

## Obituary in the Scottish Ski Club Journal, published December 2018

**Iseabail Macleod MBE**

**May 27, 1936 -**

**February 15, 2018**

Iseabail was born in Dalmuir, but was evacuated to Achiltibuie during the war, where she first went to school. Her parents were native Gaelic speakers from Wester Ross, but did not teach the language to their children. She studied languages at Glasgow University, and became fluent in French and German and competent at a few other languages, including Gaelic. She found work editing foreign language dictionaries at Collins in Glasgow. She moved to Edinburgh in 1975 when she became editor of *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, and bought a lovely flat in Scotland Street where she was extremely hospitable. She later became a freelance editor and was never short of work. She was famous for her work on the *Concise Scots Dictionary* and other reference works, for which she was deservedly awarded an MBE in 2001. Some of her work is relevant to hill lovers. Together with her brother Iain she produced *A Gaelic Guide: Translations and Pronunciations for Munros and Tops*, which was published by the Scottish Mountaineering Club in their *Munro's Tables*. Hers is the voice that gives the pronunciation of the hill names in the CD-ROM for *The Munros: An Interactive Hillwalker Guide* (Iain White, ISYS).



However, members of the SSC knew Iseabail mainly through her love of skiing and hill walking. I first met her in the late 1970s or early 80s as part of the Ski Touring Section and the summer Walking Group. She co-ordinated the latter group in 1975, and for several years until Ken McVean took over in about 1992. Iseabail gave a report in Schuss (the SSC's Newsletter) for February 1978 describing a touring meet at Gulabin Lodge, Glenshee, with almost 20 people: "On Saturday they tackled An Socach, and some went on to Carn a' Gheoidh, led by Donald Bennet down a fairly exciting descent to the main road." Iseabail was clearly an active skier at that time. Schuss also listed Iseabail as organising a trip to Rum in 1980, and as the contact for summer weekends in 1981, and as the organiser for Muir of Inverey in 1981 and 1982. I have a note for Sept 28th, 1985, when the Walking Group stayed in caravans at Faskally: we climbed Carn Liath in the mist, and "the tougher brethren (Ken and Cathy McVean and Iseabail Macleod) went on to bag Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhalgain, while the rest of us went back." She gave up skiing by about 1989 because her balance had deteriorated, but she continued to take part in summer meets, and some winter meets on foot. She joined in the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations of the Ski Club hut (and of Elaine Ross) on Beinn Ghlas in February 1992, and she organised a camping meet at Applecross in May 2003. My last entry for her with the Walking Group was in July 2011, when we stayed at Strawberry Cottage in Glen Affric. In recent years she spent most weekends with Bruce Lenman in Stirling, where she used to walk with the Stirling Hillwalkers Club, or sometimes with myself round King's Park. Her health declined over the last three years, as her tremors increased and her spine collapsed. She had a stroke on returning to Edinburgh from Stirling, and died in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary after a short time.

The funeral at Mortonhall Crematorium was well attended, despite the freezing weather and icy roads. Iseabail made the effort to keep in touch with a wide circle of friends and was always thoughtful and kind. She will be sorely missed.

**Helen Ross** (with help from Penny Calder and others)

She strode the hills,  
An ancient anorak billowing in the wind;  
And on each mountain met a friend or family member  
No matter how distant, always known by name!  
A collector of people  
A connector of people  
Keeping the family's links alive  
Across the continents.

A scholar - languages her skill -  
She taught her follow walkers  
The correct pronunciation of the hills on which they stood.  
And when they looked bemused  
When sound and spelling seemed to disagree  
She would simply sigh and say  
"Gaelic is an inflected language"  
As if that explained all.  
But now her haunting Highland lilt will sound no more  
To live on, loved and lasting, in our memories.

**David Calder**