

Conservation Work Parties Report 2019



Clearing rhododendrons with the Knoydart Forest Trust

Members and non-members can join our conservation work parties. They take place on John Muir Trust properties and on our partnership properties. Participants arrange their own food, travel and accommodation.

These events are designed to enable our members and others to:



Beach rubbish collected at Traigh Mhuilean on North Harris

- *contribute to the practical work of the John Muir Trust on Trust and partnership properties*
- *learn about the John Muir Trust and partnership properties and how they are managed*
- *practice some of the skills of conservation management*
- *meet other members and John Muir Trust staff*
- *experience and have contact with wild places.*

"Do something for wildness and make the mountains glad"
(John Muir, 1892)



top - Drystone seat built for community owned Isle Martin

Right – clearing timber in a brash hedge at Glenlude



Overview

In 2019 there were twenty six organised work parties planned (although five were cancelled before running ; two to bad weather, two to lack of volunteer numbers and one to forestry operations). There was also a wide range of volunteering by individuals and groups such as the John Muir Trust local members group work days and ad hoc volunteering on Trust properties such as the regular Thursday work days at **Glenlude**.



In total one hundred and thirty five different volunteers donated five hundred and three days. This compares with five hundred and eighty four days in 2018 with one hundred and forty nine volunteers over twenty three work parties.

As well as on our own properties and two on **Glenridding** which is now being managed by the Trust visits were made to partners and like-minded properties including the **Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape (CALL)** project that we are a member of, community owned estates that we have been involved with such



above and left Path work at Huishinis on North Harris

below relaxing on the water of Loch Ossian after a days work at Corroul



as **Knoydart Foundation** and the **North and West Harris** estates as well as the likeminded estate of **Corroul** where the Trust has been assisting with the conservation management

The number of work days achieved in the main programme was very similar to that in 2018 (adjusting for the fewer work parties run) with an average work party consisting of ten people but due to the informal way that they are run (people look after their own travel and accommodation) people do drop in and out, usually to fit in hill walks or bags!

What was achieved?

- **Pathwork**
 - **Sandwood**; We continued to carry out maintenance on the path twice as well as resurfacing and landscaping the whole of the first section from the cycle racks down to Loch a Mhuilinn
 - **East Schiehallion**; the built path continues to deteriorate badly, the path was maintained along its length 2 times, 3 anchor bars built, a collapsed culvert repaired, 20m of surface re-laid and landscaped.
 - **Harris**; 10 metres of the Huishinis to Cravadale path was completely rebuilt with new pitching and over two tons of surfacing excavated & laid. Five days were spent

on the Postman's path from Urgha to Rhengadeal with a lot of ditching, resurfacing and landscaping on the first section. Some repairs to the Ardvourlie path network. A new piece of path was built at Talla na Mara down to the drystone seat and a dozen finger posts erected on a section of the Harris Way.

- **Quinag;** Maintenance and ditching and on the lower section of the path twice
- **CALL partnership;** Culag Woodland paths maintained and two wooden bridges rebuilt.
- **Skye;** Blaven lower path maintained once with a few repairs, a day on repairs on the Strath Beag path.
- **Li & Coire Dhorrcail;** a kilometre of the Coire Dhorrcail had 3 days of ditching and general repairs.
- **Nevis;** Upper Ben paths maintained and corners 3 & 5 reworked.
- **Knoydart Foundation;** Three days maintaining ditches on the Ladhar Bheinn pony track resurfacing several sections repairing one ford and a lot of ditching
- **Glenridding;** Two days along with volunteers from Fix the Fells on stone scatter to promote vegetation restoration and path definition on White Side.

- **Rubbish**

- Beaches cleaned included four cleaned twice at **Sandwood** (Sandwood Bay, Polin, Dromin & Oldshoremore) with over 50 bags of rubbish carried out from them. The majority of rubbish relates to the fishing industry but there was also a lot of camping rubbish out at the bay. In the CALL partnership two major beach cleans at Raffin as well as the back beach and other coastline on **Isle Martin** . The Lighthouse and Lag na Laire beaches on Scalpay had over a dozen 1ton bags collected beaches and another ten 1ton bags collected at Cean an Or, Cravadal and Traigh Mheilin in **North Harris** as well as several beaches around Scarista on **West Harris** where we participated in the Surfers against Sewerage National beach clean on Luskentyre.



A section of new path was built from the West Harris Trust Talla na Mara centre to a drystone seat built by JMT volunteers last year



Beach rubbish; left at Sandwood Bay, right on Harris, below at Raffin on a beach clean with the Coigach Assynt Living Landscape project



- on **Nevis** two summit cleans on the Ben plus the path cleared a small amount of rubbish.

- **Invasives**

- Rhododendrons were removed on **Knoydart Foundation** land by hand pulling over 2 days and a few on **Isle Martin**
- Non-native Sitka was removed from large sections of native planted woodland on **Corrour Estate**
- Gorse was cut by hand at **Glencanisp** around the new nature trail
- Poplar regrowth removed on **Isle Martin**



Planting trees at Corrour

- **Woodland**

- Treeplanting; 600+ trees at **East Schiehallion**, mounding at Miabhaig on North Harris in preparation for planting in 2020 as well as 500 trees planted at Ardvourlie, 650 trees on **Corrour** in two new brash hedges, 800 trees planted at Stoer as part of a crofting planting organised by the CALL project. 50 trees and shrubs planted at **Glenridding** as well as several hundred tubes removed from a previous planting. Maintenance removing mulchmats and tubes as



Left – painting the toilet doors at Sandwwod, right building a bridge in Culag community woodland, below burning brash to promote grassland creation at Torrin on Skye.



well as weeding on **Isle Martin**.

- Seed collection was carried out for the **CALL** nursery as well as hazel & juniper on **Isle Martin**
- One large brash hedge was finished and another started at **Glenlude** and timber within it stacked or removed from the finished one.
- On **Skye** at Keppoch 0.5 hectare of brash from a Sitka clearfell was gathered and burnt to encourage a return to grassland
- 2 days helping at the **CALL** tree nursery at Little Assynt weeding, and other activities.



- **Estate management**

- A section of drystone wall was also rebuilt at Borge on **West Harris** 4 sections repaired on **Isle Martin** and three sections at **Glenridding** rebuilt as well as four sections of the wall around Scalpay lighthouse, a drystone bench was built on Isle Martin.
- at **Sandwood** the Blairmore toilet doors were painted
- At Inverie we helped **The Knoydart Foundation** rewind an emergency power cable.



Above repairing drystone dyking on Isle Scalpay below a dyke fully repaired at Glenridding



NE Scotland Members group peatland restoration by dam building on Glen Muick, Balmoral estate



Local Members Groups

The most active group again was the North East Scotland group. The Yorkshire Members group also held several work parties in the Yorkshire Dales. (See reports elsewhere on John Muir Trust website)

Photographs of activities in 2019



In 2019 there was a change to the way Flickr operated so a Facebook site was set up with separate albums for each of the properties where work parties are carried out at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/johnmuirtrustvolunteers/photos/?filter=albums>



You can see photos of previous years' work parties on the Flickr sites listed below

- Western Isles www.flickr.com/groups/westernislesworkparties/
- East Schiehallion www.flickr.com/groups/schiehallionworkparties/
- Glen Nevis & Ben Nevis www.flickr.com/groups/nevisworkparties/

- Glenlude www.flickr.com/groups/glenludeworkparties/
- Sandwood, Quinag and our partners in the Coigach Assynt partnership (CALL) www.flickr.com/groups/sandwoodquinagcallworkparties/
- Skye and Knoydart (including the Knoydart Foundation and Li & Coire Dhorrcail) www.flickr.com/groups/skyeknoydartworkparties/
- Local member group volunteers www.flickr.com/groups/2463314@N25/

All the photos in this report are taken from the Facebook site where you can see credits for photographers and descriptions of where they were taken.

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The programme for volunteering in 2020 appears at the John Muir Website :-

www.johnmuirtrust.org/support-us/volunteer/conservation-volunteering

2019 JMT work party dates

March

16-17 East Schiehallion

cancelled due to snow

28-30 Glenlude

April

1-5 Skye

6-8 Li & Coire Dhorrcail

12-14 Sandwood

27-28 East Schiehallion

29 April-3 May Corrour

May

6-10 Western Isles

20-24 Knoydart Foundation at Inverie

June

8 Ben Nevis

14-17 Sandwood

24-28 Quinag/CALL

July

1-5 now 15 – 19 Western Isles

12-14 Glen Nevis

cancelled due to low numbers

19-21 East Schiehallion

cancelled due to low numbers

26-28 Glenridding

August

23-25 Sandwood

26-30 Quinag/CALL

31 Ben Nevis

cancelled due to bad weather

September

2-6 Western Isles

13-15 Glenridding

21 Ben Nevis

23-27 Isle Martin/CALL

28-29 East Schiehallion

October

3-5 Glenlude

cancelled due to forestry operations

November

21-23 Glenlude