

Comedian Gary Little has found the perfect audience to try his stand-up routines on – the mountains and glens of the Highlands. His hillwalks on the wild side are also therapy for the funnyman, who has suffered from bouts of depression.

**Y**ou'll probably hear comedian Gary Little before you see him when walking in Scotland's mountains.

Although the Glasgow funnyman is unmissable at 6ft 2in and sporting a skinhead, it's his voice that greets you first.

And it should be something funny as the award-winning comic practises his stand-up routines out loud while he climbs Munros.

He said: "It's a strange thing, I know, to be wandering about the hills talking to myself.

"But sitting down to think up new stories for my stand-up is no good for me. I have to be up and about and by far the best place is when walking the Munros. Being away from it all with my dogs and

surrounded by amazing countryside helps me to relax and that's when the best ideas come."

Gary, 51, is a regular sell-out at comedy shows and festivals across the UK.

He was the biggest-selling Scottish act at the last two Glasgow International Comedy Festivals and a

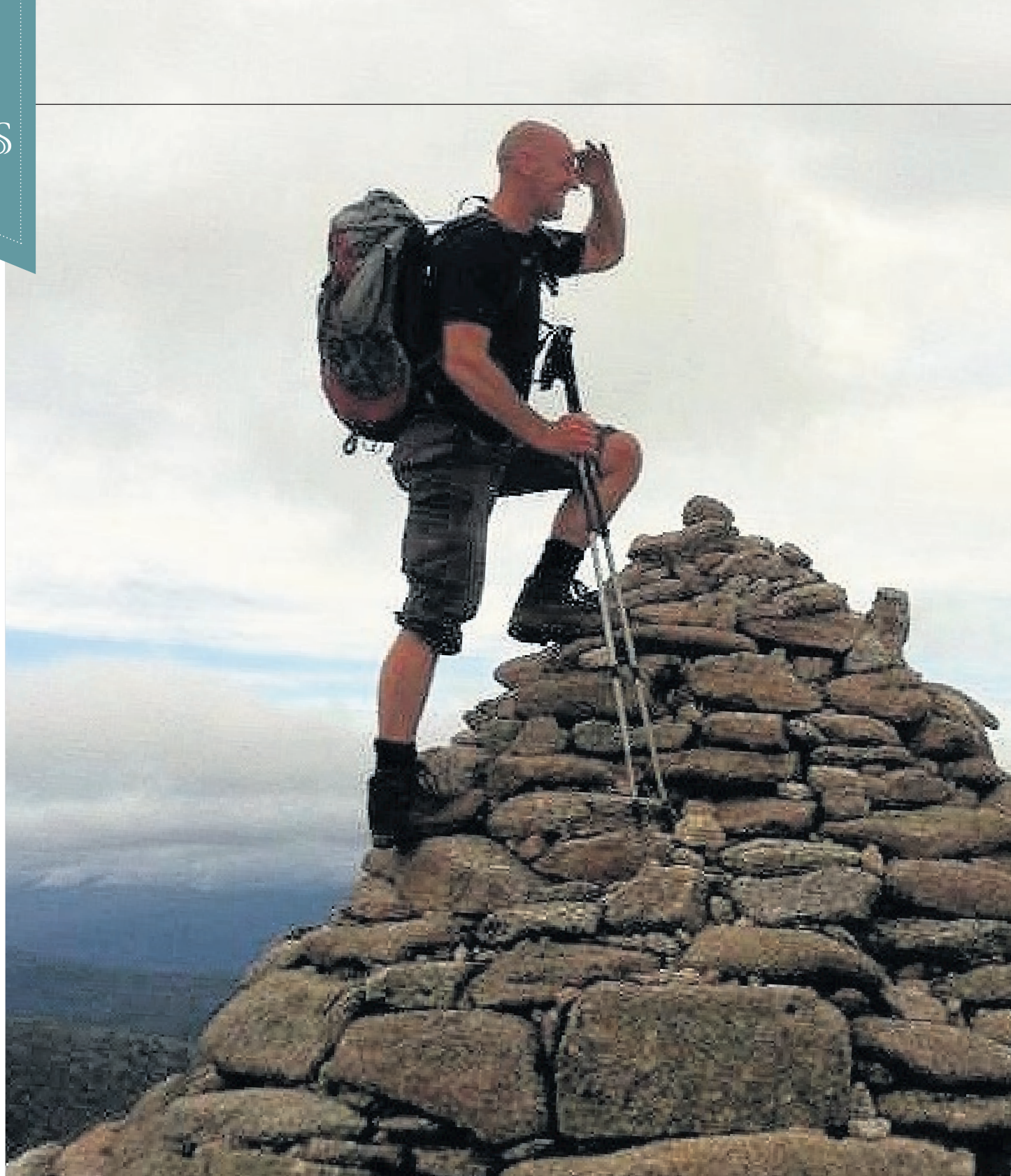
double winner at the 2014 Scottish Comedy Awards. His demanding schedule and animated storytelling requires a good level of fitness.

He said: "I get carried away with my stories on stage and then I start dancing or running around like an idiot. At my age, I'd collapse within seconds if I didn't keep myself in good shape. I was a gym goer before but now I just walk my dogs and do Munros."

Gary's Munro-bagging started three and a half years ago with a stroll in the Arrochar Alps.

While the mountains north of Glasgow are popular with city dwellers, they were a first for the comedian.

He said: "My ex-girlfriend persuaded me to go for a walk on a summer's day and I was stunned by how busy the trails were. It was like Sauchiehall Street on a Saturday afternoon and I noticed too that it wasn't just skinny



## I JUST LOVE TO GAG

**It's strange, I know, to be out on the hills talking to myself**



**FIONA RUSSELL**

mountain goats who enjoyed Scotland's mountains.

"I didn't have a clue how much effort it would take to actually reach the summit of a Munro but I thought, 'Yeah, hell, I could be part of that.'"

Gary's first Munros were those closest to his Springburn home. He ticked off Ben Lomond via the "easy to follow tourist track".

Retuning to the Arrochar Alps, Gary reached the summit of both Beinn Narnain and Beinn Ime.

He said: "I walked and I found I really enjoyed it. I liked being out with my two dogs and I got a kick out of ticking off the Munros.

"In my first year, I walked 30 or more Munros and now I walk whenever I can and usually close to wherever I am gigging in Scotland."

Recently he bagged his 101st Munro, Meall Ghaordaidh, and has a goal of reaching 200 Munros in 2015.

Life has not always been so carefree for the sell-out comedian. He has served two jail terms, including one



**RUFF AT THE TOP** Gary and pet on the summit of Ben Lawers

for drugs offences. He has also suffered bouts of depression and has performed at mental health gigs, hoping to reduce the stigma associated with the illness.

It seems that walking – and his honest, brash style of comedy – have brought a new happiness for Gary.

He said: "The walking has helped me when times were hard but I think

everyone would feel better in the hills. These days, I am doing fine and the Munros offer a kind of aim away from the gigging. Like so many men, I start hobbies and projects but never follow them through. The Munros are different. I feel they are achievable and the more I do them, the more I want to finish a full round."

These days, Gary is an accomplished