

INTRODUCTION

HAMISH'S MOUNTAIN WALK, an account of the first non-stop traverse of the Munros in 1974, was published by Victor Gollancz in 1978. The paper edition that most people bought appeared under the Granada Publishing imprint in 1980.

Tom Weir hit the nail on the head when he wrote of it:

Beautifully constructed and so well written. This book is a new breakthrough in the mountain literature of Scotland.

It is not a guidebook, but it is a gold standard for many walkers, especially those of a certain vintage. Hamish Brown's knowledge and experience even then was vast, and he conveys it with a light touch and without pedantry, the writing vivid on almost every page, and yet constrained, consistent, workmanlike. As a description of this strange pastime, and a companion to the mountains of Scotland in the present era, the book remains unsurpassed. To be candid, no one since has come close.

In 2010 *Hamish's Mountain Walk* was re-published in paperback by Sandstone Press with well-deserved support from the Scottish Arts Council. The book has been reset in a larger format and with the boast that it is "re-imagined in modern fonts" (the typeface used is Sabon, designed in 1967).

The main text apparently has a very few author alterations. You wouldn't notice.

The pictures have all changed: from the original monochrome collection, quite a few of which were of the actual Walk, to 30 of Hamish's own colour landscapes. I have mixed feelings about this. The originals told you far more about the journey and the man: there are boats, tents, bikes, bothies, schoolkids, dogs, campervans and families. While the new pictures are of course excellent and will presumably sell more books, you can already get this sort of thing in many (too many) other publications.

Worse is to come, in that the appendixes on gear, food, summit questionnaires and statistics have vanished. You might say that more than 30 years on these are of purely historical interest, but that is exactly what makes them so valuable. In particular it was instructive to learn how very simple and affordable all Hamish's basic equipment was. The loss would be less galling if the book did not include a silly new appendix on "Corbetts adjacent to Munros" – something that has nothing to do with the Walk, and contains such gems of information as "Gulvain: neighbours".

Worst of all is the loss of the index, and that is why you are reading this introduction.

I thought that recasting the index would be a few evenings' work, which was very far from the case.

These notes will be useful:

- It gives the page on which the Munro was climbed, and therefore there is only one entry per hill.
- It lists Munros in the Tables at the time of the walk and notes those that have been deleted since.
- It uses the plain English form of the name, so that "Cloich-mhuillin, Carn" becomes "Carn Cloich-mhuillin". The SMC Munros book uses this convention, and I find it perfectly usable.
- The notes (mostly of areas) are those I found helpful when compiling it. I left them in; others may find them helpful too.

I'm certain I've made errors and omissions and will welcome information about them!

This file and others relating to the effort are at

<http://www.merchant.uk.net/mountainwalk/> .

MIKE MERCHANT

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