m **Davraz Tepe** is a hike up through a ski resort, with plenty of imposing craggy ground, passing a group carrying heavy radio gear, apparently the Turkish equivalent of SOTA (Summits On The Air). 2988m **Dedegol Tepesi** is set in a popular area, although none of the many visitors seem to have any interest in the peak. It turns out to have a near-twin summit to the south, Dedegol Daglari, adding an additional 2 miles to the afternoon. Despite careful hand levelling, I'm



*Davraz Tepe - Rob Woodall*

unable to demonstrate that Petter, Richard and Denise on their previous trips haven't bagged the true summit ... Cows are wandering along the road at sunset heading for milking, as we drive back to the popular lakeside resort of Egirdir for food.

2800m **Barla Dagi** is Monday morning's peak: we encounter well-controlled sheep dogs on the way up, and a nice scrambly arete en route to the shattered remains of the summit trig pillar. An afternoon drive south to Elmali gets us in place for Tuesday's pair of peaks. En route we call at the police office to collect an accident report: showing a suitable Google-translated phrase to the clerk does the trick and we're soon on our way, with the forms smartphone-photo-copied and emailed to the Antalya car hire office. 3070m **Kizlar Sivrisi** is the highest peak of the trip and at P1966m our most prominent objective, reached by a long unpaved road. 3016m **Uyluk Tepe** in the afternoon is the rockiest most dramatic peak of the trip, and misjudging the effort required, we only just get down in daylight. Wednesday is mostly a driving day, but 1969m **Babadag** isn't quite the expected drive-up – the road is restricted due to construction and we have a longish road hike in the hot sun to the summit, where we're offered super-sweet tea while we watch paragliders start their journey down to Oludeniz almost 2 vertical km below, then we're offered a ride down in one of the minibuses which had carried them up the peak. Thursday morning we bag 2156m **Boz Dag** – another ski-resort start followed by a nice horseshoe with a little scrambling en route.



*Barla Dagi – Rob Woodall*



*Uludag - Rob Woodall*

Friday we hike the multi-summitted 2546m **Uludag** (another ski resort start), then I drop off Adrian at Istanbul (the newer eastern airport - avoiding the capital's gridlocked highways) before a longish drive east for Saturday's peak, 2587m **Ilgaz Daglari**. This should have been a near-drive-up, but misreading Petter's directions I have a longer ascent than intended. En route I meet a shepherd who seems anxious to speak to me although it's unclear what the issue is. The summit is chilly and clagged in, but there's a nice selection of montane plants – best of the trip. On the way down, I find the shepherd and his flock where I left them – but this time it's his dogs who are keen to meet

me. They're large and persistent and snap at my heels for a worrying half mile until I pass Mrs Shepherd, who gives me a cheery wave - but doesn't call the dogs off. I decide I might as well capture some footage on my phone – then a strange thing happens. As soon as I start filming them, the brutes slink off uphill back to

their master! A useful trick which I wish I'd thought of earlier. A long afternoon drive takes me from just south of the Black Sea, almost back to the Mediterranean. The roads are mostly dual carriageways, almost deserted and generally cheaply built, badly deformed due to subsidence but perfectly driveable (being from the peaty East Anglian fenlands I'm quite at home). 50kph speed limit signs are evidently cheaper than road repairs, but a reasonable driving speed is about twice this, making a nonsense of the SatNav's ETAs.

Sunday starts with a dramatically scenic drive to the foot of 2877m **Geyik Daglari**. I drive to the trailhead described by the McLellans in their October trip – but in July the shepherd (and sheep and dogs) are in residence so I park the car down in the village. It's a fine rugged peak with good plantlife, an excellent way to round off what's been a fascinating and entertaining trip, with a nice range of straightforward accessible scenic peaks. And very different from our 2011 commercially-organised trip to the East.

## Tanzania and Zimbabwe Ultras – Rob Woodall

*A 2-week trip to climb 5 ultra-prominent peaks in Tanzania, followed by the Zimbabwe national highpoint.*

January 2018, Rob, Adrian, Martin and Sean assemble at Arusha. A shopping trip next morning for expedition supplies, is enlivened by the spectacle of a ten-man team manoeuvring a full-sized telegraph pole down a narrow busy street. The half-day drive to Gelai includes more traditionally African sights – giraffe, zebra, eland, Kori bustard. In Bomba Gelai village, colourful noisy masked weavers are nest building. Accommodation is hot and cramped, but our cook Geoff sets us up well for the next day's ascent, keeping the three Englishmen well supplied with tea.

**Gelai 2948m P1930** is an 18km round trip with 700m of ascent, mostly on tracks, after our driver coaxes the Landcruiser to 2250m. A good track heads steeply uphill then traverses with views of wildebeest, scrubby trees busy with sunbirds including golden winged, scarlet chested, northern double collared; a common buzzard circles. Various Maasai join us for a while to chat with our guide. Finally, 200m of washa-washa (the local heavy-duty stinging



*Gelai trailhead - Rob Woodall*

nettle) with some useful buffalo tracks (usefully no buffaloes – they're not friendly) lead to a comms mast with the highpoint in trees nearby. The Landcruiser jolts its way back to the village, where we're stopped by a police officer (on his moped). Evidently, we should have checked in at the office yesterday – but it was closed, and we did have our local guide pre-arranged. Half an hour of discussion (and probably some cash) seems to settle matters.

**Kitumbeine 2871m P1783** is a 19km hike with 600m ascent, which we do as a day trip from Bomba Gelai village, the Landcruiser again earning its keep on the rough 4x4 approach; giraffe, zebra and the diminutive dikdik are seen en route. After collecting a local guide, we hike a good track leading through fields to a forest summit. We've noticed that the Peakbagger and Peaklist websites have different summit locations – a twin summit situation. We can see the SE summit across a deep valley: my hand level suggests it's slightly lower than the NW summit where we're standing. Our local guide confirms it's possible to reach the far summit via an overgrown trail. Setting off, we soon have good binocular views (the safest kind) of a herd of water buffalo on an adjacent hillside. We enter a patch of woodland with copious amounts of washa-washa, initially quite painful although after 20 mins the afterglow is quite stimulating, we discover! Crossing a

tussocky col we climb up through woodland infested with some particularly sadistic washa-washa, at last reaching the highpoint, which the hand level confirms is lower than the NW summit, probably by a couple of metres – but it's good to be able to wind up Pete and Duane, who climbed the peak in 2016, but visited the first summit only...

Next is a travel day. Quiet dirt roads give good views of wildebeest, zebra, Grant's gazelle, Thompson gazelle, grazing with domestic cattle; Kori bustard and Egyptian goose; Ostrich, glossy and sacred ibis. We settle in to some rather basic accommodation in Katesh ready for our next climb.



*Engareseru o Oldonai Lengai - Rob Woodall*

**Hanang 3417m P2047** is a 13km

hike with 1500m of ascent, a longish day hike. It is a striking peak, is quite well-known and has a good trail, with a little scrambling. It is the rainy season in this part of the country, but we had a dry day despite the forecast thunderstorms. There is plenty of recent flooding evidence here and also en route back to Arusha, where we swap Martin for Pete and continue by public bus, accompanied by Geoff our erstwhile cook who will be our fixer for the next few days.

**Shengena 2464m P1750** is a 19km hike with 500m of ascent. From Arusha, a 4-hour bus journey gets us to the town of Same where we cram into a Landrover for an hour and a half on reasonable dirt roads to Tona Lodge. Accommodation is again basic, but the best yet; a nice woodland location. The trailhead is reached by rough dirt roads, sometimes steep; at one point we have to get out and push the Landrover, the Defender losing traction, apparently not having a transmission lock, less capable than the Landcruisers used for our first three peaks, but it gets us to our peak. We wait while our guide finds someone to check our permit, then narrow paths lead into nice cool forest. Then the path seems to dead-end at a campsite. Pete and I check the campsite and discover that the trail continues beyond it with another summit signpost. To be fair, the guide probably doesn't come this way often (the usual route is currently closed due to bees!) and we outsiders do have the advantage of map and GPS. The scruffy summit is marked with a wobbly steel viewing platform and the concrete remains of an old structure, in a small clearing. A sign congratulates us on reaching Shengena summit. We climb the platform - individually as it sways quite a bit - to enjoy the rather hazy panorama. Then we enjoy the rattly Landrover journey back to Tona Lodge, for a bucket shower and dinner. Next day we're driven back down to Same for a bus ride to Lushoto, where we're met and enjoy a fine scenic drive to Muller Mountain Lodge – a quite fancy place.

**Sungwi 2301m P1731** turns out to have several summit candidates spread out over some 10km. Meeting with our guide the previous evening it is apparent he knows nothing about this peak, but we are able eventually to agree a plan. Next morning we're Landcruised to a likely looking attack point for the most likely looking summit (the one on Peakbagger.com). Tough initial bushwhacking spearheaded by the guides, leads into forest, then more bush whacking to the ridge, crossing several summits en route to the farthest highest easternmost summit, which is in mature woodland. We fail to get a view north, but are able to hand level the other candidates from one of the summits crossed en route, generally supporting the view that Sungwi is probably about 10m higher than the other candidates. We manage to summit one of them that afternoon. There's a short delay en route due to several loads of dumped soil blocking the road, quickly resolved when a grader arrives! The Landcruiser is deftly manoeuvred half a mile up a narrow track saving us 100m of ascent. The hike up from here is lovely, past mud houses and small fields, to reach a rocky summit above cliffs, with an excellent view of the other three summit candidates. Sungwi would be a nice target for a Tamperers, with four widely spaced summits (one in forest) - and weather considerably better than they typically experienced while Scaling the Heights!



*Sungwi from Chambolo West Peak - Rob Woodall*

A long hot bus journey takes us back to Arusha and, for Pete, Adrian and I, a flight to Harare, Zimbabwe.

**Inyangani 2592m P1515** the highest point of Zimbabwe is a straightforward 7km hike with 450m ascent, and nowadays, with the new post-Mugabe light touch regime, a hassle-free half-day drive to reach it. Somehow, we'd decided Zimbabwe might be busy with tourists and that we needed to book a hotel ahead. As it turns out, Ethiopian cancel our flight and we arrive half a day late and have to change our plans – perhaps unsurprisingly it's easy to get a place at a few hours' notice via AirBnB. First, we pick up our rental car from a place Pete knows – a white family in a well to do neighbourhood. We relax by the pool and sip tea brought in by a servant, while the paperwork is completed. We have all that's necessary to placate the ever present and often corrupt police roadblocks – including the all-important warning triangle. Except that with Mugabe's reign now ended, the police roadblocks are almost non-existent and we don't get stopped once. Any easy drive gets us to our AirBnB – again a white family but much less well-to-do, but we have a very adequate self-catering place to ourselves, and the lady cooks us an evening meal. The new President Mnangagwa seems generally popular; certainly we find the country easy to visit.

Next morning, we make the remaining 3 hour drive to the trailhead. Roads are generally well maintained; razor wire protecting the better houses is the norm. Railway crossings are unprotected - Give way to Trains is the general rule! The landscape is very green despite a drought, quite a contrast to arid Tanzania. Frequent granite tors punctuate the landscape. At the National Park gate, we pay a fee; albeit we're told ascents aren't usually allowed in misty or rainy conditions like this... At the Park reception office, we sign up for guide, then drive the remaining dirt road, catch up with our guide just before the trailhead and give him a lift. It seems Stewart is there



*Zimbabwe - Mutarazi Falls - Rob Woodall*

every day, guiding people, catching people trying to climb unguided... It's windy with low cloud as we arrive, but becomes a nice sunny day; our man has no qualms about an ascent - he has no coat even. There's a good trail all the way – it's hard to believe people disappear on the route; there's a local belief that apparitions are sometimes seen on route and these account for disappearances; we're told if we see such things not to mention or photograph them! En route we see wildebeest, baboon, stonechat, bushbuck, klipspringer, kudu; an impressive array of flowers - there are some 1000 species in the Park. The summit is marked by a

battered cylindrical trig pillar. In our remaining time here, we tick off a couple of waterfalls, before tracking down the Harare City Highpoint in a spare hour before our flight home.

## Oman - Long Days and Moonlit Nights – Rob Woodall

*A week featuring long day hikes, superb desert scenery and Middle Eastern culture*

Oman's 4 ultras had been under consideration for a few years, and I knew from the McLellans' 2017 trip that they present challenges in terms of access, long days and rugged terrain. I went solo with an SUV and a flexible plan, and an intention to bag at least 3 of the peaks in a 1-week trip.

My first two peaks lie a half-day's drive west of Muscat airport. The last few miles to the base of 2730m **Jebel Kawr** are unpaved – initially an easy gradient, but the approach to the southern trailhead itself involves



*Jebel Kawr ascent - Rob Woodall*

some very steep gradients as the track winds up through a narrow canyon. Sunday morning I start at 0430, by moonlight, well before first light – intent on avoiding an overnight if I can – but even at this early hour, on the initial descent to cross the stream, I bump into the owner of the trailhead house, who evidently has an early start himself. He guides me down the short boulder slope before driving off in his SUV. After a short boulder scramble I follow goat trails, assisted by the McLellans' GPS track. The key to breaching the peak's southern ramparts is a huge gully system. A steep rocky slope leads to a couple of short scrambles (now just daylight as planned), then a pinnacle is bypassed to a notch. It's not entirely clear where the route goes from here. I initially try descending right, into the main gully. Retreating, I consider a scramble up left. This looks tempting, but steep, and it soon becomes apparent the GPS track doesn't go this way. The right-hand descent turns out to be the route after all, with a few veg-belays proving useful. The main gully splits, with my route forking right and continuing steeply to eventually exit onto the plateau. I'm here in 3 hours, confident I can at least get back to this point in daylight, so I leave my bivvy gear here and press on with a nice light pack, the main load comprising 2 litres of water. In a while the plateau is interrupted by a rocky tower. Like my predecessors I scramble up and then face a steep downclimb with the route keeping me guessing and plenty of steep, sometimes fairly serious scrambling. There's goatherd activity below, and it's evident they have a way of bypassing this tower – handy info for later. In a couple more hours I cross the grassy bowl where the McLellans made their impromptu bivvy the year before. Benefitting from their info and an early start, I'm at the summit at midday. I find it exciting to be in such a remote place, although the remains of a comms mast spoil the wildness to an extent. It will be challenging getting down by nightfall – I have a bivvy option which I aim not to use, so I soon head back down. Reaching the scrubby tower, I easily find the goatherds bypass, following a wide ledge, saving some time, and am soon reunited with my bivvy gear and scrambling back down the gully, reversing the route to the notch, then carefully downclimbing the lower scrubby sections. Passing a little group of buildings, I'm greeted by the villagers and asked in for a drink; they seem however to understand I'm anxious to get back to my vehicle before dark - I decline and

negotiate the final boulder field before crossing the little stream and scrambling back up to the road, which I follow a short way back to the vehicle – 1840 – 14 hours - just dark – a thoroughly satisfying day which worked out better than I dared hope.

Monday is a travel half-day, with a tourist stop at Bahla, braving the fierce temperatures to take in the impressive fort and city walls, before returning to a more comfortable 1900m at the trailhead of tomorrow's target, 3018m P2818 **Jebel Shams**. After familiarising myself with the start of the trail, I spend the afternoon exploring Wadi Ghul, Oman's Grand Canyon. Standing on the west rim I look across the spectacular 1000m deep gorge to the twin radar domes of the Omani national highpoint, then drive to Al Khitaym village, where the W6 Balcony Walk leads back north following a wide ledge between the upper and lower cliffs, a justly popular tourist hike (the tourists seemingly all French). It seems a 2-3 hour round trip, ending at the abandoned village of Sap Bani Khamis more or less directly below the Heights resort where the Jebel Shams trail starts. I have time for about half the distance, before returning to the trailhead at sunset. Tuesday I start up Shams at first light, following the paint-marked tourist trail across rocky slopes to



*South-east from Jebel Shams – Rob Woodall*



*Bahla fort - Rob Woodall*

the rim of the Saydran Gorge, a tributary of Wadi Ghul, the colourful desert scenery aglow in the morning light which accentuates the huge vertical relief. The trail leads in 5 hours to the south summit, with fine views across to Sunday's Jebel Kawr and to its right the smaller but strikingly steep Jebel Misht. Eastwards, cliffs fall sheer to yet another wadi; beyond it a succession of ridges leading the eye

into the hazy distance. Looking north, on

Shams' main summit, its twin radar domes are perched atop a huge cliff. This fortified north summit, since last year sports a new security fence. At its south end the fence might perhaps be circumvented by a spectacular hand traverse on dubious rock with coils of razor wire for protection and in full view of the



*Nizwa - Rob Woodall*

radome - not something I fancy. New red signs state *Restricted Area. Do not pass*. I work my way around to the gate at the north end, open but with the same red signs. I flag down a camouflaged pickup driving out. They are workers taking rubbish down. Not much English but they make it clear I'm not allowed inside, and offer me a lift down. Reckoning I've got as close as I'm going to get, and hanging around for someone more official might be a bad idea, I accept. There's a locked gate at the bottom; the military gatekeeper seemingly shows no interest in the extra passenger. On overseas peaks such as this, it's sometimes sensible to settle for the highest legally

accessible point, and I've no wish to have my trip extended indefinitely by the Omani prison system.

I'm back at the trailhead unexpectedly early at 1400, but 4 hours won't get me to Jebel Khadar my next long day-hike, so I explore locally, driving down via Guhl Village (briefly looking into its Wadi from below having seen a lot of it from above) and through Al Hamra to the Sharaf al Alamayn viewpoint, watch the sun set over Jebel Kawr and spend the night here - at nearly 2050m my highest night of the trip. Wednesday morning, I make an out and back ridge walk from this viewpoint to a fine rocky summit partway along the Jebel Shams east ridge, along the W10h trail, above deep wadis. Then a cultural drive via Jabreen Castle and Nizwa Fort and its bustling *souk*, get me to 2211m **Jebel Khadar** the third Ultra of the week. There was a theoretical possibility of including Oman's fourth Ultra, Jebel al Harim, but it's in an enclave within the United Arab Emirates, involving several border crossings, and like Shams it has a military-occupied summit, where a year ago the McLellans were detained for questioning – thankfully briefly! Browsing OpenStreetMap on my phone over a late lunch, I'm surprised to discover that Khadar has a potential twin summit. OSM isn't the most reliable source but it shows this south summit higher than the north, with 9km of distinctly unlevel ground between the two. This is completely unexpected information, but it does seem to answer the question of what I'll do on Friday, having ruled out a long trip north to Jebel al Harim.

Arriving at Wadi Bani Khalid village late afternoon, I recce the trailhead. 3 big houses have been built since Richard and Denise were here last year, so I won't be camping where they did. I drive round to Loqil springs, a pleasant enough spot but at a mere 600m it's too warm and fly ridden for sleeping. I settle for the Tourist Service Centre, not perfect but its elevated position above the village catches a breeze. Early Thursday



*Jebel Khadar: Wadi Bani Khalid - Rob Woodall*

morning I return to the trailhead and set off at first light, a pleasant 17C making for easy progress. Compared with Sunday's Jebel Kawr, the route is inherently non-technical if the best lines are followed, and I'm at the summit in 4h30. I spend a while enjoying the isolation and wildness, hand-levelling across to the south summit. It's 9km away and with its height within about 10m of the one I'm sitting on, it's beyond hand-level resolution, although it does appear a little

lower. I head down, 9 hours round trip, leaving a few hours of daylight to identify a possible trailhead for Khadar South and recce the start. OpenStreetMap shows a trail starting at the small village of Bidah and penetrating a little way into the massif. My first mistake is parking on that part of the car park reserved for footballing - the lads put me straight and I'm soon exploring the steep narrow alleyways of the village. The locals seem a little curious but friendly, and after a few false starts I find a track leading to some farmsteads, with a foot trail; leading down into the wadi, and what looks like a trail continuing up a steep hillside beyond. The topography is quite complex, with gorges blocking the direct line, a puzzle I hope to solve tomorrow.

Friday morning I leave the village at first light, following the now quiet alleyways to gain the hill path, which leads up and (slightly off-route) along an impressive slabby arete, then a good donkey trail leads to a wadi crossing and some trackless side-hilling (I left the trail a little too soon) before another wadi crossing leads to a nice scrambly ascent on good rock. A broad ridge above isn't too far below the elevation of my target summit – but in between are several km and several rugged wadis - not too deep or technical, but promising a couple of hours hard work. Young goat-herds and their animals are making a lot of noise, but our paths don't cross. I gain the broad level summit with its two (non-summit) comms towers in just under 6 hours from the trailhead. Hand-levelling back to yesterday's north summit again suggests North is higher than

South, by maybe 10 metres. My stay is fairly short as there's a lot of ground to cover before dark. I resolve to keep to higher ground, trading a couple of rugged wadi crossings for some extra distance. It's pretty hot lower down and I'm glad to reach the shady palms of the wadi below the village, arriving back at the car in good time, in 11 hours clocking up 28km with 2700m of ascent – an excellent day out to complete a top-quality mountaineering trip to this fascinating and accessible part of the Arabian Peninsula. I wouldn't recommend visiting later than March, but it's a nice winter destination, with a range of good trails in addition to the high summits.

## Northeast Mexico Ultras – Rob Woodall

*A 1-week trip to climb 5 ultra-prominent peaks in Northeast Mexico (one a heroic failure).*

November 2018. This somewhat unruly hard-to-tie-down trip was planned to coincide with Petter Bjorstad's 300<sup>th</sup> ultra (inevitably the Norwegian beats the Englishman to this world first) – and also to attempt some little-known peaks and to link up with a few friends. Source material was scarce, with two Adam Helman trip reports from a decade ago including 5 ultras, and more recent online information for three of the peaks which are easily accessed from Monterrey. Contact with a couple of Mexican locals filled in a few gaps, and confirmed it was an area where we could drive and hike safely – not true of all of Mexico. One of Adam's peaks, the Sierra la Madera Highpoint, 3020m P1890, involved a drive across gated ranch land, and my local contact failed to get a response to a request for permission. This peak would evidently take more time than we were willing to commit, so was ruled out. Sierra Gomas was a complete mystery – an hour from Monterrey but the local climbers seemingly knew nothing about it. It wasn't listed as an ultra until trip planning started, when it became evident from the mapping that its P1490m listing undersold it.



*Sierra Gomas – Rob Woodall*

The city of Monterrey is in a spectacular location surrounded by dramatic limestone peaks. I flew in with Aeromexico – it was good to avoid the hassle of transiting through the USA. While at London Heathrow waiting for my flight, out of the blue I'd received a message from a Monterrey climber who had been up the mysterious Sierra Gomas. Hector and I managed a

brief inconclusive exchange of messages before my flight left. My task for arrival day was an afternoon recce of Gomas itself. The choices were West or East. East had appeared from Google Earth to have the less technical terrain, but denser brush. I parked east of the sprawling peak and found a way onto the approach track, which led 4km across ranch land to the base of the peak. The scrub certainly looked dense – and spiny. I followed a rocky canyon penetrating 2km into the massif, with a few small scrambles. It looked promising as a route, although with plenty of potential for hidden complications. Backtracking, I ruled out trying to access the east ridge – too brushy. On the way out to my rental car I met the rancher. In the brief friendly conversation which ensued (me in English, he in Spanish), he asked if I'd reached the summit. No, I confirmed (unable to explain that this was a recce – I had all of Friday set aside for the peak). In the last hour or so of daylight I drove around to the west side. This was certainly less brushy, and more technical, as expected from Google Earth. I was able to drive all the way to the base of the peak, via a wind farm

construction site which was deserted this Sunday afternoon. I spied a potentially feasible route, which appeared to head for the summit. So now I had two routes, either of which may or may not be feasible. I drove into the city to find Petter who had also arrived today with Adam Walker. Chatting further with my new FB friend Hector online that night I gained a little more info on his Gomas ascent – it was from the east, but via a different valley than the one I'd chosen – and the GPX track he sent me seemed rather diagrammatic. So now three options, each rather uncertain.

Monday was our first full day and Petter, Adam and I climbed **2640m P1900 Cerro Tia Chena**

(optimistically listed as 2700m). At first light we drove 4km of rough brushy track, managing to avoid the rental car developing too many "desert stripes". A steep mostly-clear trail led to the summit ridge, where 1km of dense scrub (Agave



*Petter Bjorstad descending Cerro Tia Chena – Rob Woodall*

never was my favourite plant) led to the highpoint. On the way down we managed to avoid most of the scrub.

Overnight snow and a windy morning scuppered our plans for El Fraile, which was to be Petter's 300<sup>th</sup> ultra, but involves some exposed scrambling. Petter and Adam headed south for Onofre (which I'd done) and Potosi. I was in a bind, as my 5-day 5-peak schedule had no room for a travel day. I went and looked at Sierra Gomas (also snowy – bad idea) then headed for Potosi (would the snow affect the approach drive?) before deciding to keep driving east for **3117m P1647 Cerro el Centinela**. Arriving mid-afternoon and coaxing the car to the trailhead, I reccied the first part of the route, a good trail as expected. However, the Helman party took a day and a half for this peak, with some heroic bushwhacking nearer the summit. I had come across a



*Cerro el Centinela descent - Rob Woodall*

(not entirely convincing) GPX file online indicating a more direct line is feasible – and it didn't look too scrubby on Google Earth. I planned for an overnight but expected a long day hike, and next morning I got an early start and was at the start of the shortcut soon after first light. There was no sign of a trail, but the scrub wasn't too dense and a scrubby bushwhack got me onto a spur – where I found a

flagged trail – yay! I was on the summit by mid-morning. It's undramatic compared with the Monterrey peaks but a fine wild location and much more of an adventure – I was delighted to have found an efficient route. In descent I followed the trail to where it joins the dry canyon bed I'd left a few hours earlier. An obscure start to the trail, which I carefully waypointed – Petter and Adam would find it useful a couple of days later. I chatted with Adam by text and we arranged to meet climb El Fraile together the next day, and at dinner that evening Petter related the strange tale of his 300<sup>th</sup> ultra. This milestone was indeed achieved on Picacho San Onofre as planned. However on logging Cerro El Potosi the next day he discovered his total had reverted to 299, so Potosi was also his 300<sup>th</sup>! It transpired that a Malaysian ultra he'd bagged earlier that

year (leeches and all), had been demoted due to the discovery by Dan Quinn that a nearby peak was apparently a little higher. Tamperers are much the same the world over.

**2400m P1600 Picachos El Fraile** (pessimistically listed as 2300m) towers over Monterrey and is a quite demanding ascent. I slept at the trailhead and was greeted enthusiastically by the local farmer who seemed excited that someone was climbing his mountain! Petter and Adam arrived soon after first light and we were soon crossing open scrub to a steep scree trail which led via a dramatic viewpoint onto the ridge, which is quite exposed in places, and ambushed us with a difficult 3m downclimb – not mentioned in the Helman report, fortunately not exposed and we did have a half-rope. A huge drop developed to our right, before the expected and much easier downclimb to the left, which led via an improbable looking but quite straightforward mostly-wide ledge which led to the summit, and the best view of our trip, with Monterrey at our feet and spectacular peaks all around.



*South from Picachos El Fraile – Rob Woodall*

Friday arrived – my last full day, set aside for an attempt on **2220m P1510 Sierra Gomas**. Petter and Adam sought better odds further west, heading for the Baja peninsula, whose 3 ultras I've already bagged. Trouble started on the drive over, when it turned out that the most direct road was owned by the wind farm. Whilst I'd driven that way east-west on Sunday evening, the gatekeepers were less accommodating this evening and I had to take a long diversion to eventually reach the west side of Gomas. Early next morning I hiked a gated ranch road then light scrub gave way to spiny bushwhacking before the rocky spur I'd spied on my



*Wind turbines below Sierra Gomas – Rob Woodall*

recce was at last reached. This was a nice scramble, although a couple of times I passed sections which I knew could be interesting on descent, although the holds were good – and I reckoned on a better descent route which avoided them. Nevertheless, on reaching an exposed arete with difficult scrambling, alarm bells were sounding. Reaching a deep notch I couldn't downclimb, I made a scrubby scrambly slightly worrying descent left, down the

side of the ridge, in a while thankfully reaching the top of a scrubby but otherwise straightforward slope. There was no clear way to the summit from here, and as it was already past midday and I had a flight to catch the next day, the only sensible option was to head down. My descent route involved a wide straightforward gully, with a boulder slope providing a largely boulder free descent – until it cliffed out. Bushwhacking right, I found another cliff. Returning left, closer examination identified a slabby scrambly way down, with a few "veg belays". This 15m step was the first of several, fortunately all doable, although for a worrying hour it seemed distinctly possible that I'd have to climb back up to the ridge, likely spending an unplanned night out.

I was back at the car before sundown, but with the day's labours not yet complete. Losing a day to the weather earlier in the week meant that **3720m P1870 Cerro El Potosi** needed to be fitted in before tomorrow's afternoon flight. The roads are pretty good in this part of Mexico, but night driving is worrying at times, due to the need to dodge onto the hard shoulder to avoid oncoming overtaking trucks. But much of the journey was on dual carriageways and I reached the summit access road around midnight. I followed Adam and Petter's example, making the rough 2-hour drive-up, then the short walk to the summit just before sunrise. I then enjoyed a leisurely scenic drive back to Monterrey for my flight home, reflecting on a fascinating week in an impressive part of the country.