

The Database of British and Irish Hills

Chis Crocker

Some missing LIDAR data on the English and Welsh coasts has been released since the JNSA run in April 2023, though the gap around RAF Fylingdales seems to have become permanent (it's also a gap on Bluesky's commercial LIDAR mapping). There being no sign of further releases in the Scottish Highlands, we have started to examine marginal hills below 600m on Scotlis mapping, which is based on the OS Terrain 5 digital product and benefits from 5m contouring. This requires care because some spot heights in Scotlis are copied from other sources and there are systematic height differences between Scotlis and 1:25000 contours. These differences are mostly in the range 0-3m but reach 4-5m around Beinn Tharsuinn Chaol in the Fisherfield Forest. There is less to be gained from looking at higher hills as Alan Dawson has an active surveying programme for the Simms.

We released updates to the offline database in August and December. There are a few changes to the Dodds, Tumps and SIBs, and more to the County Tops following the adoption of the Historic Counties Standard. In the Topographical Area field, Mark Jackson's Topo Areas were replaced by the scheme introduced by Alan Dawson in *The 1033 High Hills of Britain*, with additional Topo areas for Isle of Man, Channel Islands, Ireland, and lower lying ground in Scotland, England and Wales. The new scheme works better for Tumps on small islands and features in Dawson's current and future publications including the projected new edition of *The Relative Hills of Britain*.

The editorial team met in March at Alston. As the team ages, succession planning has become an increasing concern. We have expanded the editorial team several times over the database's 24 years of existence to cope with the increasing workload, recruiting younger members where possible. Hence we were delighted when Bernie Hughes accepted our invitation to join the team. Continuation of this policy should ensure the sustainability of the database. In contrast, the Hill Bagging website was until recently dependent on a single editor. The lack of IT cover was brought to a head in 2023 when Simon Edwardes was seeking to reduce his load while the pressure for site development was growing, particularly around the mapping interface and mobile friendliness. The redesigned website, launched in November, was the outcome of much discussion and consultation. Heartfelt thanks to Dave Chaffey, Denise McLellan and other members of the Hill Bagging Steering Group for making it happen. The group will remain in place to consider improvements, deal with queries, and address issues.

EastWest Mapping published two more of their highly accurate Irish maps, Mweelrea & The Reek in February and Blackstairs & Mount Leinster in September. Both maps are at 1:25,000 scale and based on Bluesky DEMs augmented by aerial imagery and ground surveys. The second replaces a less accurate Blackstairs map published in 2013 that was based on satellite data. Two maps covering Donegal are planned for this year.