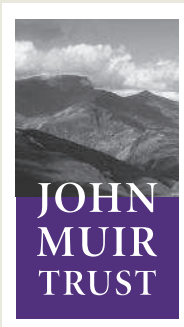


JOHN MUIR TRUST JOURNAL

No 44 October 2008



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Pitlochry, PH16 5AN.
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JMT offices

Membership

(all enquiries about existing membership)
41 Commercial Street, Edinburgh EH6 6JD
Tel 0845 458 8356, membership@jmt.org
Please quote your membership number.

Edinburgh office

41 Commercial Street, Edinburgh EH6 6JD
0131 554 0114, fax 0131 555 2112,
admin@jmt.org
Development, new membership, general enquiries

Tel 0845 458 2910, info@johnmuiraward.org
John Muir Award

Pitlochry office

Tower House, Station Road,
Pitlochry PH16 5AN
01796 470080, Fax 01796 473514
Chief executive, finance and administration, land
management, policy

■ If your phone call to an office is not answered,
please leave a message on the answer machine and a
member of staff will ring you back.

Senior staff

Chief executive

Nigel Hawkins
01796 484934, chiefexec@jmt.org

Development manager

David Picken
0131 554 0114, development@jmt.org

Head of finance and administration

Alison Russell
01796 484932, finance@jmt.org

John Muir Award manager

Rob Bushby
0845 458 2910, rob@johnmuiraward.org

Head of land management

Andrew Campbell
01796 484939, landmanagement@jmt.org

Policy officer

Helen McDade
01796 484935, policy@jmt.org

Cover On the way to Carn Mor Dearg and
the land guarded by the John Muir Trust in
Lochaber. The Trust acquired Ben Nevis
Estate in June 2000.

Photo Keith Brame Photography,
www.keith-brame.com.

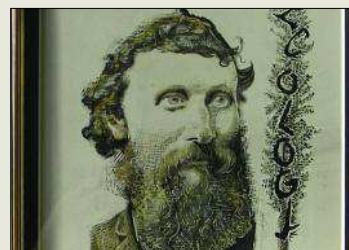
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Deer hunter



North West Six



John by John



**A new editor of the JMT Journal will be appointed soon.
Please be aware of who to contact:**

JOURNAL

About this Journal

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Editor
Mike Merchant

journal@jmt.org
01488 608672
34, Stockcross
Newbury, Berkshire
RG20 8JX

About next (October) Journal

journal@jmt.org
0131 554 0114
41 Commercial Street,
Edinburgh EH6 6JD

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LAST POST ON THE BEN

Ewen McKinnon of Perthshire sent us two articles by his grandfather, also Ewen McKinnon, about his days at the summit of Ben Nevis as sub-postmaster. 'He used to talk a lot about his days on the Ben to us when we were young, I think it made a big impression on him.'

One article appeared in *The Sub-Postmaster*, May 1966...

I JOINED FORT WILLIAM PO as a learner-sorter and telegraphist about 1897. In due course I was to be sent to London at the enormous salary of of ten shillings per week. I refused and went back to school and eventually became a student of Glasgow University.

In the summer vacation, like most other Scottish students, I looked for employment. In 1903 there were two posts open to me: one, the more lucrative, was clerk to a wealthy stockbroker, whom I had also to wheel in his invalid chair. I accepted the second post, Sub-Postmaster on Ben Nevis – emoluments, 10s weekly, paid by the PO, and board, washing and lodgings supplied by the Scottish Meteorological Society in the summit observatory.

Though born at the very foot of the Ben I had never climbed to the summit, so I did not know what I was in for. Note the date: 30th June 1903, the day was sweltering. My bag had been sent over to the low level observatory the night before. Betimes I arrived at Achantee Farm at the bottom of the path leading to the summit. I joined a cavalcade of four men and three pack horses, the latter laden with coal, coke, provisions and my bag. We set off at a brisk pace which before long I wished would not be maintained, but it was, and reached the half-way house bathed in sweat.

Having rested for 10 short minutes we set off again at the same pace until we reached sterile rocks and got into the all-enveloping cloud giving us a visibility range of only 12 yards or so. It remained so for a fortnight on the summit. The air was cold and damp, yes very damp.



Ewen and Helen McKinnon on their engagement c 1910. Below Summit observatory in 1893, SMC Collection.

The observatory was covered by drift snow about 8 feet deep, so that only part of the funnel and tower appeared above it. There was a passage cut down to the kitchen door. Inside there was a fine luncheon set for us hungry men. The room was lit by a paraffin lamp and heated, over heated by a coke fire. There were two observers and a house steward in permanent residence – and a cat. To cheer me up I was reminded that my predecessor the year before was frozen to death in August, 1902, within 200 yards of the observatory.

By the dim light of an observer's lantern I was shown my office, an annexe to the main building, the whole interior covered with dew or damp, which could be swept off the walls by the palm of the hand; the telegram forms a soggy mass; the copying ink pencils colouring the whole damp place. As the office had to be opened next day, I had to go out and dig an entrance through the snow; then dry and clean the interior. There was no heater of any kind. The door was left open to air the place.



I was up again in 1904 for three months. The observatory being opened in 1883 was closed on the last day of September, 1904; I was there. It has not been reopened. At 84 years of age I am the last survivor of the Sub-Postmasters of Ben Nevis, and the last of any of its staff.

● *Ben Nevis's biographer Ken Crocket writes: I found an archived Scotsman article reporting the death of the young telegraphist, Donald Macgillivray. The date of the article is Tuesday, 13th September 1898, and Macgillivray would have died either late on the previous Sunday, when he was struggling to reach the Observatory, or early on the Monday morning, when he was found, so either the 11th or 12th – but still 1898.*

Death of an illusion

In a local paper in the 1950s, Mr McKinnon recalled: 'There was so little Post Office work to do that I did a share of the meteorological duties... It was while in the observatory that my youthful illusions about attractive young lady science teachers were sadly shattered.

'One day a pretty young lady came to the door, announced herself as a science teacher from Glasgow, and asked to see through the observatory. The superintendent agreed, and, after inspecting the various weather instruments, we came to the barometer. 'Read it', she said, and I did. 'Dear me, I didn't think it was so cold', she replied.'

● *Fort William photographer Alex Gillespie recalls how the original observers were honoured in 1983, when with Mick Tighe and other mountain rescue team members he camped for a week on the summit, taking meteo measurements every three hours and sending the data to the nearest Met Office presence at Aviemore – 'but whether they used it I don't know!'*

CARBON CUTTING AIM FOR TRUST AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A JOHN MUIR TRUST PROJECT begun this year will help communities move towards zero-carbon status. The Sustainable Communities and Climate Change project, funded by the de Haan Charitable Trust, will operate across JMT land and in the areas of partner organisations. It will also look at reducing the carbon footprint of the Trust's own premises and operations.

JMT policy officer Helen McDade, who is leading the project, explains: 'There is a huge amount of information available about energy production on the large-scale, but often little information available to small communities about how they can move towards zero carbon by using micro-renewable energy and energy conservation measures – both in new buildings and by retro-fitting current buildings.'

At this early stage the Trust is finding out which communities are interested in joining in the project. It's envisaged that at the outset a workshop would be held locally at which a way forward would be mapped out and outstanding problems identified. The Trust doesn't have funds to hand out, but will help communities to explore what would be viable and to reach the funding and information they need.

One of the issues expected to come up is the impact of wind turbines on a peaty area. Peat is a hugely significant carbon store, and any sort of construction can lead to carbon being released. The Trust intends to commission research into this.

Another strand of the project which has already started involves the Trust undergoing its own carbon dioxide emissions audit and exploring ways in which we can cut our energy use. We will then commit to achieving a reduction – looking at a range of actions from improving the fabric of buildings to cutting down further on staff travel. The Trust already has a policy of using public transport where possible and car-sharing.

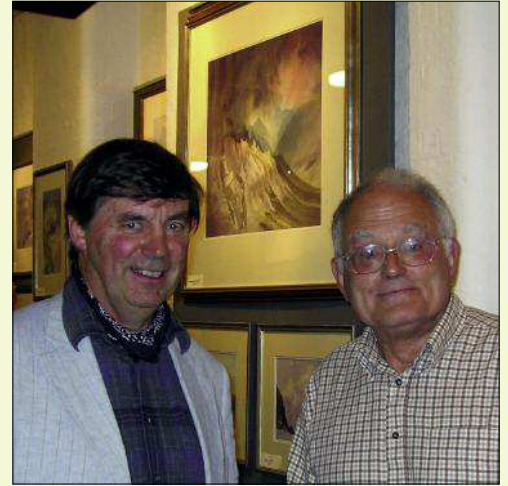
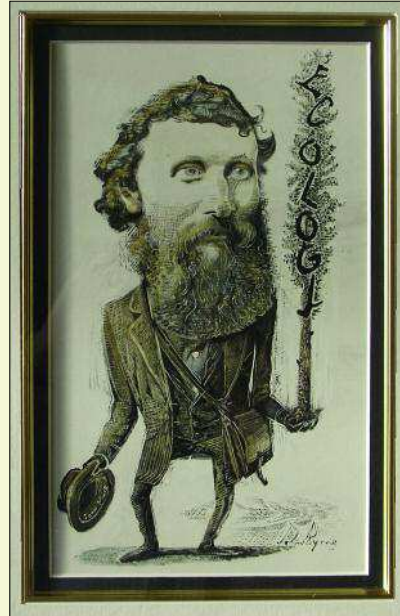
'This is definitely part of the Trust's core business', Helen said. 'We are committed to the communities in the areas where we work. This project will help assure their future.'

Birthplace Trust

Any member with a particular interest in John Muir may be able to play a special part in remembering his roots in the East Lothian town of Dunbar.

We are looking for someone to represent JMT on the board of the John Muir Birthplace Trust which owns and manages the house at 126 High Street where John Muir was born in 1838.

This would be an opportunity to play an important part in remembering the famous Scot and also assisting the local community in Dunbar to raise the profile of the birthplace. Anyone interested should speak to Nigel Hawkins at JMT's Pitlochry office.



David Bellamy (above L) and John Cleare at the opening, in the Alpine Club, of David's latest show.

ARTISTS AIDED AWARD AUCTION

The John Muir Award 10th birthday online auction last November generated excitement, profile and £2500 income for the Trust.

The fleece worn by Leo Houlding on Everest attracted lots of interest and a £300 winning bid. A John Muir Trust member from Lincoln will be combining a Geowalks geology and landscape exploration day with a day on a Trust property, having successfully bid £140 and £305.

And original paintings by **David Bellamy** and **John Byrne** attracted more than 3000 web hits and bids of between £300 and £400.

Member **Dick Clark** was the successful bidder for *The Ecologist*, the portrait of John Muir (above) donated by playwright and artist John Byrne. Dick said:

'Over the years of reading, and having the opportunity to walk in some of the footprints of John Muir, and having been also a firm fan of John Byrne's work –

The Slab Boys, and *Tutti Frutti* (with Robbie Coltrane) and many others – I really wanted to secure his view of John Muir. Having now seen it, I'm not disappointed. To me this is an **ICONIC MASTERPIECE** which radiates the forward thinking of John Muir, who changed the world as his idol Robert Burns did. Both their thoughts on the world around us continue to influence thinking in arguably every country in today's world, topsy turvy as it is.'

David Bellamy's collection of mountain and wilderness watercolours and oils was opened at London's Alpine Club lecture theatre, also in November, by mountain photographer **John Cleare** – himself a member of the JMT and a great supporter through his work of the *Journal* and other Trust publications.

● We will soon have limited-edition high quality prints of *The Ecologist* for sale. Contact Sam Baumber, recruit@jmt.org, or 031-554 0114, for more details or to order.



Corrour Estate: late April, looking NE over Loch Ossian to Beinn Eibhinn in the heart of the Central Highlands.



Our new chief scientific officer MIKE DANIELS (L) who began work this month is based in the Trust's Pitlochry office. But Mike will be seeing a lot of the wonderful landscape above. His post is funded by the Corrour Trustees and he will advise the Corrour Estate's environmental management board on the implementation of a biodiversity framework, as well as advising JMT on biodiversity action plans for all its estates.

Mike joined the JMT from the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS) where he was research and data manager leading on habitat monitoring on designated sites, biodiversity implementation plans, research programmes and DCS database management. He also led development of policy related to sustainable deer management – unified data, competence and welfare.

He did a year-long Royal Society postdoctoral fellowship with the Macaulay Institute and the University of Sydney, and from 1998–2001 was wildlife ecologist with the Scottish Agricultural College. From 1994–1998 Mike was a researcher with the Wildlife Conservation Unit at the University of Oxford. Before that he was wildcat project officer with SNH and he also did consultancy work in Scotland on the suitability of sites for reintroduction of the beaver, and the impact of red deer browsing.

Mike has a comprehensive record of publication in scientific reports, books, reviews and other publications. He was born in St Andrews and is married with two young children

BILL WALLACE GRANT—THE WINNERS TELL THEIR STORIES

The three expeditions who benefited from the 2007 Bill Wallace Grants set out, and returned, successfully.



● **Laura Balfour**, from Blanefield Stirlingshire, defied the odds to complete a two-month study of breeding turtles in Kenya wearing a back brace! Undeterred by a severe back injury before she set out, Laura (above, complete with brace) helped local efforts to improve the breeding success of the turtles in the area. She

said: 'The Bill Wallace Grant exists to support those displaying "stoicism, determination and commitment". Although in my case I'm fairly sure it's more like downright stubbornness!'

- A group of 17 Girl Guide leaders, organised by **Suzie McGuiggan** from Glasgow, went trekking high into the Himalayas to carry out community and educational work. The women clocked up more than 800 hours of volunteer work including teaching first aid, painting classroom walls and laying paving slabs. Two of the party also summited Mera Peak (6476 m) and five others reached 6250 m.
- **Kirsty Maguire** was one of six Scottish women who went trekking and climbing in Arctic Greenland – see centre pages.

The Go and Do It! Bill Wallace Grant aims to encourage the same spirit of adventure, offering between £500–£2000 for independent expeditions to wild places. Expeditions must have an element of educational or scientific work.

The grant was set up following the sudden death in 2006 of Bill Wallace,

one of the John Muir Trust's guiding lights. Bill climbed extensively in Scotland and was involved in expeditions to South America, the Alps and Greenland in the 1950s.

Douglas moves on



Douglas Halliday, land manager, left the JMT at the end of January to work with the Forestry Commission based in Oban. Douglas was with us for four years and spent this time at the Trust's base of Clach Glas in Strathaird, mainly dealing with the management of our Skye and Li & Coire Dhorrcail properties. He played a key role in land management and helped out on other properties and partnership areas as well as inputting to land management policy.

Douglas wrote about his Himalayan expedition in the October 2005 Journal, and last year took part in an exchange programme with Iceland (see page 29).

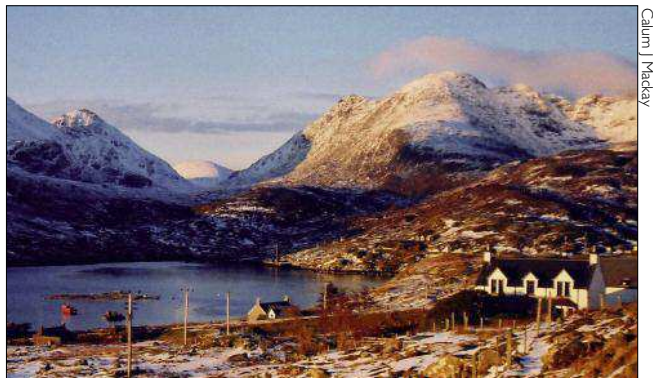
Gatliff news

Two of the Gatliff hostels in the Western Isles have had a change of warden. **Catherine Mackay** has taken over from her husband, Alasdair, at Rhenigidale on Harris. She was born in the village before it had vehicular access, and her uncle, the late Roddy MacInnes, owned the house before Herbert Gatliff acquired it in 1961 as a hostel.

Andy Stopforth has been warden at the Garenin hostel for a comparatively short period. However, he had time to make an impression on many hostellers as the proprietor of the Garenin Blackhouse Café and Restaurant, where his cooking is acclaimed!

Next Journal

The next JOURNAL will appear in October 2008.



Calum Mackay

North Harris community wind farm approved

THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST HAS WON PLANNING CONSENT for a community wind farm. Three 86-metre turbines can now be sited at Monan, three miles NW of Tarbert. The proposal had been heading for a public inquiry until Scottish Natural Heritage withdrew its opposition in September 2007.

The JMT is an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme.

The turbines, sited below Clisham (799 m) the highest hill in the Western Isles, will affect the National Scenic Area of North Harris. However studies show they will be hidden from view from much of the island by the mountainous terrain.

'Turbines of this size are never going to be invisible' commented Mick Blunt, JMT's partnership manager, who works closely with the North Harris Trust, 'but their visual impact will be nothing like that of the huge schemes proposed for the neighbouring island of Lewis – and all the profits from this project will return to the local community.'

'We are over the moon to hear that this development now has full planning permission,' said David Cameron, a director of the North Harris Trust. 'It will substantially reduce our carbon emissions and it will help North Harris re-establish itself as a thriving, vibrant community.'

Revenue from the scheme will encourage new business and address the area's chronic employment and housing problems.

- The JMT supports the development of small-scale, sensitively sited wind developments which demonstrate that renewable energy may be sourced without significantly impacting on wild land.



SCOTLAND has some of the largest areas of dark sky in Western Europe. The current Dark Sky Scotland programme, led by the Royal Observatory Edinburgh and the Forestry Commission Scotland, is the world's first nationwide initiative to harness the value of a country's dark skies – for education, community and tourism.

The programme of events and awareness runs until 31 March, after which it is hoped to extend it to a UK-wide audience.

Observing the night sky is an elemental outdoor community experience, and space technology

provides new perspectives on the Earth and insights into our environmental challenges.

The John Muir Trust has been invited to become a partner in the Dark Sky initiative. We'd like to identify a volunteer John Muir Trust member to take a lead in developing the partnership. Ideally based in the Edinburgh region, he or she will have the potential to build links with Trust properties and partners, John Muir Award participants, and our conservation work parties.

One Dark Sky happening will be in Knoydart, where the community is hosting a Dark Sky event on 7 and 8 March run by the Royal Observatory.

- Please contact Sam Baumber, recruit@jmt.org, 0131-554 0114 if you're interested in volunteering. More at www.darkskscotland.org.uk



Tom Adde

Glasgow group get to know Fair-haired Duncan of the Songs

John Donohoe writes—Members and friends from Glasgow and West of Scotland were entertained in November when Ian R Mitchell, mountaineer, historian and author of such classics as *Mountain Days and Bothy Nights* and *Scotland's Mountains before the Mountaineers* presented an illustrated talk on the life and work of Duncan MacIntyre, Donnachadh Ban nan Oran, fair-haired Duncan of the Songs.

He described Duncan's short-lived and inglorious military career in the Campbell-raised Argyll militia at the battle of Falkirk in 1746, his rusty sword the reason for his headlong flight from the Jacobite charge. Campbell of Breadalbane gave the reluctant hero a post as gamekeeper, mainly in Auch Glen, beneath Ben Dorain (above). This hill was the subject of his best known poem *Moladh Beinn Dorain*, in which he praised the mountain and its wildlife, including the foxes which attacked the hated sheep that were displacing the inhabitants and their way of life. Ironically Duncan Ban's house in the Auch Glen, ais an t-Sidhean, is now used as a sheep farm.



Illiterate in English and Gaelic, Duncan composed and could recite from memory hundreds of poems; some much loved and later taught in schools in the Highlands. He moved to Edinburgh to a post in the City Guard, where his chief contribution to civic order was supplying the illicit whisky made by his devoted wife, Mairi Bhan. He died in 1812 and is buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard (left).

Further recognition of the poet came with the world premiere of an epic symphonic poem, *Praise of Ben Dorain*, a theme suggested to the composer Ronald Stevenson by Hugh MacDiarmid more than 50 years ago. The work was performed on 19 January in the City Halls Glasgow, by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and a chorus from Scottish Opera, as part of the Celtic Connections Festival.

Ian Mitchell has produced a pamphlet on Duncan and his life, available from the author, price £2.50. Contact details from john.donohoe1@btinternet.com.

- Group contacts: Mike Gray 01360 550962, Heather Willimott 01360 311304. More events on page 28.

Goodbye to Torlundy bog

The missing link in Ben Nevis's Allt a' Mhuilinn path, which goes from Torlundy into Coire Leis, was opened in December by Cameron McNeish. It follows the acquisition of Chapman's Wood by Forestry Commission Scotland, and is funded through the Nevis Partnership of which the John Muir Trust is a member. The new route replaces one lower section of the old path that went through what seemed to those who suffered it a near-vertical bog.

Local contractors Chris Cairns of Conserve and Alex Grant rebuilt the 1750 m long path section, which rises 225 m along its length.



Fife air cadets: Ground Force or Air Force?

FIFE AIR CADETS are supporting the John Muir Award by selling their conservation services for a day to the highest bidder. If you're looking for serious help with a litter cleanup, tree planting, footpaths, bridges or ponds or clearing an area of rhododendrons, they're still open to offers for a day's work on any 'wild place' within 2 hours drive of Fife.

On recent conservation projects they have planted over 7000 trees and extracted over 40 tonnes of timber as part of managing a local woodland. Two full-day projects last year at Cardenden Woodland in Fife saw them construct two bridges (above) and resurface extended lengths of footpath.

The cadet group have been using the Award for seven years to help celebrate the achievements of their volunteers of all ages and backgrounds.

If you're interested in using them, *note that bids close on 3 March!* Find out more at www.fifeaircadetsconservationgroup.co.uk, or contact Rebecca on the John Muir Award team, eastscotland@johnmuiraward.org or 0845 458 2910. You'll not only be getting assistance with a conservation task but helping support both organisations.

New communicator

Welcome to **Jamie Grant**, who worked as our part-time communications officer late last year, and has now joined the staff on a year's contract, on a three days a week basis. Jamie is highly experienced in communications, having worked for WWF Scotland for three years and then for four years as a freelance journalist, campaigner and photographer. Jamie has already made a big difference to our media profile.

continue to develop and reach its full potential as an event that will entertain, enlighten and inspire all those with an interest in the wild and mountainous regions of this world. And it's great that we can also support the Trust through the event.'

The EMFF is currently running a photography competition and the best entries will be displayed at the 2008 festival, which will run from 17-19 October.

● www.edinburghmountainff.com.

Dùn Coilich news

Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust, which looks after Dùn Coilich, the estate to the SE of Schiehallion, will be opening a new development early this year. Their 'observation and educational facility' will combine an observation room overlooking the scrapes, and an information centre with educational material on the geology, archaeology, history and natural history of Dùn Coilich.

The trust hope to erect the building in the spring, or before if the weather allows.

In the meantime they are drawing up information sheets on archaeology, history, geology and many aspects of the natural history of Dùn Coilich.

Inhouse ad

Love the wild?

Membership Journal 07.pdf

1% for the planet towards wild land

The Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival, as part of the '1% for the Planet' group, has made the John Muir Trust the primary beneficiary for a percentage of its turnover.

At its fifth festival last October, the EMFF raised £400 for the JMT as one of its two nominated charities, alongside the Mountain Rescue Committee for Scotland.

The EMFF has also joined the Trust as a new Bronze Corporate Member. Festival director **Stevie Christie** is glad to be putting something back; 'Working with the John Muir Trust, the festival can

Wildland Project one year on



Liz Auty writes—We are approaching the end of a good first year of the Wildland Project. The staff now settled in to their roles are wildland rangers Ally Macaskill (Ben Nevis and Schiehallion, pictured), Don O'Driscoll (Quinag and Sandwood) and Lester Standen (Skye and Knoydart), and biodiversity officer Liz Auty, based at Tower House in Pitlochry. This office is now a records centre for the Trust with data storage including an AditSite biological database.

The first stalking season saw successfully increased culls on several properties. Vegetation and wildlife monitoring has been set up on all the estates and will be continued by both rangers and volunteers. It includes formal surveys as well as records of species seen on site. We can't expect to see instant results, but the vegetation monitoring that is now in place, in particular looking at the growth of tree seedlings, should show some positive results soon. We are looking forward to a busy spring and summer of monitoring flora and fauna on Trust land.

Munchatreeaforest—the movie

Ten children from Knoydart aged between 4 and 9 have made a film called Munchatreeaforest, about a forest regeneration scheme in the peninsula and the effect it has on the children's lives.

Their film was nominated for a National First Light Movies Award, under which it is one of only three films in the Best Film By Under 12s category, and the only Scottish one of the three.

You can get Munchatreeaforest on DVD by contacting Grant Holroyd at forest@knoydart.org or on 01687 462560. It's £6.50 post paid.

The 30,000 tick box

Marianne James updates us on the Scottish Lyme disease and tick survey—We would like to thank all the members of the JMT who emailed or wrote to us last year telling us about their tick experiences and cases of Lyme disease. This information helped us go out over the summer and collect ticks from 16 sites throughout Scotland, from small mammals, birds, deer and from the vegetation. In fact

over 30,000 ticks were counted this summer!

We would like to now appeal for anyone who has been unfortunate enough to contract Lyme disease either this summer or in any previous year to contact us to fill in a short survey.

Please either: complete the questionnaire at www.macaulay.ac.uk/lyme, or email marianne.james@abdn.ac.uk, or write to me at Zoology Building, University of Aberdeen, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen, AB11 8BU. Thanks!



Dragging for ticks.

tido

Tiso-JMT[190x130].pdf



NIGEL'S NOTES

With Nigel Hawkins, Chief Executive

HELPING US TO BE A LEADING AUTHORITY ON WILD LAND

Chief Scientific Officer appointed

THE TRUST HAS TAKEN A SIGNIFICANT STEP forward in developing its role as the leading authority on wild land conservation through the appointment of its first chief scientific officer.

Trustees consider it is important that the Trust can speak to politicians and other decision makers on wild land conservation with authority and be able to present a very robust case in support of safeguarding and enhancing wild land.

With the threats of the impacts of climate change this is more important than ever and there is a need for the Trust to be able to engage fully in the national debate on global warming.

Our new chief scientific officer is Mike Daniels who has excellent experience in a number of fields highly relevant to his new post, and joins us from the Deer Commission for Scotland.

The appointment is part of a new arrangement with the Trustees of the 50,000 acre Corroul estate – a large area of outstanding wild land lying at the very heart of Scotland. The Corroul Trust is fully funding the chief scientific officer post for three years and Mike will give advice to the estate's Environmental Management Board on the implementation of a very imaginative and significant biodiversity framework for the estate as well as advising JMT on biodiversity action plans for all its estates.

The John Muir Trust already works closely with several community owners of wild land and this new move represents a new chapter in working closely with private owners of equally fine wild land. Most of the wild land in Scotland is under private ownership and so it is important that the Trust develops opportunities for influencing management in ways which safeguard and enhance wild land.

Trustees are very grateful to the owners of Corroul for this opportunity to input to the management of Corroul while at the same enabling the Trust to make a

senior appointment to a new post which will help to position the Trust as the country's leading authority on wild land conservation.

Minister's visit

Mr Mike Russell MSP, Environment Minister in the new Scottish Government, visited the Trust's offices in Pitlochry in January.

He toured the offices and then took part in a stimulating discussion about the importance of wild land and wild places. The Trust took the opportunity to show how wild land played a key part in delivering on the Government's objectives for a greener and healthier Scotland.

There was a great deal of common ground and agreement on many issues. It is clear that the Government does greatly value the wild land of Scotland and appreciates its importance environmentally, socially and economically. A number of opportunities for inputting into Government thinking and discussion were identified and ways for continuing this important dialogue were identified.

Mountain of evidence

The public inquiry into the proposals by Scottish and Southern Energy for a major upgrade of the power line from Beaully to Denny has come to an end after nearly a year of evidence from objectors and supporters.

The Trust presented major opposition to the upgrade which will create giant pylons up to twice the size of the existing pylons striding across the Highlands from north to south. We questioned the need for the upgrade and with the help of expert witnesses proposed alternatives such as sub-sea cables by the west or east coast or an extension of the existing major east coast landward line.

We worked together with five other organisations through the Beaully Denny Landscape Group chaired by our policy officer Helen McDade with our case being presented by solicitor Walter Semple who afterwards

was elected as a Trustee of the John Muir Trust.

It was the biggest planning inquiry of its kind ever held in Scotland presided over not by one but by three inquiry reporters. It is expected they will take up to a year to weigh up the mountain of evidence and present their findings and recommendations to Ministers who will take the final decision.

Thanks

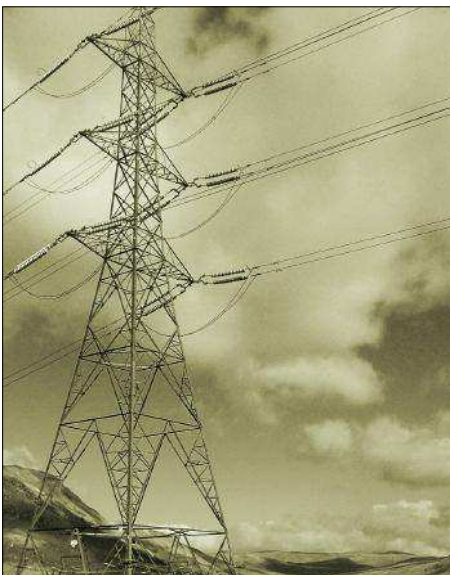
I would like to thank everyone who helped in the organisation of the Trust's adventure activities programme which has come to an end after 11 years.

The programme was built on the dedication of volunteers, partner organisations and staff and was an exemplar of how a combination of exploration, conservation and good leadership can be a powerful and enriching experience for participants. This has been reflected in the excellent feedback from those involved.

In a recent review, the Trustees of the John Muir Trust, aware of the risks of the Trust overstretching its operations, decided to streamline our work to concentrate on land management, policy and education delivered through the John Muir Award. Trustees were also aware there were other providers of experiences in wild places.

With expressions of regret, Trustees decided that 2007 would be the last year of the programme.

We are still keen that people have the opportunity to volunteer with the Trust for conservation activities. We also continue to support outdoor activity enterprises that live and work in wild places and provide enriching experiences. If you are interested please visit our website to find out about volunteer opportunities with the Trust and activities with outdoor activity providers.



'We questioned the need for the upgrade and proposed alternatives... it was the biggest inquiry of its kind ever held in Scotland'



Maude Tiso and Katie Jackson



Farewell to a mighty threesome

We are bidding farewell to three stalwarts of the John Muir Trust who are departing after more than 15 years each of involvement with the Trust.

All of them made an outstanding contribution to its development during that time and helped to make it the organisation it is today. However, although they are leaving they are all so committed to the Trust that I am sure they will continue to be great supporters and fierce advocates for it in the years ahead.

Maude Tiso has been a Trustee since 1992 and has been a distinctive voice in the organisation both at board meetings and a host of other meetings and events she attended for the Trust.

She brought her deep love of wild places to our discussions and added her great zest and passion to all our deliberations. Maude felt it was vital that the Trust took positive steps to redress the loss of our woodland cover and all the richly diverse wildlife it should support.

She is a great traveller having been to all seven continents and brought her great knowledge of wild places across the globe to our benefit while at the same time drawing on her great experience of walking and climbing in this country.

She joined the board following the death of her husband Graham who was also a Trustee. Maude and Graham set up the outdoor equipment and clothing retailer Tiso which has given fantastic support to the Trust for more than 20 years. Not least has been the provision of our office in Edinburgh currently housed in Tiso's headquarters at 41 Commercial Street, Leith.

Maude's business acumen combined with her great knowledge of the wild made her a formidable Trustee and proponent of the John Muir Trust. She helped particularly with fundraising and staff matters and was a key member of both the development group and the staff committee. We are all very grateful to her for the amazing contribution she has made to this organisation.

Continued over

Nigel's Notes, *continued*

Also leaving after 15 years was **Katie Jackson**, our Promotions and Information Officer, and longest serving member of staff. Katie was a very popular member of our staff team and absolutely imbued with the ethos of the Trust.

She has a great love of the outdoors which came across in all her work for the Trust whether it was preparing publications, handling the increasing range of merchandise, arranging events and exhibitions or giving her very distinctive and personal talks to members and the public. She played a key part in producing very attractive leaflets supporting our membership recruitment activities and fundraising appeals, and in preparing the excellent displays of information about the Trust.

Katie and her husband Iain and their daughter Jill are planning to set up home in Ullapool and I am sure they will continue to take a great interest in the Trust's activities.

The third stalwart to leave was **Keith Miller**, our senior conservationist, who played a huge part in developing the conservation activity of the John Muir Trust on our own properties and further afield.

Keith was extremely popular with members and our work parties, and to many people he was the John Muir Trust epitomising our very ethos and way of doing things. He has an infectious enthusiasm for everything to do with wild places and it is a delight to be out in the hills and wild places with him.

Keith (pictured right on the Journey for the Wild) wrote the first management plan for Strathaird estate on Skye, our largest property, which set the standard for all our management plans. He has great expertise on mountain paths and applied this to the maintenance of paths on our properties and gave us the confidence to tackle the major

project for the re-alignment and restoration of the Schiehallion path

Keith has set up his own consultancy Mountain Environment bringing his huge local and international experience to a wide range of clients including the Trust.

We wish him and his partner Mo all the very best for the future.

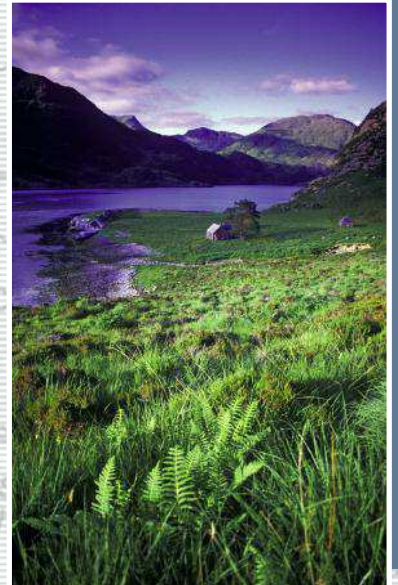


gift member.pdf
'The Gift of Wildness'

ROADS TO KNOYDART

(WITH A LITTLE LATERAL THINKING)

KEITH GRIFFITHS on SCOTWAYS, the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society



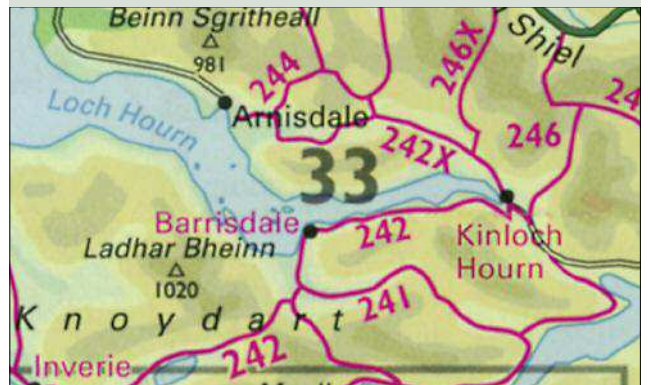
THE FANCY TAKES YOU to go to Knoydart, but you eschew the Mallaig boat for the joys of the long walk in, so what are the options? OS map 33 looks pretty scary, rock symbols everywhere and some Hydro flooded paths, so maybe better stick to the tried and tested walk in from Kinloch Hourn along the south side of Loch Hourn, and then over the Mam Barrisdale to Inverie, but that sounds scenic but a bit tame? At this point the old codger with a bobble hat and a pipe sitting quietly in a corner of your sub-conscious coughs in a self-deprecating manner and suggests you take down from the shelf *Scottish Hill Tracks*, that book you bought one Tiso's club discount night when the red shopping mists descended but have since forgotten. Not wanting to offend the codger (who might come in useful one day in a whiteout when you can't quite make sense of the map) you comply. A map falls out of the back; and joy follows.

The relevant corner of Scotland is seen to be positively hoaching with numbered red lines. 242 looks spookily like what you were thinking of, but what about 241 (and are you seeing double). With trembling fingers you search for the text and read on.

Well it appears you can walk in to Inverie by umpteen ways. From KLH you can indeed follow plan A (aka route 242) along the loch to Barrisdale and then over the Mam, but the other options! Route 241 is seen to be three routes in one, depending on the state of your boots and the Abhainn Chosaidh, and any of these would give a fine walk in really wild country. Or you could walk in from Strathan beyond Loch Arkaig by route 238 (maybe taking in 237). And once you're in Knoydart there's route 240 for a tootle on a quiet day.

Being a keen JMT member, your eye scans the map to other areas and there are other red lines in areas you know. Route 317 seems to skirt Quinag, 137 is a short cut to the west of Schiehallion, the Skye properties are criss-crossed by 279 and 280, 219 follows the Glen Nevis

Above the house at Runival on the S shore of Loch Hourn, near to route 242. ©John Cleare/Mountain Camera Picture Library



Mapping ©Collins Bartholomew Ltd 2004

Gorge route and ends up at Corroul Station; and the other possibilities are endless; Lairigs and Mams all over the place.

Who has produced this cornucopia of possibilities? – it bears to be The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society – the Sunday name of Scotways.

Who they? Well Scotways was founded in the 1840s when the increasing popularity of countryside access led to clashes with landowners. Its first major test was the so-called Battle of Glen Tilt, leading to a court case vindicating the public's right of way through that glen. Since then Scotways has been at the forefront of maintaining public rights of access, and was an enthusiastic proponent of the access aspects of the current Land Reform legislation.

By definition public rights of way must link two public places (sadly the top of a Munro probably doesn't qualify) so the routes in *Scottish Hill Tracks*, many of which are typical of the rights of way which Scotways protected in the past, tend to go round rather than up things – much more attractive for the geriatric hill-walker.

Continued over



Throughout their history Scotways have been blessed or cursed with an over-representation of lawyers among members and office-bearers, because of which (or despite which) they have a reputation for taking a balanced view of access issues, unlike other bodies whose activities sometimes seem rooted in class warfare. For example Scotways held the unpopular view that there was previously no enforceable 'right to roam' in Scotland, which is why they were keen to support the Land Reform legislation. As part of that process they made representations on the legislation and Access Code while it was going through the Scottish Parliament, leading to clarification in some important respects, although unfortunately Parliament chose to ignore Scotways' warning that the Access Code as drafted had strayed beyond its remit under

the Act, something which became relevant in the recent Gloag case.

So has the land reform legislation made Scotways redundant? I became a Director quite recently after the legislation was passed, so I've been persuaded that it hasn't.

Public rights of way are still very relevant, not least because they apply over ground excluded from statutory access rights (eg they can run right in front of houses).

Scotways maintains a catalogue of public rights of way (known as CROW), which is regarded as the most authoritative source of information on such rights. Solicitors dealing with rural property often consult Scotways to check whether a property is affected by such rights.

The society acts as a clearing-house for information on public rights of way throughout Scotland. It has published several editions of the aforementioned *Scottish Hill Tracks*, and the less racy *Law Guide* came out in 2006. Regular updates are provided to Scottish local authorities and other arms of government on the latest developments in the law, chiefly court cases arising under the recent legislation.

Scotways' latest venture is the recently launched Heritage Paths Project, seeking to raise awareness of the rich heritage of Scotland's paths and tracks. This 3-year effort, supported by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, will enable people to find out more about their heritage at the same time as enjoying the outdoors.

The project will identify and research heritage paths and record them in a national database with information about their history and heritage value as well as path surveys and maps.

Scotways is run on a very limited budget, with a small number of staff assisted by a large number of volunteers. Many JMT members will already be members or supporters of Scotways, but more will always be welcome – details of how you can join or help can be found on www.scotways.com.

- *Keith Griffiths, JMT's Hon Treasurer, is a Director of Scotways. This article gives his personal views, and does not represent the views of either JMT or Scotways.*

Berghaus ad:
JMT recycled fleece advert .pdf



A DAY AT THE HIND CULL

The wild land we strive to protect is vulnerable. One threat comes from red deer. The lack of any significant natural predator and a preference for some estates to maintain populations at high densities has led to a loss of woodland through their continual browsing of young trees. The Trust's most ambitious venture to date, the Wild Land Project, is – among other things – tackling it by reducing deer numbers.

The campaign will restore biodiversity to a more natural balance and will ultimately improve the habitats the deer need to thrive sustainably.

Carefully co-ordinated culls have been carried out on all JMT estates along with extensive monitoring of vegetation. Although shooting deer may sound simple, it's not a job for the faint hearted as LESTER STANDEN, one of our Wild Land project team, reports.

TODAY THE WEATHER IS REALLY FOUL, the wind is blowing from the south west and rain is battering the side of the van. It's nine o'clock in the morning and still hardly light. I've decided to stalk in the woods at Keppoch, as in this kind of weather I'd expect deer to be sheltering there. Keppoch is a spruce plantation in Strathaird on Skye and is a good fallback for stalking when it isn't possible to stalk on the open hill. Although the rain is unavoidable, in the trees it is relatively calm and possible to approach deer quite closely without them being aware of your presence.

I park the van and check through my kit. I feel for my knife, that it's in its sheath on my belt, I zip up my binoculars inside my jacket, oil my rifle, load up two five-round magazines, one of which is put into my pocket as a spare and the other clipped onto the rifle, I sling a rope over my shoulder and set off.

I have parked out of sight of the wood and I intend to stay out of sight until I have scanned it. I climb a stile over a deer fence and keep below a low ridge heading parallel to it. The rain is pelting me from behind and the

wind is buffeting and pushing me forward. I walk on and up for half a mile before I decide to crest the ridge. I get down into the peaty moss and slither forward. Water soaks into my clothing around my arms, legs and stomach. A few yards of slithering and I can peer through some heather to see the edge of the wood. I pull the binoculars out of my jacket and try to focus them whilst scanning the edge of the wood, the lenses instantly steam up and the rain finishes off any hope of seeing anything. At least I tried. Still conscious that I may be seen, I slither

Sometimes I lose the trail and have to go back again... sometimes when I can't find it at all I have to get into the head of a deer and ask myself which way I'd go.

backwards until I am hidden again by the ridge, then I get up and walk on. I walk up into the mist and into obscurity. Hidden from the world, I gradually turn through 180 degrees until I am facing the wood and approach slowly through the mist.

Scanning the wood again, I see no deer so I move forward and enter

beneath the dark, dripping spruce trees. It is virtually dark in here and it takes a while for eyes to become accustomed to the gloom.

Slowly I move forward, bending low to avoid the branches that stick out and are so keen to cling to me, my rifle carried at the ready for an instant reaction. The ground is steep and each footstep wants to slide sideways. I am intensely alert, keeping my eyes open, peering forward and to the sides, listening to all the sounds, the dripping of the rain and the wind whipping the tops of the trees. I walk forward in this way for awhile and time has lost all meaning as I concentrate, observe and listen. Suddenly a thud and a glimpse of movement for a couple of seconds, then just the sounds of the wind and the rain again.

I move forward only a few feet and find the place where a couple of deer were standing, their slot marks clearly visible where they took off from. I'm a bit annoyed that I didn't see them first, but quite pleased

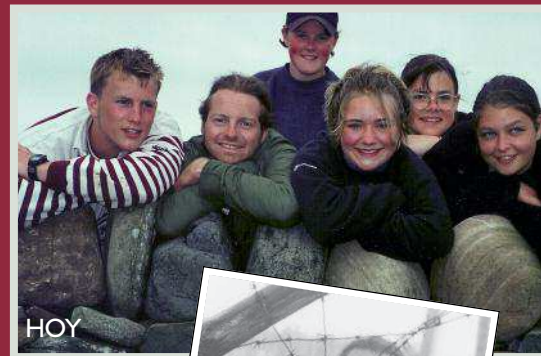
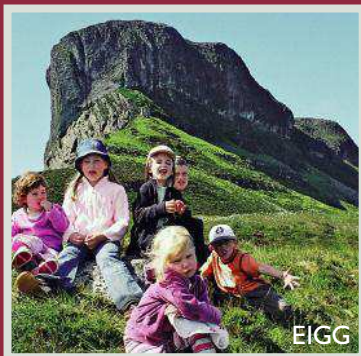
I got so close to them before they saw me. I set off following their trail, peering at their slot marks in the darkness. They've run a long way through the wood and it takes a long time to follow. Sometimes I lose the trail and have to go back again and look with more care, and sometimes when I can't find it at all I have to get into the head of a deer and ask myself which way I'd go. I find this method effective and creeping forward see two hinds, facing away from me with their heads down and grazing in a ride only 40 yards away.

At this distance deer don't give you a second chance. Lying in mud, I align the crosshairs on one of them, just behind the shoulder. The safety catch is off and I'm ready to squeeze the trigger, the hind lifts her head and looks around at me, her black eyes staring. I watch for three seconds then squeeze the trigger... BANG! They're gone. I get to my feet and go over to where they were standing. Looking down I see the slot marks leading off and I follow. She's only gone 20 yards and is lying dead.

I roll up my sleeves and slide my knife into the base of her neck, warm coagulating blood flows over my freezing hands and onto the forest floor mixing with the peat and spruce needles. I carefully gralloch the deer but blood still splashes out onto my trousers and face. The heart is soft and floppy: it means she died relaxed. A solid heart would mean she was stressed and pumped full of adrenalin; I wouldn't want that.

I tie a rope to her forelegs, making a half hitch around her neck and another over her nose. Slinging my rifle over my back I head off along the ride, my feet sinking and sliding in the soft slushy peat, dragging her behind me through the pouring rain.

LIFE-CHANGING ACTIVITIES



On the closure of the Activities Programme, DAVID PICKEN looks back.

BACK IN 1995 I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH to be recruited by the Trust to develop the John Muir Award. An adventure with Peter Wright in the same year to Rackwick Bay on the Island of Hoy, Orkney piloted the John Muir Award and was the start of the Summer Residential Programme.

This programme was targeted at 16–24 year olds with 20% of participants from socially excluded backgrounds. It offered a diverse range of experiences in wild places. They were led by skilled volunteers and aimed to ‘leave no trace’ and have a positive impact on the environment.

On request we expanded the programme to include specialist adult trips such as geology and sea kayaking. This helped subsidise the young people’s programme and provided larger financial contributions to the communities that live in wild places.

Our leaders and partner organisations also developed families trips and journeys for those with disabilities. In total some 1500 participants and 300 leaders have been involved in 135 trips.

Venues

We aimed for venues that were outside JMT’s normal sphere of influence. This enabled us to spread the word of the Trust far and wide across the UK, visiting over 60 different wild places and working with 250 organisations. These places when drawn on the map acted as the catalyst for the Journey for the Wild in 2006.

We also ventured overseas working with the USA, Canadian and Spanish national parks. A youth exchange with Finland and Russia enabled participants to be involved in removing some of the Iron Curtain when exploring the Paanjärvi national park in Russian Karelia.

People

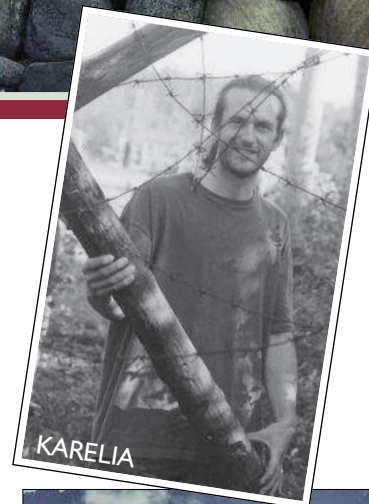
From day one the feedback from participants was consistently high. An incredible 97% of people marked the trips 8/10 or over, with 50% of participants rating the experience as 10/10. Many claimed positive life changing experiences. A bold statement supported by four independent university research studies that linked the experience with emotional and behavioural change.

The place, the people, the activity were part of the mix. However, great leadership made the experience exceptional. Over the years this was provided by volunteers, staff and partner organisations. This has been helped by the hard work put in by all the programme co-ordinators who have juggled logistics and maintained a high standard of safety; the never ending enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers and staff; and partner organisations being prepared to try something different and support the work of the Trust. I cannot thank them all enough for their hard work and dedication in making every trip such a success.

Future

There are still opportunities to get involved with conservation work parties on Trust properties. There are other providers of good outdoor experiences. My recommendation is to look for one that offers a holistic experience, an experience that gives you the opportunity to put something back rather than just learn a new skill or make use of the natural environment. It is also worth making sure that your money is spent in these economic marginal communities.

It has been a great pleasure for me to be involved in the programme from the start. I have had the opportunity to work in some wonderful wild places and be inspired by those people that have led, hosted and participated in the programme.



THEY SAID...

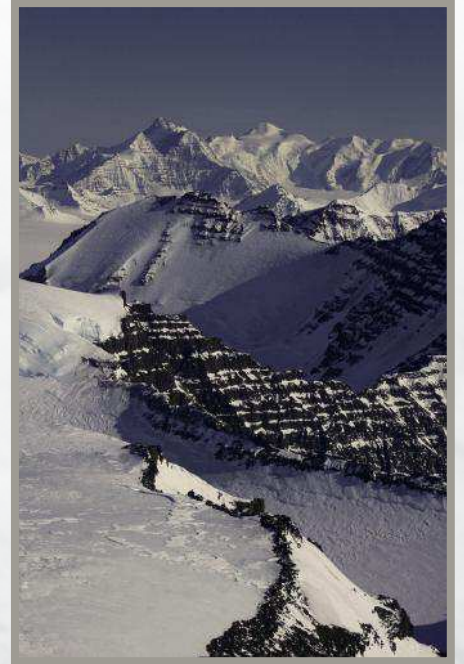
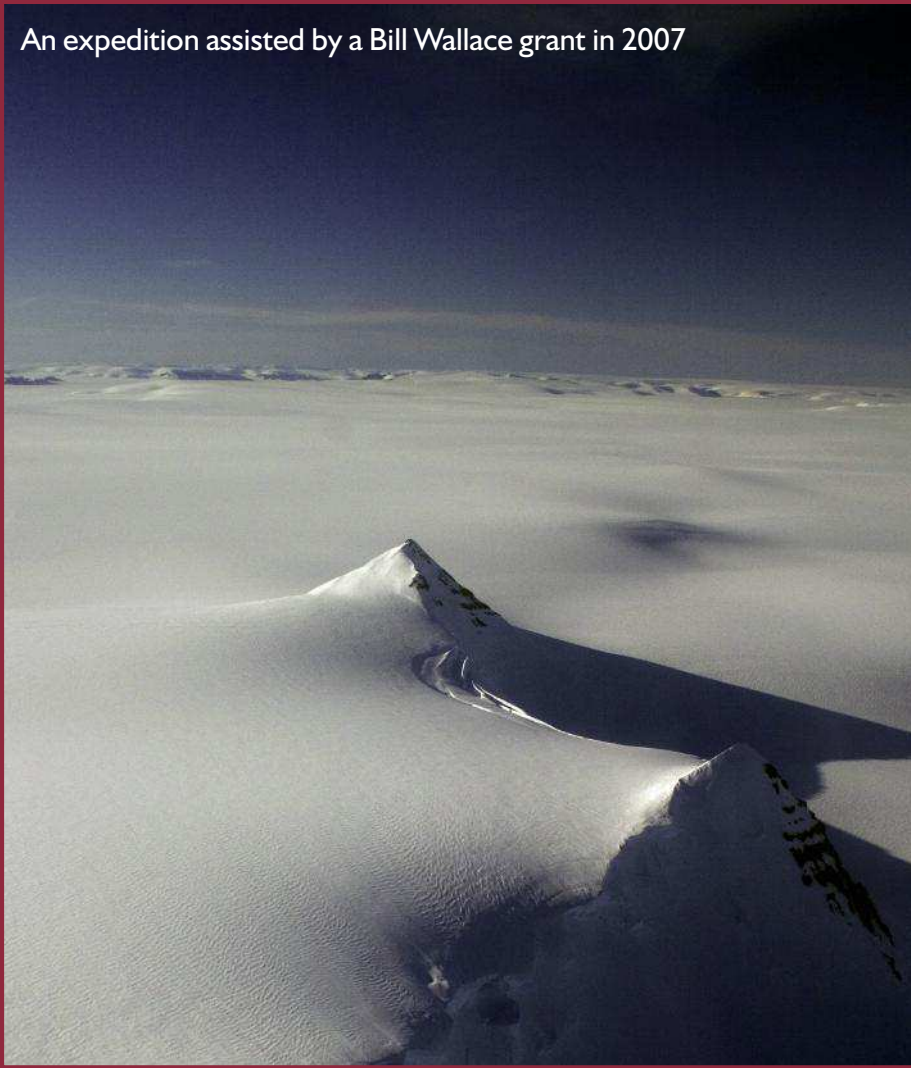
■ *I feel as though a true understanding of wilderness has just been awakened.*

■ *Thank you for organising such a thought-provoking and rewarding trip. I had the privilege of participating in the Sandwood Bay trip and I was amazed by the beauty and character of such a remote place! There were magical moments each day.*

■ *The meeting of people with an ethos to life that I admire; and a wealth of skills that I have enjoyed learning about, while being able to give something back to the special place that we have come to know.*



An expedition assisted by a Bill Wallace grant in 2007



Turning this ambition into a reality was assisted by a generous donation from the Bill Wallace 'Go and Do It' fund. Thank you.





WHITE NOISE

Kirsty Maguire, assisted by a 2007 Bill Wallace Grant, was one of six Scottish women on a month's trekking and climbing expedition in Greenland.

I was inspired to travel to East Greenland by seeing photos my great-uncle, Douglas Scott, took in the 1950s and 1970s. After years of dreaming and many months of planning, on 5 May last year, I stepped out of a Twin Otter onto a huge glacier in the Sortebrae mountains in East Greenland. I was, quite literally, blinking – as the sunlight made the snow twinkle and the immense scale and pristine landscape turned from pictures in my mind into a reality. For a very long time I had tried to imagine what it would actually feel like in a sea of white, in temperatures down to -20 degrees C, 1000 km from home, with only five other women, some unclimbed peaks and a very large ice cap for company.

The landscape is truly spectacular, with snowy mountains stretching in all directions. The air is so clear, judging distance is very difficult and several times I set off on a journey, only to realise that some plan revision was required to understand the scale of the mountains. During our trip, we climbed 13 mountains, 12 of them previously unclimbed, ski toured between camps and explored several valleys. For part of the trip, we split into two groups, with two of us ski touring up to the icecap and climbing there for a week, and the others choosing to climb the highest mountain in the area.

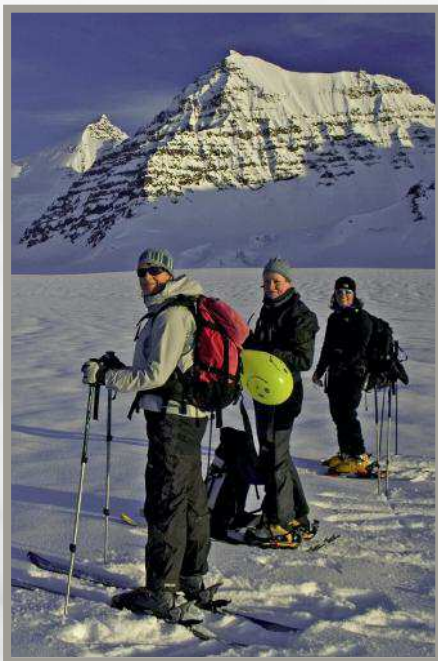
One of the most lasting impressions of spending so long there is the quality of the silence. In good weather, it is so still that I could hear my own heart beating, a single bird call got all of us rushing out of our tents (we didn't see the bird, it was flying too high) and a helicopter was heard two mountain ranges away.

In that type of silence, small sounds become so much more pronounced and define activities, weather conditions and the time of day. The squeak of snow under boots indicates that it is pretty cold out there. Footsteps brushing through powder snow sound like wind in dry grasses whereas, later in the trip when it got warmer, stepping through melting snow sounded like walking through damp sugar. And when that icy slush layer froze, it crunched like dry cornflakes. This refrozen snow indicated 'night time', as it was 24 hour daylight and the sun ran in circles above us, almost as though it was a bit of a joke.

During the day, when the snow and ice are melting, snow and rock avalanches tumble down the cliffs, rumbling and crashing, with cold 'night' bringing refreezing - silencing cliffs, but bringing the creaking of the moving glacier on which we are camped. Around camp, the roar of a stove indicates hot water. And everything zips – sleeping bags, inner and outer jackets, fleeces, tent inners and tent fly sheets. To get out everything has to be unzipped, and to get back inside, all zipped up again.

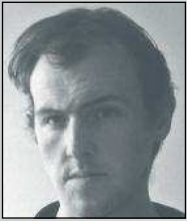
But when the wind arrives, not only does the temperature plummet, but the silence departs. In general, we had good weather during our trip, but we were tent bound for seven days, with one day in the eye of the storm. During this time the tent flaps endlessly and millions of ice crystals are hurled against the fly sheet, sounding like vigorous rustling of a thin plastic bag. There is no escape. Going outside in a storm gives a different flapping sound as my jacket and hat flap against my ears. Not that being outside for any length of time is anything but a battle against the cold, so it's straight back inside to listen to the tent and the 'plastic bag rustle'. As the gusts blow through or the wind lessens, it can be measured by listening. And when it stops completely it leaves a ringing in my ears and a return to silence.

A silence that is not golden, but white – with an inspiring twinkle.



From top and L-R Windy weather; Greenland ridge lines; view from the summit; travelling by ski was safer and easier; the expedition six; room with a view; moving camp; setting off for a night's climbing.
All photos © Kirsty Maguire.





'Gathering more to our cause'

A message to members
from SAM BAUMBER, our new Membership Manager

I was inspired to join the John Muir Trust as a life member in 2004 after a life-changing experience in a wild place with the John Muir Award. The Trust's long-term vision and belief in commitment to nature and people moved me to make a similar lasting commitment to the Trust. In my time since, as coordinator of the Activities Programme and Journey for the Wild, I have enjoyed meeting and building friendships with many members from across the UK. I am privileged to now have the exciting task of gathering more members to our cause.

This is a new post and is charged with engaging John Muir Trust members in the work and life of the Trust, and with spreading our message more widely to recruit new members. I would like to start by encouraging members to come along to their local group, volunteer on the lands or behind the scenes, help us attract new members, and reach new audiences through the John Muir Award.

Your view is important for the future of the Trust, so do write in to the Journal, or attend the annual Members' Gathering and AGM, where there is the opportunity to debate issues and ideas with staff and Trustees. I look forward to working with such vibrant, active and diverse members.

NOMINATIONS for TRUSTEE ELECTIONS 2008

You can still stand for election and nominate others.

NOMINATIONS ARE INVITED FOR JMT TRUSTEES to serve for three years from 10 May 2008. Our constitution provides that five places will fall vacant for election or re-election this year.

The full board of Trustees usually meets five times per year - four meetings during the day in Edinburgh or Pitlochry and one weekend in the highlands and islands, when there is time available outdoors. Guidance notes and a nomination form are available from the Returning Officer at our Pitlochry office (Tower House, Station Road, Pitlochry PH16 5AN) or from the JMT website.

***The closing date for nominations is 10 March 2008.
Full details are on the inside front cover.***

John Muir Trust Corporate Members

Corporate Membership is vital. It helps us protect wild places, increase fauna and flora, run our educational John Muir Award and our conservation programmes. Huge thanks to the members below for their valued support.

Gold Corporate Members

Anatom

Berghaus

Enlightenment Media Ltd

First Group

Graham Tiso Limited

Haggis Adventures

Heart of the Lakes

J W Muir Group PLC

Mackie's of Scotland

Scottish & Newcastle plc

Silver Corporate Members

DMH Baird Lumsden

Bronze Corporate Members

Avendris

Carsten Fliieger.Fotografie

Dewar's World of Whisky

Do Good Advertising

Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival

Hay Nisbet Press Ltd

Highland Adventure Safaris

Jane Street Printing Company

Panda Print

Profitmaster Systems Ltd

Great partnerships – Great benefits

All these companies support the Trust through corporate membership and in return gain valuable promotional benefits. The Trust will tailor its corporate membership packages to suit your company, and we are always open to ideas.

Ask your employer to give us the opportunity to explore how we can work together. We will find the best way for you and your company to benefit in return.

Call us on 0131 554 0114, email fundraising@jmt.org – or visit www.jmt.org where there are full details of the scheme.

THE PROMISE OF THE DAY

25 YEARS OF THE JOHN MUIR TRUST REVIEWED



Photo by FERGUS MACKAY, Inverness. 'Taken at 6.45 am on a crisp morning in October. The profile of the Red Cuillin, especially Glamaig, is very distinctive so I kept it simple and allowed the long exposure, 7 min 30 sec, on the sky reflected in the bog pool to do the talking... finding a suitable bog pool in the pitch black was an interesting experience however!'

www.fmackayphotography.co.uk

25 YEARS — HOW HAVE WE DONE?

We asked a selection of those who've worked within and outside the Trust since 1983.

Three ideas that began it all

■ DENIS MOLLISON, one of the four founders of the John Muir Trust.

THERE WERE TIMES when it seemed that the need for a new trust, to conserve wild places for nature and people, was the only thing on which the four founders agreed.

For Nigel Hawkins and myself the need and the idea came largely from experience of Scottish hills, glens and islands.

Chris Brasher's home ground was Wales, though a winter journey across the northern highlands of Scotland in 1977 was also crucial.

Nick Luard contributed an international perspective.

Agreement centred on three ideas.

- First, the value of wild places for their own sake: a simple ethical idea, though one that until recently caused difficulties with human-centred charity legislation.
- Second, the value of wild places to people: for the enjoyment of being part of nature, for self-exploration, for recreation in its widest sense.
- Third, the entanglement of humans with 'wilderness' throughout our history, and hence

the need to work with other people, whether through education, or in working with those who make their living from wild places.

The John Muir Trust name came later on, when Chris came to Scotland to give lectures in honour of Percy Unna in November 1981. At a reception before the Edinburgh lecture, Chris and I discussed again the idea of a wild land trust. 'But you wouldn't name it after Unna', he commented.

'No', I answered, and added, pretty certain that the same thought was in both our minds, 'John Muir'.

'The need to communicate is greater than ever'

■ MAUDE TISO, a Trustee and a long-term personal and business supporter of the Trust.

IN 1983 AN ARTICLE in *The Observer* by the late Chris Brasher CBE alerted my late husband and myself to the proposed sale of the Knoydart Estate and the attendant threats if purchased by the Ministry of Defence. Not only would access be denied to walkers and mountaineers but the tiny community there would be marginalised or removed. The response to Chris' article was such

that the Ministry of Defence backed off. The power of the media to reach a wide audience is invaluable to any organisation.

For the John Muir Trust, where the threats to Wild Land keep changing, the need to communicate with as large an audience as possible is greater than ever. Recent threats have included ill-thought-out schemes for industrial-scale groupings of giant wind turbines near remote communities. These 200ft high windmills would not only be visually damaging to the wild landscape but, through the process of their erection, would destroy large tracts of bog moorland in the North West Highlands and Islands. These precious peat bogs are valued as the biggest carbon sink in Europe and as such should not be disturbed.

Throughout the past 25 years of change the John Muir Trust has kept a clear view of the overall picture, recognized which aspects would benefit or threaten its work, and gone forward boldly and efficiently to achieve much with the support of its members. An approach consistent with maintaining the success of a well-run business! Add a lasting love of mountains and a desire to put something back to understand my continuing commitment and enthusiasm for the John Muir Trust.

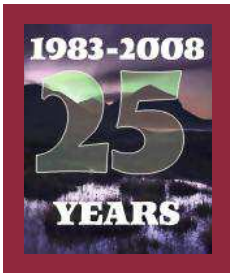
But there remains one area where the work of the Trust and other conservation organisations has, as yet, barely impacted: the natural regeneration of forest. These related statistics continue to trouble me:

Only 2 per cent of our native trees remain; in 1980 there were approximately 160,000 deer; in 2007 there were approximately 600,000 deer!

The next 25 years will be interesting.



Continued over



Continued from page 19

'The big challenge is to promote the value of ownership and conservation'

■ ANDREW ANDERSON, Head of the Community Land Unit, Highlands & Islands Enterprise Assynt Crofters Trust took ownership of 9000 hectares and 13 townships in 1993. The islanders of Eigg achieved ownership of their homeland in 1997, sowing the seed in Brian Wilson's mind to instruct Highlands and Islands Enterprise to create the Community Land Unit. Since then community organisations have taken ownership and control of many areas in the Highlands and Islands, and much of that land is internationally significant wilderness.

The community land owning sector is now a significant landowner in Scotland. Some key characteristics distinguish it from private landlords:

- Most, if not all, will have the objective to maintain and enhance the natural heritage enshrined in law in their Memorandum and Articles.
- The people who live and work on the land have shared ownership and belief in its welfare.
- The owners of the land have no intention of selling the property in the future, and thus actions such as increasing deer numbers to



Duncan MacPherson

Mountains of North Harris, in community ownership of the North Harris Trust.

increase valuation of the property will not take place.

These unique features ensure that land held by communities is in safe hands, and create opportunities for organisations with similar aims to work with them.

All this has happened since the formation of the John Muir Trust in 1983, and few would have believed in 1983 that community ownership could be considered a realistic option whenever an estate or island is on the market.

JMT has been an influential and helpful partner to several communities during the acquisition, and post-acquisition development, of some major community buyouts such as the North Harris Trust and the Assynt Foundation, and surely has an important role to play in the future in helping community landowners make the best of their assets for current and future generations.

The big challenge facing them, and I would suggest that it faces JMT as well, is to promote the value of ownership and conservation of wilderness areas so that it can be recognised as an economic and revenue earning asset which can contribute to the long term management of the land.

'Try to stay out of the mainstream of environmental groups'

■ DAVID CAMERON, Director, North Harris Trust.

Last Friday evening, I had the pleasure of being at the book launch of the story of the community purchase of North Harris, a purchase which involved financial and advisory input from the JMT. One of the speakers spoke about the wind of change he felt in Scotland and associated this with the empowering of communities.

JMT have the potential to contribute to this exciting period in our history and one part of their activity could be to continue to work with communities... stress the 'with'.

For centuries, Scotland and its people have been told what's good for them. It has made the Scottish psyche what it is, a mix of confidence anywhere on the globe and self-doubt at home. If you are Scottish, you know it... but we are changing, and belief in our own abilities is growing.

Against this background, the JMT needs to examine its role and position in the environmental world. The JMT has grown fast and perhaps the harder bit is now to come. Where do you see yourselves 25 years from now?

Perhaps a personal small word of caution. I believe that there could be a problem in that, as time goes by, JMT will be perceived as another group who, even if there is a people cost, are against change. From contact not only with the staff of JMT but also with the work groups who have visited and helped in North Harris, I believe this to be a wrong perception, but I see a real danger here.

Try to stay out of the mainstream of the other environmental agencies. Retain the independence of thought and enthusiasm of spirit of the founders.

JMT's role in the past and present story of North Harris is a happy one. At the end of the day, any group are as good as their people and with the contribution of Nigel Hawkins, Will Boyd-Wallis and now Mick Blunt, our relationship has been a comfortable, happy and productive one. It is hoped that they and JMT have achieved as much from the partnership as has our community.

JMT members can feel that they are contributing well to the sustainable development of the area not just in the natural heritage but also in people terms.

There is absolutely no reason why the objectives of both parties cannot be met with common sense and goodwill to our continuing mutual benefit.

Congratulations on your first quarter century, I am sure there are many more successful years to come.

'Hundreds of years of traditional land use have made this the wonderful area it is today'

■ CATHEL MORRISON, conservation manager, Sandwood Estate, writes about land in the Trust's guardianship.

Since the Trust bought the Estate in 1993, the most dramatic changes have been mostly due to mother nature's designs, as in 2003 when several thousand tons of cliff face dropped into the sea, carrying with them several prime fulmar nest sites, and again in November 2006 when after torrential rain we had two large landslips.

The vagaries of the weather and a booming rabbit population threatened the dynamic dune and machair systems but thankfully they have now been stabilised by marram grass transplanting with the help of volunteers, good grazing management by the crofters, and an outbreak of the dreaded myxomatosis in 2003.

In common with all other areas the crofters have suffered with falling farmgate values, rising fuel and bought-in feed prices, more and more levels of bureaucracy and outbreaks of foot &

mouth, to such an extent that some have decided to call it a day. The number of active crofters on the estate has dropped from 14 in 1993 to 9 today and some of those are on a much reduced level. Each crofter that stops working his croft may impact on the viability of the wider crofting community; it also has the potential to create major changes to the grazing habitat, especially to the machair which possibly many hundreds of years of traditional land use have made the most wonderful and important area it is today.



The greatest change has possibly been the many thousands of people who have visited the area. Last summer I got chatting to a walker on the track and after explaining about the estate and the Trust, he asked if this John Muir chappie lived locally. I explained that John Muir had departed this life back in 1914 but his spirit is very much alive and well, in the local community and in the visitors who come here – if they don't have it when they arrive, hopefully they are blessed with it when they leave.

Sandwood Bay has a habit of soothing body and mind, stealing softly into people's hearts, and staying there forever!

Ardvar woods below
Quinag Denis Mallison;
strong regeneration
behind fencing at Li and
Coire Dhorrcail.
Knoydart
Alan Scott.



'Advocate, owner, example. What the Trust is all about'

■ CHRIS SMITH, Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury, a JMT member since 1991 and former Trustee.

The idea of getting involved in the John Muir Trust was first put to me, over 15 years ago, by the wonderful Andrew Raven. Tragically, Andrew is no longer with us, but the Trust is still imbued with much of his extraordinary spirit. A passionate environmentalist, devoted to the wild land of Scotland, he understood the practical realities of land management, the financial as well as the aesthetic value of the wild, the approaches to conservation that would work, and the urgency of changing minds as well as securing ownership.

These principles still stand. It has always seemed to me that the Trust has three fundamental, and equally vital, roles.

- It is an advocate for the value and importance of wild land in a modern world.
- It protects and secures particular areas of wild land by taking ownership and managing for conservation.
- And it serves as an example to other landowners by demonstrating practical measures that will conserve land, engage local communities, and secure a sustainable future.

Advocate; owner; example. This is what the Trust is all about, and the combination of the visionary and the practical has always been its unique contribution.

Take just one example. Over the last decade or two we have woken up to the reality that the regeneration of natural habitats in wild uplands has long been hampered by the levels of deer population. For a while, we thought that the only response was to enclose tracts of land with high fences, and nurture regeneration within them. We saw some wonderful habitat restoration, but it was an inelegant and obtrusive solution. So we began also to think about controlling overall deer numbers to those that the land could sustain. And now this approach, too, is beginning to bring rewards. In its own areas of land the Trust has shown how a mix of

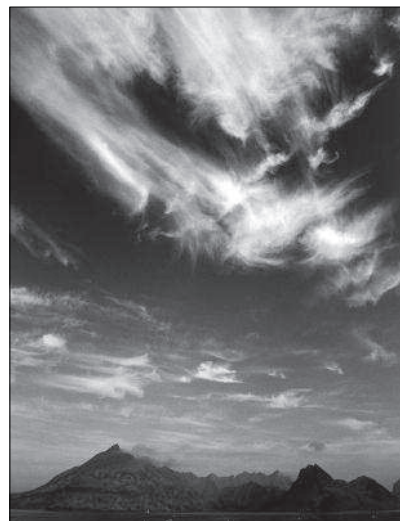
approaches, appropriate to the location, can bring about the desired conservation outcome. We've done the practical work, and by doing so have encouraged others to follow.

This is vital work, and the Trust rightly commands respect because of it. I'm passionate about wild land. Stand at the shore at Sandwood Bay, or look down on the waters of Loch Hourn from the summit ridge of Ladhar Bheinn, or see the Cuillins rising up across Loch Scaivaig, and you can be lost for words. A sense of the wild gives you something utterly unique. But it's not just about the emotional pull, it's about the hard work too. For 25 years the John Muir Trust has championed both. Long may it continue to do so.

'Consensus that it can't achieve aims just by owning properties'

■ JOHN MAYHEW, Chair, Scottish Environment LINK.

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE it's 25 years since I arrived in Edinburgh, fresh from college, and heard that a new Trust was being set up to look after wild places, in the name of one of Scotland's most famous sons. I joined JMT in 1993, inspired by its



Keith Braine

'The Cuillins rising across Loch Scaivaig...'

acquisition of some fine wild places on Knoydart and Skye and by hearing about how it was looking after them. Since then I've visited Sandwood, Knoydart and Skye – and been impressed by how JMT manages them in partnership with local communities. When I get the chance I'll visit Schiehallion, Ben Nevis and Quinag too. However, I've noticed a growing and welcome consensus within JMT that it can't achieve its aims just by owning properties.

As Chair of Scottish Environment LINK, I value JMT's involvement in LINK and the leadership it shows in the ongoing debates about managing Scotland's landscapes. As former Head of Policy and Planning with the National Trust for Scotland, I've worked alongside JMT on some of the big policy issues and planning cases. Most notable has been our joint effort over the last two years – along with many other bodies and individuals – to prove that the proposed Beauty-Denny pylon line would damage wild landscapes unnecessarily.

I've seen JMT set a good example to other managers of wild land. And as an individual I've been impressed by the way JMT increasingly works in partnership with other organisations, as in Assynt and Harris, and by the John Muir Award, an innovative project which clearly fires the imaginations of thousands of young people and instils in them a love of wild places. JMT has benefited from the leadership of many inspiring individuals over the years – I remember in particular the late and greatly missed Andrew Raven.

So congratulations JMT on your first 25 years – John Muir would be proud of you!

Carrifran: key support when it was needed most

■ PHILIP ASHMOLE, Project Co-ordinator, Carrifran Wildwood project.

JMT IS APPROACHING ITS 25TH anniversary, while Carrifran Wildwood and Borders Forest Trust have existed for only about a decade. The contrast is

Continued over



MORE IN OCTOBER

The October Journal will continue the 25-year review by examining achievements in raising awareness and in education.

Continued from page 21

relevant, since when the Wildwood Group (a devolved component of BFT) was negotiating for a two-year option to buy Carrifran at a cost of a third of a million pounds, BFT was barely a year old. We felt that an informal association between BFT and the well established John Muir Trust would lend much needed credibility to fundraising. JMT Trustees approved this idea in mid 1997, and six months later the Carrifran Wildwood brochure was printed with the John Muir Trust name on the front alongside that of BFT. There is little doubt that this – and the associated direct appeal to JMT members – was a key element in the success of the Carrifran fundraising effort.

During the next few years I was privileged to give talks on Carrifran at several local meetings of JMT supporters. Some of these occasions were not without incident. On one I had to respond to persistent though partly misplaced public criticism by a member of a small group opposed to our relocation of the feral goats from Carrifran, who had come to the members' meeting in Gloucestershire especially for the purpose.

After Carrifran was purchased on Millennium Day, BFT and JMT tried to arrange a more formal link, such that if BFT ever got into difficulties, the future of Carrifran could be assured by JMT. For technical legal reasons this link was never forged, but JMT has continued to play a much appreciated supportive role. Recently Keith Miller has provided valuable advice, maintaining a tradition started by Nigel Hawkins and the late Andrew Raven.

Much of the funding needed for the ecological restoration of Carrifran has been raised and some 450,000 trees have been planted. Diverse semi-natural woodland and open ground habitats are developing from the roadside up to treeline scrub and montane heath near the summit of White Coomb. The Borders Forest Trust has consistently punched above its weight as a locally based environmental group and now has plans for ambitious new projects. The John Muir Trust provided key support at the time when it was needed most.

THE MISSION STATEMENT

John Muir, born in 1838 in the small Scottish port of Dunbar, emigrated with his family as a child to the USA. There in his adopted homeland he became a founding father of the world conservation movement, and devoted his life to safeguarding the world's landscapes for future generations. Since 1983, the John Muir Trust, guided by Muir's charge to 'do something for wildness and make the mountains glad', has dedicated itself to making Muir's message a reality within the United Kingdom. By acquiring and sensitively managing key wild areas, the Trust sets out to show that the damage inflicted on the wild over the centuries can be repaired; that the land can be conserved on a sustainable basis for the human, animal and plant communities which share it; and that the great spiritual qualities of wilderness, of tranquillity and of solitude can be preserved as a legacy for those to come.

REFLECTIONS FROM AFAR

■ LAURENCE DOWNING, Rochester, Minnesota. An attorney, former President of the Sierra Club, former Chair of the Sierra Club Foundation, a former Trustee and Honorary Trustee of the John Muir Trust, and a Life Member.

AH, THE MEMORIES OF THOSE YEARS!

It has been a real pleasure for me to reflect back with my wife about the early years of the Trust, the adventure of our first travels to Scotland on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of John Muir's birth to speak to the people of Dunbar and across Scotland about John Muir's unique place in the world as a visionary, passionate and effective preservationist of wild lands.

We recall with great affection and admiration the founders, early Trustees and staff. And we can only admire the substantial positive environmental impact that the Trust, its members and staff, have had since then – an impact that goes beyond the acquisition and restoration of wild places, in educating the public to the critical importance of the preservation in perpetuity of such lands.

There is no doubt in my mind that John Muir would be very proud of all that this organization has done for the wild places in the United Kingdom in his name in its first 25 years.

Let me take you back 15 years. In 1993, in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the John Muir Trust, the Trustees and senior staff met in retreat session at Ardtornish Estate on the west coast of Scotland. I was asked by the then Chairman of the Trust, Nick Luard, to lead an effort to envision the future and articulate the mission of the Trust.

To begin that effort, I suggested to those participating on that weekend that... 'We transport ourselves ahead 10 years. The John Muir Trust is having its 20th anniversary celebration. It is very well-known and well-thought-of throughout the United Kingdom. In short, it has been successful.'



'I challenge you – Go out and make that vision happen'

I then posed this question: What will the John Muir Trust look like in 10 years if it is 'successful' according to your vision for it?

There was much impassioned discussion about visions, goals, weighing of alternatives and the like, that weekend. As a direct successor to John Muir as President of the Sierra Club, it was wonderful to have the opportunity to observe such thoughtful, caring, and committed efforts on behalf of the environment in an organization of such great promise.

The Mission Statement (above) evolved and was adopted by consensus of the Trustees.

I think it will be interesting – and instructive – for the leaders, staff and members of the John Muir Trust on this 25th anniversary of its founding to reflect upon those envisioning efforts from 15 years ago, and to assess how well they have stood the test of time.

I challenge each of you – leaders, staff and members – to ponder in your own mind the question of what would a 'successful' John Muir Trust look like in another 15 years. And then go out and make that vision happen. As the boy from Dunbar so well expressed it, 'Do something for wildness and make the mountains glad!'



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Aladaglar ski traverse, Turkey

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YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE YOU WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS! YOU'VE BEEN SENDING IN YOUR STUFF TO THE JMT JOURNAL FOR EIGHT YEARS, AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS, ALL FOR THE LOVE OF WILD PLACES. KEEP IT COMING, PLEASE. AS THE POET SAID,

**IF ANY FIRE
BURN IN THE IMPERFECT PAGE,
THE PRAISE BE THINE.**

MIKE MERCHANT

Editor 1999–2008 mike.alloneword@googlemail.com

THANK YOU!

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Scottish Linen	Fine linens with Scottish themes	www.scottishlinen.co.uk	5% of profits from Scottish Thistle Duvet set
Enlightenment Media	DVDs "Mountains of Scotland" & "Seeing Scotland"	www.windowonscotland.com	50p for each DVD sold
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Knoydart Lamb	Organic, naturally reared lamb	01687 462844; calannaboat@knoydart.org	£3 for each order
Tiso	The outdoor specialist	www.tiso.com	JMT Wild Nature Diary, cards sales
Image Scotland	Personalised clothing, merchandise	www.imagescotland.com	Online shop & merchandise support
Toast	Ethical retailer	www.toast.co.uk	£1900: ALL income from signed 1st edition copies of The Wild Places by Robert Macfarlane

Classic text

Introduced by
**John
Martindale**

IN THE EARLY 1930s Seton Gordon was at the height of his powers. His lectures attracted audiences of up to 1000 people and recent years had seen the publication of classic titles, including *The Cairngorm Hills of Scotland*, *The Immortal Isles*, and *The Charm of Skye*. There were few, if any, contemporary writers who could match his skill in describing landscape, seascape and the natural world and he was a skilled photographer providing many of the illustrations for his own books. It was therefore not surprising when he was asked by the publisher Macmillan to write *Highways and Byways in the West Highlands*. This was to be the latest in a series of books that began in the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

To describe the Western Highlands and Islands in 150,000 words was a daunting challenge for the author. Gordon admits that he hesitated, thinking it would take not one but half-a-dozen books to do justice to such a large area. But this was a land he already knew well. He visited much of the Highlands and most of the Hebrides, sometimes camping, often staying with crofters, and getting to know their way of life and outlook on the world. His camping was not without incident. On a visit to Mingulay, a bull sent him on his first aerial journey. On another small island he found a newly hatched phalarope that he took to a crofter's house and warmed it in front of the fire before returning it to the moss!

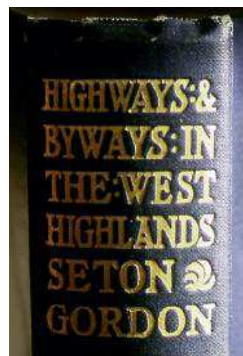
Published in 1935, the book was an immediate success. Here was a book from a man who had such a strong feeling for the life and traditions of the west that

he was able to write of it in a way that none had done before and few have done since. Who but Seton Gordon would summon the Kylerhea ferry by playing a piobaireachd on the shore? One midnight in June he corrected the proofs for this book on the summit of Bruach na Frithe. He noted much that others would have missed and he brings the book to life with wonderful word-pictures.

This, for example, is how he describes Sandwood Bay which he reached on a walk from

GualinHouse:

I believe that Sandwood Bay is the most beautiful place on all the west coast of the Scottish mainland. The beauty of its sand dunes, its green machair, its dark rocks that guard it, is the greater because of the dreary inland bogs. That April day on which I visited Sandwood Bay the white waves surged in upon the shore in a confused, impetuous company. A faint breeze from the north west drifted in, ice cold, from the ocean. At length the delaying sun broke through the thin cloud canopy and shone brilliantly upon the cheerful machair, where many rabbits fed, and upon the wreck strewn shore.



Macmillan commissioned Sir D Y Cameron RA to provide the pen and ink illustrations. The choice of Cameron was an inspired one because, like Gordon, he was a romantic who appreciated the strong association of the Scottish landscape with its history, literature and folklore.

A companion volume, *Highways and Byways in the Central Highlands*, was published in 1948. A lot has changed since these books were written but so much of their

content remains valid that they continue to be excellent usable guides to their respective areas. A visit to Staffa or Skye, Mull or Moidart, Glen Dessary or Glen Etive will be enriched not only by a wealth of history and legend but by writing of such a high order that it brings the very atmosphere of such places to life. Tom Weir regarded the two titles as being amongst the very best and most useful of reference books and both have been reprinted several times.

Michael Powell, the film director, said of Seton Gordon, 'Nothing on the hill escaped his attention, to walk with him was an education and every sight and sound was interpreted by him.' It is this awareness of everything around him that brings such a special quality to his books. Writing about what he had seen was Gordon's greatest pleasure in life and his books have provided inspiration and encouragement to later generations of naturalists, writers and conservationists.

Raymond Eagle, Seton's biographer wrote, 'the uniqueness of his writing lay in his ability to transport the reader so that they saw the world through his all discerning eyes.' Nowhere is this more true than in these two *Highways and Byways* volumes.

● *Suggestions for further titles are welcome.*

Next: Frank Fraser Darling's Reith Lectures



Our predators: taking the fences away?

Reviewed by
Dick Balharry

Tooth & Claw: Living alongside Britain's predators by Peter Cairns and Mark Hamblin. Whittles Publishing, £25.00. ISBN 978-1904445-46-3 320.

COMETH THE TIME, cometh the book. This is a timely publication on the subject of Britain's magnificent wild predators and the quest to re-introduce species we have lost including the beaver, lynx, wolf and bear. This is a big book, 1.65 kg and 235 x 320 mm, and the authors have judged society's needs with sagacity. The informed will want to read it but I do hope its readership will extend to a wider audience and most importantly to politicians.

Striking photographs of high quality appear on almost every page in ten eclectic chapters ranging from 'Who's afraid of the big bad wolf' to 'Marine wolves'.

The last chapter, 'The feelgood factor' allows the authors to voice their own opinions. This is excellent and thought provoking. For example: 'There are many entrenched positions – all hiding behind their respective fences. The mud slinging that characterises the stereotyping of different interest groups, bobble hats, bunny huggers, gamies, toffs and worse – does nothing to further constructive dialogue. The secret surely lies in taking the fences away? *I do like this taking the fences away!*

Or: 'It takes a little bit of effort to see a brown bear but more and more people want to see predators in their natural environment, e.g. polar bears, killer whales, sea eagles. These are animals that make the blood course through our veins – we find these animals exciting – they make us feel alive.' I'm sure the authors get the same feeling when watching wildlife in Scotland.

The subject is controversial and the authors' work in speaking to a wide spectrum of people, many with a vested

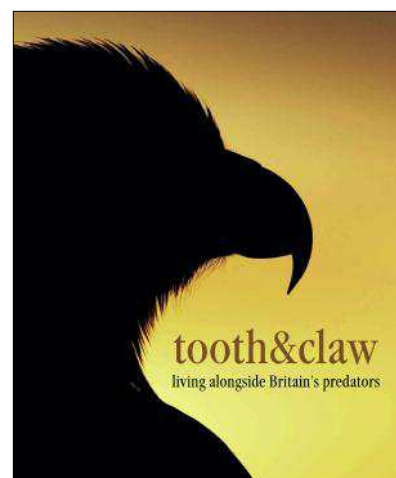
interest, is to be commended. Scientists' comments are included but this is a book to appeal to all and will help individuals gain a greater awareness and understanding to enable them to contribute to the decisions that lie ahead.

Tooth and Claw is also a very successful website that has attracted thousands of respondents ready and willing to share opinions and attitudes to predators. The resulting dialogue is used to advantage. Sharing emotions and passions can only benefit the future of all wildlife.

To a degree all humans are selfish. A family witnessing a gentle and noble roe deer in their garden one morning will be excited about the unexpected visitor, calling for a camera to record the memory. However, if the next day the deer arrives with followers eager to devour the garden, another instrument is likely to be called for. To quote from the book: 'we should not forget that we too are predators – by far and away the most efficient on the planet'.

The criteria for introducing species are not that complex. First, is there enough habitat (food and shelter) for the animals to survive, thrive and breed? Also very pertinent is the attitude of the British public including those that live and work where releases of beaver, lynx, wolf and even bear might be staged. Second, then, is there a willingness to support the concept of sharing our wild habitats – to permit the return of creatures that once roamed our landscapes?

In many ways the interest and love conveyed in this book for the magnificent predators needs to be extended to all our existing wildlife and particularly to the expansion of habitats as a present and future haven. The omission of the role and problems of our most numerous mustelids,



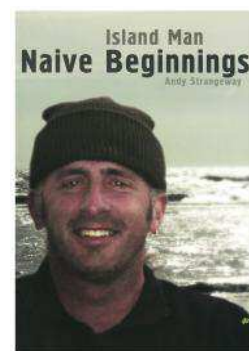
the weasel and the stoat, is regrettable. Unloved, unprotected, they deserve a mention.

John Muir's words, 'When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world', are appropriate at the end of a book that I believe could play a defining role in changing perceptions of predators – I do hope it will. It will also look very attractive on your coffee table!

● *Dick Balharry is Chairman of the John Muir Trust. He writes in a personal capacity.*

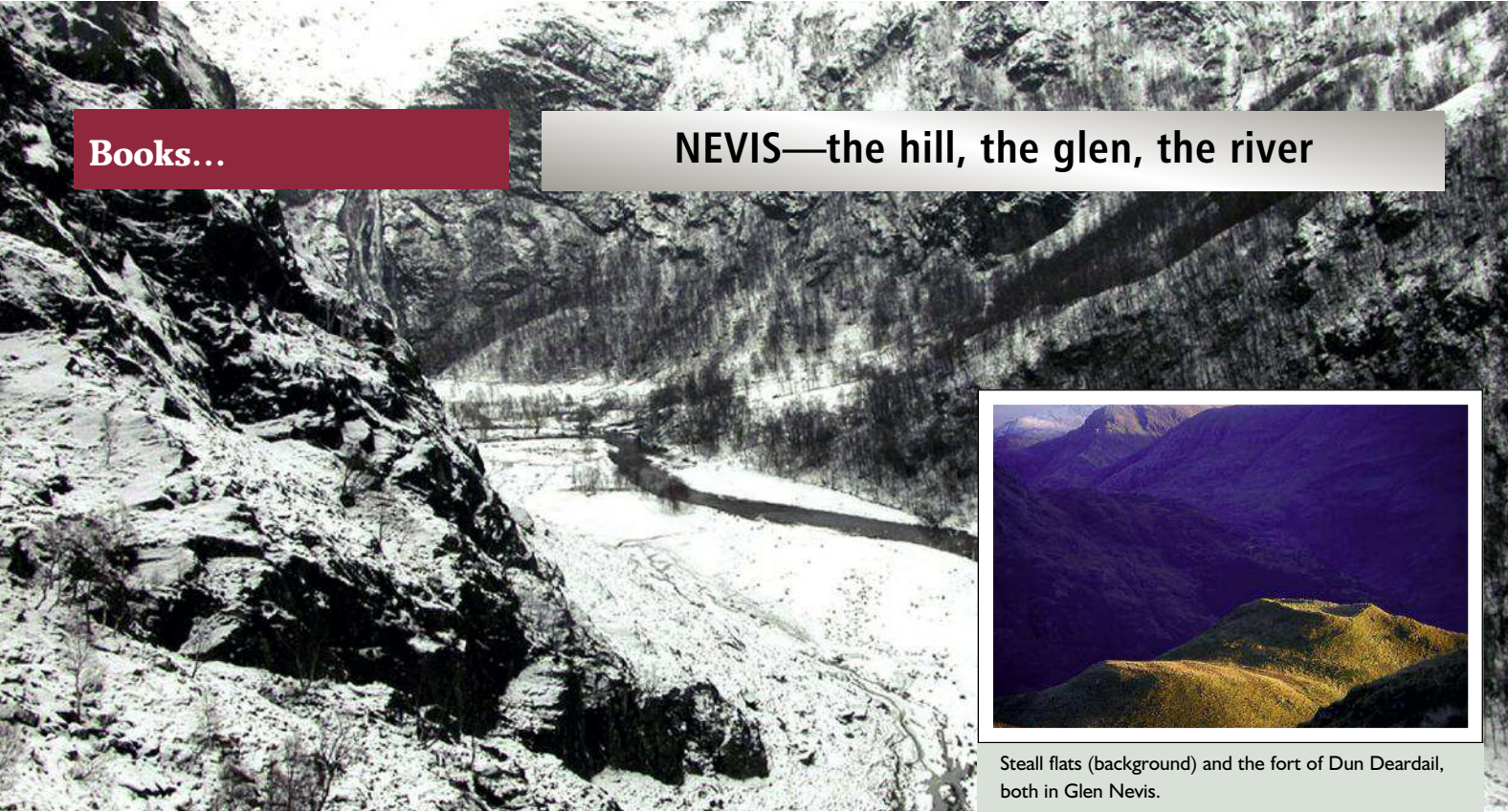
Island Man

Island Man: Naive Beginnings by Andy Strangeway. £11.00 + £1.50 P&P from www.island-man.co.uk.



How many Scottish islands are there? 500, 1000, 2000? Nope. According to Hamish Haswell-Smith, author of the definitive guide, *The Scottish Islands*, there are 162. Haswell-Smith decided to exclude freshwater islands, anything below 40 hectares, drying or tidal islands, or anything accessible by bridge or causeway. So out of the list go Erraid, Seil, Skye, Staffa, and, gulp, Rockall! Even peerless Eriskay was demoted to a mere adjunct of the Uists.

Now most readers would grumble about



Steall flats (background) and the fort of Dun Deardail, both in Glen Nevis.

Fort William photographer and JMT supporter ALEX GILLESPIE has brought 40 years of walking, climbing and admiring Ben Nevis together in a self-published book. Hundreds of images show the people and the nature of the place; many are the sort you don't see in calendars! Alex says: 'May the readers of this book enjoy the area as much as the author has done'. The enjoyment shows. Each copy is signed and includes a JMT membership form.

■ On sale locally in the Fort William and Glencoe areas, or by post from Alex Gillespie, 8 Caledonian Rd, Corpach, Fort William PH33 7LF. £15.95 post paid.

Continued from page 25

the definitions and read on, dram in hand, relieving a dreich winter evening by imagining a scramble along the Rum Cuillin, sea eagles over Loch Frisa, a flowery stroll along the South Uist machair or the simmer dim on Unst looking over to Muckle Flugga. But not Yorkshireman Andy Strangeway, who was inspired by the statement that no-one had visited all 163 islands. He decided not only to visit but to stay overnight on each one.

This book records the start of his marathon journey and the first 42 islands slept on. With self-deprecating humour and searing honesty, the restless self-employed decorator recounts his adventures; and naïve indeed are his preparations and attempts to adjust to Hebridean urgency. Surprisingly, a vegan, he doesn't starve to death. Baffled by early setbacks he retreats to Yorkshire to think again. He returns however and gets to visit some truly magical spots, including the Garvellachs in the Firth of Lorn. To begin with he doesn't know much about the geology, flora or fauna, the archaeology, history, languages and culture of the past and present inhabitants and doesn't always bother to bag an island summit. He realises that he probably visited Eigg too early in his journey to fully appreciate how significant the islanders and their journey are.

So what is Andy searching for and will he find it on the islands? We might find out in further chapters of his story. I suspect the answer lies within himself, and the special characteristics of these very special places will help him to discovery. It will be a treat to find out with him.

John Donohoe

Scotland's Beginnings

By Michael A Taylor and Andrew C Kitchener, NMSE Publishing, £8.99, 978 1901663 26 6.

Imagine, Scotland as a tropical paradise, separated from England by a vast and deep ocean; then it all drifted away. No, not the imaginings of a crazed hypernationalist, the story of how the Scottish landscape and every living thing in it got here.

The first section of this 88 page booklet from National Museums Scotland explains how, over 500 million years, the rocks that became Scotland started beneath the southern ocean and gradually moved north, becoming mountains of Himalayan dimension, subtropical rainforest, Saharan desert, shallow tropical lagoon, vast erupting volcanoes, howling arctic wilderness; each moving and shaping the land. The second section deals with the plant and animal life which colonised the land and surrounding sea as the ice receded. There are descriptions of the differing habitats that make the landscape so varied and complex, and stark warnings on the impact of man on the environment. Don't panic, but the next Great Mass Extinction has already begun! OK, panic a bit.

The language throughout is clear and helped throughout by a layout with lots of diagrams, illustrations and photos. The authors were leading curators for the NMS exhibition 'Beginnings', and this book should inspire a visit to the museum or Our Dynamic Earth down by the Scottish Parliament; a perfect setting for fossils and volcanic eruptions.

This is an ideal introduction to the story of our geology and contains a list of places to visit and further reading. I would particularly recommend

Land of Mountain and Flood. The Geology and Landforms of Scotland by McKirdy, Gordon and Crofts (Birlinn/SNH 2007), simply a masterpiece.

John Donohoe

Ben Macdui biography

The Life and Times of the Black Pig by Ronald Turnbull. Millrace Books, £14.95. 978 1902173 252.

Ronald Turnbull follows up *The Riddle of Sphinx Rock* (about Great Gable) with another unclassifiable mountain biography and miscellany.

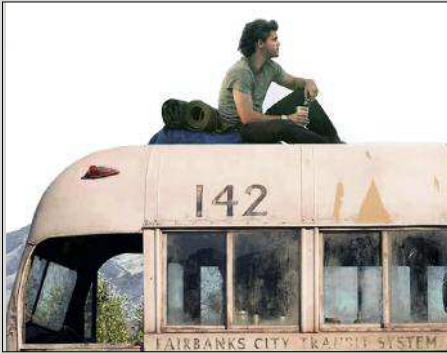
In a small, traditionally built hardback there are 17 routes to the bouldery summit of Ben Macdui, from start points between Glenmore and Derry Lodge. With no photos, one greyish map and admirable economy in the prose department, you're going to need a map of your own.

In fact you're best to have a map or good knowledge of the area to follow the bulk of the book, which consists of 17 discursions, some related to the routes and some apparently not.

Catholic is the word. Two of the discursions concern geology, one of them the snow bunting, but there is more art than science overall: sympathetic tales of Queen Victoria's Munro-bagging; the nature of fairies; the historiography of the Grey Man of Ben Macdui; the drovers; climbing history.

Mixed in are some of the author's own long days in the hills, a realistic number spent under ghastly conditions. It has references, good drawings and an index. Turnbull is a guidebook author, but this is less a typical modern guidebook than an invitation to explore, on foot or through your bookshelves.

MM



FREE SPIRIT

With INTO THE WILD, released last November, Jon Krakauer's 1996 book of the same title is brought to the screen, supported by a substantial production budget and some of the biggest names in Hollywood. You may be forgiven some trepidation at the thought of the venerated mountaineering authors being filmed by the ex-husband of Madonna (the film's director and driving force Sean Penn). But the result is a fascinating, genuinely moving meditation on our modern relationship with nature. It avoids melodrama, even when the characters and subject make it seem inevitable, and ultimately offers a mature and balanced take on the modern view of the 'wild' as an escape from our perceived woes.

The story is that of Christopher McCandless who, aged just 24 and three years after disappearing from his family, was found starved to death in the Alaskan wilderness, after hitching across America, surviving hand-to-mouth.

It was a story that fascinated Jon Krakauer. Drawing heavily on his own experiences as a restless youth he has argued that McCandless' struggle was, rather than an immature adolescent reaction to a privileged upbringing, a quest in the frontiersman-like vein of Jack London or the medieval Celtic monks setting sail from Ireland to Iceland. Whilst many dismissed McCandless as ill-prepared and even suicidal, Krakauer pointed to the fact that the youth survived comfortably for over two months before bad luck, compounding some unfortunate decisions, led to his death. The film shows to great effect how McCandless' previous journeys (including a 36 day solo trip down the Colorado river into the Gulf of Mexico) were an apprenticeship for his Alaskan retreat. In other words while McCandless was clearly a troubled young man and ultimately made poor decisions that would cost him his life, he was not naive about the trials that awaited him in the wild.

The film opens with McCandless, played by Emile Hirsch, being dropped at the edge of the vast Alaskan bush and wading into the snowy tundra. He stumbles across a derelict bus which becomes his home. Taking the themes of 'childhood', 'adolescence' and 'manhood' the story then cuts between the travels that preceded the wilds of Alaska and the 113 days he spent there. We see that the dissatisfaction with his own privileged upbringing, underpinned by a strained relationship with his parents, is the catalyst for McCandless' break from his family, university career and forthcoming enrolment in law school. Donating his college fund to charity, abandoning his car and burning his remaining cash we follow him from the deserts of

Arizona, through the cornfields of South Dakota, down the Colorado River and, ultimately, into the Denali national park.

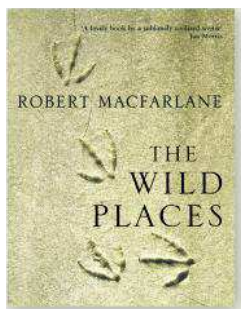
Hirsch's performance and narration is at the heart of the film. His portrayal of McCandless is as a damaged, restless yet ultimately endearing free spirit. The supporting performances are similarly subtle and compelling.

The film's depiction of the North American wilderness is a triumph. The Alaskan spring is beautifully composed with McCandless cutting a lonely figure against the panoramic background of the Denali range. The wildlife is also put to dramatic use, most memorably when, while in the final stages of his starvation, the narrator comes face to face with a large grizzly bear, to be apparently saved by his emaciated and singularly unappetising appearance (Hirsch lost some 40 lbs to play a gaunt and sickened McCandless at the end of his journey).

McCandless' outlook matures in the film from the reactionary to a more rounded appreciation of the need for solitude in balance with the warmth of human interaction. The relationships he forms and the lasting, at times life altering, legacy that he leaves run parallel to his own quest to distance himself from all in his final retreat. Drawing heavily on McCandless' diary, the final chapter depicts the character's learning come full circle, with the recognition that his experiences in the wild are only truly fulfilled through the act of sharing and the companionship of others.

Beautifully shot and acted with a haunting guitar score from Eddie Vedder, Into the Wild is a thoroughly entertaining and moving piece of work which stands apart from the usual multiplex fodder. It is a film that will resonate strongly with all those for whom the wilderness is a treasured retreat.

Iain Hutchinson



An alternative map

The Wild Places by Robert Macfarlane. Granta, £18.99. ISBN 9781862079410.

Maps are dominated by roads and motorways. Wild places in Britain are a figment of memory: and if they are not, they soon will be.

Robert Macfarlane disputes such jeremiads. In *The Wild Places* he creates an alternative map by going out and celebrating the remaining wildness of Britain and Ireland. He lives in the forests and mountains. He climbs trees and swims in lochs. He walks on beaches and forgotten holloways – the ancient roads 'which archive the customs of a place'.

His maps are delineated by rock strata and weather fronts rather than trunk roads. They take their bearings from the migrations of birds and ancient peoples. Their boundaries are forest and myth and their contours, tradition and memory.

In *Mountains of the Mind*, his award-winning first book, Macfarlane (a JMT member) celebrated the lure of the high places and their presence in our subconscious. Once again he captivates with a stark spare writing, striding his landscapes; his descriptions have the elegance and precision of a hawk taking prey. Landscape or insight is crystallised in a phrase. At Ynis Enlli he dives in among the seals: 'Blue shock. The cold running into me like a dye.' He finds Irish blackthorns with thin lichen-covered trunks 'like the legs of shaggy centaurs.' On the Suffolk coast he captures a shingle spit with vivid economy: '...hundreds of grey acres, the only moving things are hares, hawks and the sea wind.' His evocation of winter chills the reader: 'Over half an hour the hail turned to snow which had the texture of salt and fell hissing on to the ice.'

'Anyone who lives in a city will know the feeling of having been there too long,' says Macfarlane. He steps through the Euston crowds and boards the sleeper for the north. '...we woke to chilly air, white

mist and a stag disappearing into the drizzle. Fog pooled in the low ground. At Rannoch Station we stepped down from the train and on to the moor.' Adventure is afoot. Who would not wish to be alongside him?

Macfarlane's map includes the expected – Rannoch Moor, the Lake District – and the less known – remote Irish islands, unvisited English shores and abandoned villages. His journeys are at once physical and intellectual. In the Black Wood of Rannoch he roams from sunrise to winter dusk and lays his sleeping bag under the upturned root of a fallen tree as the snow drifts in. But he intersperses the practical encounters with digressions of lightly-worn erudition: on bark-dwelling beetles and art history, on Welsh poets, on wandering Celtic monks (the peregrini) and first century Chinese artists who, like our ancestors, saw no distinction between nature and man. He turns the expected on its head – moss covered ruins are not images of our past but images of our future; when our time has gone and nature takes over.

He quotes his wood-loving friend on the loss of the elm. 'They will be back', he reassures us, though, he adds, man may not be there to see it.

Mike Brown

YOUR CHANCE TO SAMPLE ISLAND LIFE IN 2008



ICELAND CONSERVATION

Last summer Douglas Halliday, till recently JMT's land manager based on Skye, worked on a conservation project at Skalanes in eastern Iceland. This is a privately owned nature reserve which may be willing to welcome a group of volunteers for a week in 2008 to help with tree planting, work with eider duck and other tasks. As on JMT work parties, volunteers would organise and pay for their own transport to and from Iceland, but accommodation and possibly food would be supplied. The week is possibly being arranged in early June 2008.

● For further details please contact Sandy Maxwell – details on page 28.

Douglas gave us these impressions of his trip:

TO REACH SKALANES required an internal flight to the town of Egilsstadir, then our hosts took us on by road, passing the port and ferry terminal of Seydisfjörður. Skalanes is some 30 minutes drive further on.

Iceland had no indigenous people. Colonising peoples of Celtic and Scandinavian origin brought domestic grazing animals and while driftwood provided significant amounts of timber, Iceland's native woodlands were depleted in a similar way to those in the UK. It is thought that during the 9th century settlement Iceland had a forest cover of 30% comprised of birch, rowan, aspen and various willows. In 1907 when the Icelandic forestry service was created, only 2% of the country had forest cover – near Egilsstadir, sizable remnants of these native woodlands can still be seen.

Skalanes has a real feeling of wildness with its dramatic shoreline, snow covered mountains, vibrant birdlife and little evidence of the outside world barring the odd fishing boat. Our accommodation was a farm house which had been occupied by the British during the war and is now a comfortable bunkhouse. In June, birds were nesting within yards of the building and they included eider ducks, swooping Arctic terns, greenshank and golden plover, to name but a few. As in many parts of Iceland, Arctic/Alaskan lupin had

been planted to counter soil erosion brought on by grazing. Like many introduced species, the lupin have become very successful in spreading and despite their nitrogen fixing abilities, concern over their advance is growing. A programme to plant trees in eroded areas is also been undertaken with the support of the Icelandic Forest Service and this is set to continue over the coming years. Reindeer, introduced from Norway in 1780, are not viewed as an environmental threat given their low population (some 4000 animals nation wide, subject to controlled culls).

The farming of eider ducks at Skalanes is an income generating venture. Since 1849, eider ducks have been protected in Iceland and consequently it hosts some of the largest colonies found in the world. The eider, while considered wild, appears to be at ease living near to people and will even tolerate occasional handling if care is taken – which raises the question as to whether they are in fact semi-domesticated?. Trapping, shooting and ponds and ditches help to avoid predation and create a safe environment. A down house is used to store collected down and the down, once cleaned, is sold to international markets such as Japan.

I found Iceland a truly fascinating experience and it was a real privilege to meet and learn from its people about the country's environment. There are certainly interesting times ahead, with a growing nature tourism market competing against expanding industrial development in certain areas. Countering this is a rapidly emerging conservation movement. I certainly felt on my return that I'd benefited greatly from my experience and hope my hosts will feel the same.

BOOK TRUST LAUNCHES OUT

The Islands Book Trust is planning a first in the shape of a week long trip to the Faroe Islands, from 23–30 July. Travelling by boat from Scrabster to Torshavn and return, the draft itinerary takes in the celebrations to mark the Faroes National Day, and visits to Mykines, the Vestmanna bird-cliffs, and some of the northern islands. The guideline price (excluding lunches) is £900 per person.

Boat trips to less visited parts of the Western Isles will be happening again in 2008. Planned destinations, weather permitting and bookable, are Taransay (Saturday 24 May), the Shiantis (Saturday 21 June) and Little Bernera (Saturday 19 July).

Among land-based events are:

Tuesday 23 March, 7.30 pm, Council Chamber, Stornoway – Alasdair MacEachen, 'The Faroes'.

Tuesday 22 April, 7.30pm, An Lanntair, Stornoway – Sally Magnusson, 'Roots – A daughter of Iceland and Mull'.

● For more information and to book, contact Alayne Barton (01851 820946).

See also www.theislandsbooktrust.com.

YOUR LETTERS

Your letters on all subjects relevant to the Trust are most welcome. Please make sure they reach the editor by July. Contact details, page 1.

All in the mind!

Further to Edward Bunting's letter in your October issue (Happy Days in Knoydart), I was camping at Barrisdale two years earlier, late June-early July 1986, with my friend Janet Fabian and her daughter Wenda.

During this 5 day heatwave the midges were at their worst, eventually driving all other campers into the Barrisdale Bothy. Because I had the crazy idea that midge-phobia was 'all in the mind', needing only will-power to defeat them, I was forcibly ejected from the tent each morning to light a smoky fire so that we could breakfast outside.

Off the hill each day we would all plunge into the burn, unseen as we hadn't brought costumes.

Another memory is of taking sardines up Meall Bhuidhe without a tin-opener, but fortunately I was able to hack into this juicy snack with a pen-knife.

Happy Days indeed!

Janet King

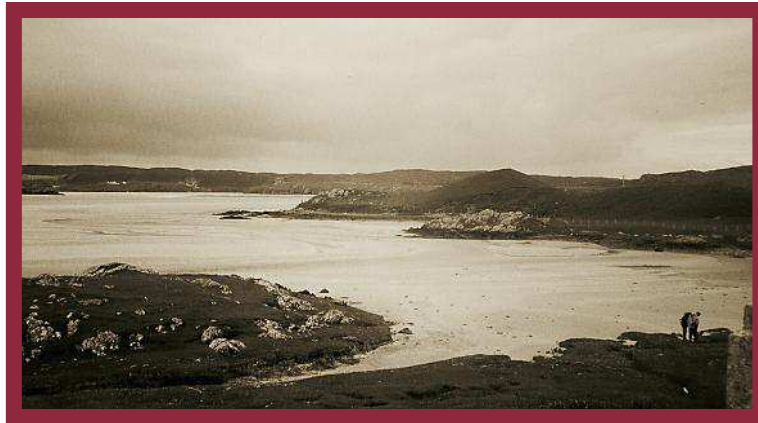
Poyntsfeld, Inverness

NEXT JMT JOURNAL

The next Journal will be published in October. Contact details for the editor are on page 1.

An incomer to the Great Island

MERVYN SOUTHAM, once 'an Englishman on the west coast of Lewis',
was inspired by stories of Lewis and Harris in the last Journal.



Uig sands. Mrs Marion Macleod.

SOME NUMEROUS YEARS AGO I worked as a radar technician at RAF Bawdsey, Suffolk, the much updated site of Britain's first radar station. The terrain, the sea-side, the river Deben and the people were all normal to the understanding of a lad from the South.

Out of the blue came a posting to RAF Aird Uig, a brand-new radar station on Gallan Head, Isle of Lewis. Eh? where? Had it been Gibraltar or even Christmas Island, the Postings Clerk could have understood where to send me, but not this place. The ticket he issued sent me via Inverness, where I spent one night, followed by another in Stornoway. Then back towards reality, across that 40 miles in the back of an RAF lorry and a sort of lunch in the canteen run by a sergeant who was selling the good stuff to nearby crofters.

In contrast to some of the domestic matters, the headland, the coastal cliffs, the scrambles to Uig sands and Valtos, the outlook to the Flannans and St Kilda were remarkable and stimulating. I had already been keen on ornithology for 10 years and was immediately presented with a whole new range of species, on the increase as spring approached. Skuas, perhaps chiefly, were new

to me and keeping the telescope still in those stiff winds was something I had to aspire to.

Well, the short winter days, nine to three, were a revelation. A long night's sleep, if not on the night shift, for nothing else moved before nine o'clock. It was best if one's sleeping was of such depth as to be unbroken by the brag school on the middle table. It might seem that the station was only manned by Englishmen but actually at least half were Scots, and some of them native to Lewis itself. Naturally, they wondered why we were amazed by the Aurora and by the sheep snoozing on the road for warmth. We had a lot of other things to learn.

On the machair near Uig Sands it was possible to play football (a little). Birdwatching at the sands and a visit to the nearby grocery shed, and the remote Post Office, rewarded a 5-mile walk each way. Sheep on all hands, of course, and as the spring progressed and daylight expanded a few swallows and, to my surprise, one or two cuckoos, presumably hosted by pipits and twite. Birds that lived and nested in the heather presented me with a new experience.

An Englishman finding himself on the west coast of Lewis could expect a new

experience more or less daily... and weekly, as summer came on, if he played football for RAF Aird Uig on the 'home' ground in Stornoway and, wildly and dangerously, at some of the distant away fixtures. I'll never forget the game at Carloway, followed by a social and dance in the village hall. I took the safer option and had a doze in our blue coach, rubbing the bruises. We were looking forward to further visits, to Barvas and Butt of Lewis, but my return to Suffolk robbed me of those intriguing experiences.

We were there for radar rather than football. Ours was one of a line of stations looking out for the large Russian reconnaissance planes. Saxa Vord on Unst – recently closed, but Putin has resumed the flights – then us on Lewis and another station on the north coast of Northern Ireland. Reputedly there was another site on the mainland near Cape Wrath where, as the huge 60 x 30 ft aerial was lifted towards its great base, it fell into the sea. No replacement was produced.

I wonder whether our blockage of access to Gallan Head is now a thing of the past. I hope so.
(It is –Ed.)