

## **2002-2003 NWDG COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONTACT DETAILS**

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## **EDITORIAL**

This unusual year will see three newsletters, due to delays in producing this issue. Your contributions for the spring 2003 newsletter will be most warmly received, Please note the deadline - 31<sup>st</sup> March. All contributions are welcome, including short news items, updates and personal opinions. The NWDG approach is to accept all kinds of articles, as long as they relate to Native Woodlands. We edit them as little as possible before going into the newsletter. We hope that this produces an interesting, varied and useful newsletter. Please note my new email address: [nick@leaf.me.uk](mailto:nick@leaf.me.uk)

Nick Marshall

### **Forthcoming events**

- Developing Sustainable Woodlands On Islay - Joint Meeting Of NWDG And CCFG - 24/25 April 2003 - Flyer enclosed
- NWDG 2003 Field Excursion to East Cumbria (5th - 8th June) - Flyer enclosed
- Field trip to Albruzzo, Italy - autumn 2003 - see P6

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS FROM THE TREASURER**

Please note that we can no longer afford to send out the Newsletter and other mailings to lapsed members. If you wish to continue to receive NWDG publications and news you must ensure that you have paid your subscription for the current year. Why not make life easier for yourself and us and set up a standing order? In future, members who have not renewed by March will be alerted by a red sticker on the envelope containing the Spring Newsletter. Anyone who still has not paid by October of any year will be deleted from the mailing list until they do renew.

If you work for an organisation such as SNH, FC or SAC and your subscription is paid by that organisation, please will you ensure that the person who sends out the cheque is aware of the name and address of our new Membership Administrator. It is important that nothing more is sent to Debbie Cowen at Tayside Native Woods as that office has closed.

Thank you

### **Membership cards**

From this year onwards, you will be sent a membership card when you subscribe to the NWDG. These have been printed for us on 100% post-consumer recycled card by Pointer Print of 22a Court Street, Haddington, East Lothian. If you do not receive one, please get in touch with our Membership Administrator, Jeanette Hall

# NATIVE WOODLAND DISCUSSION GROUP NEWS

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

**Carol Crawford**

### **Committee Make-up**

Since the AGM there has been much shuffling of the committee; new members joining and the workloads of existing members causing them to take steps back from NWDG commitments. This began at the ceilidh when Ruth Anderson volunteered to join and Jeanette Hall expressed interest in being our new SNH representative. These appointments were quickly approved! During the summer Meg Pollock began to focus more on her PhD and found a replacement to work on our website: Helen Shaw. Ruth Mitchell also had to stand-down from the committee before our first meeting in September. At that meeting our new Minutes Secretary, Andrew Sheridan, had to resign as he was moving to a new job in Leicestershire. Ruth Anderson kindly took on this role until the next AGM. Ruth is also our link person with the team organising the joint excursion to Islay. At the same meeting our new Membership Secretary, Helen Gray, reported that she no longer had time to fulfil this role. Fortunately Jeanette Hall's new job as Woodland Advisory Officer at SNH means that she can take on Membership Secretary duties and Helen Gray was able to stay on the committee in an advisory capacity. See the inside front cover for the committee as it now stands.

Looking ahead this is Nick Marshall's last year as Newsletter Editor and he has also agreed to stay on the committee - in a more general role. We have already found a replacement: our current Treasurer Alison Averis. She will be able to shadow Nick on the spring newsletter if we can find a new Treasurer by then. So I'll close this section with a plea for a volunteer to take on the interesting and rewarding role of

NWDG Treasurer. Please contact Alison to find out more.

### **Membership**

There was a temporary hitch in spring 2002 with the demise of Tayside Native Woods and our previous membership secretary Debbie Cowen having a baby. Alison was able to step into the breach, sort out the database and do a comprehensive handover to Helen Gray in the summer, who in turn passed records over to Jeanette Hall in the autumn. Diligent pursuals of non-renewals meant we ended the year in good heart - 160 members.

A membership "think-tank" of Alison, Helen Gray, Helen Shaw and Jeanette met in October. Amongst the ideas being progressed are a "Welcome Pack" for new members, and a refresher course on winter tree and shrub identification, to attract new members. The new membership cards are also a result of that meeting.

There is a steady rate of renewals for 2003 already and if you haven't renewed please do so soon, preferably by Standing Order!

### **Website: [nwdg.org.uk](http://nwdg.org.uk)**

Our new website manager, Helen Shaw, is very experienced in website design as you will see if you visit the site. Though parts are still under construction, great changes have been made. It is now also possible to download a membership form directly from the website - for any non-members reading this!

### **Annual Excursions**

We had a classic NWDG annual field meeting in Argyll in 2002, reported elsewhere in the newsletter, and plans are so well-advanced for this year's East Cumbria excursion (5th - 8th June) that we are able to include booking details with

this mailing. Please book accommodation early to avoid disappointment

### **Workshops**

Our new workshop organiser, Juliet Robinson, is also a victim of an increased workload, so is unable to progress her ideas for a workshop, on interpreting archaeological features in woodlands, this year. She did much of the admin for the autumn bryophyte and lichen workshops, together with Gordon Gray Stephens of AGWA. These, becoming-annual, workshops were again successful and for 2003 Gordon has kindly volunteered to do all the organising and admin. Juliet's other commitments are currently not a problem as others to the committee are keen to run workshops! Helen G and Nick have volunteered to organise the one on winter tree/shrub ID.

### **Other events**

The joint Continuous Cover Forestry Group/NWDG field meeting to Islay Estates, planned for last August, had to be postponed. It is rescheduled for April 24th - 25th 2003. The enclosed flier gives details. If you wish to attend it is advisable to book by 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

The trip to Albruzzo, Italy, next autumn is still being progressed by members Richard Thompson and Lucio Di Cosmo. If you are interested in going and haven't already let Richard know, contact him on richard.thompson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk before 21<sup>st</sup> February.

### **Lower Plants**

The Lower Plants Section continues to go from strength to strength under the able steerage of Ben Averis - see Ben's articles elsewhere.

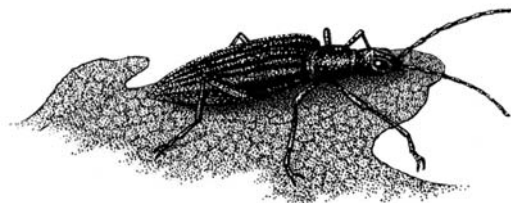
Also elsewhere you will see that I have been having an exciting time with the bryophyte booklet. The last time I wrote about it in the newsletter the 2nd edition was being launched. I thought 1000 copies

would last at least a year; they were gone in 9 months. I'd like to thank the 300 plus recipients who sent donations - they funded almost half the printing costs of the 3rd edition. The NWDG committee persuaded me to accept additional sponsorship for this edition - see treasurer's report. This and the donation total will come back to NWDG for use in future projects. I would also like to thank Treefest Scotland and Eammon Wall and Co for their contributions to the 3rd edition. The balance came from my own practice. All profits from the 3rd edition are going into a follow-up booklet, covering the next 40 or so commonest bryophytes in Britain & Ireland's woods. I started working on this in my spare time in December but would not like to say when it will be finished owing to my other commitments!

### **Conclusion**

My first half year in the chair has been eventful. New members have brought new ideas and new enthusiasm. I would like to thank all the committee, and others mentioned above for their efforts. Everyone contributes voluntarily (or finds time amidst other work commitments) so please bear with us if there are delays. Finally I would also like to thank Richard Toleman, for leaving such a well-organised committee behind. That makes my job much easier.

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## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

**Alison Averis**

When I took over as Treasurer in Autumn 2001, I soon saw that the NWDG was in financial trouble - we were running at a loss. In 2001 the NWDG made a loss of £500.24. (The deficit of £1790.86 in the Summary table below includes money spent on costs which were incurred in 2000.) This compares with a profit of £415.14 in 2000 and a loss of £606.31 in 1999. The deficit in 2001 was the result of falling income from membership, an increase in the costs of producing the Newsletter, and group activities costing more money than they raised. Also, each edition of the Newsletter was being sent out to about 60 lapsed members - meaning that every two paid-up members were subsidising almost one person who was not paying! The cost of the Newsletter plus mailings in 2001 was £1412.47. Unfortunately, the membership subscriptions for 2001, which are supposed to cover the cost of the Newsletter and any extra mailings, amounted to only £1289.00. So there was a shortfall of £123.47. In Autumn 2000 the Committee resolved to increase the subscriptions to the current rates, but for one reason or another this resolution was not acted upon until 2002. Ironically, had members subscribed at the new rates in 2001, we would have covered our costs for that year.

Our finances are now much more healthy. Since the beginning of 2002 we have been collecting subscriptions at the new rates, we have more members, and we are being much more careful about budgeting for Group activities. We are also sending the Newsletter only to paid-up members. As a result we are now financially secure.

On behalf of the NWDG, I would like to congratulate our Chairperson, Carol Crawford, on the outstanding success of her booklet 'Bryophytes of Native Woods'.

Originally conceived as a small project funded by a Millennium Award from the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust, the booklet has become a runaway best-seller. It is now in its third edition and was short-listed for the Natural World Book Prize in 2002. The first two editions of the booklet were distributed free of charge, but recipients were invited to send a donation to NWDG to be used for future publications and many of them did so. The donations amounted to £1879.41. We were able to give this money, plus a further £870.59 to make a round figure of £2450.00, in sponsorship to Carol to fund the printing of the third edition. Carol has very kindly agreed to treat this as a loan rather than as a gift, and will repay us at the rate of 50 pence for every copy sold. The third edition was launched in mid November and we have already received over £50 in repayments.

One of the main reasons for the NWDG's existence is to promote interest in and understanding of the flora and fauna of native woods, and the Committee felt that Carol's booklet fulfilled this admirably and was also good publicity for the group. Any other NWDG member with an idea for a small project such as this is more than welcome to approach us to discuss funding.

Finally, I'd like to thank all our members for their continuing support, and would like to apologise to all those whose subscription cheques went astray when Tayside Native Woodlands ceased to exist. This will not happen again - as long as you remember to send your money to our new membership secretary or - even better - fill in a Standing Order form!

All the best for 2003.

### SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 1999-2001

INCOME	2001	2000	1999
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Transfer from old account	£2267.39	-	-
Subscriptions	£1289.00	£1704.00	£1293.00
Interest	£17.57	£86.63	£43.15
Field Meetings	-	£4702.85	£297.85
Workshops	£1423.00	£585.00	£1060.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4996.96</b>	<b>£7078.48</b>	<b>£2694.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Transfer to new account	£2267.39	-	-
Newsletter	£2169.24	£341.93	£995.90
Postage	£22.83	£135.83	£181.35
Stationery	-	£65.67	£16.00
Telephone	£11.75	£69.29	£230.06
Photocopying	-	-	£26.55
Field Meetings	-	£ 4610.00	£378.98
Workshops	£863.51	-	£835.74
Chairperson's expenses	-	-	£25.73
Honoraria	£1258.85	£150.00	£650.00
Sundry expenses	£176.00	-	-
Bank Charges	£18.25	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6787.82</b>	<b>£5372.72</b>	<b>£3300.31</b>
<b>Income minus Expenditure</b>	<b>£ - 1790.86</b>	<b>£1705.76</b>	<b>£ - 606.31</b>
<b>Final Bank Balance</b>	<b>£2345.50</b>	<b>£3254.95</b>	<b>£1549.19</b>

**£51.16** is to be added to the balance for 2001. This is the residue of money remaining in the old Bank of Scotland account after most of the funds were withdrawn, plus accrued interest on this money to 31 December 2001. Total assets on 31 December 2001 were therefore **£2396.66**

Balancing the books for 2001 is complicated because funds were transferred from the Bank of Scotland to the Royal Bank of Scotland leaving a residue in the Bank of Scotland account, and some cheques issued in 2001 were not cashed until 2002. However:

$$\text{£}3254.95^1 - (\text{£}6787.82^2 - \text{£}874.36^3 + \text{£}47.91^4) + (\text{£}4996.96^5 + \text{£}54.96^6) = \text{£}2345.50^7$$

1 Final balance in Bank of Scotland account at the end of 2000

2 Total outgoings recorded from both accounts in 2001

3 Total amount of cheques written in 2001 but not banked until 2002

4 Money remaining in Bank of Scotland account when funds transferred in April 2001

5 Income into Royal Bank of Scotland account

6 Income into Bank of Scotland account before April 2001

7 Final balance in Royal Bank of Scotland account at the end of 2001

Alison Averis

21 April 2002

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## **NWDG LOWER PLANTS SECTION Ben Averis**

The Lower Plants Section now has 35 members, and since the last newsletter we have had three field visits:

### **14 April 2002 - Dollar Glen, Clackmannanshire**

On this morning of rather dull, wet weather, the 17 people who came were soon cheered by being handed a glass of champagne from Carol Crawford, and a copy of her bryophyte booklet for which this occasion launched the second printing. We then set off into the impressive ravine woodland with luxuriant bryophyte assemblages and a rich vascular plant flora. There are several calcicolous bryophytes here, including the moss *Mnium stellare* and the 'hairy' thalloid liverwort *Apometzgeria pubescens*. There are also far-flung eastern populations of western, oceanic species: the tiny moss *Fissidens celticus* (shoots like minuscule ash leaves) and the spiny-leaved liverwort *Plagiochila spinulosa*. The wet weather cut the visit a little short, but we saw enough to make some people feel that it would be well worth coming back in better weather for a longer look around.

### **28 April 2002 - Darley Wood, Troon, Ayrshire**

Rain again! Of the ten people who came on this wet morning, some were from well outside the ecological world and were quite new to looking at lower plants, but they took a really keen and intelligent interest which I found most encouraging. Carol's champagne and bryophyte booklet helped too! (This was the 'west coast' launch of the booklet's second printing). Darley Wood is on sandy soils and, most unusually for woodland, has sand sedge *Carex arenaria* growing commonly beneath trees. In the rainy weather the profusion of common woodland

bryophytes looked very fine and more reminiscent of what you see in upland woods. On wet ground we saw *Sphagnum quinquefarium* - an upland woodland moss, rare in this part of Scotland - and on trees the oceanic mosses *Orthotrichum pulchellum* and *Ulota phyllantha*. The bryophyte flora here is considerably more interesting than one might expect for a lowland town wood on flattish ground without rocks or streams.

### **6 October 2002 - Crinan Wood, Argyll**

A very small but very keen group of four - three of them all revved up by the bryophyte workshop on the previous three days - joined me on this day to explore the mixed deciduous woodland on this small hill near the Crinan Canal in south Argyll. It's a fantastic place: wandering through humid, rocky woodland with luxuriant bryophyte and lichen assemblages we found many western, oceanic species including the 'juicy' yellow-green liverwort *Lepidozia cupressina* on rocky banks, the 'Ancient woodland indicator' liverwort *Adelanthus decipiens* on rocks, and on trees several Lobarion lichens and the uncommon oceanic liverworts *Plagiochila exigua* and *Cololejeunea minutissima*. We also saw excellent patches of Tunbridge filmy fern on some steep, shaded banks. Altogether a great day: I enjoyed looking at lots of interesting plants in good company.

The main purpose of the Lower Plants Section (LPS) is to organize these informal field outings, and also to communicate any other information about woodland bryophytes, lichens or fungi. Membership of the LPS is open to all NWDG members at no extra cost. Communication within the group is mainly by e-mail. I'll send details of further visits around the e-group in due course: hopefully there will be a site visit soon in the western Highlands. To join the LPS, check for information on future site visits, or suggest places to visit, contact Ben Averis, 2 Traprain Cottages,

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Finally, I would like to thank Peter Quelch for donating a copy of the wonderful Swedish book *Signalarter: indikatorer på skyddsvärd skog - flora över kryptogamer* ('Indicator species for assessing the nature conservation value of woodland sites - a flora of selected cryptogams') to the LPS. I have this book at present but it is for general use by or circulation around LPS members, so let me know if you want to see it. (By the way, the text is in Swedish!). •

**WOODLAND BRYOPHYTES  
WORKSHOP IN ARGYLL, 3-5  
OCTOBER 2002  
Ben Averis**

I was pleased to be asked to be the tutor for yet another bryophyte workshop in Argyll: I've done them three years running now. A total of eleven people came and it was nice to see some familiar faces, with 'return' visits from some people who'd been on previous courses. (Unless this means they were not satisfied with what they got first time round, but I suppose I shouldn't be so self-doubting!) And of course it was equally good to see new faces too.

The workshop had the usual schedule: introductory meeting on Thursday night, field visit during Friday daytime, microscope/book work on Friday night and final field visit on Saturday. Oh, and drinks and chat in the pub on Thursday and Friday nights of course! Our indoor centre was Kilmartin House, where we had excellent facilities including a most remarkable wooden table to sit round on the Thursday evening. Thanks to Gordon Gray Stephens for arranging for us to use this place. For the field visits we swapped

the last two year's sites (Barnluasgan and Artilligan) for 'new' ones, just to be different, especially for folk who'd been on previous workshops.

On Friday we went to Tainish National Nature Reserve. This is a great wood in the sense of both size and quality. We saw only a bit of it, but that gave us a good range of bryophyte species including most of the common ones of acidic rocks and soils and also several western oceanic species. Thanks to John Halliday (Scottish Natural Heritage warden) for having us there: unfortunately John was unable to come out with us on the day.

On Saturday Gordon Gray Stephens played host as we visited his woods at Old Poltalloch. Fantastic place - stream, ravine, rocks, good mix of tree species..... There's a good calcicolous flora here, which complemented the predominantly acidophilous flora we saw at Tainish the day before. And again a good mix of common species and 'choice' oceanic ones. Some people got right into the smaller oceanic liverworts growing on tree trunks: focus your lens on these plants and you discover a beautiful world of all sorts of shapes and colours, all in miniature.

Thanks to Gordon Gray Stephens, John Halliday and Juliet Robinson, for organization and site access, and to all of you who came on the workshop, for your keenness and good company. I hope you all found it worthwhile. It's good to see some serious bryological expertise developing among people who've been on these (and other) bryophyte workshops. Finally, many thanks to my good friends John Halliday and his family for so kindly putting me up at their home while I was in Argyll to do the workshop. •

## **NWDG WOODLAND LICHEN WORKSHOP - BARR NA CILLE WOOD AT OLD POLTALLOCH**

**Gordon Gray Stephens**

Saturday's Site Visit was a speculative foray by Brian and Sandy Coppins. One of the reasons that the NWDG & AGWA are fortunate enough to be able to attract the Coppins to teach on these workshops is because they love the opportunity of being able to visit the west coast, and particularly the opportunity to visit new sites.

Lesser mortals might feel slightly uneasy about the prospects of leading a group of students into a woodland for the day without knowing whether there are any lichens there or not. However this is the west coast (so there are bound to be some lichens), and Sandy was reassured by the fact that Ben Averis was prepared to spend a day looking at mosses and bryophytes on the same site.

So fresh from a good night's sleep the intrepid workshop participants braved the three miles of pot holes with patches of forest road which take you over the hill to Old Poltalloch, to be greeted by the owner (your correspondent) and an introduction to the wood.



*At Old Poltalloch*

The woods at Old Poltalloch are a mixture between native woodland and policy woodland fitting in around a designed

landscape of woodland and open space which was laid out by members of the Malcolm family in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a tree nursery on the site in the 1820s, and at the same time a considerable number of dykes were built, and trees planted. Subsequently the area was run as a farming unit, with mixed farming latterly replaced by sheep and cattle grazing. Areas were logged by Canadian units during the second World War. So are there any lichens...(?)

The group managed to get at least 15 yards into the woodland before coming to a halt to inspect a selection of oak, sycamore and hazel. Sandy and Brian split the party into two, with Sandy concentrating her attention on those who were still getting to grips with the subject, whilst Brian took the swots to a second trunk to lead them further into the arcane world of lichen identification. The two groups worked well together, with the opportunity to come together to share other expertise, and to look at woodland management and structure in relation to lichen interests.

Among other subjects which came up, was the matter of sycamore, and it was interesting to hear Sandy's opinion on the value of sycamore in western woodlands. Although sycamore is of great importance as a lichen host, this significance can be reduced in the west if there are alternatives nearby. This has the unfortunate effect of forcing the owner to reconsider the fate of the sycamore: initially they had been destined for the wood shed, then all 4 species of the lobarion lichen were found on one tree, and they seemed to earn a reprieve, especially as they are not seeding. Ah the trials and tribulations of woodland management...

Veteran hazel also came under considerations. David Whitaker girthed one stem at over 100cms, which using the Coppins' ready reckoner puts the stem at over 100 years old. There was some

discussion as to whether the growth rate of 1cm per year can be applied universally: hazel grows very well on some sites, but is slow-moving on poorer soils.

The choice of wood was obviously good: tea time and we hadn't managed more than a couple of hundred yards along the track. Fortunately the weather was also good (it never rains in Argyll...), and after further gentle discussion we continued along the old road, pausing to inspect tree trunks, and spending a while looking at "map lichen" and other species on exposed rock faces. The rock was exposed during road building operations during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and there was some discussion on the speed of colonisation by different lichens.

Our next stop was at a small patch of ash & elm with a change in species reflecting the more base rich bark of these species. One of the elm trees had given up on the struggle to stay upright during the summer, and had collapsed over the track. This brought upper limbs which are normally inaccessible within hand lens range, and also prompted some discussion about intervention. Despite its value as habitat, the tree was destined for removal, because it was blocking an access route and even if the wood does not burn very well, the trunk looked as if it could yield some interesting timber.

Suddenly it was the early afternoon, and Sandy only had the time to throw some admiring glances at some old riparian ashes as we headed across a field and into the lower wood. A stand of oak took up much of the remaining time, followed by a walk through the rest of the wood on the way back to the cars, with just enough seen to tempt Brian and Sandy to come back again to try to add to the 130 or so species identified so far. •

## **HAND LENSES**

**Ben Averis**

Those of you who have attended workshops and Lower Plants outings may have seen, or even have been loaned, one of the Eschenbach hand lenses. These lightweight X10 lenses are made entirely from plastic, are waterproof and do not steam up in the rain. There is a continuing demand for these from members, and so NWDG has purchased a supply of the lenses which we are able to sell for £18.50 each at NWDG events or £19.00 by post. This is a good saving on the normal retail price of £23.48 including p&p. The lenses will be available at all future workshops, field-meetings and Lower Plant excursions, or may be obtained by post from Ben Averis, 2 Traprain Cottages, Haddington, East Lothian, EH41 4PY. Please send £19.00 and make cheques payable to 'Native Woodlands Discussion Group'. •

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## **TAKING THE MICKEY OUT OF ORDINARY MOSS**

**Mary Ann Smyth**

You'll have heard that Carol Crawford's book (Bryophytes of Native Woods) was short-listed for the Natural World Book Prize, also known as the "Green Booker". This international prize is for a book which promotes wildlife and nature conservation in an enjoyable and accessible fashion. The winner was announced at the British Birdwatching Fair, held in August among the lush meadows next to Rutland Water.

A hot hot day. Thousands of bird watchers. No birds in sight. A dozen huge marquees. Champagne. Cameras. Action!

The birders were out in force! A fit, jovial and well-focussed crowd of greater-pocketed-waistcoaters jostled cheerfully with khaki-shortened ruddy-rucksackers for ice-cream. Sensible shoes and white knees strode about purposefully in the sun, while

we, happily lacking in the binocular department, twitched instead for celebrity authors. There were plenty!

Chris Baines did the speech summarising the shortlisted books, and Bill Oddie presented the prizes. The Native Woodlands Discussion Group Lower Plants Section was mentioned! Sadly, Carol didn't come first or second, but that didn't stop all of the judges from saying how much they'd liked her book. They were being genuine, too - many said it had been their favourite - although Times journalist Simon Barnes had described it as "the Joker", and Bill Oddie said it was "crap for propping up slide projectors"! Most were impressed at the fact that Carol had focussed on a subject overlooked by others - even 'ordinary moss' deserves special attention.

The opposition was steep. Out of 80 entries to the competition, seven made it to the short list. Half of these were by professional and experienced authors, and all except Carol's were heavy tomes, printed and distributed by established publishers:

- Michael Pollan *'The Botany of Desire'*. Bloomsbury. (how plants manipulate people)
- Robert Sapolsky *'A primate's memoir'*. Jonathan Cape. (humorous baboon stories).
- Bob Gibbons and David Woodfall *'Flowers at my Feet'*. Collins. (Plantlife's wonderful photos).
- Edward O. Wilson *'The Future of Life'*. Little, Brown. (a plea to save the world's biodiversity) - the winner, US professor and celebrity.
- Roy Leverton *'Enjoying Moths'*. T&AD Poyser. (personal views of moths) - the Aberdeenshire runner-up. Roy stammered the best speech I've ever heard, saying "I'm not good at talking, that's why I became a writer".

- J Asher, M Warren, P Harding, R Fox, G Jeffcoate and S Jeffcoate *'The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland'*. Oxford University Press. (comprehensive illustrated survey by hundreds of recorders).
- Carol Crawford *'Bryophytes of Native Woods'*. Natural Resource Consultancy

If you want more details about the prize or the other books, visit the sponsors: [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk), [www.bp.com](http://www.bp.com), [www.wildlifebooks.com](http://www.wildlifebooks.com) or [www.wildlifetrusts.com](http://www.wildlifetrusts.com) •



# REPORT OF THE 2002 FIELD EXCURSION

## INTRODUCTION

### Carol Crawford

The 2002 annual excursion to Argyll was in classic NWDG mould. Great woodland visits, discussions and company. Huge thanks to Gordon Gray Stephens and Peter Quelch for organising everything well (except, as often, the weather!).

Restoration of native woodland landscapes and the return of beavers were big themes, the former already happening on a large scale; the latter still on hold. The term 'Celtic Rainforest' was frequently used to emphasise to woodland managers the international importance of Argyll woodlands for lower plants. As ever, deer control was a regular theme – there are success stories in mid-Argyll. An overarching theme was woodland management through time: the importance of wood pasture in the local economy and the everyday uses of timber; interest in the latter being revived well by the Argyll Green Woodworkers Association (AGWA). After time in the forest strange things happen (see Mealdarroch report) and at Crinan Wood our retiring chairman was observed hugging an ancient oak!

Those who had been on the "long walk" to Mealdarroch coped well with the exertions necessary later at the now-traditional Saturday night dance, and one of them didn't want the music to stop! New ideas for the NWDG future were hatched over beers at the bar. The evening was rounded off with a ceilidh and great hospitality at Peter's house for which we thank him and his wife.

On the Sunday we were at the Woodland Festival at Cairndow, saw AGWA in action and had a chance to try out their tools. A small group went up the slope to

the Creag Loisge woodland enclosure with Gordon where the use of quills was demonstrated (and debated!).

There were mix-ups with two recorders meaning some excursion leaders had to write their own reports. Apologies from the committee and thanks to Peter, Gordon and John Halliday for filling in the gaps.

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## **THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> MAY** **EVENING PRESENTATIONS -** **NATIVE WOODLANDS IN** **ARGYLL** **Peter Quelch & Gordon Gray** **Stephens**

Aah, the delights of the NWDG Field Visit.

Devotees and acolytes alike ventured down Lochfyneside to the village hall in Ardrishaig. We gathered to hear Richard Toleman's introductory words welcoming us to Mid Argyll, and introducing our first speaker, and the man responsible for the management of a number of the sites to be visited over the next days.

Chris Nixon, the acting Forest District Manager for Forest Enterprise (FE) West Argyll Forest District, ran through some of the management issues which face Forest Enterprise. FE directly employs around a hundred people in West Argyll, and provides and supports many more contracting jobs. A main driver in the District has been the creation, management, harvesting and restocking of large areas of conifer plantation. However Forest Enterprise is also concerned with many other aspects of life in West Argyll. Chris illustrated works which were being undertaken to protect, restore or enhance

native woodlands, including large areas of SACs and SSSIs, and also highlighted FE's work on providing access and interpretation, moving timber by sea and rail, and their efforts to secure and protect cultural and archaeological monuments.

Next up were Gordon Gray Stephens, Scottish Native Woods' Area Manager, and Peter Quelch, Forestry Commission's Native Woodland Adviser, co-organisers of the Field Visit.

Gordon gave us an overview of the work of Scottish Native Woods in Argyll and Lochaber. First describing some of the underlying problems faced by native woodlands in Argyll, and then looking at the process of promoting the various benefits of native woodland management in a way which was attractive to the managers and occupiers of said woodlands. Gordon also talked about his work with the Argyll Green Woodworkers Association to encourage and develop the utilisation of native timber in Argyll.

Peter Quelch then gave his talk, after pointing out to Gordon that the 19<sup>th</sup>C bench that Gordon showed in Auchindrain, had in fact been made by himself only about 15 years before. Peter refused to accept that he was in fact about 150 years old, though some were not convinced!

Peter contrasted Mid Argyll's somewhat softer, greener, and quieter or less dramatic hill and forest scenery with that of Lochaber. At Loch Sunart Peter has written a guide to good management of the Sunart oakwoods and showed the classification of existing types and also future stewardship models which were also applicable to oakwoods in Mid Argyll. The 5 stewardship models used in this guide are:

- Ancient Oak Forest
- Native Timber Stands
- Coppice

- Wood Pasture
- Natural Reserves

(Further details and electronic copy of the guide are now available from Peter Quelch)

He stressed however that ancient woods all have their own quite unique histories, and this gives them their different characters and values. A slide show of local woodland examples followed, with discussions on the range of histories, structures and therefore future management. This theme would be taken up again by Peter in the field visit on Saturday to the Mealdarroch coastal woods. During the slideshow Peter again managed to cast a slur on the Gray Stephens family by suggesting that the roadside veteran oak tree near Inverneil currently surrounded by spruce was in their ownership, while it is of course in the neighbouring state owned forest!

All wrapped up in time to allow sufficient exploration of some of the 5 possible beer outlets available to NWDG delegates in Ardrishaig (guide not forthcoming).... •

## **FRIDAY 24<sup>th</sup> MAY** **VISIT TO FE WEST KNAPDALE** **Iris Glimmerveen**

Forest Enterprise have embarked upon a 20 year programme to restore a coniferous woodland in west Knapdale to native woodland. This woodland contains 15 miles of land and marine SSSI & SAC.

### **Nature conservation**

The main objective for this restoration programme is nature conservation. The long term aim is thus to create a native broadleaved woodland, and once tree cover is established then the exotics will be removed on a site by site basis. 40 hectares have already been cleared of both conifers and rhododendron, but 200 hectares are still to do. However, in doing so several

issues, such as landscape, historic value and other conservation interests still need to be resolved.

### **Historic legacy**

The woodland contains remnants of native woods and has evidence of drovers and other archaeological interests.

### **Landscape and recreation**

With roads alongside the forest and public access (however difficult) to it, good views can be had into and from the area. Clear felling the forest or large parts of it is thus not desirable from a landscape point of view and therefore some mature exotic broadleaves, such as beech and sycamore will be retained. This will enable the lichen flora on sycamore, which may be important for conservation, to be sustained. Conifers, depending on the eye of the beholder, also have visual appeal, and therefore some larch will be kept too.

The regeneration of these exotic species will mean that a continuous effort is required to manage this. The micro-climate along the ridge of the hills in particular is very good for regeneration of both native and non-native species including rhododendron. Beech regeneration in particular is recognised as a threat in the long term.

However, the priorities of the SAC are based on native species. Variety is important in landscape, but initially the natural regeneration will be dominated by birch, which may not necessarily be most appealing to the eye. Eventually a birch-dominated mix is envisaged, with oak and ash mixes on the hill interlaced with open spaces.

### **Deer management**

The Knapdale area has a self contained deer population consisting of red, sika and roe deer. 12 rangers cover 5,000 ha and because they are kitted out properly they

are very effective. This is reflected in the speed of tree regeneration.

### **Woodland Management**

Exotic removal by other means than felling was considered, ring barking in coupes in particular. However, because funding this type of work is currently available, the work was accelerated, thereby benefiting from economies of scale.

This enabled the removal of several thousand tonnes of timber, which is much more than envisaged before the funding was available. With this kind of volume it is impractical to fell to waste, because it would create too dense a brash mat, hindering any follow up operations, such as rhododendron clearing and monitoring the regeneration.

The absence of a big sporting estate in Knapdale has enabled the control of the whole catchment area and this overall has resulted in less fencing. This doesn't mean that private companies/estates couldn't do more, along similar lines. The current low timber prices may encourage estates to change their management strategy to incorporate both nature conservation and landscape in their objectives. Some Danish people own large areas in Scotland and already have both nature conservation and deer shooting as their main objectives.

Some restoration work is underway in the lowlands of 240 ha of native woodland on a wind farm. The main focus is to manage for black grouse and eagle, but there is very little positive native woodland management in the upland areas.

Here in Knapdale there is the potential for 1000 ha to be restored, but not all of the Ancient Woodland Sites can be restored. A start will be made with the SSSI's. However, there is no policy for the other sites and they can therefore only be done ad hoc.

A debate is needed about how to create more variety in this big area. Because of the currently poor quality broadleaved timber, any management is not economically viable. It may therefore only be possible to manage on a small scale. There is thus no problem if AGWA wants to use any timber. Access to the area is so bad that thinning is not worthwhile.

This forest is publicly owned not privatised, and because the conifers were good quality they did bring in money. However, this was not enough to cover the deer management costs of £480,000 with £100,000 income per year. The WGS restocking grant does not cover any deer management either. Other factors reducing profitability are the exchange rate between £ and € and the opening up of Eastern European forests.

Monitoring has been good in the past, however reporting was not, eg. there are no records for natural regeneration, vegetation type and past management, therefore some important information is lost. Videos might be used in future, combined with GIS mapping. However, a paper copy of the main data must be kept once a year, because GIS software keeps changing.

Charlie Taylor is currently recording the Black Wood of Rannoch for the Landscapes in Time project, and hopefully some evidence or records for this project will be created as a spin off.

Future management envisaged includes rhododendron control for at least another 10 years; maintaining the wetland drains, with only natural regeneration allowed in them. However, the road will be kept open. All felling is to be done by 2026. However, an extraction road is sinking, making it unpredictable how much can be achieved. A young plantation with a heronry and red squirrels will for the moment be retained. •

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## **TAYNISH NNR**

### **John Halliday**

#### **Introduction**

Taynish must surely be the most beautiful reserve in Scotland! It was a great opportunity to have such a respected group of “woodlanders” there for the day, to get some feedback on what SNH are doing (and not doing) on the reserve in the way of woodland management.

Taynish is a microcosm of the former Knapdale landscape – very much a core area of oak woodland within the wider fragmented area. Positive restoration works going on elsewhere in Knapdale will help consolidate the native woodlands once more.

Taynish has been a National Nature Reserve for 25 years. All 330 hectares are owned and managed by SNH. An important attribute of NNRs is best practice management. The NNR is part of the Taynish and Knapdale Special Area of Conservation, notified primarily for oak woodland and marsh fritillary butterfly, with otters and the freshwater lochan being additional European interests.

About 250ha (75%) of the peninsula is wooded, mainly oak (about 200ha). This forms one of the largest blocks of oak-dominated woodland in Scotland. After oak, birch and bracken communities are the most common. Pollen analysis shows that there has been continuous native woodland cover at Taynish for about 7,000 years. Deborah Long (of Plantlife) talked about pollen analysis and how it can indicate past woodland management.

One of the Reserve's most significant attributes is its biodiversity. There are over 20 NVC sub-communities. Features of interest on the SSSI citation include internationally important lower plant

communities, freshwater communities associated with Taynish Lochan, invertebrate communities associated with open areas of fen, mire and grassland and coastal communities.

Priority conservation management objectives include maintaining the indigenous woodland cover while maintaining the variety of other habitats and associated communities. The policy of limited intervention over 75% of the reserve area is not always conducive to maintaining biodiversity.

Grazing issues are important. Stock removal and deer control have allowed a significant increase in woodland cover, predominantly birch, alder and willow, over the last 25 years. However, this has also contributed to the loss of what was open heathland, mire and grassland. Bracken glades have become denser with no regeneration.

Similarly, the spread of *Molinia* in coastal areas which have a long history of grazing, may be detrimental to the threatened marsh fritillary. Butterfly monitoring over 25 years suggests that fritillary butterflies, once widespread throughout the Taynish woods, have declined. Is this due to changed management or the general national decline?

The group contemplated two points on the way round:

- a) Could Taynish have been a richer place for wildlife when it was extensively grazed?
- b) Are the woodland and associated communities we see today in favourable condition?

### **Valley mires**

Taynish has had several significant changes in management. The irregular topography makes it unsuitable for agriculture. It was probably extensively grazed by sheep and cattle since neolithic

times. Between the iron age and the 18th century, the woodlands would have been more open – more of a wood pasture situation. Species like ash and hazel would have been more common. Dense mixed woodland would have been confined to the steeper slopes. Such woodland with irregular structure still exists in parts of the reserve.

Woodland succession in mires was prevented by grazing. With the removal of stock this succession has now resumed. Given the importance of these mires for invertebrates (large heath butterfly and keeled skimmer dragonfly were only recently recorded), clearance of birch is now taking place by mechanical and chemical means. Perhaps, in future, beavers will do this job!

### **Barr Mor woodland**

The canopy composition and structure of much of the Taynish oak woodland was greatly modified by coppicing during the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Barr Mor is an extreme example of a very uniform stand resulting from intensive coppice management. The coppice has naturally singled with many dead stems. The lichen flora is not as rich as elsewhere, due to lack of continuity of key habitat. The oaks range from 40 to 130 years old, averaging just over 100 years, so they generally date from the time when coppicing ceased. It has been suggested in a recent Forest Research paper that supplementary planting of oak could have taken place on these slopes during the 19th century.

Following the Peterken and Worrell report, presumably there will be much debate in places like Sunart whether this stand type should be brought back into active management (thinning) for both conservation and socio-economic reasons. The group were asked for their views on this, given the recreational and landscape issues at Taynish.

There was no consensus, some believing the stand ripe for management, others believing there would be more long term benefits (e.g. knowledge) if the low intervention approach was upheld. Natural regeneration is scarce and some crown dieback present; the group agreed there was no urgency to artificially open the canopy.

### **Hut Platforms**

There are 74 circular recessed platforms in three discrete groups. Originally, these were thought to be charcoal platforms, but, digging deeper, archaeologists found the foundations of round timber framed huts, possibly dating back over 1500 years.

### **Barr Mor summit.**

Interestingly, the most significant change in the pollen diagram was the decline in tree pollen during the iron age period. The group viewed one of the most extensive open areas at Taynish which would have been cleared at that time. It was probably under arable cultivation from then until the 19th century. Now there is a sea of bluebells and a dense stand of bracken with no seedlings present.

### **Deer Control**

The reserve policy is to eradicate the small population of sika deer and reduce the roe population to about 6 per 100 ha. Current estimated population is about 10 roe per 100 ha. There is still much evidence of damage to holly and hazel coppice. The estimates are based on direct counts by the team of deer stalkers and dung count transects, and cull rates are set accordingly. In 2001, 12 roe were shot and the 2002 cull is set at a minimum of 12 (6 does) and a maximum of 24 (12 does). Movement from neighbouring estates makes accurate counts and setting cull targets difficult.

### **Active “demonstration” management**

In this zone, beech was removed and native trees planted over 10 years ago.

The approach might differ today. There was prolific birch regeneration in the years following beech removal but no evidence of oak regeneration despite the open canopy.

A coppice enclosure was felled in 1988 and protected by double electric fence. It has 90% birch and 5% rowan regeneration. Of about 400 oak seedlings located in 1991, only 4 survivors have been found. Oak coppice is also being suppressed by birch. Enclosures need to be managed if oak regeneration is to succeed. Perhaps it should have been done differently, e.g. birch thinned to allow new oak saplings to survive. This could be a future trial.

### **Fields and coastal area**

Here mature exotics were retained as part of the designed landscape of local interest. There is seasonal cattle grazing to maintain habitat for marsh fritillary butterfly. There is an opportunity for cattle grazing trials in the WGS enclosure.

Other features of the reserve include:

**Secondary birch woodland**, which has developed on former heathland since stock were removed in 1975. The previous owner remembers shooting grouse here!  
**Deer fence enclosure** - brambles have taken over.

**Bracken cutting trials** - to monitor impact on regeneration.

**Peterken transect** Established 1988 and repeated in 1998. Concerns were raised about the loss of mature stems and lack of recruitment of saplings and young trees. •

## **THE GREAT BEAVER DEBATE**

### **Graeme Morison**

#### **Introduction**

The EU Habitats and Species Directive asks member states to consider the reintroduction of species including the beaver, wolf, bear and lynx to areas from

which they have become extinct, and the purpose of this discussion was to widen the debate on the reintroduction of beavers to include other species as well. Try as she might, Helen failed to stimulate the group's interest in discussing anything but beavers, so this report follows suit!

Perhaps that was because, next day, some group members would have the opportunity of seeing the proposed release site for SNH's trial beaver reintroduction in the Knapdale area and it is very much the immediate issue.

### **Beaver Biology**

Martin Gaywood and Dave Batty of SNH began by giving a detailed and interesting account of beaver biology, ecology, and behaviour, comparing and contrasting the Eurasian beaver with the North American beaver. Being American, of course, the latter builds bigger, more spectacular dams than its European cousin. Both species are strongly associated with water, 95% of activity being within 20 metres of the water's edge. They feed on a wide variety of plants in the summer (c. 150 species). The main purpose of the famous (or infamous) tree felling activity (bet American beavers fell bigger trees!) is to provide winter fodder, the stems and branches being taken back to the lodge where the bark can be stripped in comfort. Although aspen is often regarded as being favoured, a variety of trees are taken, including rowan, hazel, alder, willow and birch. Felling is largely of trees between 3 and 9 cm diameter.

### **History in the UK, and Reintroduction Proposal**

Fossil evidence of beavers is very good in England, and although poor in Scotland, they were once widespread. The last account of a beaver in Scotland comes from the Loch Ness area in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. SNH began a feasibility study in 1995/96 to consider their reintroduction, and in a consultation with various bodies

and interest groups in 1998, 65% of respondents considered reintroduction to be a good idea (12% against). In a "pro-active" public consultation seeking written comments, 85% of people writing in were in favour, but perhaps this is the result of a rather self-selecting group. In responses from "specialist" groups, mostly fishery groups were opposed, as were some forestry interests.

As a result, and in contrast with most other countries in Europe where full scale reintroductions have gone ahead, SNH proposed a precautionary trial period, selecting Knapdale as the area where the population could be reasonably well contained. It was on this basis that SNH then, in 2002, applied to the Scottish Executive for a reintroduction licence for a 7 year trial. Editor's Note – At the time of printing this newsletter, the SE has not yet made a decision.

### **Discussion**

Helen called for a pre-discussion vote on people's views of the trial introduction: a big majority were in favour, a considerable number were opposed, and there were only a few abstentions. Discussion ranged round the impact on fishing interests; effects of damming on spawning burns; siltation of spawning grounds; impact on tree species, especially the very small Scottish aspen population; prevention of outward migration from the trial area etc etc. Some of the answers: in Norway, salmonid species seem to get round beaver dams, and beavers are not seen as a problem to salmonid breeding (but salmon themselves are the most difficult to monitor); there is no evidence in Europe that a whole aspen clump would be felled out as beavers seem to have such a patchy feeding pattern; while difficult to prevent migration, the trial area has many natural barriers, including the sea and the extensive conifer plantations, but if the trial was not allowed to go to widespread

expansion, the limited population could probably be fairly easily trapped out.

Monitoring of the trial population was essential, and SNH have drawn up comprehensive plans. Measures of success of the trial included assessment of the animals' survival, health, welfare and breeding success, and impacts on habitats and species. Crucially, the ability of the habitat to regenerate was seen as an important criterion, and in this major respect, Scotland differs from other European countries where reintroduction has been deemed a success. Elsewhere in Europe, natural levels of deer browsing are up to 1/10<sup>th</sup> of browsing levels in Scotland. Some people felt that deer numbers in Scotland would have to be dramatically reduced in order to allow trees felled by beavers to establish successful coppice regrowth. Otherwise, riparian woodland habitat might be seriously affected. This also has major implications for any population expansion: riparian habitats throughout Scotland are generally not felt to be in a good enough condition presently to support a wild beaver population.

In concluding the discussion, Helen then called a second vote on allowing the beaver population to expand if the trial proved successful: about 50% were in favour, few against, but there were many abstentions.

This was an interesting debate but there remain clearly polarised views on the desirability of having a naturalised beaver population in Scotland. There is good support for the Knapdale trial, but rather more caution regarding the expansion of a natural population in the absence of widespread suitable habitat. As always, the habitat is the key! •

**SATURDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> MAY**

## **LANDSCAPES IN TIME AND BEAVER REINTRODUCTION**

**Tim Hall**

With my head slightly numb from the night before and the rain falling heavily, I was quite relieved (despite Eamonn's comments that I was 'wimping out') to put my feet up in Ardrishaig village hall for an hour, whilst 'The A team' headed off to Mealdarroch. Brent Meakinn from FE, gave us an informative talk on the Landscapes in Time Project, the aim of which is to bring together the natural, cultural and historical heritage to provide a catalyst for the sustainable regeneration of the Argyll Peninsula. The project is made up of a large number of partners (including FE, Argyll Council, SNH, the Tourist Board, Kilmartin House and local communities) with a shared vision. Objectives include:

- To generate benefits for the local and wider community
- To maximise the potential of the areas assets using, amongst other things, integrated interpretation, information and transport planning
- To stimulate public awareness of the area, locally, nationally and internationally
- Delivering the above and more, through partnership working.

It's a wonderful vision for an area with a unique landscape, environment and thousands of years of human history, but there's still lots to do. The next steps include producing a detailed project plan, putting in an HLF application, appointing a project officer and possibly having a full time ranger service.

Outside it had stopped raining and we headed back to Knapdale on the bus. During a brief stop, Sandy Coppins explained that the 'Celtic Rainforests' of Argyll were unique in the world in terms of their lichen communities and this had never really been given enough

recognition. Areas relatively undisturbed for 200 years could support up to 200 species of lichen due to the wet climate, clean air and continuity of tree cover. This continuity was sometimes very localised and often of a 'rolling' nature, but quick regeneration meant that areas recovered quickly from disturbance. Sandy pointed out that unfortunately there were simply not enough lichenologists to survey Argyll, let alone the rest of Scotland, and there may be many areas that are yet to be 'discovered'.

Onwards & upwards, we walked to see the core area of Knapdale where, Scottish Executive allowing, beavers are to be introduced. We were told that the beavers would initially be fenced in with temporary fencing, to allow them to settle in. This would prevent them from immediately moving, which is a common problem when introducing mammals to a new environment due to disorientation. Down on the loch side, midge repellent was brought out and we looked at the prolific regeneration that it is hoped beavers will open up, improving the habitat for biodiversity. It was noted that one habitat improvement would be the creation of more wetland areas that would, no doubt also improve the habitat for midges! There was much discussion about the fact that Knapdale, where deer numbers have successfully been brought under control, was not typical of the rest of Scotland. However, there was general agreement that the beaver would make a strong marketing icon for the need to restore riparian woodland habitats. Alan Stevenson made the comment that if the beaver introduction programme were successful, it would be much harder to convince the animal loving British public about the need to control beavers in certain circumstances, than in Eastern Europe, where people are less concerned about such issues. This attitude was brought home to me when I mentioned our visit to our Czech neighbour. "Do you have beavers in the Czech Republic?" I asked.

"Yes" she said "but I much prefer to eat chicken".

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## **NAKED WOODLAND DISCUSSION GROUP - MEALDARROCH WOODLANDS**

### **Duncan Kervell**

"This walk takes 8 hours with minimal stops over ground which is inaccessible, trackless and broken" and "This walk is not for the faint hearted".

Despite the intimidating nature of the visit description, a surprisingly large group of NWDG members turned up for the Mealdarroch Woodlands walk.

Undeterred the group of intrepid foresters donned their waterproofs, waved goodbye to the bus driver (who clearly thought we were mad) and began walking north through the Mealdarroch Woodlands from Skipness to Taret. The day was a great success with a full day of great fun and adventure, good weather with excellent views and coastal walks. Not forgetting the real reason for the walk to visit beautiful examples of relic wood pasture and ancient semi natural woodland.

The first stop of the day was at the Altgalvash SSSI. This is a 51 ha Ancient Semi Natural Woodland site, that includes some coppice origin birch, oak, hazel and alder. The site and the surrounding woodlands have a wealth of natural and cultural history, with several signs of settlement over a long period, including a multi-phase settlement, sheep fank, sheiling and dykes.



*Facing south in the forefront Altagalvash with Arran in the background*

There are many interesting ancient tree features on this site that reflected the areas previous land use and a history of wood pasture systems. Peter Quelch discussed the probable land use of this woodland which had an old even-aged structure of ancient pollarded birch. He considered this site to be a relic example of wood pasture of birch intermixed with hay cropping systems.



*Ancient pollarded birch woodland at Altagalvash with its rich ground flora*

Field indicators for this system included agricultural land improvements such as clearance of stones which were mounded

and used to build dykes and cart tracks. Birch showed distinct signs of pollarding - the branches and leaves were possibly used as fodder for livestock in winter and as other raw materials.



*One of the numerous and tamer streams that needed crossing, with Uncle Quelch to lend a helping hand*

The Altagalvash woodland was entered into a FC WGS in 1997. This helped fund over 2000 metres of new and upgraded deer fence, as well as the removal of rhododendron, exotic seedlings and bracken control. The sheep were cleared in 1998 and deer management of both sika and red involves removing seven deer per annum on average. The owner of the estate has entered Altagalvash into a management agreement with SNH, who are undertaking monitoring work in the woodland with the use of fixed-point photography. The future management of this site was discussed, including two possible key options 1. Either restrict the grazing and implement a management regime of non-intervention, which would probably result in a high forest system, or 2: Would require grazing from cattle as a

key feature to attempt to maintain the present or similar structure.

For the next seven hours it was simply a case of heads down and keep walking. The going was tough at times, but the scenery was awe-inspiring, with a series of deep gorges, impressive old oaks and beautiful coast lines. After the fourth or fifth hour a strange happenings came over the group. I believe some members had been in the forest so long that they started to revert back to their pagan roots, with symbolic nakedness and much flamboyance in the warm pools of one particular gorge. The long journey was aided within the intermittent glimpses of the sun, occasional water stops, a lot of humour and the steadily increasing desire for a cold beer. The group exited the woodland and headed over the headland to descend in to the town of Tarbet, a very happy but sore-footed bunch of NWDG members, all slightly concerned about their ability to finish that day off with a ceilidh.

PS) Considering the occurrences happening in the deepest, darkest gorges of Mealdarroch Woodlands, I propose that the group should be re-named **NWDG: Naked Woodland Discussion Group**. •



*The hand of woodland friendship*

## **CRUCK FRAMES AND CRINAN WOOD**

**Helen Armstrong**

Over lunch in the cruck frame barn built by the Argyll Green Woodworkers' Association, Henry Russell told us about his work making cruck frames. Ideally you need to find straight oak trees that are bent at the top. They use green oak that is softer than seasoned wood so is easier to work with hand tools. They use the whole trunk, bark and all. It takes ten years to dry oak and if it cracks you can't sell it. Green oak cracks once it's in place but that rarely affects its strength and even poor quality, green oak can last for 100 years. There is now a big market for cruck frames. They have also built a log cabin to house a composting toilet.

Our last visit was to Crinan Wood. Paul Young from the Woodland Trust, which owns the wood, and Hugh Fife, a voluntary warden, took us round. They have just produced a Wild Wood CD with local people telling the story of the wood. It includes local pipers and Gaelic singers. The idea of the CD came from a member of one of the special needs groups that Hugh takes round the wood.

We passed the last working puffer in the harbour at Crinan. It carries people instead of coal now, and apparently even has a piano on board. We also found the Vital Spark slowly mouldering in the canal, after its last TV appearance in Para Handy. The Crinan canal comes between the wood and the sea shore and in summer, when the water level is low, the canal is topped up with sea water. We passed a couple of Caithness slab interpretation lecterns, funded by a wide range of Agencies, giving detailed information about the canal and the wildlife. An otter trail crossed the path illustrating that British Waterways are keen to protect the canal's wildlife.

However there isn't much birdlife since mink arrived on the canal.

The castle we saw across the bay used to belong to the Malcolms of Poltalloch and was the oldest inhabited building with 800 years of habitation. The Malcolm family used to own a huge area of land including Crinan wood. Around 1920 they sold the bulk of it to the Forestry Commission and in the 1988 the Woodland Trust bought Crinan wood. Much of the adjacent Forest Enterprise land is ancient semi-natural woodland under conifers and is in the process of being re-instated. On the surrounding ridges old townships are being revealed as Forest Enterprise fells the conifers. There were still people living in some of these townships in the 1920's.

We turned upwards into the wood on a path some of which has been in existence for hundreds of years. The rest has been put in by the Trust with the help of Scottish Natural Heritage. A local arts group installed various pieces of artwork along the path a few years ago including giant clothes peg hand-rail holders and a couple of metal leaves that, when hung in an old, open-grown oak tree, make humming noises. The path is heavily used and has made a huge difference to local people's attitudes to the wood. The Management Plan was put out to consultation.

The wood is largely oak but with birch, alder, some sycamore, and some planted beech. There are also some elms that are currently free of Dutch elm disease. 14 ha of the 40 ha site is ancient woodland. The Trust has a policy of preventing new beech and sycamore regeneration and slowly removing most of the older trees since they have a negative effect on ground flora and lichens. This is Woodland Grant Scheme and European funded. In the past some of the oak was cut for boat-building and some was on a 15 – 20 year coppice cycle. The abundance of old stone dykes throughout

the wood suggests that cattle were moved from one area to the next, as needed, to prevent grazing on newly-cut coppice.

There are some open-grown oaks within the woodland. There is quite a lot of oak regeneration from a good mast year two years ago but deer (roe mostly with some red and sika) will probably stop most of the oak getting away. The Trust contract out the stalking but public access limits deer control with stalking confined to two hours before dusk and two hours after dawn and stalking stopping if anyone is seen in the wood. The Woodland Grant Scheme covers the cost of deer control. Their target is 10 roe and 5 red /sika per year. There are now some badgers in the wood after a 20 – 30 year absence. Rabbits never came back after myxomatosis in the 1950's.

The more open bits of the wood were probably cultivated at one time and were then grazed by cattle and sheep until the 1980's. It would have been short grasses at that time but is now covered in bluebells and bracken. The open areas support wood mice and common lizards. The Trust sprayed the bracken (some of which was shoulder height) in some areas with Asulox three years ago. The open areas are very rich in nutrients so young trees are swamped by ground vegetation. The Trust has scarified 2% of the open area at the top of the hill to see if that would increase the success of tree regeneration. We saw one or two young trees in these areas but they were still very small. Oak trees have also been planted, some by local children, in some of the open areas.

The aim is to retain woodland on the boulder-strewn slopes with pasture in-between. They are currently discussing whether they want to graze stock in the wood. They lease out some of the lower pastures but are worried about grazing in the wood getting out of hand. Electric fences might be needed to control the

cattle but the Trust will have to wait until the planted trees are taller before they could put cattle into the wood.

Crinan wood is a good example of a native woodland being managed both for people and wildlife with the restrictions on stalking the only apparent problem caused by the twin objectives. •

## **THE NATIVE WOODLAND DISCUSSION GROUP AGM 25 MAY 2002**

**Kate Holl**

1. The Chairman presented the minutes of 2000 AGM to the group and they were approved.
2. The Chairman made a plea to members for membership subscriptions and newsletter contributions to be in on time to help with NWDG administration. The Chairman thanked Alison Averis for stepping into the treasurer's vacancy, Gordon Gray Stevens and Peter Quelch for organising the field meeting, and others for their contributions to the field meeting. Chairman also gave thanks to Nick Marshall for the continued excellent quality of newsletters, to Carol Crawford for running the workshops, to Alison Averis for stepping into the breach temporarily as membership secretary, and to Ben Averis for getting the Lower Plants Group off the ground.
3. **Treasurer and Membership Secretary's reports**  
Alison Averis took over as Treasurer in October 2001. Income from membership has fallen, while newsletter costs have risen; consequently the Group is not

meeting the cost of its activities. Current membership stands at 100 which brings in £1300 while the cost of the newsletter is £1400. So far in 2002, 99 members have paid up; 20% have taken up standing order – thanks for this. The committee doesn't want to cut what members receive, but will no longer send out newsletters to lapsed members. Committee plans to use email more to contact members. Idea of selling advertising space in the Newsletter was discussed; also the possibility of charging to enclose others' fliers. AA asked for suggestions from membership on how to recruit more members. Ideas included putting out NWDG leaflets at conferences. Treasurer's report proposed by Iris Glimmerveen and seconded by Richard Thompson.

#### 4. **Newsletter report**

Nick Marshall reported that Yorick Corre, the Newsletter illustrator has unfortunately gone, also that the cost of the Newsletter is to rise slightly. There are several options to try and keep this cost down:

- a. Cut down to 1 newsletter/year with email updates
- b. Newsletter distributed by email
- c. Place NWDG articles in other newsletters

5. Nick wants to hear views from members on the kind of article members want to see in their newsletter. He is also looking for someone to take on the newsletter soon. Members responded that the Newsletter of good quality but want to still continue to receive as hard copy. It was suggested that perhaps SNH/FC could help with printing and mailing newsletter.

#### 6. **Workshop report**

Carol Crawford organised a Workshop in 2000 on Bryophytes and 16 people attended; in 2001 ran it again as a joint venture with AGWA and 14 attended; good feedback. Ben Averis was the tutor. In 2001 a successful lichens workshop was also organised, jointly with AGWA, on which Brian and Sandy Coppins were the tutors. Workshop participants expressed interest in regular refresher courses in lower plants. Workshops now publicised by email. Carol thanked the course tutors, and announced that there would be courses in September/October 2002 for beginners and 'improvers' in bryophytes and lichens. Other ideas for further workshops include a wet woodland course, other difficult plant groups, wood pasture management, and interpreting cultural landscapes through woodland features.

#### 7. **Lower Plants Section**

Ben Averis is organiser. Any NWDG member can join for no extra cost. Members contacted through e-group. 4 field visits held last year, and 2 further meetings to launch the Bryophyte booklet. Ben invited suggestions from membership for future meetings. Almost 500 copies of the bryophyte booklet had gone out by late May 2002. Thanks to SNH and Eamonn Wall for financial support. £750 raised from donations so far for next reprint.

#### 8. **Election of Committee Members**

Retiring from the current committee: Richard Toleman (Chair), Nick Marshall (Newsletter co-ordinator), Kate Holl (Minutes

Secretary), Carol Crawford (Workshop Co-ordinator), Debbie Cowen (Membership Secretary). Staying on: Alison Averis (treasurer), Meg Pollock (ordinary member), Ruth Mitchell (ordinary member).

- Helen Gray was nominated as membership secretary by Kate Holl and seconded by Nick Marshall.
- Juliet Robinson was nominated as workshop co-ordinator by Carol Crawford and seconded by Richard Toleman.
- Andrew Sheridan was nominated as minutes secretary by Richard Toleman and seconded by Alison Averis.
- Carol Crawford was nominated as chair.

- All appointments approved by membership.

#### 9. **2003 Field Meeting**

Iris Glimmerveen volunteered to organise the next field meeting in Cumbria, which will include visiting the bio-cultural landscape site at Geltsdale. Membership approved proposal. Interest was expressed in having an evening talk from the Grazing Animals Project.

#### 10. **2004 Field Meeting**

Deeside/Speyside or Trossachs and Loch Lomond National Park or Galloway suggested for the following year. •

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## NEWS, INFORMATION NOTES, FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE WOODLANDS ON ISLAY - JOINT MEETING OF THE CCFG AND NWDG - 24/25 APRIL 2003 Ruth Anderson

This field meeting has been brought forward from August 2002.

Key content: The contrast between the three main types of forest on Islay:

- a) long established plantations in designed landscapes
- b) seminatural native woodlands
- c) 20th C forestry plantations.

The strengths and benefits of each type of woodland, and their relative costs and values in an island situation.

Please send the enclosed booking form to:  
Janette McKay, Tigh an Arish, Gruinart,  
Isle of Islay, PA44 7PP  
Email: [janette.mckay@virgin.net](mailto:janette.mckay@virgin.net) •

### BIOCULTURAL HERITAGE IN EUROPEAN FORESTS - AN EC LIFE PROJECT IN SWEDEN AND FRANCE Peter Quelch

Over the last 3 years, the forest services in France and Sweden have worked together on recognising and understanding '*biocultural heritage*' in their forests. This is a new concept and a phrase you probably will not have heard before. I was the only person from UK on the Swedish seminar held near the end of this project, in June 2002. Subsequently there was a second seminar at the French demonstration sites, which I was unable to attend. I wanted to find out what sort of features in the forests the Swedish foresters, ecologists and archaeologists classified as biocultural heritage, how they

managed or protected those features, and what relevance this had to Scottish woods and forests.

The results were very interesting, in that while the cultural heritage features that I saw were quite familiar from similar Scottish examples, the thinking behind their protection, and the future management of biocultural heritage were more relevant to Scotland than the Swedes could possibly know. Knowledge amongst participants of Scottish woodlands was in fact at a rather low level ("You mean you have some forests which are not just plantations?"), so I put them right on this by showing a range of slides illustrating biocultural heritage in Scottish seminatural woodlands. Thoughts of exchange visits later presented themselves.

A longer article exploring the issues raised by this visit will be coming out shortly in the *Reforestation Scotland* journal. I also have in mind sometime to write an illustrated article with Scottish examples of biocultural heritage in woodlands. •

### SCOTTISH WOODLAND HISTORY DISCUSSION GROUP (SWHDG) Fiona Watson

The SWHDG is run by the Centre for Environmental History. Its aim is to further the study of the history of Scottish woodlands, in a way that will be of interest and relevance to foresters, land managers and conservationists today. The group meets once (sometimes twice) a year, both indoors and on field excursions. We try to choose a different season from the Native Woodland Discussion Group: we have found a great deal of benefit comes from the cross-fertilisation of ideas between woodland archaeologists and historians on

the one hand, and those concerned with modern woodland ecology, management and policy on the other.

We publish *Scottish Woodland History Notes* following our main meeting each year, free to members and conference delegates. Back numbers (1996, 1997 and 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001) are available at £5 each. Membership fee is £6.00 (£4.00 concessions). For those wishing to join our group, please contact: The Scottish Woodland History Discussion Group c/o Centre for Environmental History, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA. Tel: 01786 466250  
Email: n.a.jeffres@stir.ac.uk  
Website: [www.stir.ac.uk/cehp](http://www.stir.ac.uk/cehp) •

## RECENT LITERATURE ABOUT LOWER PLANTS

### Ben Averis

This is a small and undoubtedly incomplete selection of recently published books, papers and articles which are relevant to bryophytes, lichens and fungi in northern British woods. There is a bias toward bryophytes, as at the time of writing I have more literature available to me about these plants.

- Crawford, C.L. (2002). *Bryophytes of native woods: a field guide to common mosses and liverworts of Britain and Ireland's woodlands. Third edition.* Published by The Natural Resource Consultancy (TNRC).

Now in its third edition, Carol's excellent 40-page A5-size booklet is really getting around, and was shortlisted for the 2002 Natural World Book Prize. It includes 36 species: 33 mosses and 3 liverworts. Each species is superbly illustrated in colour and is described in clear terms which are understandable to everyone, even those who have been put off by the larger bryophyte identification guides. The text deals with identification, habitats and main

National Vegetation Classification types. For sale through certain booksellers and from Carol herself (see her contact details in this newsletter).

- Skogsstyrelsens Förlag (2000). *Signalarter: indikatorer på skyddsvärd skog - flora över kryptogamer.* Skogsstyrelsen, Sweden.

The title translates as 'Indicator species for assessing the nature conservation value of woodland sites - a flora of selected cryptogams'. This 384-page book is about bryophytes, lichens and fungi associated with the more natural or 'ancient' woodland types in Sweden. It contains text about the identification of these species, their ecology and distribution. It is beautifully illustrated with colour photographs of different woodland habitats and a close-up of each lower plant species. Many of the species occur in British woods, and some of the photographs of Swedish woodland habitats have a familiar look to them. The book is extremely well presented, printed on really good quality paper and with a seriously strong hardback cover. The text is in Swedish, apart from a 2-page summary written in English.

- Coppins, A.M., Coppins, B.J. & Quelch, P. (2002). Atlantic hazelwoods: some observations on the ecology of this neglected habitat from a lichenological perspective. *British Wildlife* Vol. 14 (1), pages 17-26.

A fascinating, authoritative and well-illustrated account of hazel's history, growth form and lichen flora in Scottish hazel-dominated woods. Well written and made especially interesting in the way it deals with things from the general or large scale to the very specific or small scale: for example how different kinds of algae in lichens are related to habitats with different amounts of shade. Gives a good insight into relationships between woodland management and the more 'natural' ecology of hazel and lichens.

- Crundwell, A.C. & Smith, A.J.E. (2000). *Heterocladium wulfsbergii* in the British Isles. *Journal of Bryology* Vol. 22 (1), pages 43-48.

What we used to call *Heterocladium heteropterum* (dull green moss on moist, shaded rocks in western woods) is now split into two species: *H. heteropterum* (more common) and *H. wulfsbergii* (scarcer).

- Weibull, H. (2001). Influence of tree species on the epilithic bryophyte flora in deciduous forests of Sweden. *Journal of Bryology* Vol. 23 (1), pp 55-66

Looking at bryophytes on granite boulders under different tree species, Weibull has found that tree species influences bryophytes on rocks below, probably because of throughfall chemistry and the chemical composition of leaf litter. Interesting. This kind of thing probably happens in Britain too.

- Porley, R.D. & Ellis, R. (2002). *Timmia megapolitana* new to the British Isles. *Journal of Bryology* Vol. 24 (2), pages 151-156.

Funny-looking *Atrichum undulatum* (moss) in a wet wood? Check it out for *T. megapolitana* (found in Norfolk; occurs further north in mainland Europe).

- Werner, J. (2002). A comparison of *Dichodontium flavescens* and *D. pellucidum*. *Journal of Bryology* Vol.24 (3), pages 215-222.

Separation of the mosses *D. flavescens* and *D. pellucidum* was always tricky, but all is clear now thanks to Werner's patient studies in Luxembourg.

- Holyoak, D.T. (2001). A hybrid sporophyte on *Rhytidiadelphus subpinnatus*. *Bulletin of the British Bryological Society* No. 76, pp 56-58.

Interesting evidence of hybridisation among pleurocarpous mosses in a Welsh upland wood.

- Stevenson, R. (2001). An epiphyllous moss in Norfolk. *Bulletin of the British Bryological Society* No.77, pp 49-50.

*Hypnum resupinatum* on the lower leaves of a bramble in a Norfolk wood. Wow! Bryophytes grow as epiphylls mainly in the tropics and only rarely in Britain. This is the first published finding of an epiphyllous moss in Britain (other British epiphylls are all liverworts). I'd have been really jealous of this Stevenson guy if I hadn't already found some epiphyllous bryophytes in Britain myself! (Actually I'm a bit envious anyway because I've never found one on bramble!).

- Holyoak, D.T. (2002). *Ulota calvescens* with hairy calyptrae. *Bulletin of the British Bryological Society* No. 79, pages 59-61.

*Ulota* spp. are little tufted mosses. The commonest ones have hairy calyptrae ('caps' on tops of capsules) and short setae (capsule 'stalks'). The scarce *U. calvescens* has hairless calyptrae and longer setae. David found plants in Ireland with long setae but hairy calyptrae: they turned out to be *U. calvescens*. If we were all as diligent as Dave we might find *U. calvescens* more often. •

# GROUP/PROJECT REPORTS

## **NATIVE PINWOOD MANAGERS REPORT FOR 2002: VISIT TO THE FOREST OF BIRSE**

**Charlie Taylor**

### **Introduction**

On the 8th of May 2002, over twenty managers visited the Forest of Birse – the most easterly pinewood in the Inventory and the eleventh largest overall. It lies on the slopes between the Water of Feugh and the Burn of Cattie in the south-western corner of Birse Parish in Mid Deeside. Labelled as Glen Ferrick in the Pinewood Inventory, half is managed by two local estates (Finzean and Ballogie) and half by the local community - Birse Community Trust (BCT). Our main hosts for the day were Robin Callander, Manager of BCT, and Angus Farquharson of Finzean Estate. The visit focussed on the Finlets section of the pinewood managed by BCT and the historic water powered mills that BCT owns on the Feugh.

### **History**

The earliest records show that Birse parish was owned by the Bishops of Aberdeen, with the Forest of Birse being common land for the tenants of the parish. In the twelfth century, there is documentary evidence to show that there were 17 sheilings within the Forest. Subsequent archaeological surveys have confirmed the location of 11 of these sites. These were thought to be substantial wooden buildings in clearings in the lower parts of the forest. From these summer bases, the cattle and sheep would be herded daily to the open hill grazing above the forest. The tenants also paid their rent to the Bishops in wooden goods, so the forest and common rights were an integral part of the local economy.

In 1642, records indicate that the forest was still quite extensive and covered the southern slopes above the Water of Feugh as well as the northern slopes. Following heavy exploitation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the forest was much reduced. This clearance coupled with muirburn for grouse shooting means that there are only remnant riparian woodlands on the southern slopes today.

After the Reformation' the Bishops gave the parish to new owners and bestowed shared rights over the Forest on the owners. However, with the passage of time, this developed into confusion over who had rights to what. Over the centuries, there have been a number of high profile court cases to try and resolve the position.

In 1999, the fledgling Birse Community Trust negotiated an historic settlement over the rights to the Forest of Birse Community. This area of land extends to over 3750 hectares, mainly moorland, but including the Finlets section of the ancient pinewood remnant. This unique settlement confirmed that Dunecht Estate owns the solum of the land and that Dunecht and Ballogie Estates share the sporting rights. It also recognised that Birse Community Trust, who have since taken on the responsibility for sustainable management of the woodlands, now hold the ancient shared rights. Subsequently, the Trust entered an agreement with Ballogie Estate to carry out deer management to enable natural regeneration of the woodland.

Birse Community Trust was established to promote common good of the community within the parish and deliver wider public benefits. Everyone who resides within the parish is a member. There are 260 households and approximately 700 people.

Although only 3 years old, the Trust is responsible for the management of 10 sites within the parish – ranging from the War Memorial to a partnership agreement over two Forest Enterprise woods in the parish. It has established a base and resource centre within the old school at Finzean and draws in 98% of its funding from outside the parish.

### **Finlets**

The eastern end of this area is part of the pinewood remnant and is managed by BCT under a Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) II contract. The up-front payments associated with this grant scheme were a huge advantage, allowing the Community Trust to make real early progress. The western end of the pinewood area managed by the Trust – self-sown pine, from planted pine of local origin, and some high quality European larch – is under WGS III.

The current primary objective is to secure natural regeneration to restore the forest resource. To date, the main effort has been to reduce deer numbers in the woodland to enable regeneration. Vincent Clements of Ballogie Estate indicated that red deer were mainly transient, dependent on weather conditions. However, roe deer are resident and 50 were removed from the approximately 500 ha woodland in the last season. Fortunately, with the main sporting interest in the glen being grouse, there is a common aim between Ballogie, Dunecht and the Community Trust to keep deer numbers down (fencing is also not an option due to the legal constitution of the Forest of Birse Commonty).

This lack of fencing is very positive, given the resident capercaillie population. Last year brood counts carried out through the Trust showed the area to be one of the best on Deeside. As part of the ongoing national conservation programme, droppers have been installed on an old deer

fence on neighbouring Finzean Estate to make it more visible.

There are encouraging signs of pine regeneration across the open hill between the remnant and the planted origin pine to the west. As yet, there is little evidence of broadleaved (i.e. birch) regeneration on the slopes. This is maybe a sign that the deer density is still slightly high. However, this has to be balanced against the risk of a blanket of regeneration across the whole area and the corresponding lack of age diversity. Scarification trials established in the spring of 1999 have sporadic regeneration of pine and birch but are not dramatically better than the rest of the hill. This desire for rapid regeneration is not required now and the Forestry Commission seem increasingly relaxed about allowing longer timescales. It is hoped that this view will prevail in the current review of WGS.

Near the roadside there is regeneration of broadleaves, including oak. This may be influenced by the greater disturbance from the visitors on the public road and by the river. It is estimated (from a car counter) that there are 15-20,000 day visitors to the glen. The Community Trust has been improving the parking places along the river, but not increasing the number or promoting the area more widely. The general aim is to enable quiet and informal recreation as a contrast to the busier and more formal facilities in nearby Glen Tanar and Glen Muick. The Community Trust and Ballogie Estate also run joint fire patrols at times of highest risk.

### **Water-Powered Wood Mills of Finzean**

In the 1820's, Finzean Estate established two water-powered sawmills on the Water of Feugh to encourage production from the pinewoods for external markets. The lower mill still survives, together with the turning mill that was added to it by the local Duncan family in the 1830's. These mills are still functioning and run by Davy

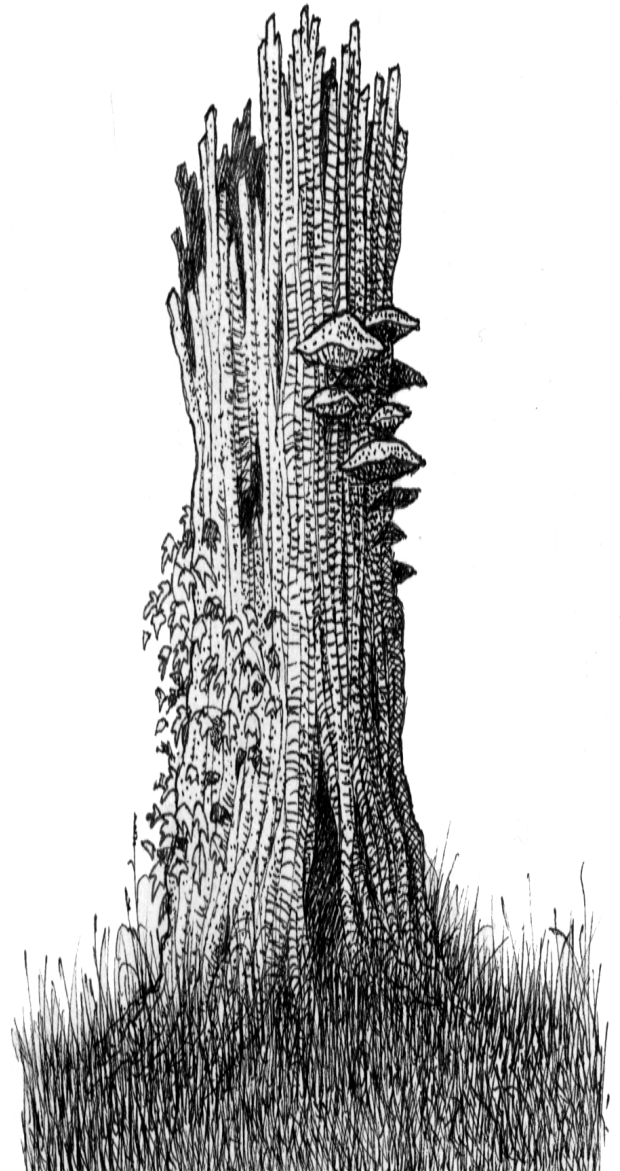
Duncan – the fourth generation of the family to do so! Davy provides an amazing living link to a forest-based culture that we have virtually lost in the rest of Scotland.

Further up the river, the upper sawmill was cleared at a sale in the 1840s. However, another local family (the Browns) established a bucket mill on the site in 1853. In the 1970's, after the death of the last of the Browns to work the mill, Stan Moyes took on the task of restoring the mill to working order and rediscovering the art of bucket making.

In its heyday the turning mill employed 4-5 people and included an amazing array of innovatory and unique production lines. These enabled the production of vast quantities of items such as barrel bungs, bobbins, brush heads and spirtles. The bucket mill employed 10-12 people and wagonloads of buckets regularly left the glen to wholesalers in Aberdeen. The buckets were made from the predominant local tree – Scots pine – and the timber was kiln-dried on site. All the metalwork for the buckets was also produced on site.

Historic Scotland has now listed all the mills and the landlords, Finzean Estate, have transferred the ownership to BCT. Support from Historic Scotland and other donations have enabled BCT to carry out major restoration works at the mills, including the re-roofing of the bucket mill. These mills are fantastic working relics of our woodland culture, particularly with the ongoing link to their traditional source of timber in the Forest of Birse. They are unique within Britain and, probably, north-western Europe. The Trust, ably supported by Davy and Stan, are doing an excellent job of maintaining these mills which are now in their care and deserve wider financial support. It was also suggested that an archive film be made of Davy and Stan in action to act as a reference source for the future.

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# SCOTTISH NATIVE WOODS ANNUAL REPORT 2001/02 Graeme Morison

## Introduction

Picking up where last year's Annual Report ended ... with restructuring, and looking to the future ... during the year to March 2002, SNW staff and Trustees indulged in a certain degree of navel-gazing and reappraisal as part of the restructuring of the organisation. This, at least up to March 2002, has largely resulted in SNW re-affirming its underlying philosophy and remit which is the encouragement of the restoration of Scotland's native woodlands. It remains core to the organisations' objectives that this is done largely through working with woodland owners and managers, with SNW acting as a stimulus and perhaps a catalyst to owners' interests in securing the future of their native woodlands. (But needs must, and SNW has since recognised that a broadening of its scope and *modus operandi*, while retaining its underlying aims may be necessary in these days of increasingly tough fundraising challenges.)

Part of SNW's self-appraisal identified that an impression of disunity could arise from the existence of various Woodland "Initiatives" run by SNW, while other "initiatives" were run by other agencies and partnerships. SNW's staff are now referred to as Area Managers. We continued to employ 5 Area Managers throughout the year: John Parrott in North Highland; Gordon Gray Stephens in West Highland; Carol Robertson in the North East; Mairi Stewart in Highland Perthshire and Simon Lockwood in Central Lowlands. (NB. At the end of the year, after several years' devoted work for SNW as both volunteer and staff member, Mairi departed for pastures – or woodlands – new with FE on Skye under their Scottish Forestry Alliance Project. Paul Schofield was recruited as the new Highland

Perthshire Area Manager in May 2002).

## Woodland Restoration

Through the involvement of the Area Managers with landowners and managers, 22 new woods were brought into management, involving 768 hectares. SNW has now stimulated the management of 127 woods involving 4,914 hectares. The organisation maintains a considerable monitoring commitment to all these woods, to ensure restoration proceeds as planned. As a result of refinement of data handling, it is now feasible to illustrate the growth of SNW's achievements in bringing woodlands into management since 1993 when this work started, and these are illustrated in the graph and table below.

SNW remains involved in the LBAP planning process in several local authority areas and in the development of Woodland Habitat Action Plans (HAPs). It remains to be seen how successful these LBAPs and HAPs are in securing the future of the relevant habitats and species as planning is no guarantee of action!.

## Product Development

Following Piers Voysey's departure at the end of March 2001, funding for Product Development was seriously reduced during the year, and SNW's role in product development (except for Gordon's continued involvement in AGWA) was wound up in December 2001. A final push to achieve funding targets on the development of prototype birch products was carried out under contract to SNW by Doreen Macintyre, culminating in a products seminar and workshop in Perth in December. Our conclusion was that there is scope to develop greater commercial use of native timbers, but until a more secure supply of quality timber can be secured, demand and consumption will largely remain with the small-scale craft market.

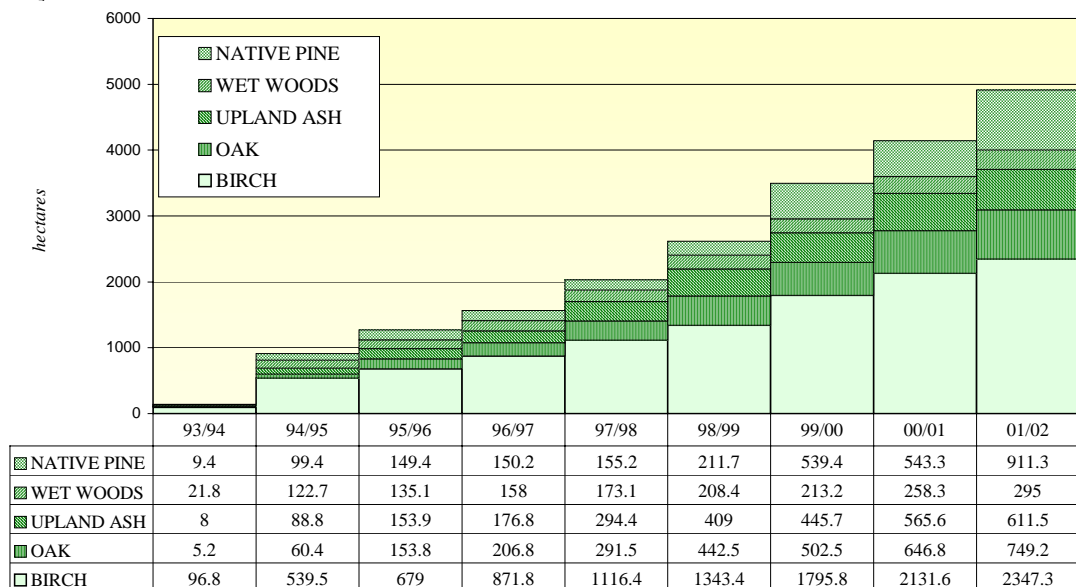
## Native Woodlands and Tourism Study

Another short term contract to carry out this study was also let to Doreen Macintyre. Originally intended to cover spring, summer and autumn visitor seasons, Foot and Mouth Disease was responsible for restricting the study only to the October school holiday period. Visitors in rural and semi-urban (i.e. Pitlochry!) locations in Highland Perthshire were interviewed on their reasons for visiting the area. With some caution due to the

sample size, a link was established between visitor's appreciation of the natural woods of the area and the amount of money they spent in the area, thus enabling the provisional valuation of the natural woodlands to the local economy through tourism. These results were presented at a seminar in Perth in December 2001, and the results are available on request from SNW.



Woodlands assisted into management by Scottish Native Woods, 1993-2002  
Woodlands in broad Habitat Action Plan habitat types



Total Woodlands into Management at 31 March 2002 4914.3ha

# ARTICLES

## ARBOREAL CLIMBING PLANTS IN SCOTTISH WOODLAND

**Ben Averis**

I am fascinated by climbing plants in British woods: their varied growth forms and ecology, some interesting geographical affinities and the way in which they can make a big contribution to the total structure of woodland. As a group they seem to be rather neglected in favour of other plants, especially trees and tall shrubs, so I hope that this short article - based on my observations - will be of interest to readers.

In Britain, climbing plants are most common in the warmer south, and this trend is continued further south into the tropical forests with their abundant lianas. Climbing plants seem to need a long or warm growing season so that each year they can grow up to reach the next 'rung of

the ladder' before their growth slows down or stops.

I have seen nine native plant species growing as arboreal climbers in Scottish woods. These are listed in the table below.

These plants grow to varying heights above ground and attach themselves to their tree or shrub hosts by various means: twisting their stems around those of the host; short roots attached from their main stems onto the host's bark; downward-pointing prickles which 'stick onto' the stems of the host; main stems growing underneath mats of epiphytic mosses and liverworts; main stems growing up through the spaces under loose 'flaky' pine bark. They are not parasitic on their tree and shrub hosts. Most of them have woody stems and are palatable to deer, sheep and cattle, so they are commonest as arboreal climbers where there are few or none of these animals.

### Native plant species seen by Ben Averis growing as arboreal climbers in Scottish woods

(Note: maximum heights are based only on my observations in Scottish woods)

<i>English name</i>	<i>Latin name</i>	<i>Woody or herbaceous</i>	<i>Climbing method</i>	<i>Ever- green?</i>	<i>Maximum height</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	woody	twisting stems	no	>10 m
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	woody	roots	yes	>15 m
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	woody	prickles	semi-ev	c.5 m
Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	woody	prickles	no	c.8 m
Bittersweet	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	woody	twisting stems	no	c.2 m
Goosegrass	<i>Galium aparine</i>	herbac. annual	prickles	no	c.3 m
Heath bedstraw	<i>Galium saxatile</i>	herb. perennial	bryophytes	no	1.5 m
Blaeberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	woody	roots/bryophytes	no	2.3 m
Cowberry	<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>	woody	roots/pine bark	yes	c.1 m

Most species can also grow as low, sprawling plants on the ground.



The most common arboreal climbers in Scottish woods are honeysuckle and ivy. These plants can form thick masses of stems and foliage at all heights from ground level to high up in tree canopies. In some places - mainly in the lowlands and along parts of the west Highland and Hebridean coasts - the dense arboreal growth of these species forms as significant a part of the total woodland structure as does a shrub layer. It can reduce the amount of sunlight and rainfall reaching tree trunks, branches and epiphytic mosses, liverworts and lichens, and can be an important habitat for birds and invertebrates. Sometimes I wonder if the original native woodland in Scotland - presumably less grazed than most of

today's woodland - had a more extensive arboreal growth of these species, at least in the south and west during warmer climatic periods.

As arboreal climbers, bramble and rose are fairly common in the Scottish lowlands, but much less so than honeysuckle and ivy. Even so, they can add a lot to the total amount of arboreal summer foliage on some trees.

I have seen arboreal bittersweet only rarely in Scotland, growing up juniper bushes in the southern Highlands: it was interesting to see such a southern climbing species in a northern, upland type of environment.

Goosegrass commonly grows up the lower parts of trees and shrubs in the lowlands, and considering that this is an annual plant I really admire the way it can grow so high and dense in just a few weeks in spring and early summer. Some people say they hate goosegrass because it spoils their gardens, but somehow that just makes me like it more!

We generally see heath bedstraw as a very low-grown plant sprawling through grasslands and heaths, so I was surprised to find it growing up to 1.5 metres up oak trunks in an ungrazed wood in Argyll. The lack of grazing might have had something to do with this, although from what we see in grasslands and heaths this species is not very palatable. Perhaps the lack of animals rubbing against tree trunks helped it? Some of the bedstraw stems were growing among mosses, rather like those of the blaeberry plants described below.

Blaeberry and cowberry are ground-dwelling dwarf shrubs which I would never have expected to see growing up trees. They normally have lateral underground rhizomes from which grow the erect, branched aerial stems that are a familiar sight in heaths and on the ground in some birch, oak and pine woods.

In some sheltered western oakwoods blaeberry stems grow up through mats of mosses, liverworts and lichens on tree trunks. It seems that as the blaeberry grows upwards, epiphytic bryophytes and lichens on the oak trunk grow quickly enough to soon cover the older, lower parts of its stems. In this way the blaeberry gains stability by being held against the tree trunk by bryophytes and lichens. Numerous short roots - rather like those on ivy - grow from these main blaeberry stems and clearly help the plant to stick to the oak trunk. The main blaeberry stems are mostly hidden behind the bryophytes and lichens, but the youngest shoots and some others arising at intervals along the main stem grow out and look like individual tufts of epiphytic blaeberry up to two metres up the tree trunks: a strange sight!

I have seen cowberry plants growing up trees only rarely. I found them growing up to about a metre up the trunks of pines in native pine woodland in the western Highlands. The upward-growing cowberry stems were hidden beneath the outermost flakes of pine bark, and the aerial leafy stems were visible higher up, looking as if they were just growing out of bare bark.

Going back to honeysuckle, another thing which I have found interesting has been young shoots twisting up around the stems of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis* in woodland in the western Highlands. Honeysuckle is a woody perennial, yet here it was using much shorter-lived - and in the case of the grass, softer - plant stems as a means of support. I've seen honeysuckle doing the same thing with nettle *Urtica dioica* in Wales. The grass, bracken and nettle stems die back in the same year but the honeysuckle remembers them for longer, keeping those twists in its stem as if to say "Thank you"!

I would be interested to hear of other peoples' findings on the subject of climbing plants (my contact details are in the list of NWDG committee members in this newsletter). •

## **CULINARY USES OF WOODLAND PRODUCTS - VENISON**

**Alison Averis**

Red and roe deer are natural inhabitants of woodlands. Both can and indeed should be eaten. Land-owners and managers would be far more easily persuaded to control deer, in order to encourage woodland regeneration, if there was a ready market for the meat. Many people think that venison is tough. I suspect that this is because they cook it in ways which are more appropriate for farm animals who spend their days lounging around in fields rather than running up hills. Venison responds best to long slow cooking in wine or other liquid. This is a foolproof way which avoids any need for beating with a rolling-pin or marinating for days. It is suitable for joints on the bone or boned and rolled, though a rolled joint looks neater and is easier to carve. I had the idea from Mrs Helena Brough, who runs a B&B in Newcastleton in the Scottish Borders. She does something very similar with pheasant. It is not the sort of cooking for which precise weights and proportions of ingredients are important.

Weigh the meat and put it in a metal casserole or roasting pan with a tight lid. Cover the meat entirely with overlapping strips of streaky bacon, arranged (for those in the Lower Plants section) like the imbricate leaves of liverworts such as *Bazzania*, *Calypogeia* or *Frullania*. Pour in a couple of glasses of red wine and add a few juniper berries and peppercorns and a bay-leaf. Put the lid on the pan. Cook for one hour per pound at 130°C, 250°F, gas 1/2 or in the slow oven of a solid-fuel

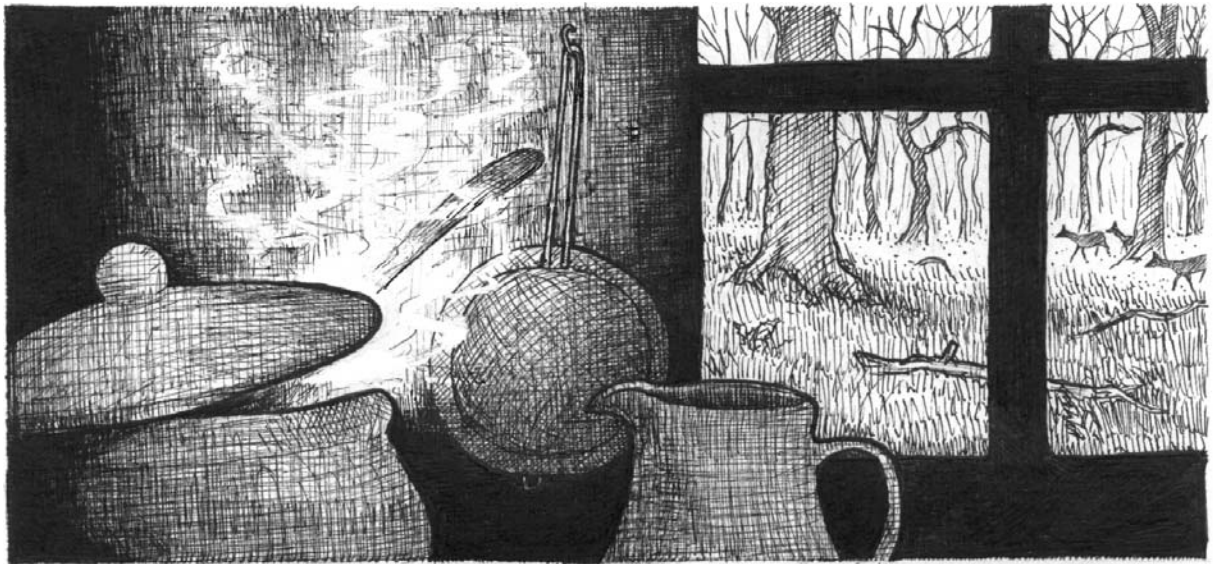
stove. If all else fails, including the power supply, it can also be done over an open fire. When cooked, the meat will be totally tender and is best served in thick slices, each including a rasher of bacon. It's brilliant with baked tatties and vegetables such as sprouts and carrots. The liquid formed from the amalgamation of the meat juices and the wine is good enough to use as gravy without any further work. If there is any left over, it can be used to make the most fantastic soup with the addition of vegetables and small bits of the meat. Any red wine will do, but a woodland fruit wine such as elderberry or raspberry really does add that bit extra.

If you have chopped venison rather than a joint, you can make this casserole. Put a tablespoonful of flour, a good pinch of salt and a good grinding of black pepper in a strong paper bag. Drop in the bits of meat and shake the bag to coat the meat with seasoned flour. Melt a big knob of butter in a heavy frying pan, put in the floury meat and stir until it is browned and sealed on all sides. Then push the meat into one half of the pan, and fry a chopped onion, a chopped carrot and a chopped stick of celery in the residual fat in the empty side

of the pan. When the vegetables are softened and starting to brown, mix them all up with the meat and spread in an even layer over the pan. Pour half a glass of whisky over, give it a few seconds to warm up and then set it on fire with a long match. I'm not sure what this actually does for the flavour, but the blue dancing flames look sensational and your children will find the whole spectacle mind-blowingly exciting. The exact brand of whisky is unimportant. I use whatever is in the cupboard - usually something from Islay or Skye - but anything will do and brandy or even gin are equally successful.

Back to the recipe. When the fire has gone out, scrape the contents of the frying pan into an ovenproof pan with a tight lid. Add red wine until the meat is almost covered. Stick in a bay-leaf or two and a few juniper berries. Put the lid on the pan. Cook for about 3 hours at 130°C, 250°F, gas 1/2 or in the slow oven of a solid-fuel stove, until the meat is really tender and the sauce thickened. It can be left to cool and be re-heated before serving.

As with the other recipe, this is good with baked or mashed tatties and chunky vegetables. •



# **NATIVE WOODLANDS DISCUSSION GROUP CONSTITUTION**

**Name:** The organisation shall be the Native Woodlands Discussion Group

**Aims and objectives:** The purpose of the group is to encourage interest in native woodlands, their ecology and management.

**Membership:** Membership of the group will be:

- a. Individual
- b. Family (1.5 x full rate)
- c. Concessionary (0.5 x full rate)

Membership of the group will cease 18 months after the payment of an annual subscription. Committee will advise the Meetings Organiser for the year of the fee for attendance of non-members.

**Officers and committee:**

- a. The group elects a committee of not more than eight members. The committee shall co-opt or appoint such officers as are considered necessary. Officers will be eligible to vote at committee meetings.
- b. Committee members shall serve for three years, but shall be eligible for re-election.
- c. The chairperson shall be nominated by the committee and endorsed by the Annual General Meeting.
- d. All members are free to attend committee meetings.

**Accounts:**

- a. The financial year shall be the calendar year
- b. The committee will set the annual membership fee before the end of October.
- c. The treasurer will keep accounts and present a financial report by 15th March each year. The accounts shall be independently audited by a competent person before presentation.

**Annual General Meeting:** An AGM shall be held at such a date as is determined by the committee. Notification of that meeting shall appear in the newsletter at least one month prior to the AGM.

Business at the AGM shall be determined by a simple majority except changes to the constitution which shall require a two-thirds majority of those members present. Family membership entitles up to two votes if both are present.

The chairperson and the treasurer will each submit a report at the AGM.

**Meetings:** The committee shall organise or authorise any member to organise such meetings as considered desirable.

**Publications:** The committee shall approve such publication as are considered desirable, and which carry the group's endorsement.

# **NWDG OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

**Objectives:** The purpose of the Group is to encourage interest in native woods, their ecology and management, with a particular emphasis in Northern Britain.

**Activities:**

- \* Organise at least one Field Meeting with related discussion each year.
- \* Organise Workshops on subjects suggested by members (initially two per year).
- \* Issue Newsletters (currently two per year) with an emphasis on members' contributions.
- \* Maintain contact with like-minded organisations through the membership.

**Membership:** This is open to any interested individual (There is no corporate membership).

**Subscription:** According to the following categories -

<b>Ordinary individual</b>	<b>£15.00 p.a.</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>£21.50 p.a.</b>
<b>Concs./Unwaged</b>	<b>£ 7.50 p.a.</b>

**Subscriptions should be sent to Membership Administrator: (see inside front cover for contact details)**

# **NOTES FOR FUTURE CONTRIBUTORS**

**Copy date for the Spring 2003 newsletter is 31<sup>st</sup> March.** The newsletter will go out in April.

The following types of contributions are always welcome:

- Group or organisation reports
- Woodland reports/updates
- Research, management and articles
- Shorter items of news, e.g. new groups/initiatives/projects or personnel changes
- Letters to the editor
- Reviews of books or other publications relating to native woodlands.
- Illustrations - cartoons, logos, pen and ink drawings of trees and wildlife etc..

Contributions can be up to 1500 words long. They should ideally be word-processed in Word for Windows 98 or compatible software and sent by email or on floppy disk. Please include full contact details with any contribution. Contact the editor if you have something to contribute but are having difficulty meeting a deadline. Also if you have an idea for an article you wish to discuss.

**The current editor is:**

**Nick Marshall, 64 The Causeway, Edinburgh, EH105 3PZ**  
**Tel/Fax: 0131 661 2019 Email: [nick@leaf.me.uk](mailto:nick@leaf.me.uk)**