



Buachaille Etive Mòr

# Life through a lens...



by Gordon Craigie

conditions that research has found cures for, such as some cancers. Or AIDS – around 25 years ago that was a death sentence but now people can live a normal life. After the initial shock I tried to put it to the back of my mind and carry on with running, swimming and the spinning classes I used to teach. My reasoning was that I would carry on as normal for as long as I possibly could then cross whatever bridges I had to when they came along. As time has passed I've adapted my approaches, but I'm determined that MND won't stop me doing what I want to do."

And what he's done since then is an impressive list – holidays to the USA, Hawaii, Japan, Africa, Thailand, Norway, France, Italy, Crete, Czech Republic and Ireland as well as further exploration of our own Outer Hebrides. I tried paragliding in Crete with my daughter, and the four of us – me, Carol, Donald and Sara – fulfilled a dream by driving open-top Mustangs from Las Vegas to San Francisco! There's been loads of other stuff too – rugby trips to Paris, Rome and London, and annual visits to our good friends who spend a sizeable chunk of their year in Italy. We've seen all the major Italian sights but also experienced everyday life in a different culture – we love it. This year we have trips already booked for Mull and Spain, and that definitely won't be the end of it. I've realised that my passions have changed quite regularly throughout my life anyway. First it was rugby and motorbikes, then triathlon, and now it's travel, nature, Scottish culture and photography – which is handy as it gives me plenty of subject matter! And family, of course. My son Donald is settled with his partner Jamie-Lee and their three kids – Aimee, Emily and wee Sophie – and my daughter Sara married Matthew in 2018 and were joined by wee Mac last year. It's quite a clan gathering when we all get together, and lots of photo opportunities too!

*I realised my swimming times were going backwards despite training harder!*

2014 WAS A momentous year for all Scots. For *independistas* we had the exhilaration of our momentum building towards 18 September – can any of us ever forget the rush of excitement when that poll came out a week before the event? – then the crushing disappointment of 19 September, and the realisation that we'd come so tantalisingly close to regaining our independence only to be taunted with EVEL instead of 'lead don't leave'. It was like a bereavement. Yet within a few days we all realised that it wasn't the beginning of the end but the end of the beginning. SNP membership soared to unprecedented levels, same for the Scottish Green Party, and it was clear

*His first job was as a butcher, yet he married a vegetarian!*

that our fight to regain our independence was far from over – the Yes movement was alive and kicking and preparing for the next battle. Well, 2020 – bring it on!

In amongst all of this activism, of course, life goes on. At the start of 2014, *iScot Magazine* reader and ardent independence supporter Ian Bain was working away as an Environmental Health Officer by day and tramping around Forfar canvassing for Yes almost every night. His intensive triathlon training had been severely curtailed, not just by work and politics but because he just 'wasn't himself' and medical investigations weren't pinpointing the cause. Until one day they did, and the news was devastating – MND, Motor Neurone Disease. But Ian is a husband, father and grandfather, a son and a brother, a friend, a colleague and a teammate. He's defined by who he is and not by what he does – his first job was as a butcher, yet he married a vegetarian! So, he most definitely was NOT going to be defined by MND...

"The first signs that something was wrong was when I realised my swimming times were going backwards despite training harder! Then I noticed my technique was faulty – my left arm wasn't pulling properly. Other things too, like losing power when training with weights, and twitching. Eventually I went to see about it and the initial verdict was that 30 years of playing rugby had affected a disc in my neck which was probably pressing on a nerve. Once that was removed, I felt great and started training again but, after my first triathlon back, all the symptoms returned with a vengeance. Tests and more tests followed, but each time something else was ruled out and even I could see – from a combination of internet research and my wife Carol's nursing background – that the whole process was funnelling towards MND.

"When you're told that you've got MND, and that there's no cure, I think you feel devastated at first. I felt numb. But you have to look around you and you have to look at the

Since Ian reckons he took more than 20,000 photos in 2019 alone (1), and a picture paints a thousand words, we thought it only fitting to ask him for a selection from his archive to complete this tale...

**Photo 1:** Summing up Ian's attitude to his illness is this photo, taken by Carol at the top of Achtercainn Bras above Gairloch. "After hiking for over an hour, going off piste and losing the path as usual, we eventually got to the top exhausted but rewarded with great views across Gairloch and the mountains behind. This image shows me climbing on top of the rock and shouting out F\*\*\* MND!"

**Photos 2 and 3:** "Getting out and about taking photos of nature is what I love to do most, whether that's going to places that I have not been to before or returning to the same location time and again waiting for the right conditions. These images show a puffin on the Isle of May, and Port Allen at Errol on a freezing, foggy day."

Photo 2: Puffin on the Isle of May



Photo 3: Port Allen, Errol



Photo 1: Cursing MND at the top of Achtercainn Bras



Photo 4: Rattray Head lighthouse, Peterhead



**Photo 4:** "This one reminds me of a typical day in the life of Ian Bain! Geared up with friends for a 5am start, the idea was to drive the 2 hours to Rattray Head lighthouse at Peterhead in time for sunrise. I had everything ready for the off, jumped into the car and headed off before realising, 10 minutes in, that I hadn't taken my medication... Rushing home to take my pills left us around 20 minutes behind schedule - inevitably, of course, we missed sunrise by about... 20 minutes!"

Photo 5: Rab crafting a target



**Photos 5 and 6:** "I like taking photos of craftsmen at work and in these images, I admire the skill and patience of two of my friends - targemaker Rab and potter Dave. For me, they'll leave behind a legacy of craftsmanship that one day might vanish - I hope not."

**Photos 7 and 8:** "My grandchildren, Mac and Sophie. When the MND was diagnosed back in 2014 I didn't think I would see the next generation, but I'm so glad that I'm still here and able to hold them, kiss and cuddle them, and see them grow up. Although I know I will not be part of their life for long, hopefully they will look back on my collection of photos and remember their papa fondly."

Photo 7: Wee Mac



Photo 6: Dave forming a pot



Photo 8: Donald and Sophie

Photo 10:  
Bow Rock



Photos 9, 10, and 11: "Apart from my family, obviously, in the end the most inspiring photos for me are always of this fantastic little country we call Scotland. I've long had a fascination with the Highlands, probably since I discovered my great-grandfather was born in Wick. In our child-free days Carol and I used to tour all over on my motorbike, and in recent years have settled on the area around Loch Ewe as a regular escape.

Photo 9: Glen Clova



Photo 11: Loch Ewe



Photo 12:  
Edinburgh march,  
October 2019



Photo 12: "I've been marching for independence since 2013, in the build-up to the first referendum and ever since. In October this year I took this photo from a great vantage spot on the Royal Mile. However, getting the shot involved my good friend Gordon, (yes reader, the very same Gordon, your trusty correspondent!), holding the tripod out the window while I shouted instructions *Golden Shot* style – left a bit, right a bit! – then I took the shot remotely using an iPhone app.

(Ed's note: Oor Gordon's still no happy that he missed seen the *Yes Bikers* while hingin on tae thon tripod!)

Photo 13: This final photo obviously wasn't taken by Ian, but by Sandie Knudsen and David Ho as part of the *YES – Portraits of a Nation* project. It captures the spirit of a man laughing in the face of adversity, who has refused to lie down to MND but decided instead to devote all of his energies to his family's and his nation's – their nation's – future.

Photo 13: Credit: *YES – Portraits of a Nation/Headshots Scotland*

“After being diagnosed with MND back in 2014 I thought life was over. But the more I thought about what I might leave my kids and future grandchildren, the more I didn't like the path the Union was taking. So I became involved in the YES campaign, helping in anyway I could to promote the case for independence.

Scotland to me is a country of 5 million people from all walks of life. It's a country that is rich in culture, rich in heritage, rich in diversity, rich in resources, rich in history.

We can achieve so much more without the shackles of the Union. It is up to us to change the course of history and make Scotland a country fit for our children and grandchildren to call their own.

“  
**Ian Bain**  
Retired Environmental  
Health Officer



"When I was diagnosed with MND in 2014, I knew the condition would eventually leave me unable to work. I could go on and on about how MND affects me, and those around me, but it would bore anyone reading my havers! Without my wife, Carol, my best pal, I would find life much harder coping with MND. She is always there to help me, even with seemingly little things like turning the knob on the tripod now that I no longer have the strength to move it or just making a great cuppa! The bottom line is that since being forced into retirement in June 2018 I have had more time to spend with my family and friends, take photos of the world and the beauty all around me, post more on various formats (Facebook, Twitter, Blipfoto) and also get even more involved in the struggle for Scotland to become an independent nation again. I realise that time is short and that we are given a limited time on this planet, and there is so much out there to see and discover. There are so many good people in this world that try their best with limited resources to survive day to day. It scares me that it appears that politicians no longer represent the folks they were elected to and, in my part of the world, I can no longer sit back and do nothing. I make no secret that I feel what is best for my country would be independence from the UK and Westminster rule and I will help where possible to see this through."

I'm proud to call Ian a friend, and if we can all harness just a wee bit of his indefatigable attitude, then we'll not go far wrong. And, independence? Aye friends, it's coming yet for a that!

According to *MND Scotland*, Motor Neuron Disease "is a rapidly progressing terminal illness, which stops signals from the brain reaching the muscles. Every case of MND takes



Carol and Ian

*its own course, but the disease may cause someone to lose the ability to walk, talk, eat, drink or breathe unaided".*

*The Euan MacDonald Centre for Motor Neuron Disease Research at the University of Edinburgh published results from an epidemiological study last year which confirmed that "the number of people being diagnosed with MND in Scotland has increased when compared with 20 years ago. Scotland's incidence of MND is also higher than that of other European countries".*

*Some research has also indicated a possible link between rugby, and other contact sports, and MND. Doddie Weir is the most high-profile example in Scottish rugby, but South African internationalists Joost van der Westhuizen and Tinus Linee both succumbed to the condition as did former*



Happy family!



Sara and Ian parasailing in Crete



It's coming yet!

Lazy days in Umbria



Ian, Donald, Sara and Carol in Hawaii



Rangers footballer Fernando Ricksen. More recently, former English rugby league international Rob Burrow has also been diagnosed with MND at the age of only 37.

If you would like to learn more about MND, or find out how you can support MND research, please visit the MND Scotland website at:

[www.mndscotland.org.uk](http://www.mndscotland.org.uk)

or the Euan MacDonald Centre for Motor Neuron Research website at: [www.euanmacdonaldcentre.org](http://www.euanmacdonaldcentre.org)