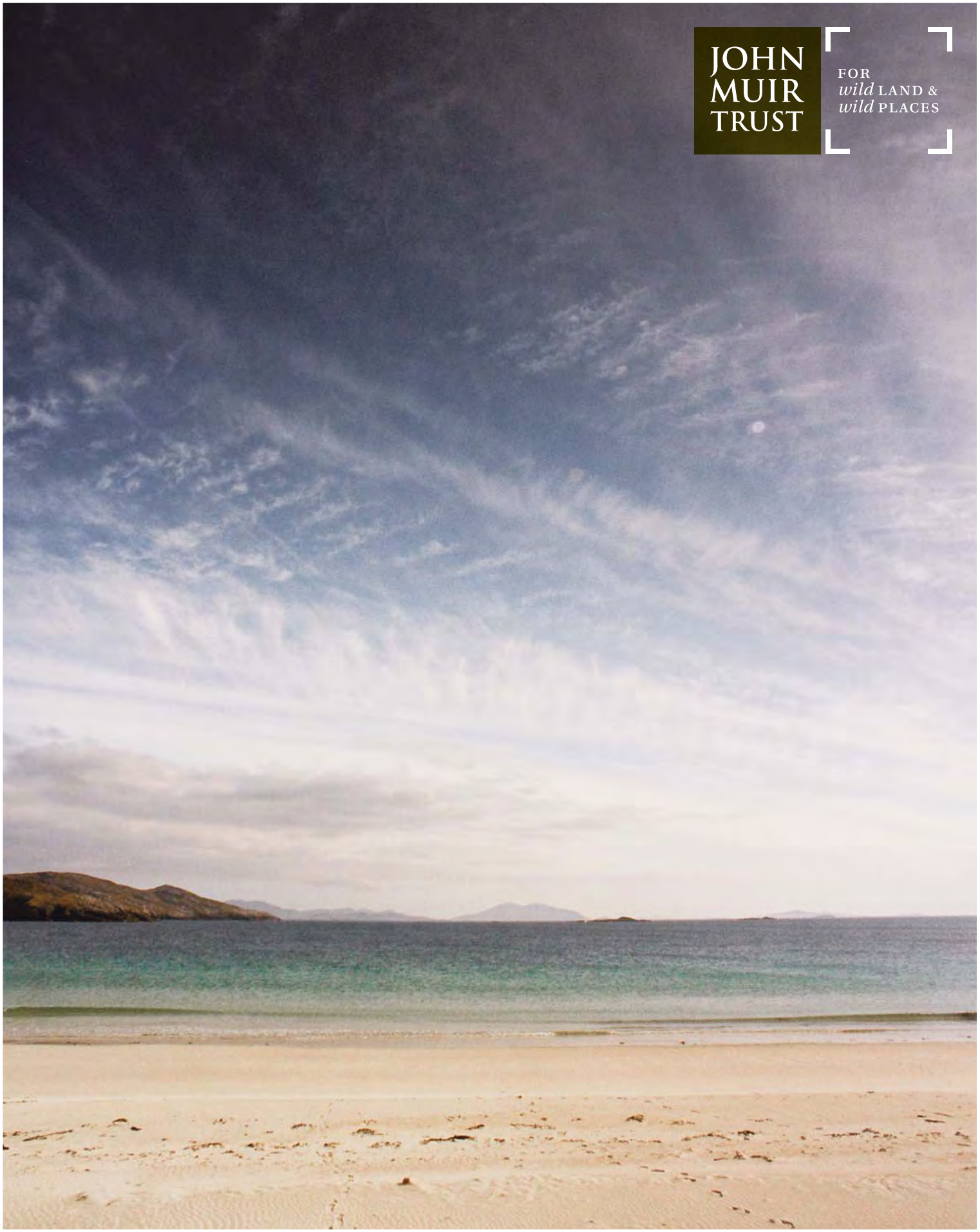
JOHN MUIR TRUST

JOURNAL

50 SPRING 11



Spreading the word

Whether through hands-on conservation work or stimulating public support, we would be unable to undertake our work to protect wild places without you, our members. Thank you for that support and for spreading the word through the new Member Get Member initiative (which includes a special discount card from our corporate supporter Tiso).

Turn to page 11 for more details ...

REGULARS

FEATURES

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Cover photography
Huishinish beach and big sky, North Harris

Inside front cover photography
Beach clean at Camasunary, Isle of Skye

PHOTOGRAPHY: KEITH BRAME

PHOTOGRAPH: JIM MANTHORPE

From the Chief Executive

Stuart Brooks highlights the partnership theme that runs through this celebratory 50th issue of the John Muir Trust Journal

Welcome to this special 50th edition of the John Muir Trust Journal. We are extremely proud of our work and the properties in our guardianship and I am glad to say that this pride extends to our publications and, in particular, this Journal. We take the opportunity of this 'diamond jubilee' to reflect on the evolution of the Journal and the many stories and milestones that have been highlighted in its pages. I'd like to extend a huge note of thanks to the many members and contributors who have provided words and images to convey their own stories of the wild and done so much to inspire others.

Land in Trust 'ownership' often takes precedence in our communications. However, while this is very important, it is by no means the sole focus of activity. We have pinned our colours to the mast and published maps indicating where we see the most important wild land areas in the UK but it is hardly credible to advocate purchase of anything other than a small percentage of this. In delivering our overall Vision where 'wild land is protected and enhanced and wild places are valued by all sectors of society' we have to look at other ways of influencing both land and people. This is where our work in partnership with others is so essential.

Such partnerships take many forms. Some, such as our work with the North Harris Trust, Knoydart Foundation and Galson Trust, have their roots in community ownership where local people share a passion for conserving their natural heritage alongside an economically sustainable future. Our involvement has changed over time as these organisations have gathered momentum, skills and experience, but we remain committed to learning from each other for the benefit of wild land and the communities that live and work there.

With similar objectives, we strive to work alongside people and communities on our own estates. This is not always a comfortable situation and we need to work hard at listening and responding to ideas and criticisms – after all, partnerships are not always easily 'won'.

More recently, the Trust has developed some very positive working relationships with private landowners. In this issue, Mike Daniels highlights some of our work with the Corrour Estate in the Highlands. Much of the 'best' wild land is in private ownership, so these kinds of relationships are crucial for helping the Trust better understand the issues and pressures at play.

We also revisit Carrifran in the Scottish Borders where the vision for ecological restoration at a landscape scale is beginning to bear real fruit.

Of course, some of the very best examples of partnership can be found in our work on the John Muir Award. There are currently more than 600 organisations that use the Award to help encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to experience and value wild places. Rob Bushby highlights some of these organisations and explores the constituent parts of a successful partnership.

I do hope that you can find time to read the Journal. Please come back to us with comments, ideas and your own opinions. We'd also be delighted to hear from you with ideas of what you would like to see covered in future editions.

Stuart Brooks

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
JOHN MUIR TRUST

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

PHOTOGRAPH: RORY SYME

Photography

1 The Knoydart Foundation ranger service

2 Thistles, Oldshoremore, Sutherland

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST ARCHIVES

WIND FARM FOLLY

The John Muir Trust has lodged an objection to the proposed extension to a wind development scheme on the Isle of Lewis that will further spoil one of Scotland's most remote areas of wild land. The extension of the Muaitheabhal scheme would add six 150-metre high turbines to the 33 turbines already consented in January 2010 following a Public Local Inquiry.

Visualisations prepared by the developer show some of the impact the full development will have on one of Scotland's wildest areas. However, a key viewpoint from the summit of Uisinis, which would show the impact of the six-turbine extension, has not been fully examined due to health and safety reasons, according to developer Crionaig Power.

"We are amazed that a crucial photomontage which would show the true impact of the extension on an area of high quality wild land has not been created because of health and safety," commented Helen McDade, the Trust's Head of Policy. "It is ridiculous to expect anyone to judge the impact these turbines would have without seeing a realistic picture of what the landscape will look like.

"It is remarkable that after a major public inquiry to determine the size of this development, an application to extend it by nearly 20% could potentially be passed through without this level of scrutiny."

The turbines at Muaitheabhal will be highly visible from Beinn Mhor, which at 572m is the highest peak in the Pairc range in southeastern Lewis, and also from an area of high quality wild land south of Loch Sealg, which has been identified by Scottish Natural Heritage as one of only four areas in Scotland more than 5 miles (8km) away from any road.

PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL TUCKETT

MODEL T CARRY

The John Muir Trust has reached an agreement with the organisers of a major car rally in Lochaber that will see a Model T Ford carried, piece by piece, to the top of Ben Nevis where it will be reassembled. The event is planned to commemorate the centenary of a publicity stunt by an Edinburgh car dealer which saw a Model T driven to the summit of the Ben in 1911.

The car, which has already been prepared by Model T enthusiast Neil Tuckett, will be dismantled at Achintee, near Fort William, and reassembled on the 1,344m-high summit of the Ben. The carry of the car, planned for 18 May, is part of a week-long rally being organised for the Model T Register of Great Britain.

Local company No Fuss Events will co-ordinate the carry with the support of Fort William Community Council, Friends of Nevis, John Muir Trust, Nevis Partnership and The Outdoor Capital of the UK, working with the Model T enthusiasts.

Following a meeting between Model T enthusiasts and a number of local groups, John Hutchison, Chairman of the John Muir Trust, commented: "We are very pleased that all parties have reached agreement on an appropriate way to celebrate this event and we will be working to make it a success."

Volunteers with hill walking experience are needed to carry the car to the summit. Anyone interested should contact No Fuss Events by emailing:

→ **spook@nofussevents.co.uk**

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

GLEN COE TOPS POLL

Glen Coe has been voted Scotland's most romantic landscape in a poll organised by the John Muir Trust as part of its Wild Land Campaign together with outdoors website Walkhighlands.

Visitors to Walkhighlands were asked to vote from a shortlist of 15 beauty spots across Scotland.

Glen Coe was a clear winner, attracting 19% of the vote, followed by Sandwood Bay and Glen Affric.

"On top of the votes in the poll, we've had a whole host of recommendations for places that didn't make the shortlist, including Loch Maree, the beaches of North Harris and numerous views from the Isle of Skye," commented Paul Webster from Walkhighlands. "This poll just goes to show how passionate people are about the variety of sights that Scotland has to offer."

Although a light-hearted poll, the response adds further weight to the Trust's argument for the need to protect and value such areas, not only for the emotional connection we have with wild landscapes, but for the wider benefits that they bring to the country. Research by Scottish Natural Heritage in 2003 found that visitors to Scotland's wild landscape areas contributed as much as £751m to the Scottish economy, supporting 20,600 jobs.

→ **www.walkhighlands.co.uk**

PHOTOGRAPH: IAN SYKES

MOUNTAIN CULTURE AWARD

Ian Sykes MBE, the founding figure behind the Nevisport chain, Nevis Range and Nevis Radio, is the recipient of the fourth Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture, announced at the Fort William Mountain Festival in February.

The annual award goes to a person who has made an outstanding contribution to Scotland's mountains in sport, theatre, art, photography, film or literature. Sykes, a native of Fort William, was a Mountain Rescue Team member for many years and in 1970 opened a 'wee climbing shop', Nevisport, in his home town; it went on to became a hub for outdoor activities in Lochaber and, later, a nationwide chain.

A keen skier, Sykes was one of those behind the development of the Nevis Range ski centre, which is now also synonymous with downhill mountain biking. He also started Nevis Radio as a ski weather and information station, SkiFM, in 1992. In 1990 he was awarded an MBE for services to sport and mountain rescue.

→ **www.mountainfilmfestival.co.uk/mountain-award**

CELEBRATING OUR WOODLAND

This year is the United Nations' International Year of Forests (IYF), declared to raise awareness of the conservation and sustainable management of all the world's forests. Conservation and woodland restoration bodies are organising a range of UK-wide activities, events and initiatives designed to encourage a greater appreciation and enjoyment of native woodlands.

For its part, the John Muir Award will celebrate how current Award activity engages people with forests and measure how participants make a difference to forests across the UK through the John Muir Award Conserve Audit 2011.

→ **www.jmt.org/jmaward-conserve-audit2011.asp**

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

MINK PLAN ANNOUNCED

A major new conservation initiative to establish an area free of invasive American mink begins in April. The partnership between Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), the University of Aberdeen, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and more than 16 other organisations will see the creation of a mink monitoring and control zone across northern Scotland, with the aim of protecting native wildlife, including salmon, water voles and ground-nesting birds such as greenshank and lapwing.

"This exciting project is the first stage of a strategic approach to managing the spread of mink in mainland Scotland," said SNH species adviser Rob Raynor. "The zone will extend from the mid-Tay to the South Esk, around the east coast to the River Nairn, and across from Dornoch and Cromarty on the east to Ullapool on the west. As we gradually establish areas free from mink, we hope to expand the zone southwards in future."

The fisheries trusts' networks of ghillies, water bailiffs and gamekeepers will be key to the alert system, explained SWT Habitats and Species Officer Paul Gallagher. "This project will monitor the animals' movements using mink rafts to identify their footprints, and hopes to maintain mink-free zones by strategically undertaking the minimum amount of control necessary."

PHOTOGRAPH: DARYL SMITH

PHOTOGRAPH: VICKY JACK

INTRODUCING VICKY JACK

The John Muir Trust is delighted to announce that Vicky Jack will present the Spirit of the Wild Places lecture at the Trust's AGM and Members' Gathering at Rheged Centre, Cumbria on 4 June.

Vicky is the first Scottish woman to have climbed the Seven Summits – the seven highest peaks on each of the world's continents. She developed her love of the outdoors through her father who introduced her to the hills at a young age. However, in her mid 30s, Vicky realised that she still didn't know great swathes of Scotland so took up sailing and climbing the Munros.

A decade later, having climbed all the Munros, she then set her sights on bigger targets. In 1996, she climbed Mount Elbrus where she first heard about the Seven Summits, which she duly completed in 2004 when she reached the summit of Mount Everest – becoming the oldest British woman to scale the world's highest peak.

"In many ways Vicky is an ordinary hill walker who has pushed herself to extraordinary heights, which makes her journey all the more compelling," commented John Hutchison, Chairman of the John Muir Trust.

The Spirit of Wild Places lecture is sponsored by the Ben Nevis Distillery. The AGM and Members' Gathering is open to all Trust members. Bookings close on 20 May.

→ **www.jmt.org/gathering11.asp**

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Earlier this year, 20 of the UK's top nature photographers visited Coigach and Assynt in the northwest Highlands as part of 2020VISION, an ambitious two-year project that aims to inspire people about the benefits of repairing, restoring and reconnecting our natural environment.

Mark Hamblin, 2020VISION photographer, commented: "The natural landscape of Coigach and Assynt is a photographer's dream. The goal for the 2020VISION team is to capture this landscape and visually communicate why we must do more to protect and restore the natural environment here and across the UK."

The 2020VISION team chose this area because the Scottish Wildlife Trust is already working with local landowners, including the John Muir Trust, Assynt Foundation, Culag Community Woodland Trust, Tanera Mor and Eisgh Brachaidh, to look at the environmental issues facing the area on a landscape scale and plan how to work together to address them.

The ambition for what is being called the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape Project is for the area to become the focus of one of the biggest conservation restoration projects ever attempted in the UK.

"Ultimately, our vision is to create healthy and resilient ecosystems across large areas of Scotland which serve the interests of visitors and local communities alike," commented Jonny Hughes, Director of Conservation, Scottish Wildlife Trust. "Restoration of nature on this scale will create jobs; paths will be built, trees grown and planted, peatlands restored and land actively and sustainably farmed to provide livelihoods as well as places in which nature can thrive.

"Working in partnership is vital to achieving such an ambitious vision and everyone will have a part to play if we are ultimately going to bring about positive change."

→ **www.2020v.org**

STOP PRESS

John Muir Trust members are being given an opportunity to visit three exciting conservation projects in the Scottish Borders as a prelude to the AGM. Members are invited to take part in guided tours of Glenlude near Innerleithen, which passed to the Trust following the recent death of the benefactor Sheila Bell, and the two Borders Forest Trust properties at Carrifran and Corehead, near Moffat. Tours will be organised for Friday 3 June, the day before the AGM.

For more information, see:

→ **www.jmt.org/events.asp (Members Land Days section)**

or, contact:

→ **John Thomas, j.p.r.t@btinternet.com**

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HAMBLIN/2020VISION

PHOTOGRAPH: BORDERS FOREST TRUST

Supporting role

In addition to managing its own land, the John Muir Trust works with communities on a variety of land partnerships across Scotland. No two partnerships are the same but all aim to support specific local needs, writes **Richard Rowe**

PHOTOGRAPH: JIM MANTHORPE

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"We were about to embark on a venture with relatively little experience in land and estate management," recalls Calum Mackay, Chair of the North Harris Trust. "We were a group of teachers, crofters and business people with no experience of such matters."

How things change. Today, the North Harris Trust successfully manages one of the largest community-owned estates in Scotland following its buyout of the 22,500ha North Harris Estate in 2004 and the neighbouring 2,500ha Seaforth Estate two years later. Bounded by the sea on three sides, the area comprises croft land, common grazings and rugged hill ground, including An Cliseam, the highest peak in the Western Isles.

The success of the North Harris Trust is largely due to the commitment and zeal of the community itself, although the John Muir Trust can rightly claim to have also played a valuable role. When the steering group for the buyout of the estate was being formed, an approach was made to the John Muir Trust for support and assistance. "We were aware of their experience in land management and particularly on land similar to our own with its many environmental designations," explains Mackay.

Fast forward seven years and the John Muir Trust remains the only external representative on the North Harris Trust's board of locally-elected volunteer directors. During that time, the community group has made impressive progress across its broad remit of social, economic and conservation aims that include increasing employment opportunities, addressing local housing needs and protecting and enhancing the cultural and natural heritage of North Harris.

"It's a very interesting partnership and unique from the start in that the North Harris Trust approached us," comments Mick Blunt, John Muir Trust Area Manager, based in Lewis. "At the time, they were one of the earlier community buy-outs, so were real pioneers in a sense. We were able to support in the process of the buyout, help develop the first management plan and offer assistance in areas such as ecological surveys and footpath maintenance plans."

As Blunt explains, in this instance the John Muir Trust was approached because of "who we are and what we stand for" rather than simply to source funding. "One of their main objectives was to keep North Harris 'wild and beautiful' and they very much saw it as an environmental asset. That's important: partners must have the same fundamental aspirations."

> IT'S A VERY INTERESTING PARTNERSHIP AND UNIQUE IN THAT THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST APPROACHED US

STARTING OUT

Such beginnings are common to many of the John Muir Trust's land partnerships: young community organisations invariably want for little in terms of commitment, energy and ideas but often need support in the shape of funding assistance, development plans or specific areas of land management expertise.

In the northwest of the Isle of Lewis, for instance, the John Muir Trust has supported Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (The Galson Estate Trust) since its buy-out of the 22,600ha Galson Estate in 2007. While some financial assistance was provided for the initial buy-out, much of the input since has concentrated on supporting the estate's ranger service, led by Julie Sievewright. "At the time, I was the only employee and we were starting from scratch, so to have that support was fantastic," she explains. "There are now three of us and we are a lot more structured in the way that we operate."

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

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PHOTOGRAPH: MICK BLUNT

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PHOTOGRAPH: ASSYNT FOUNDATION

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PHOTOGRAPH: JIM MANTHORPE

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Today, interpretation and environmental education are at the heart of the rangering work on the estate, although with more than 20 crofting townships within its boundaries, the role also includes working with crofters on a variety of land management issues. During the summer months, the focus is on visitors and the provision of guided walks and other activities, while work with local schools provides an important year-round community link and also helps raise awareness of the natural heritage of the area.

As Blunt explains, the relationship with Galson is quite different from that with the North Harris Trust. "At Galson, we are not directors – our role is more as specialist environmental advisor. It was agreed from the outset that we would specifically provide support for the ranger and other environmental services as and when needed, and also be on hand to provide advice. This means that we get together a few times per month and help with getting particular projects off the ground."

Of course, both partners also benefit from the groups of dedicated volunteers that attend John Muir Trust work parties on the islands each year. Whether undertaking beach cleans, assisting with native woodland projects or helping remove invasive plant species such as gunnera (giant rhubarb), such work continues to make a clear, visible difference that is greatly appreciated by local communities.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Back on the mainland, two further partnerships highlight the very different nature of such relationships – and the fact that partners don't always need to entirely agree in order to work together.

In 2005, the John Muir Trust helped the Assynt Foundation raise £550,000 towards the purchase of the Drumrunie and Glencanisp Estates – large tracts of physically imposing land that neighbour the Trust's own Quinag property in Sutherland.

"For our part, it was an opportunity to work with an organisation with similar values in terms of sustainable management and conservation of land for the benefit of the wider community," explains Mark Lazzeri, Assynt Foundation Manager.

"The funding was important but so too was the way that the John Muir Trust was able to bring in other organisations to assist. They helped us with the fundamental question of 'how do we do this?'"

As both parties admit, it is a partnership that has not always run entirely smoothly, with differences of opinion on some of the Foundation's more commercially-minded plans for economic development. This led to the John Muir Trust stepping away from its seat on the Board of Directors. Today, things have moved on and there is a much more relaxed relationship – one that that sees the Trust as a friendly neighbour working collaboratively with the Foundation on joint conservation projects rather than being intimately involved with the running of the organisation.

On a broader scale, the two are working together with other landowners as part of the recently-launched Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project – an initiative that aims to connect fragmented habitats and create thriving communities over a large swathe of Sutherland. "The project is interesting in that it looks to gain consensus on an approach to land

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

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management – with much for us all to collaborate on," says Lazzeri. "For instance, we all want to see more woodland cover; the protection and enhancement of peatlands; and educating people about the management of large landscapes."

A similar kind of background role now exists within the Knoydart Foundation – the community group that purchased the Knoydart Estate in 1999 with support from the John Muir Trust, Highland Council and others.

"Knoydart will always be very personal to the John Muir Trust with it being the location of its first property and the founding directors having triggered the idea of a buy-out," says Angela Williams, the Foundation's Development Manager. "Since then, it has provided financial backing, fund-raising and moral support as much as anything."

Williams admits that it is only in recent years that the Foundation has been able to invest more time and money on the land management side of its operations, principally deer management, rhododendron control and running ranger-led guided walks. Prior to that, it focussed on issues such as housing, establishing the Foundation bunkhouse, refurbishing the hydro-electric scheme which now powers most of the properties in the community, and establishing its various trading companies.

"We are now financially viable which is a big achievement in itself, but we are by no means comfortable," says Williams. "It's still pretty knife-edge."

As Fran Lockhart, the John Muir Trust's representative on the Foundation board, notes: "In an isolated and marginal place like Knoydart, these will always have to be a priority so it's important that the Trust continues to understand that the Foundation has more than just land management issues to consider."

> KNOYDART WILL ALWAYS BE VERY PERSONAL TO THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

FORWARD PROGRESS

Of course, over time, land partners can become so skilled and resourceful that their need for assistance diminishes. That's certainly the case with the North Harris Trust which can list transport infrastructure improvements, the development of path networks, renewable energy projects, ecological monitoring and successful lobbying for the building of community housing among its many achievements. Perhaps most important of all, it has secured employment for seven staff – a significant number for an area like Harris – and is about to complete its own office building in Tarbert to house all but one of them.

Given the dynamism of the group, it is perhaps little surprise that the John Muir Trust's role is now more as a catalyst for new initiatives – including the first Harris Mountain Festival planned for September. "The North Harris Trust these days has such skilled and able staff that they can absolutely take something like this on," says Mick Blunt.

Similarly, the Assynt Foundation has made great strides forward, with a rounded programme of activities covering its various economic, social and environmental aims. Habitat restoration continues apace, helped considerably by achieving target deer populations. "We are already seeing improved and recovered habitat," reports Mark Lazzeri.

Crucially, in terms of generating income, the Foundation has completed its renovation of Glencanisp Lodge, a once grand but since faded Victorian pile that now generates healthy rents from holiday groups and shooting parties. The Foundation is busy exploring how best to source a sustainable, long-term supply of wood to feed the Lodge's new woodchip-fuelled boiler, including the possibility of working with crofters on planting and harvesting of willow coppice on their own land or on the estate.

Meanwhile, in Knoydart, the Foundation continues to pursue a wide range of activities including running an extremely active ranger service – for its first three years part-funded by the John Muir Trust – that offers visitors guided walks as well as organising conservation volunteer days.

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Here, the John Muir Trust acts both as board member and friendly neighbour, offering support and advice as and when requested. As Angela Williams notes, it is quite an intangible partnership but one that works despite some contradictions in focus. "I hope that the relationship continues," she says. "It certainly has value and we are very happy to have the John Muir Trust as a board member."

Further information

The John Muir Trust is involved in a variety of land partnerships from the Western Isles to Corrour in the Central Highlands (see page 12) and the Carrifran Wildwood Project in the Scottish Borders (see page 14). For more details on the partnerships mentioned in this article, visit:

North Harris Trust
www.north-harris.org

Galson Estate Trust
www.galsontrust.com

Assynt Foundation
www.assyntfoundation.org

Knoydart Foundation
www.knoydart-foundation.com

About the author

Richard Rowe is editor of the John Muir Trust Journal. He can be contacted at **journal@jmt.org**

Photography

1 Rhododendron control, Knoydart
2 Carolla Bell, crofter, Galson, North Lewis
3 North Harris Trust guided walk
4 Glencanisp Lodge, Assynt
5 Spying deer, Knoydart
6 Classic coastal scenery, Lewis
7 Work party footpath repairs, Galson

Tiso – the outdoor equipment specialist and the John Muir Trust

Tiso has had strong links with the John Muir Trust since 1983 and continues its support as a Gold Corporate Member and through the provision of office space in Edinburgh

In 2011, this support has increased in the form of an exclusive John Muir Trust discount card entitling Trust members to a 10% discount on selected purchases in Tiso stores during set promotional periods. In addition to offering the 10% discount Tiso will donate 5% of the value of the discounted purchases that members make back to the John Muir Trust. So, members know that the more they take advantage of the exclusive offer, the more they help the Trust.

"Tiso has supported the John Muir Trust from very early on," commented Managing Director Chris Tiso. "Both my late father and, more recently, my mother have served as Trustees and our company's commitment and sponsorship remains as strong as ever. Tiso recognise that as a membership organisation it is vital for the John Muir Trust to raise awareness and recruit new members in order to carry out its work to protect our treasured wild places. For this reason, we are delighted to have the opportunity to offer this discount card as a thank you to the Trust's existing members for their ongoing support. We hope this offer will also be seen as a nice added benefit to those thinking of joining the Trust in 2011."

For further information on your nearest Tiso store, visit www.tiso.com

The John Muir Trust would like to thank Tiso and all our Corporate Members and Supporters and all other corporates who provide support such as payroll giving schemes.

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We value the contribution of the growing number of companies that support the Trust through membership, donations, promotional initiatives and in-kind support. If your business would like to help our business of protecting wild land and wild places, please contact Fiona Mackintosh on 0131 554 0114 or email recruit@jmt.org

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

Private practice

Over the past three years, the John Muir Trust has forged an excellent working relationship with Corrour Estate – an example of the kind of land management partnerships that are possible with private landowners, as **Mike Daniels** explains

Since 2008, the John Muir Trust has worked in partnership with Corrour, a privately-owned estate that covers more than 20,000ha of wild land sandwiched roughly between Ben Nevis and Rannoch Moor. Since buying the estate in 1995, the current owners' approach has been about "moving towards a balance between a sporting estate and a natural wilderness".

Central to this approach has been the development and implementation of a management plan that puts biodiversity and sustainable thinking at the heart of everything the estate does. Former Trust Chairman Dick Balharry was commissioned to write the original management plan, and it was through Dick that the link between Corrour and the Trust was first forged.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE?

Rather than being run purely for sport shooting as per the previous management regime, the estate now aims to take a more holistic view of its activities. Everything that the estate does is underpinned by the environment; there are plans for the restoration of woodland and montane scrub habitats, and restructuring commercial forest to the original blanket bog and native woodland. Such work is reinforced by a detailed programme of monitoring and biological recording of everything from blanket bog and dwarf birch to bats and black grouse.

Visitors are a key part of Corrour too, with open access for all being encouraged. But this is not a place that is ever likely to be overrun. The special wild land feel is preserved by the challenge of actually accessing the estate. It's a long walk in from the nearest road, with the favoured route for many being the railway and a stop at remote Corrour Station on the West Highland line.

Income from tourism is generated through a range of accommodation on the estate, with two SYHA-operated youth hostels – at Loch Ossian and Corrour Station – a selection of self-catering cottages and the old shooting lodge all available for booking. Once on site, guests can choose from a range of activities, from climbing any of the seven Munros on the estate to canoeing, fishing and deer stalking.

Ultimately, however, to be truly sustainable, the estate is striving to be economically self-sufficient. Most sport shooting estates rely on significant inward investment, with income generated from shooting and venison only recovering some of the cost of the staff and infrastructure required. Instead, Corrour's management plan sees it look to generate income not just from sport shooting, but also holiday

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP DEAN

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PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP DEAN

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PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP DEAN

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accommodation, growing and selling timber and, most significantly, renewable energy.

Since the last century, every drop of water that falls on Corrour has generated electricity, but elsewhere and for someone else – with the energy used primarily for the production of aluminium in Kinlochleven and Fort William. Today, the estate is developing three small schemes on-site to supply its own needs and generate the income needed for continuing the environmental management plan.

THE TRUST'S ROLE

Like all good partnerships, the Trusts relationship with Corrour is based on mutual benefit and, in this case, a shared vision for wild land that focuses on:

- Protection – ensuring the wild land qualities of the estate are preserved
- Enhancement – by encouraging natural processes and minimising human impacts
- Engagement – through interpretation of the management aims of the estate to thousands of visitors each year
- Ensuring a thriving community – by investing in staff, infrastructure and local contractors and businesses

On the ground, the Trust's role continues to evolve. Initially, the Trust helped establish habitat monitoring and develop a detailed plan. But now that the plans are embedded and beginning to be implemented, the Trust is involved more in active support, including an annual work party to repair footpaths and remove invasive non-native spruce. In addition, Trust staff are paid by the estate as advisors and give ongoing advice on the development and implementation of the plan. We also hope to hold a Trustees' meeting at Corrour this year.

> THE SPECIAL WILD LAND FEEL IS PRESERVED BY THE CHALLENGE OF ACTUALLY ACCESSING THE ESTATE


PHOTOGRAPH: ROHAN BEYTS

4

FUTURE CHALLENGES

This type of partnership is a new one for the Trust. As it evolves, it is worth scrutinising the effectiveness of the relationship for both sides. It should be said that working in partnership is not without challenges. The two partners do not agree on every issue and being an advisor does not mean that the Trust automatically gets its way. Similarly the estate may not always want to adhere to all of the Trust's Wild Land Management Standards, or be associated with all its policies.

Overall though, beyond a shared vision for the estate, the link to the Trust gives the estate the benefit of our wider experience of land management in terms of the environment, communities and public access. For the Trust, the main benefits are that we can help to manage another piece of wild land; and, of course, gain a valuable insight into the workings of a private estate; and of course, generate income that helps cover the running costs of the Trust as a whole.

So, can this model be replicated elsewhere? It is early days, but the key tool is the development of a sustainable management plan based on the Trust's Wild Land Management Standards. If an estate is willing to undertake the production of this then we can certainly begin to engage with them and help to deliver sustainable management across other areas of wild land.

This will not be easy. The fact is that many private estates simply do not share our values, while some of the management practices required are potentially controversial. Deer management is a particularly emotive subject. Moving from a legacy of high numbers to a more sustainable model usually requires a significant culling effort. This in turn requires a culture shift away from 'traditional' management – a change in thinking that rarely happens over-night.

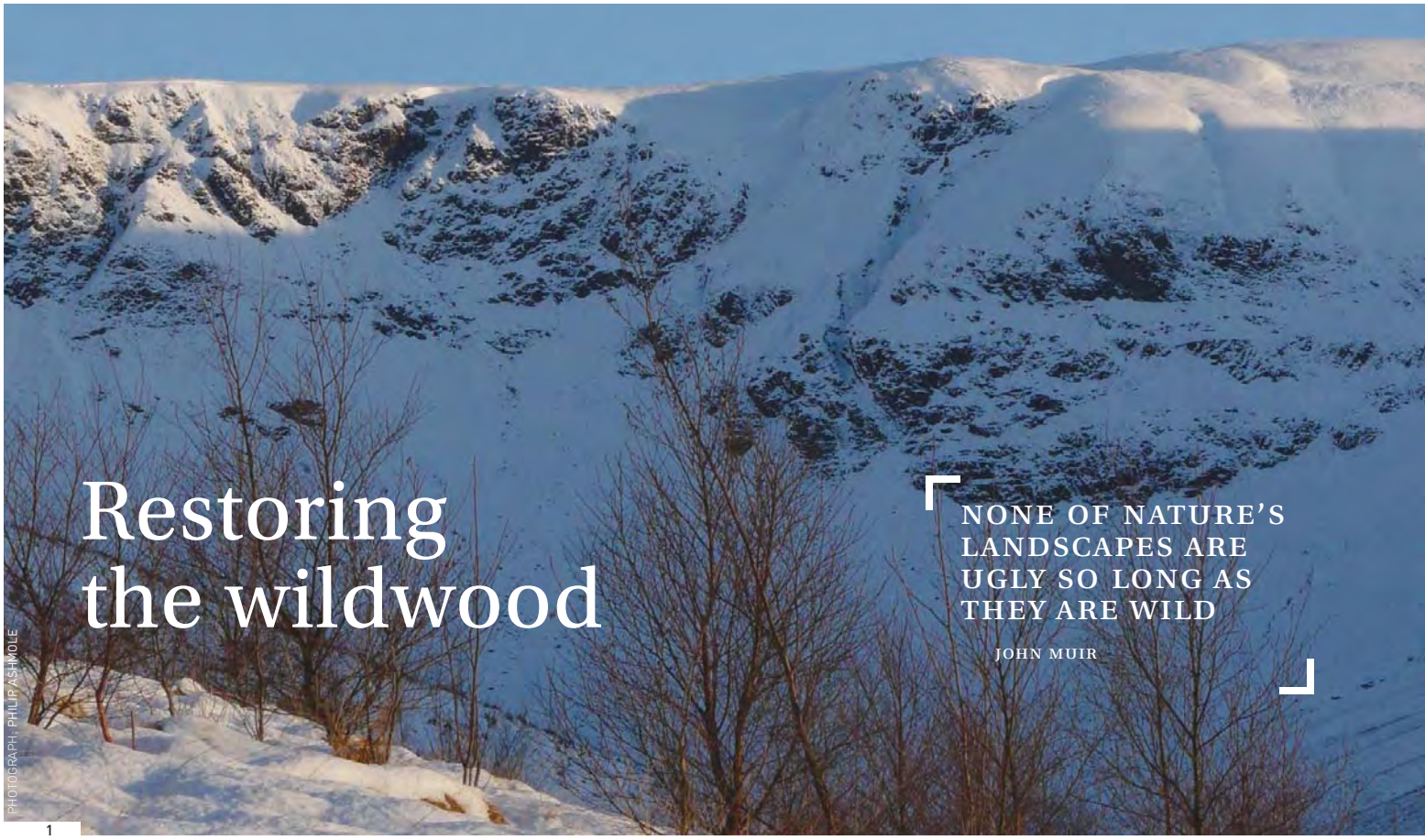
The problem is that our wild land continues to disappear at an alarming rate, so time is not on our side. We urgently need to encourage more private owners to show the courage, conviction and commitment already demonstrated by Corrour.

About the author
Mike Daniels is Head of Land Science at the John Muir Trust. He can be reached at **mike.daniels@jmt.org**

Further information
Corrour Estate
www.corrour.co.uk

Photography
1 The grass-roofed lodge sauna with jetty stretching into Loch Ossian
2 Snow melt filling the Allt Feith Thuill burn
3 A stag feeding on the flanks of Leum Uilleim
4 Work party volunteers in action

Restoring the wildwood



PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP ASHMOLE

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> NONE OF NATURE'S LANDSCAPES ARE UGLY SO LONG AS THEY ARE WILD
>
> JOHN MUIR

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP ASHMOLE

2

PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON BROOKE

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John Thomas reflects on a remarkable project that, over the past decade, has seen the planting of half a million trees and the gradual greening of a historic valley in the Scottish Borders

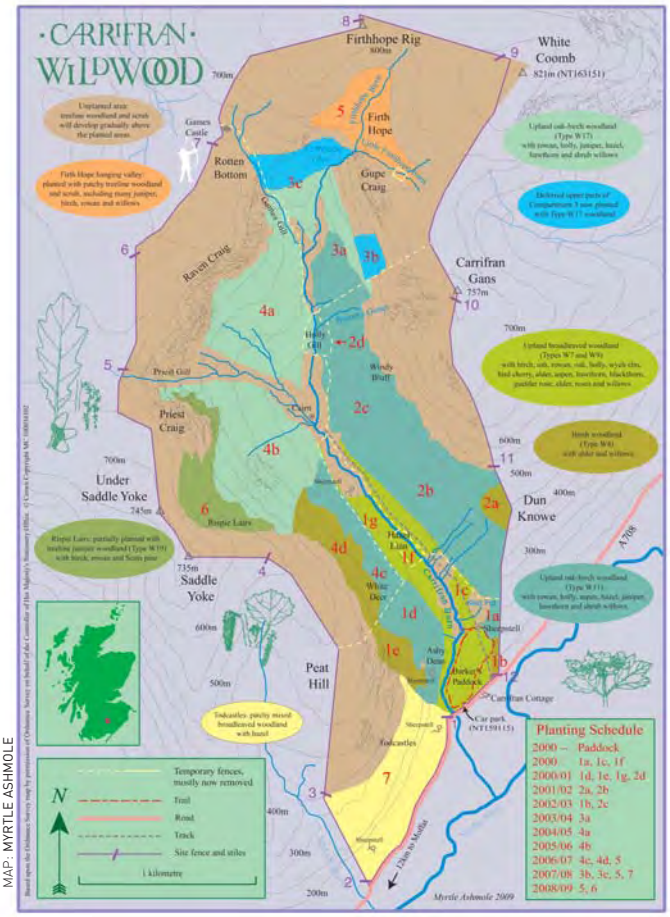
The hills of the Scottish Borders have been grazed by cattle, sheep and goats for well over 1,000 years. Dr Johnson noticed the distinct lack of woodland in 1733, remarking: "I believe few regions have been denuded like this". The Forest of Ettrick – a royal hunting ground – that once covered these hills was present up to the Middle Ages, but the woodland was long gone by the time Johnson and Boswell rode by.

Some 200 years later, in the mid 1990s, a group of volunteers set out to re-establish part of that ancient woodland in the Carrifran valley, adjacent to the National Trust's Grey Mare's Tail property. The aim was to restore a wildwood of indigenous trees and plants consistent with how it looked before man set foot there.

In pursuing this vision, the group received great support and encouragement from the John Muir Trust. This partnership in a shared vision, which included much personal help rather than funding, brought immense goodwill to the public appeal for the £300,000 required to buy the land. More was raised than was asked for, with not a penny from the public purse and, after tortuous negotiations, Carrifran was purchased before the seller's deadline expired.

Over the following decade, starting on New Year's Day 2000, no fewer than half a million trees have been planted – an effort that has extended to more than just volunteers. Lottery funding, grants from the Forestry Commission and other public and charitable bodies, including some climate change funding, all helped, as did some generous voluntary funding from individuals. And it was individual forestry workers local to the Borders who did the work all year round, not the big forestry companies.

In addition, the Wildwood Group, as it became known, could not have applied its ideas to such a huge canvas had it not become part of the Borders Forest Trust, itself a developing voluntary body at the time that the Millennium Forest and Reforesting Scotland programmes were emerging.



MAP: MYRTLE ASHMOLE

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RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

The process of turning vision into reality involved a systematic, evidence-based, yet practical, approach. The Wildwood Steering Group was comprised of environmental scientists, craftsmen, foresters and business people, both professional and amateur. Once the likely site had been identified, they organised a conference at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh which laid the groundwork for ecological restoration at Carrifran.

The group was fortunate in having access to excellent pollen records of peat samples taken at the head of Carrifran by an earlier research project. Described as one of the best records from an upland site in Scotland, the project indicated what had grown in the valley over the past 10,000 years. In particular, it demonstrated that pine had largely been superceded by oak, alder and birch from about 6,000 years ago.

Soil samples were then taken showing the distribution of soil types throughout the valley. The Borders has richer soils than much of the Highlands and Carrifran is no exception with calcareous soils appearing in places, as well as its share of peat, scree and bog. Following a detailed study of the valley using a site classification system developed by the Forestry Commission, a comprehensive planting scheme was drawn up matching trees to specific soil types and locations *(see map above)*.

And these were not just any trees; all were grown from seeds collected by volunteers from fragments of ancient woodland taken from as close to Carrifran as possible. This led to some exciting adventures up crags and cleughs (a Borders term for ravines) across the Southern Uplands and northern England. The seeds, mainly brought on by an East Lothian nursery and all paid for by a generous supporter, were then planted by a combination of independent, self-employed contractors and very committed volunteers.

A feature of the project is the range of habitats it offers for regeneration. The valley is 665ha, rising from 165m at its mouth to 821m at the highest point of the plateau at White Coomb. And the site covers the whole catchment of the Carrifran burn from its many sources in the bogs and screes on the top almost to the point where it joins the Moffat Water in the valley floor. This range is reflected in the planting scheme which includes everything from dense lowland woods to montane scrub.

The association between Borders Forest Trust and the John Muir Trust has continued beyond the restoration of Carrifran. Recently, the John Muir Trust lent its support and goodwill to Borders Forest Trust's purchase of Corehead Farm, a 640ha tract of hill land between the Devil's Beef Tub and Hart Fell. And with the John Muir Trust taking full ownership of its property at Glen Lude, kindly gifted by Sheila Bell, there will be further opportunities for the two organisations and their members to work together. Slowly, the great forest of Ettrick is being restored.

THE NEXT CENTURY

From the beginning, the Wildwood Group was committed to restoration rather than simply conservation of the status quo. But what part does extensive planting on this scale have to play in the future management of wild land?

Come off the hill on a rough winter's day into indigenous woodland such as that found at Rothiemurchus or the Quoich and the welcoming protection of the woods is keenly appreciated. And not just by people, but by all sorts of wildlife. If we want our hills to be alive and not just empty sheep walks and so-called deer 'forests', we need to put something back. Comprehensive planting on the scale of Carrifran may not be widely applicable, but many glens and hillsides have been denuded by man's intervention and will not recover their lost biodiversity without sympathetic restoration.

Once planted, the trees at Carrifran will face a number of threats for many years to come. The stock fence will exclude goats and sheep, but all 12km of it will need regular maintenance. Meanwhile, roe deer and hares will put the wood under constant browsing pressure, with the control of deer alone costing more than £1,000 per annum.

Added to that are large areas of bracken which compete with the young trees and restrict their light, although the most difficult problem of all is the thick grass sward which has been grazed for 1,000 years and in which the seeds of many native trees are unable to germinate and become established.

It is for these reasons that the greatest challenge now is to sustain the wildwood for the next century. During this time its health will depend increasingly on volunteer labour and the generosity of individual members of the public, since public money is rarely available for long-term projects. Only then, after a century or so, the relatively mature Carrifran ecosystem may finally be able to sustain itself against most threats – other than, of course, man himself.

About the author

John Thomas is a lifelong hillwalker and mountaineer, John Muir Trust Trustee and volunteer with Borders Forest Trust.

Further information

For much more on the Carrifran Wildwood, visit **www.carrifran.org.uk**

See also page 31 for a review of *The Carrifran Wildwood Story: Ecological Restoration from the Grass Roots*, by Myrtle and Philip Ashmole

Photography

1 The valley in its winter coat

2 Trust staff were involved from early in the project

3 A volunteer hard at work tree planting

4 Detailed mapping helped match trees to specific soil types in the valley

PHOTOGRAPHY: RORY SYME

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Gathering pace

Our Wild Land Campaign met with a fantastic response, with the submission of our petition to the Scottish Parliament in January a significant milestone. **Mel Nicoll** explains

Our Wild Land Campaign is now well and truly up and running, with the article in the last issue of the Journal explaining how to get involved spurring many members into action. More than 3,700 members signed our petition to the Scottish Parliament, while over 3,000 have added their voice to our UK one – with many more getting in touch to inform us about other actions they have taken.

Members have also been extremely generous in donating to our Wild Land Campaign Appeal, raising more than £15,000 so far. The Trust would like to thank all those who have contributed for their generosity and encouragement – such commitment is helping us to make a real difference.

SCOTTISH SUCCESS

The submission in January of our petition to the Scottish Parliament calling for a new designation to protect Scotland's wild land represents a key milestone in our Wild Land Campaign. Our actions have made a big impact in the Scottish media with the petition successfully raising awareness of the need for better protection for wild land.

Responses to our petition from consultees, including the Scottish Government, VisitScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the National Trust for Scotland, show a wide consensus that wild land should be protected. The Scottish Government responded that, "the Public Petitions Committee's consideration of this petition is timely. The question of

how we identify and protect Scotland's wild land is one which the Scottish Government and its agencies have been actively considering, and we welcome the Committee's contribution to this debate".

In addition, the Scottish Government also referred to work underway by SNH to prepare more detailed and accurate maps of wild land than have been used previously. Very encouragingly, it suggested that the maps are expected to be used by local authorities to identify and safeguard areas of wild land, and perhaps also at a national level.

SNH gave further backing to our Campaign, saying: "There is a history, in the field of environmental protection, of acting decisively only when the resources in question are under extreme threat. Given the distinctiveness and rarity of Scotland's wild land resource – in a western European, not purely a UK, context – we must surely avoid this trap and act before it is too late."

We are now building the momentum for improved wild land protection, using the opportunity of the Scottish Parliament elections on 5 May. Submitting our petition before the Scottish elections was vital; it should now receive attention as soon as the new Government is elected. There is certainly no time to lose. New figures from SNH highlight that the areas without visual influence of built development fell from 31% in January 2008 to 28% in December 2009. That drop represents an area around 14 times the size of Glasgow.

The need for action is further reinforced by developments that will impact on Scotland's best wild land – such as plans to extend the Muaitheabhal wind development on the Isle of Lewis, and the Dunmaglass wind development in the Monadhliaths. A new designation should stop developments of this scale from being proposed in wild land areas.

With the Scottish elections fast approaching, we need members and friends to continue to demonstrate support for our campaign in the lead up to 5 May. The remaining weeks provide a vital opportunity to influence candidates and increase political understanding that wildness is a necessity in our lives and that action to protect it is needed at all levels of government.

You can pursue this by writing to candidates as well as the local and national press, and encourage debate about wild land at any public meetings. If you are not eligible to vote in the Scottish elections you can still write to the leaders of the main Scottish parties (see www.jmt.org/wildland for a template letter). And, please, keep up the pressure – the first few months after the election will be crucial.

UK CAMPAIGN

With elections on 5 May for the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly, and also for local government in some areas, wherever you live, this is the time to lobby your political representatives and candidates about the need for better protection for wild land.

And with the 'localism' agenda, local councillors will have an increased role in planning decisions in England, so don't forget to ask candidates for their views on landscape protection and continue to press them on this matter post-election.

Meanwhile, our UK petition continues to gather signatures and we aim to make an impact at Westminster later in the year. Please sign our petition and encourage others to do likewise – we know that petitioning works.

> THE NEED FOR ACTION IS REINFORCED BY DEVELOPMENTS THAT WILL IMPACT ON SCOTLAND'S BEST WILD LAND

About the author

Mel Nicoll is Campaigns Coordinator for the John Muir Trust. She can be contacted at **campaigns@jmt.org**

Further information

To find out how you can support our Wild Land Campaign, visit **www.jmt.org/wildland**, or call Mel Nicoll on **01796 484938**. To keep up with the latest Campaign news and actions, sign up to receive our monthly email newsletter at **www.jmt.org**

Photography

1 Trust staff and helpers spell out their message in Holyrood Park, Edinburgh

2 Stuart Brooks and Campaign supporter Cameron McNeish (left) prepare to deliver the wild land petition signatures to the Scottish Parliament

EXPLORING POLICY ALLIANCES

Helen McDade reveals how the Trust is working with others to highlight major campaign issues

For many years, the John Muir Trust has been part of Scottish Environment Link, a forum for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations with over 30 member bodies representing a range of interests. It is primarily an information-sharing network that works through sub-groups, called task forces. In the past, the John Muir Trust has had representatives on the landscape task force (chairing it for several years recently), as well as the biodiversity and planning task forces.

But while Scottish Environment Link is a great way to benefit from a larger pool of knowledge and interests, it can be difficult to obtain agreement from a number of bodies to issue press statements or to take a more campaigning focus. Sometimes, it is useful to form a more informal alliance with a smaller group of organisations whose aims on one particular issue are very closely aligned. This allows for a quick turnaround on decisions and statements, as the grouping has a closely agreed position and a clear goal.

One such partnership was the Beauly Denny Landscape Group which was formed to put the national, strategic and environmental issues to the Beauly Denny Public Local Inquiry (PLI). The group, chaired by the John Muir Trust, included the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, Mountaineering Council of Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Ramblers Scotland and the Scottish Wild Land Group.

In the fast-changing pseudo-legal world of a PLI, it was essential to be able to make decisions or issue statements without the days or even weeks of negotiation which occur in more formal partnerships. Although the result of the Beauly Denny PLI was not what we wanted, we felt this grouping had worked well within the limits of the knowledge we had then (we know so much more now!) and the resources available.

The Trust wishes to extend this way of working south of the border. As such, we have agreed with several other UK landscape-focused organisations to create an informal grouping to exchange information, work together to promote our message through the media and consider joint policy events.

The organisations involved in these initial discussions include the Cambrian Mountain Society, Campaign for National Parks, Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Friends of the Lake District, Outdoor Industries Association and Yorkshire Dales Society. We look forward to a fruitful partnership.

About the author

Helen McDade is Head of Policy for the John Muir Trust. She can be contacted at **policy@jmt.org**

The Journal at 50

Many will wonder where the time has gone, but this edition of the Journal marks a half-century of issues. To celebrate, **Richard Rowe** includes the thoughts of former editors as he explores the evolution of a publication that charts the story of the John Muir Trust itself

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THE JOURNAL IS VERY MUCH PART OF THE OUTREACH OF THE TRUST

JOHN HUTCHISON
CHAIRMAN

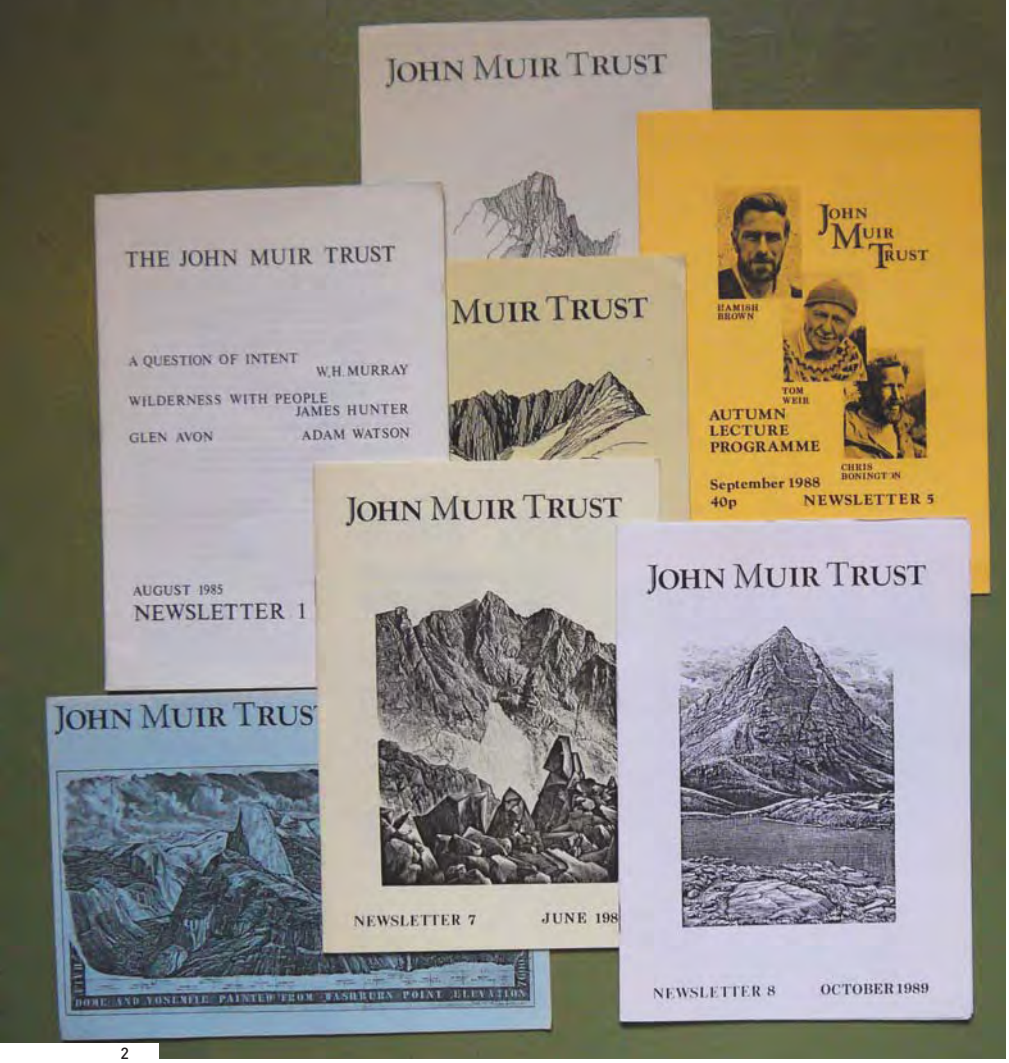
Leafing through the 47 issues that preceded my own editorship of the John Muir Trust Journal is something that I would recommend to all future editors of the publication. Doing so reveals the story of a fledgling organisation that grew from a somewhat obscure, almost underground group to its position today as a highly-respected guardian of wild land.

And like the Trust itself, what began as a simple, eight-page, A5 newsletter has come a long way. As original editor, Ben Tindall, recalls, the early newsletters were decidedly homespun: "They were literally cut and paste affairs, typed in my office with headings by architectural Letraset, and illustrated with woodcuts by David Bellamy and, as far as I can remember, photocopied at Edinburgh University's law department."

But never mind their simplicity, what mattered most – and what I found particularly humbling – was the sheer energy and sense of purpose that drove the Trust's founders and its early supporters. There is a touch of the diary about the first newsletters, as they reveal the inner anxieties and uncertainties of an organisation committed to the conservation of wild land, but not entirely sure of the best way forward.

"The first newsletter was born out of a frustration about not being able to share confidential information about efforts to purchase Li & Coire Dhorrcail, our first property," explains Ben. "It also had prescient and passionate articles from W H Murray and James Hunter about the tension between wild land for its own sake versus its cultural and social importance." Essentially, they asked, what is it that the Trust stands for?

The eventual, rather low-key purchase of Li and Coire Dhorrcail was officially announced in Issue 2 – published two years later in August 1987. In a similarly understated vein, it was not until Issue 4 (May 1988) that a report appeared on the public launch of the Trust in Dunbar.



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The issue included a reprint of an article by Chris Brasher, one of the Trust's four founding members, that appeared in *The Observer* and which resulted in a surge in membership (from 98 to 200). It also announced that the Prince of Wales had agreed to be patron of the Trust – a position he continues to hold today.

The early newsletters portray the Trust as a rather nervous group, one slowly finding its feet, gaining confidence but cautious about growing; for while there was recognition that it had to be heard for reasons of fund-raising and recruitment, the Trust was wary of raising its head above the parapet lest it draw too much attention and increase the public pressure on wild land.

But the Trust, and its newsletter, became gradually more assured. Issue 5 (September 1988, price 40p) saw the announcement of a star-studded lecture programme with mountain men Hamish Brown, Chris Bonington and Tom Weir recruited to help deliver the Trust's wild land messages.

What is particularly striking both then and throughout later issues is the level of engagement of members – as demonstrated by the always busy letters column. Here was a supremely vigilant audience, one not afraid to take the Trust to task if it felt a wrong turn had been taken, however small or innocent.

ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING

In these early years, the newsletter was the home of not just news and letters, but also accounts, calls to arms, work party details, job vacancies and more. Issue 14 (January 1993) recorded a most generous donation of £250.00 from the Bishop of Newcastle, while others contained some real delights, such as this gem in Issue 11 (July 1991):

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Shariff. I am seven years old and I live in London. Our topic is living things. What wild places do you look after? What kind of animals live there? Do you have zebras or snakes? What is it like in Scotland? Is it snowing still?

Yours sincerely

Shariff

By Issue 12 (January 1992), the Trust had added Torrin in Skye to its land portfolio and was negotiating to acquire Mar Lodge Estate in partnership with the World Wildlife Federation and RSPB. It was to become the second of three failed attempts to acquire property in the Cairngorms with the Trust having previously missed out on buying Upper Glen Avon and later suffering the same fate with Glenfeshie Estate.

By Issue 16, the newsletter had another new editor, Colin Eastwood, who arrived thanks to the persuasive powers of his predecessor Terry Isles, who had become the first full-time director of the Trust. "Terry always had the facility to make his suggestions apparently innocuous," notes Colin. "Since I am naïve, I fell prey to his blandishments."

Colin edited seven issues during which time the newsletter became much more adept at highlighting the Trust's stance on how wild land should be managed. It grew significantly in size and content. So, too, did the postbag. "I got a fair deal of flak," he recalls. "One view voiced was encapsulated in a letter to me that all the Trust needed was a sheet about its activities that could be passed round a coach on the way to meets."

Undaunted, it was Colin who oversaw the changing of the name to Journal & News, with the intention of exploring the major conservation issues of the day, often including opinion from outside organisations, in addition to covering the Trust's own work.

The subsequent growth of the rebranded Journal & News coincided with the Trust's acquisition of Strathaird in Skye – the largest purchase in its 11-year history – which saw the well-being of crofting communities added to its previous main interest of caring for wild landscapes. The successful capture of Strathaird was considered a direct result of time spent on earlier failed bids in the Cairngorms, with each seen as having helped the Trust establish itself as an important player in conservation circles.

Such standing certainly proved favourable to Strathaird's owner at the time – Iain Anderson of Jethro Tull fame – who was

Ben Tindall
Issues 1–8

"I believe that ultimately it's our approach and philosophy that's the most important and influential aspect of our work and therefore communicating this is our most important mission. Whether this is done through our Awards, by example on the ground, lobbying in parliament or other means, the keen support of members is crucial and newsletters are a powerful link. Our newsletters also provide another purpose; they provide an institutional memory, and to this end I suggest that all back issues should be searchable/ indexed and put on our website – another vitally important tool, undreamt of in 1985."

Colin Eastwood
Issues 16–22

"How much is the Journal read? By members? By people outside the organisation? I don't know. But I remain convinced that the voice of the Trust is crucial to our wild environment, to its safeguarding and management. The pen of the one whose name we recognise in the title of our Trust never tired of proclaiming those things he held in the very core of his heart.

At the time of writing this contribution, the issue of what happens to our forests and woodlands, and who should own them, has become a political matter. Thank goodness, after a huge outcry, this fatuous and dangerous idea has been dropped by the Government. Even so, read what John Muir had to say:

"The battle we have fought, and are still fighting, for the forests is a part of the eternal conflict between right and wrong, and we cannot expect to see the end of it… so we must count on watching and striving for these trees, and should always be glad to find anything so surely good and noble to strive for."

In our time, in our smaller way, we can, and should, add our two penn'orth."

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sufficiently impressed to take the estate off the market and negotiate an agreement with the Trust, so sparing the usual agonies of an open bid.

The Strathaird purchase caused then Chairman, the author and naturalist Nicholas Luard, to use his Chairman's message to muse, somewhat provocatively, about the Trust's change in direction, noting how its founders, himself among them, had created the Trust to conserve and regenerate wild landscapes, but perhaps didn't foresee people being a part of the picture. In future, he asked, should the Trust be involved with "wilderness alone, or wilderness with people?" His question generated a flurry of correspondence, much of it printed in Issue 20 (January 1996); people and wilderness – at least in Scotland – are inseparable was the general thrust.

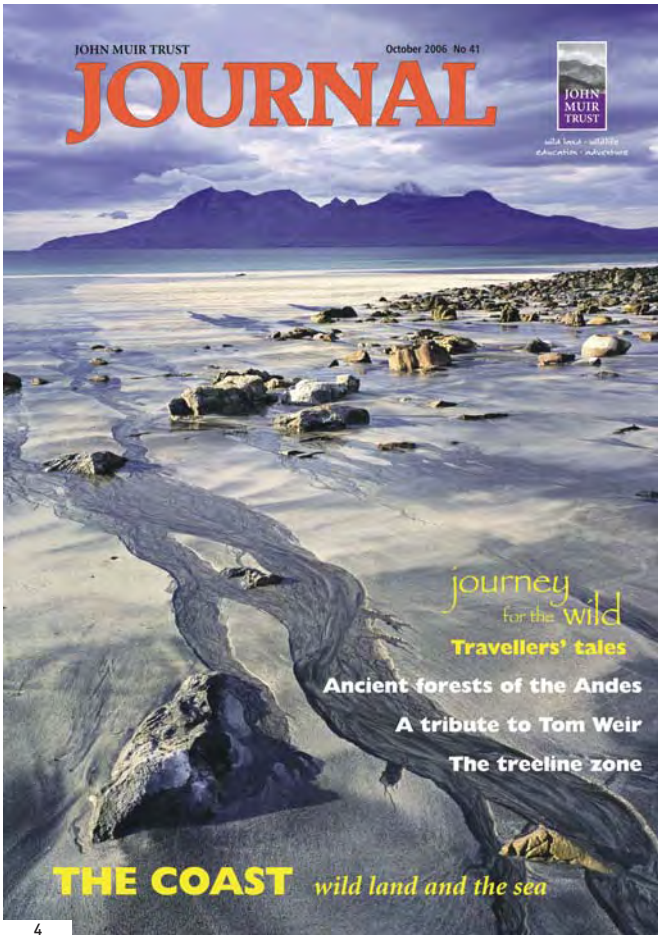
ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Issue 26 (Winter 1998) saw the Journal & News adopt a colour front cover for the first time, while inside each issue continued to reflect key moments from the Trust's history: an increasing presence beyond Scotland, thanks in large part to the launch of the John Muir Award; the award of the first John Muir Award for Lifetime Achievement to Tom Weir; a particularly forthright letters special on the Trust's response to the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001; and, later, tales from the Journey for the Wild in 2006. There were also moments of sadness, with obituaries for Chris Brasher, Graham Tiso, Andrew Raven and other major figures who had helped shape the Trust from its earliest days.

By Issue 28 (Winter 1999), the Journal & News was in the hands of its longest-standing editor to date, Mike Merchant, who was at the helm through to Issue 44. Mike recalls an interesting start to his editorship having been hired following a "pleasantly informal interview". "In no time at all it sank in that I had five weeks to get the first one to press, more or less from scratch. It was an A5 saddle-stitched magazine with a colour cover; the big story was the purchase of Schiehallion. Nine years later I was sending my last Journal to press; by then A4 and full-colour."

Mike's time in the editor's chair saw many highlights, not least when he was able to give space to people who had inspired and informed him down the years. "John Cleare and Irvine Butterfield never failed with a photo, and they would be well-documented as well as expertly shot," he remembers. "Unbidden but always welcome, Hamish Brown would submit type-written musings and sketches, and Tom Weir, on the occasion of his lifetime achievement award, sent a bunch of bromide prints – from which we chose for the cover of Issue 30 a view of Liathach's swooping ridge in winter."

But best of all, he says, were the surprises, "the contributors with no 'form' in the writing business but who came up with pieces that, as an editor, I could only stand back and admire". These included a piece in Issue 34 (Winter 2003) by Mike Nurse in which he wrote of his John Muir Award quest for *Dryas octopetala* (Mountain avens) in Snowdonia: "At the end of a long retreat… far from alpine avalanche,



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snow and the arctic birch scrub, in Wales it is an outpost, a representative of those wildernesses ...".

Another memorable piece explored memories of Lewis from a radar technician posted long ago to RAF Aird Uig. "Mervyn Southam's story in Issue 44 (February 2008) was full of humour and wry observation, and I thought of it when I finally saw Uig's great sands for myself," says Mike. In the same issue, the Trust's own Lester Standen seemed surprised when told how good his piece was. "An account of the hind cull in Strathaird estate, it was vivid, tautly paced, exactly descriptive."

And then came the leap into the current format – one that saw the visual identity of the Trust extend to the Journal for the first time. It was overseen by another Mike, this time Mike Brown, my immediate predecessor whose appointment appeared to coincide with a changed attitude to publicity within the Trust. "The Journal was, for the first time, being seen as part of the promotional mix," notes Mike.

One of his first acts was to uncouple the Members' News from the Journal, leaving the former to deal with largely internal matters and the latter to serve as the Trust's window to the wider world. "The Journal was designed to be strategic, influential and have a longer shelf life. It was something we wanted members to be proud of."

The visual change that came with Issue 46 (Spring 2009) brought a lot of positive feedback but was not without criticism, recalls Mike. "There are always some in a voluntary organisation who are uneasy about looking professional or 'slick' as some would have it. This is a view I do not share: if one wants to yield influence and make a difference, the organisation needs to be taken seriously."

I have attempted to continue in the same vein, hopefully producing a Journal that informs, inspires and – dare I say it – also entertains. It is far too early in my own editorship to make any weighty pronouncements on its past or future impact. Much better instead for the last words to belong to Trust Chairman John Hutchison: "The Journal is very much part of the outreach of the Trust and, as an historical record, will exist long into the future as a reference source for those studying our natural environment. It is a dynamic time capsule, the period to date offering not a simple snapshot but 50 separate exposures of the issues that have faced the Trust, matters that are important to our membership which has grown many-fold."

So, happy 50th birthday Journal. Although much has changed since 1985, much also remains the same, with intrusion into wild land as serious a threat as ever. The signs are that the Journal – and the organisation it reflects – will be needed more than ever over the next 50 issues.

WORDS FROM PREVIOUS EDITORS

Mike Merchant
Issues 28–44

"It was the land that had led me to join the Trust years before. I'd felt there were lobby groups and pressure groups around, but none that had put money where their mouth was, bought the land and in their own way restored it in perpetuity to 'the people'. So the core of the journals I managed was a celebration of the places where the Trust was the landowner or a partner in community ownership.

I believe that there were big changes in the national awareness of wild land in those years. I can remember starting with a sense of how pioneering, indeed daring the Trust was to take charge of these famous places. But before very long the views we put forward in the Journal had almost become received wisdom. As community buyouts, access rights and 'sustainability' emerged on the political landscape, the Trust took its place in a spectrum of – let us say – enlightened, inclusive landownership in the Highlands and Islands. It was a sea change and I'm convinced the Trust's brave example helped bring it on."

Mike Brown
Issues 45–47

"I've been a member since the early 1990s and from early days believed passionately that the Trust, like John Muir himself, should have a campaigning voice. I believed that the Trust not only had to communicate with its members but become a high-profile campaigning body.

During my time as editor we started to reflect the Trust's new mantra of 'conserving, campaigning, inspiring' throughout the publication and also introduced themes for each edition. I took particular pleasure in covering topics such as the campaign to restore Hetch Hetchy which both widened horizons and addressed fundamental issues. I also felt it was vital to carry articles about our campaigning to help our members and the wider audience understand why we were taking particular public positions.

While outspoken campaigning was an integral part of John Muir's work, some members appeared uncomfortable when the Trust challenged official policy or conventional wisdom. I believe the Journal has a vital role in engaging the membership in the need for campaigning."

About the author
Richard Rowe is the current editor of the Journal. He can be contacted at journal@jmt.org

Call for help
We are missing issues 28, 29 and 31 of the Journal. If any members can help us retrieve a copy of these issues, please contact the editor on the email above.

Photography
1 The cover of Issue 2 featured a line drawing of Li & Coire Dhorrcail by David Bellamy
2 A montage of early front covers
3 The Journal was produced in A4 and full-colour from Issue 36
4 Mike Merchant's favourite cover image: a shot of Rum from Laig Bay on Eigg by Joe Cornish (Issue 41)

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

1

Strength in numbers

The value of working in partnership is no better illustrated than in the delivery of the John Muir Award – with hundreds of relationships and several major strategic links fostered with organisations around the UK. **Rob Bushby** explains

Partnerships are all about mutual benefit. At best, they make more happen than would be the case without them. They add something to the work of all parties. And they are based on common interests, shared goals, communication and a fair amount of trust.

Developing partnerships with like-minded organisations and groups is one of the things we do best through the John Muir Award. Early last year, we passed the £1 million mark – that is, £1 million of staff time funded and hosted by other organisations to help manage the Award across the UK. Each year, since 2003, between three and six full-time equivalent staff members have been employed in a variety of major partnerships to further the work of the Trust. And that's on top of the working relationships with hundreds of groups using the Award at a local level.

GRASSROOTS DELIVERY

Each year, at grassroots level, we partner with between 600 and 800 organisations that all see value in delivering the John Muir Award as an integrated part of their own activity. Schools, outdoor centres, volunteer groups, prisons and walking clubs all make use of the Award for a variety of reasons. Helping with curriculum links, establishing conservation activity so that it isn't a 'bolt on', recognising achievement, promoting celebratory events, offering an experiential basis for tuning in to sustainability issues… all are highlighted as motivations for linking the Award's four Challenges – Discover, Explore, Conserve, Share – to their own work.

But what's in it for the John Muir Trust? Primarily, this activity helps deliver on one of our top-line aspirations that wild places are valued by society – clearly not something that we can

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

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PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE BRAIG/SPEY DESCENT

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achieve on our own. It also extends the Trust's reach beyond its membership demographic by engaging people from different backgrounds. At least 25% of those achieving Awards each year are 'socially excluded', while 80% of participants are under 25 years of age.

In addition, the Award gives the John Muir Trust a substantial presence beyond its wild land properties, including south of the Scottish border, and locates it in a range of operational and government policy settings from National Parks and Wildlife Trusts to school curricula, inclusion and health.

A wide range of case studies of these informal partnerships can be found on the John Muir Award web pages. There's also a collection of 25 'Biodiversity Stories' showing how Award activity can link the Trust with major initiatives such as International Year of Biodiversity 2010. We haven't yet calculated the financial value of these grassroot-delivery partnerships, but we have begun to collate all the 'Conserve' activity undertaken in 2011 that forms a fundamental part of the collective John Muir Award experience. This will help demonstrate a cumulative impact of this collaborative work to Trust members, funders and participants.

> THIS ACTIVITY HELPS DELIVER ON ONE OF OUR TOP-LINE ASPIRATIONS THAT WILD PLACES ARE VALUED BY SOCIETY

STRATEGIC LINKS

There is another very important level of partnership – one that extends the management capacity of the John Muir Award to reach more people and strengthen its presence. This is a strategic arrangement in which an organisation manages the Award jointly with the John Muir Trust with an additional, explicit purpose of meeting its own aims. This is achieved by creating dedicated posts, shared fund-raising efforts, staff hosting arrangements and allocating existing staff time to manage the Award. Over 40% of Award activity in 2010 was managed in this way by staff not employed by the John Muir Trust.

Such an approach recognises that running the John Muir Award can deliver demonstrable organisational benefits *(see the strategic partnership case studies)*. It is also measurable. For example, over a seven-year period, more than 10,000 people engaged in the Award via our partnership with Cumbria Youth Alliance, while last year's YHA Do it 4 Real summer camps generated 9,000 hours of conservation volunteering. Meanwhile, National Parks are interested in bringing the ethos of Muir to life, while the likes of Durham County Council are looking to get more communities involved in their local wild places.

The bottom line is that organisations are willing to invest in the Award to help deliver their aims in a cost-effective way. And as an initiative that is provided for free to the end-user, it is a relationship that offers a sustainable business model, sharing the cost – and benefits – of management. This approach is at the heart of our thinking for the future. And we are aiming high: how about a million pounds a year invested by others, on a win:win basis, in the educational initiatives of the John Muir Trust by 2020? You never know…

CASE STUDY:

Cairngorms National Park Authority

The first board meeting of the newly formed Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) in September 2003 agreed to support a full-time funded post of John Muir Award Manager for the Cairngorms. Eight years on, the John Muir Award continues to be the principal environmental engagement and outdoor learning scheme promoted by the CNPA. Chiefly this is because it helps address key statutory aims by creating opportunities to learn about, enjoy and become practically involved in caring for the National Park and its special qualities – especially for young people, those with disabilities and people on low incomes. It also helps deliver outcomes in the National Park Plan and for the John Muir Trust that are mutually beneficial.

The 10,000th Award to have been achieved in the Cairngorms, by a pupil at Ballater Primary School, was presented in November by the Scottish Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham, who said: "Learning in the outdoors can make significant contributions to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The John Muir Award plays an important part in this by motivating people to get outdoors and make the most of their natural environment. It's wonderful to see the pupils at Ballater Primary getting involved and learning about nature and conservation in a way that is fun and meaningful."

→ continued

PHOTOGRAPH: THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST

4

CASE STUDY:

The Outward Bound Trust

Outward Bound is one of the biggest names in outdoor learning, development and adventure. Every year, nearly 30,000 people have 'the experience of a lifetime' at one of its five centres in North Wales, the Lake District and Scotland. The Outward Bound Trust's mission is to unlock the potential in young people through discovery and adventure in the wild, and key to this is a high level of learning and challenge on its programmes. In recent years, it has been particularly focused on inspiring concern for and raising awareness about the natural environment.

Outward Bound has worked with the John Muir Trust for nearly a decade. With keen support from instructors and senior management, a revamped partnership was instigated in 2009, recognising the common ground between our values, ethos and significance placed on first-hand experience of wild places. Our educational and environmental processes are complementary: Outward Bound provides a programme of adventurous outdoor learning and personal development; while the John Muir Award provides a framework for encouraging awareness and care for the natural environment.

Working arrangements include a tailored staff training package (with 50 instructors trained by Award staff in 2009), Outward Bound-branded John Muir Award certificates, national co-ordination by a Deputy Head of Centre, case studies and instructor blogs. All create a consistent approach across a range of multi-centre provision.

Sir Chris Bonington, Deputy Patron of The Outward Bound Trust, commented: "I've long been a supporter of both organisations and am delighted to see them working closely together and playing to each others' strengths. This [joint] approach recognises that learning through frontier adventure and enjoyment, awareness and care for the natural environment, can and should be part and parcel of the same experience."

CASE STUDY:

Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales)

Mention the initials YHA and most people think of buildings and bunk beds. But read its charitable objective and the links with the John Muir Trust are easier to spot: "To help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, and appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing youth hostels or other accommodation for them in their travels, and thus to promote their health, recreation and education."

The John Muir Award was approached in 2007 to help provide a context for informal learning and development in the Do it 4 Real Summer Camps run by YHA in England and Wales. Over the past four years, positive engagement in natural environments has become a more central feature, and over 2,000 Awards were achieved as 10 out of 23 camps placed the John Muir Award at the heart of their programmes last year. Operating at this scale, over an intense six-week period, was only possible with senior YHA management support and a YHA-employed full-time John Muir Award Manager.

"Our partnership with the John Muir Award has been an integral part of the success we have achieved with the Do it 4 Real summer camp programme," commented Carl Stanforth, YHA Product Delivery Manager. "Many young people have stated that they preferred some of the conserve activities to more familiar outdoor activities such as canoeing or climbing!

"We are certainly looking to build on the successes the partnership has achieved to date with the intention of integrating the award into our schools packages as it is so in line with YHA's vision and key objectives."

An additional feature in 2010 was an audit of everything that Do it 4 Real campers achieved as part of the 'Conserve' challenge of the Award. Here's a summary of Conserve contributions and activities:

- 2,839 Do it 4 Real campers (at least!) involved, as well as staff that supported them
- Over 9,143 hours of Conserve activity (valued at £57,144 at National Lottery volunteering rates)
- 100 wildlife habitats created
- 1,812m^2 of invasive species cleared
- 6,050m^2 of heather seed planted
- 370m of footpath maintained
- 180m^2 watercress beds recreated and weeded

AND FINALLY ...

Besides the three strategic partnerships highlighted, the John Muir Award is midway through a Natural England/ Access to Nature-funded project with Durham County Council and its Outdoor and Sustainability Education Service.

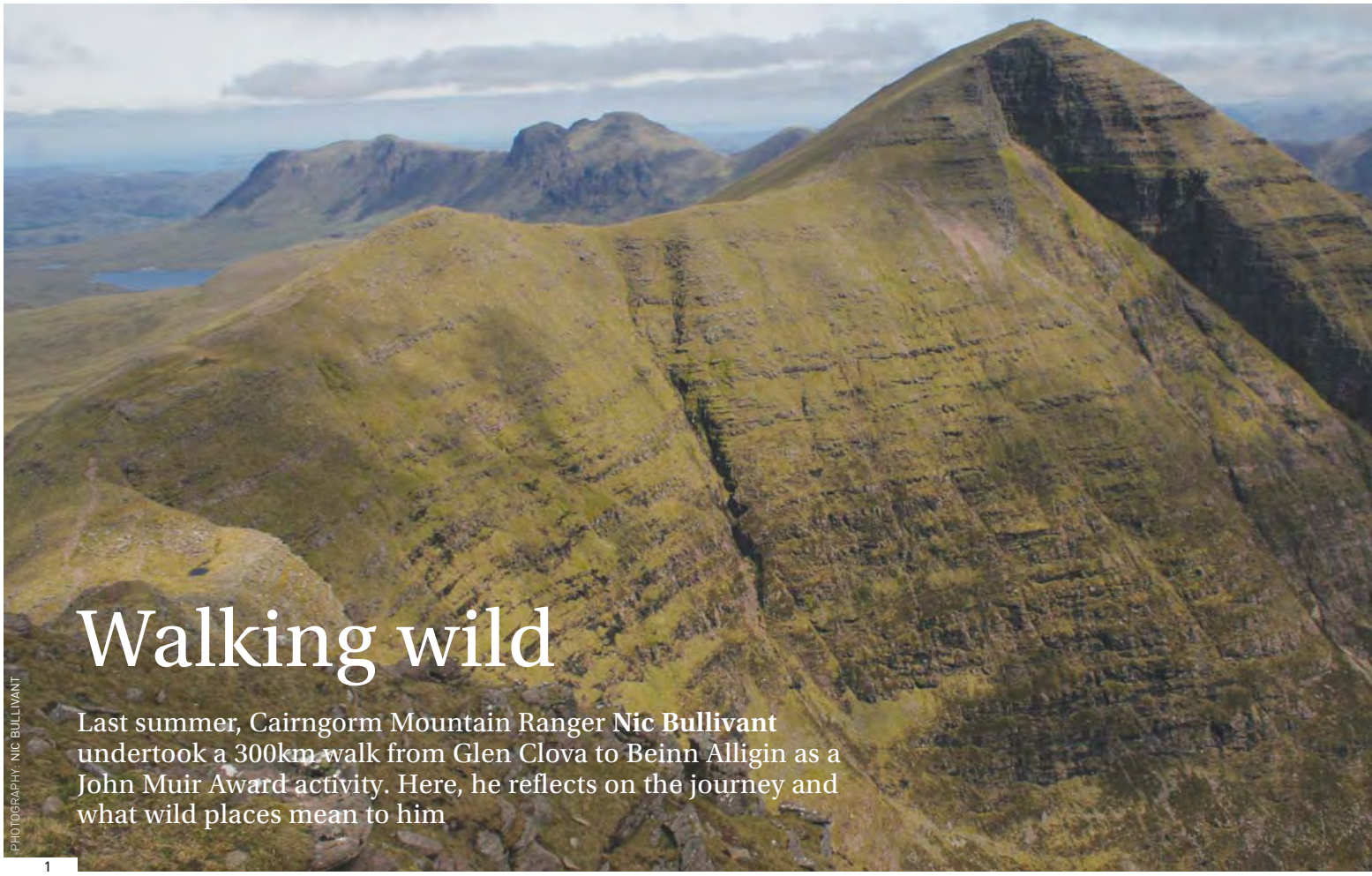
Elsewhere, and following a successful hosting arrangement with Cumbria Youth Alliance from 2004 to 2010, the management of the John Muir Award in Cumbria has now been taken on by the Learning Service of the Lake District National Park Authority.

About the author
Rob Bushby is John Muir Award Manager at the John Muir Trust. He can be contacted at **rob@johnmuiraward.org**

Further information
For much more on getting involved with the Award, visit **www.jmt.org/jmaward-home.asp**

Photography
1 / 2 John Muir Award Green Team participants in Vogrie Country Park
3 Exploring the River Spey
4 Outward Bound sea kayaking expedition

An account of a wild walk from one side of Scotland to the other



PHOTOGRAPHY: NIC BULLIVANT

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Walking wild

Last summer, Cairngorm Mountain Ranger **Nic Bullivant** undertook a 300km walk from Glen Clova to Beinn Alligin as a John Muir Award activity. Here, he reflects on the journey and what wild places mean to him

Have you ever had an idea for a long walk – one that lasts for several days, connecting parts you know through wild land, and visiting unfamiliar places? I thought of connecting my three children's mountains. They don't have title deeds to these mountains and their 'ownership' is little more than the rest of us enjoy but I think of them as theirs, and that is a good start.

The three mountains – Mayar, Beinn Eibhinn and Beinn Alligin – are dotted across the Scottish Highlands with long stretches of wild country all around them. Through-valleys and remote bothies suggested a journey. I was suggestible.

I admire the travel writing of John Muir, and as a member of the John Muir Trust, I wanted to engage in an exploratory way with my journey – and share it afterwards. I thought this would make a good topic for a John Muir Explorer Award and having contacted the local Award manager, was duly signed up. The Award was not essential to my journey, but it sounded intriguing and the John Muir Trust was interested in how I related to it as an individual entrant.

FORWARD PLANNING

Some of the major considerations for my journey would probably not have bothered Muir in his early forays. I had to carry food and shelter as our countryside has changed immeasurably since his day. There are no longer the isolated cottages where travellers are welcomed and accommodated. Many of the well-trodden paths of the past have fallen into disuse. Even the climate has changed, and not for the better.

In considering my predecessors who walked from the Highlands to Aberdeen to go to university, or from Lochinver to Dingwall for a judicial hearing, I felt very humble. In today's world, there are so many easy alternatives that cut us off from the experience of such travels by transporting us to our destination effortlessly.

I'm not sure whether Muir intended his journeys to be pleasurable, but as this was my holiday I was determined that it was at least not going to be unpleasant. The journey had to be kind to me, or I would forsake it. When the going gets tough, the tough get the bus, I resolved.

So, as part of the preparation, I had my kit worked out in great detail and had two large dry-bags transported to crucial places where I could collect more provisions and leave behind gear I didn't need any more. The support of my family and the patience of staff at the two points that agreed to keep my bags was crucial. Friends in Rattray were delighted to ferry me to the start, so overcoming the greatest transport problem of the route: the lack of public transport in Glen Clova.

DISCOVER A WILD PLACE

Very soon after starting the walk, I realised that 'wildness' was everywhere and that our evaluation of a wild place is utterly dependent on personal experience. For people from downtown Dundee on their first foray to the big hills, the Kilbo Path [an ancient right of way in Glen Clova] would be like the Khyber Pass, full of unknowns, dangers and amazements. To me, it was a steep, eroded path through a managed commercial woodland, leading to overgrazed moorland with artificial plantation blocks.

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So, where was this wild place I was going to discover? Most of the unfamiliar parts of my journey were in some ways the least wild, because I have made a point of visiting and enjoying obvious wild places all my life. But if the premise is accepted that wildness is everywhere, then even the less wild is truly wild – at least in someone's opinion.

The unfamiliar parts of my journey were the ones I needed to discover and, in fact, it was these parts where there was a real scarcity of other people. Such areas do not attract the crowds, so there are fewer paths, less erosion and litter. There are also fewer opportunities to meet people and enjoy conversation – and fewer chances of rescue if all goes wrong.

Three examples of really wild places come to mind. Glen Geusachan in the Cairngorms is, for me, a gold standard wild place. Although the Gaelic name implies that there used to be a pine wood there, and none is present now, one must assume that something, probably people, acted to get rid of it. Perhaps they only got rid of the wolves that controlled the deer, and then the deer prevented the pinewood from regenerating and the old trees died out naturally. I don't know.

Glen Geusachan shows no sign of any human activity at all. I found this quite a shock, arriving from Deeside and Derry on the Lairig Ghru, where there are shielings and walls, tracks, fences and enclosures. In Glen Geusachan, there was not a fence post, not a rock on a rock, no sign of clearance or ploughing and no footpath (until further up). Absolutely nothing.

The second example is Coire Dhorrcail and Li – the John Muir Trust's first property and one that, through the efforts of so many volunteers and fencing contractors, is now a recovering wild place. I visited on my rest day at Barrisdale. As the fenced-off area receives no visitors, it has no footpaths. The trees have grown well in the quarter of the exclosure that has been planted. So has the heather, molinia (grass) and bracken. Together, they make a knee-high and unsupportive layer of vegetation on which walking is nigh-on impossible.

This area has become so overgrown it discourages visitation. Combined with my unrealistic expectation of learning about the property by reading a sign or even something in the nearby bothy, I felt out of place and unwelcome. I struggled uphill and crossed the exclosure fence onto the normal deer-bitten heath above before retracing my route over the spur to the Coire Dhorrcail path and back to Barrisdale. That was pretty exhausting for a rest day!

The third example of wild areas are the so-called sporting estates. These, like the moorland above Li, had a subdued wildness brought on by heavy grazing or burning, and were intimately decorated with the tracks of machines used for transport. Some, in the Cairngorms, showed signs of being regularly burnt for heather moor management. In many places this had exposed the stones and charred the crags.

Meanwhile, in the west, the influence was more subtle, relating to the imperative to control numbers of our largest land mammal. I found the lack of trees in these places rather depressing and wished the deer-controllers well.

EXPLORE – I ALWAYS DO

Exploring was a major theme of my walk. Even revisiting places I had been before was like a new exploration; after all, the time of year, season, day and the weather make each visit different. The wildlife encountered, companions met, even one's own state of health and mind make every visit unique.

My greatest elation was on the high tops, with the high points of the route far more than just physical highs. Reaching the summits of Mayar, Beinn Eibhinn and Beinn Alligin were obvious causes for celebration, but so too were Lancet Edge, Sgurr na Ciche and the Saddle.

I must admit that conservation is the weakest aspect of a long walk like this. On a schedule and a budget, setting aside time to make a management input to a place on the way is difficult. The various bothies I swept out and rubbish I collected and carried away amount to very little in the scheme of things. Using zero-impact techniques meant I avoided making things worse, I suppose.

In my formative years I understood conservation to mean 'wise use', a meaning largely ignored nowadays, especially when people start to talk about balancing conservation and use, which is not the point at all. Conservation *is* use. So, I hope I used the resource wisely.

SO WHAT?

Is this wild place a physical place or is it inside me? During the walk, I discovered things about myself – principally that I can still do this sort of thing despite advancing years, that I still enjoy it and that other people are prepared to help me, perhaps even listen to me when I get back.

I tested my preconceptions, came to terms with things I didn't agree with and resolved to continue to oppose things I cannot stand. I kept my mind alert, filled it with new ideas and experiences, all of which is well-known as good activity for a healthy life, and my physical health has never been better. I think I can claim to have contributed to my own conservation.

And in sharing anything, such as the story of an endeavour, one shares one's self. So, perhaps, yes, the wild place I have been engaged with is myself. That's the sort of dangerous conclusion one can come to by spending too much time alone!

About the author

Nic Bullivant is Head Ranger for the Cairngorm Mountain Ranger Service.

www.cairngormmountain.co.uk/see-do/other-activities/ranger-service

Further information

Nic is available to speak to members' groups about his journey and has a wide selection of images available for presentation. For much more, visit **www.panoramio.com/user/2135544**, or go to **www.geograph.org.uk** (and search for 'Nic Bulivant').

Photography

1 Beinn Alligin, Sgurr Mor from Tom na Gruagach

2 Loch nam Breac, en route to Barrisdale

Hand-crafted journeys

Coppice craftsman **Richard Taylor** outlines his love of exploring wild areas and why a hand-crafted coracle is his transport of choice

Wilderness in all its forms has been an important part of my life, particularly as a place of sanctuary and spiritual renewal. The coracle, a boat consisting of a waterproof skin on a wooden frame, has on many occasions played a major role in my wilderness journeys. At times, these have felt like modern parallels of the pilgrimages of faith made by missionaries of the early Celtic church who set to sea in simple skin coracles and curraghs to be taken by wind and tide in the name of Christ. For me, with my more 'pagan' beliefs, the coracle has been both a tool of self-discovery and a means of accessing wild nature on its own terms.

I have always been drawn to the more traditional methods of crafting my own coracles where the essence of the materials is preserved in their most natural and strongest state. This is why I am a strong advocate of framing coracles from riven laths and woven withies rather than the sawn lath and nail construction typically seen in modern coracle making.


PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD TAYLOR

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Sadly, while sawn lath coracle making grows ever more popular, the skilled crafting of traditional cleft wood fishing coracles appears to be a dying art. Indeed, I seem to be unique outside of Wales in crafting coracles 'properly' and, in Wales, one of two remaining ancestral coracle makers on the River Teifi, Ronnie Davies, my own teacher and inspiration, sadly passed away recently.

My earliest wilderness adventures made use of primitive hide and hazel coracles which I found to be heavier and less stable than the craft coracles of the Welsh salmon netsmen of the Afon Teifi, so in the 1990s I began to use self-crafted Welsh coracles. Being light and strong due to the riven flat lath, withy and tarred canvas construction, and stable as a result of the flat-bottomed design, I found the Teifi coracle, along with my own design Witham coracle, to be a far superior craft for long river paddles, sea loch exploration and for reaching small islands.

Construction of a coracle begins in the dormant winter months when willow for the floor laths is sustainably harvested from riverside pollards where the coppice poles are maintained above the height of grazing animals. Knot-free poles some seven-to nine-feet-long are selected and carefully cut before being riven, or split, along their lengths to create laths which are then finished to a thickness of just under a quarter of an inch. Hazel coppice is also visited over winter to harvest the finger-thick rods that are peeled and eventually plaited to weave the rim or gunwale of the coracle.

Construction takes place around the previously made seat or 'thwart' and its integral nine-railed bulkhead after the laths and withies have been soaked for a week or so. Considerable speed and skill are required to weave and turn up the floor laths and plait the gunwale before the materials dry and crack. No nails, screws or staples are used in the construction of the coracle, which is instead held together by the natural tension of the materials.

Coracles were at one time covered or 'skinned' with animal hides, but the Welsh netsmen switched to tarred fabrics such as flannel, canvas and later calico with good reason as a hide coracle could weigh as much as 80lb – hence the old Welsh adage of 'a man's load is his coracle'. My largest canvas coracle, the Witham, weighs half that and a Teifi coracle is lighter still – an important consideration if it is to be carried any distance with wet nets, fish, or even the limited survival equipment I take into the wild.

Compared to a canoe or kayak, a coracle is very sluggish on the water as they are not designed to travel very fast or far and their shallow draft leaves them at the mercy of the wind. A variety of paddle strokes are used to propel the craft forwards or even sideways, and single-handed techniques allow the handling of fishing rods and nets with the free hand.

Indeed it is the manoeuvrability of the coracle along with its easier storage, transportation and portage over rough ground which I believe gives it the edge over more conventional man-powered boats. The natural 'give' in the materials and shallow draft allows it to scrape over obstacles that would damage a canoe, therefore enabling a coracle to explore the most inaccessible areas.

Seals, otters, porpoises, eagles and even a minke whale have been companions on my wilder solo paddles which are always the most profound. I was grateful that the whale wasn't too close, although it was near enough to unnerve me in such a small boat.

Nothing comes close to fishing from a coracle either – after all, that is what they are designed for. Shellfish and even mushrooms have also been collected using coracles on extended wilderness quests. It is perhaps paddling alone to the call of curlews beneath sunset skies that, more than anything, has possibly brought me closer to the Pure Truth that dwells in the heart of nature.

Further information

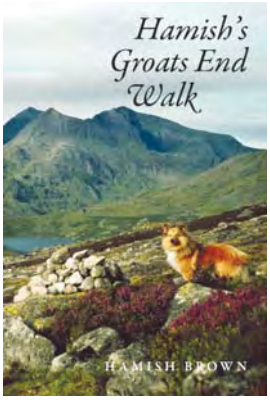
For more on the art of traditional coracle making and wider bushcraft, visit
www.coracle-craftsman.com
www.coracle-bushcraft.co.uk

Written in memory of the late Ronnie Davies, master coracle craftsman of Cenarth

Photography

1 The author carrying a Teifi coracle in Skye

2 All stocked up and ready to go



Hamish's Groats End Walk: One Man & His Dog on a Hill Route Through Britain & Ireland, Hamish Brown

Rory Syme revels in a recently revised account of one of Hamish Brown's typically ambitious long-distance ventures – one that is full of the author's trademark wit, warmth and observational flourishes

Hamish Brown comes across as an inspiring travelling companion. He is knowledgeable about the landscape he is walking through, good-humoured and keenly conscious of the need for conservation. He also has a stubborn refusal to do things the easy way.

Groats End Walk is an account of one of the author's typically epic ventures, describing a trek from John O'Groats to Land's End, via the highest points of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The journey, which spanned 175 days between March and October 1979, is largely completed solo with just Storm, the author's Shetland collie, for company.

In the wrong hands, an account of such a trip could easily have become just another walking diary, but happily relatively mundane concerns about distances covered, the weather and the heights of mountains are dealt with quickly and without fuss, leaving more room for the author's personal reflections and experiences. The diary style so familiar from his earlier *Hamish's Mountain Walk*, does lend itself to casual reading though, with the reader invited as much to dip in and out as read long passages in one sitting.

True to the winding train of thought that so often accompanies a long solo walk, Brown's entertaining account is peppered with an eclectic mix of ideas from sometimes unlikely sources: Norman Collie, John Muir, champion motorcyclist Barry Sheene and Agatha Christie are quoted alongside Lewis Carroll, but taken together it somehow all makes sense.

And what at first glimpse might seem to be a distracted meander turns out to be a meticulously planned trip. Excess kit is sent ahead to be re-used further along the route and sacks of letters are handed over at strategic points to be answered during breaks from walking.

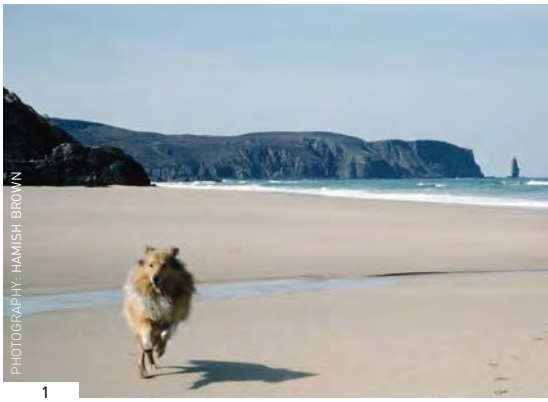
Along the way, the outside world intrudes fleetingly through newspapers and hotel televisions. Early in the journey, Brown passes a polling station in Thurso; two days later, we hear that Margaret Thatcher has been elected Prime Minister. Elsewhere, we learn of the death of John Wayne, a disastrous Fastnet race and, most affecting, the assassination of Louis Mountbatten, but all of these affairs appear as events in a far-away land.

Here, social history is as important as natural history. The legends of ancients such as the Irish giant Finn McCool sit alongside the consequences of the Highland Clearances; we learn as much about the people who have occupied and coloured the hills as the glaciers and rivers that carved them out.

Rather than romanticising about his adventure, Brown is at pains to point out the hard slog involved, as one excerpt from his log-book – written during a heat wave in Ireland – makes clear: "Battle on, collapse and brew, read, snooze, catch up on this for yesterday. Shoulders ache. Feet ache. Sun no fun. Soul and soles being punished. A landscape of inescapable sameness."

Written in an age before mobile phones and the internet, much has changed in the 30 years since Brown undertook this journey, but sometimes what is most striking is not so much what has changed, but what has remained the same. The author outlines concerns about record consumption of oil and the "aberration" of urban life, as well as the need for conservation of both wildness and rural communities.

But such observations never dominate; the noise of screaming fighter jets, litter and the erosion caused by mass



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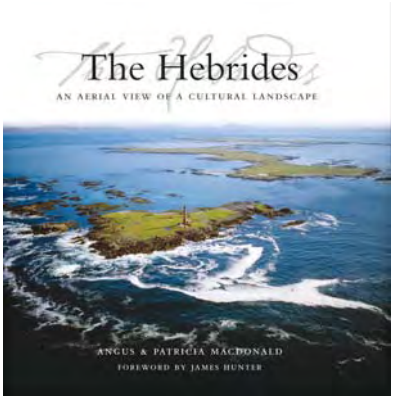
mountaineering are all discussed, but so too is an inconvenient boil on Hamish's backside, and an infestation of fleas pestering Storm's. This refusal to take things too seriously, and to find light moments among deeper thoughts, is an endearing quality. A brief and unexpected encounter with a "Rubenesque" group of female ramblers is a particular highlight.

Above all, *Groats End Walk* is a timely reminder of the simplicity and personal reflection that can be enjoyed on a long walk. And it's pleasing that this particular walk, which takes in both well trodden and seldom travelled routes alike, is measured in days, not miles.

Book details
A fully revised edition of *Hamish's Groats End Walk* was recently published by Sandstone Press.
www.sandstonepress.com

The reviewer
Rory Syme is Press Officer for the John Muir Trust, based at the Pitlochry office. He can be contacted at **rory@jmt.org**

Photography
1 Storm in full gallop at Sandwood Bay with the pinnacle of Am Buachaille behind
2 Hamish and Storm on top of Carrauntoohil, Ireland – the country summits linked



The Hebrides, An aerial view of a cultural landscape by Angus & Patricia Macdonald
Reviewed by Denis Mollison

The complex history of the Hebrides is written and re-written across its landscape. It is beautifully matched by this literal overview, to which the Macdonalds bring scientific minds, encyclopedic knowledge and artists' eyes.

The Hebrides are for the most part rugged, poor for agriculture but rich in wildlife. The latter helped attract some of Scotland's earliest inhabitants, 9,000 or more years ago. Indeed for most of their history the islands' geographical position held distinct advantages: the sea was a highway rather than a barrier.

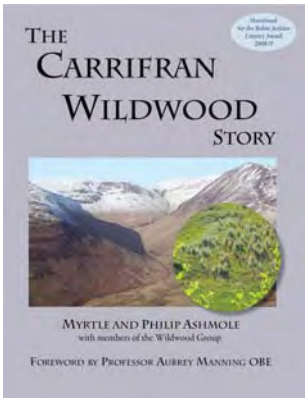
Their decline began with the power vacuum created by James IV when he abolished the Lordship of the Isles in 1494: the crown was too strong to allow a rival power in the Hebrides, but not strong enough to bring law and order. When that was resolved, new problems arose, particularly a succession of clan chiefs and incomer landowners who shared an ambition to extract more than was sustainable from the land and its people.

This complex story is teased out in all its twists and turns through to the present, where the authors see much hope in today's community activism, and in the positive engagement with that movement of conservation bodies such as the John Muir Trust.

While the economic history of the isles has often been poor, the intellectual and cultural life has been rich, as is brought out in many excerpts of poetry and description throughout the book. And, above all, the photographs both illustrate the history with pinpoint detail and celebrate its richly varied beauty.

Birlinn, 2010, £30.00

ISBN: 978 1 84158 315 0



The Carrifran Wildwood Story by Myrtle and Philip Ashmole and members of the Wildwood Group
Reviewed by Nigel Hawkins

In July 1997, I received a call from Andrew Raven, then director of land management at the John Muir Trust, enthusing about the plans of a group who wanted to re-create a wildwood in the southern uplands of Scotland. I had been aware for some time that the group had been bogged down in the purchase of the land they wanted – the Carrifran Valley – which they deemed perfect for realising their vision for ecological restoration.

Andrew had just visited the valley and was convinced that the moment was right for the John Muir Trust to get involved. Thanks to Andrew, two days later Philip and Myrtle Ashmole, leaders of the Wildwood Group, came to Perth for a meeting during which they bowled me over with their enthusiasm, energy and clarity of purpose.

But they needed help with fund-raising and an assurance for funders that the Wildland Group and the newly-born Borders Forest Trust (BFT), which stood behind them, had the backing of an organisation with a track record. And that is where the John Muir Trust came in.

I had these thoughts in mind when visiting Carrifran 12 years later for the launch of The Carrifran Wildwood Story. To walk up the valley and see the wonderful landscape of trees where only a few years ago there was desolation, was one of the most inspirational moments I have had with the John Muir Trust. What is doubly inspirational is the huge voluntary effort that has gone into all aspects of the project and which is so faithfully recorded in this book. It is a wonderful read for anyone with an interest in wild Scotland.

Available from the Carrifran Wildwood Group, £15.00 plus p&p at **www.carrifran.org.uk** or via the Borders Forest Trust, **www.bordersforesttrust.org**

For more on the project, see page 14

Dibidil – a Hebridean Adventure by Irvine Butterfield
Reviewed by John Allen

The recent re-publication of Irvine Butterfield's limited first edition from 1972 is not for the profit of the publishers but for the love of the game involved. It is also to help the objective of the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA) "to maintain simple shelters in remote country for the use and benefit of all who love wild and lonely places".

David Robertson and Roderick Manson combined selflessly with John Mitchell to recreate this edition in modern form, with additional text and colour photos. It is a fitting tribute to a man whose energy and drive propelled him from Yorkshire to the Munros in Scotland, and a passion to enable others to enjoy similar personal explorations.

Enthusiasm sells, is infectious and likely to galvanise the common man into belief – even to rise from a backside riveted in Yorkshire by puddings and 'krikit' to renovate a tumbledown ruin on a remote island called Rum, and to get others to go there voluntarily and undertake much of the work. Irvine's belief in the end product runs through the book like an express train and, of course, he brings home the Ashes: Dibidil is rebuilt and a cornerstone of the MBA assured.

This tale is about young people doing good, with most of them complete strangers before coming together on the boat from Mallaig. These bothy builders will now be grey-haired or in a higher place – the great bothy in the sky. May their heirs read all about them here, and then get up and go for it themselves.

Available for £8.00 from Roderick Manson, 33 Cedar Avenue, Blairgowrie, Perthshire PH10 6TT with the wholehearted support of Irvine's sister, Irene.

Ben Nevis Estate, Lochaber

Sarah Lewis looks back on a fruitful year of banana skins, bridge repairs and soggy work parties at the John Muir Trust's most heavily-visited property

There's never really a quiet time in Nevis. Each magical season sees to that – not least winter. When the temperature drops low and long enough for ice to form in the Northern Corries of the Ben, and for snow to fill the gullies and blanket the high tops, the glen is transformed into a winter playground.

Climbers come from all around to test themselves on the many world-class routes, while others sample the delights of the area during the annual Fort William Mountain Festival in February. For the past four years, the Trust-run adult's writing and children's poetry competition have been an integral part of the event, with the collection of writing on wild places a fitting reminder of why we look after special places such as Nevis.

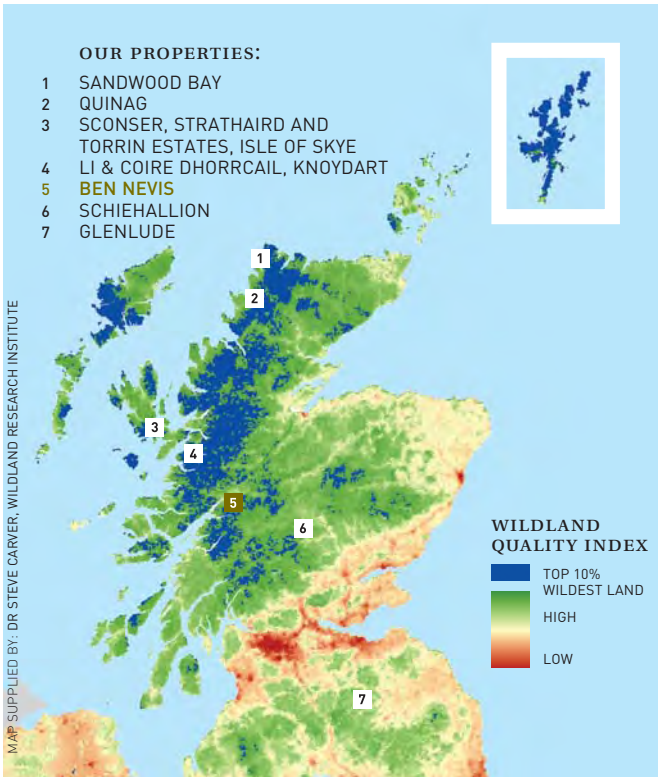
Then, as winter gives way to spring, Nevis fever really begins. The warmer months see the whole gamut of sightseers, nature lovers and peak baggers descend on Nevis from all over the globe; a recent survey suggested that of the 140,000 hill walkers who attempt to climb Ben Nevis each year, more than 50% come to Fort William primarily to set foot on this iconic hill.

That's good news for the local economy, but not always so great for the Ben itself. Large quantities of rubbish – banana skins and plastic bottles being the worst offenders – are collected each year, while footpath repair work helps contain further degradation. Funds for the path work are overseen by the Nevis Partnership, which shares in delivering conservation objectives and presents interpretation projects in the glen.

And it's not just the track up the Ben that can suffer. Let's not forget the temporary closure of the Steall Bridge in upper Glen Nevis when one of its steel cables succumbed to the combined weight of several overseas visitors. It was an incident that lent itself to the start of a poor joke: 'How many Dutch police trainees can the Steall Bridge take at one time ..?' Not that many as it turned out.

Built in the 1970s by the local mountaineering club, the bridge serves as an important link over the Water of Nevis to and from the Mamores. The jointly-owned bridge was duly repaired, but not before undertaking the arduous job of carrying in the replacement steel core galvanised rope.

The carriage of anything in or out of the Steall and upper glen is always an adventure, so working on improvements to the footpath on the meadow flats means shimmying wheel barrows and mattocks around boulders and braving energetic burns.



Our July work parties offer the hope of spotting the elusive Mountain ringlet butterfly (they only fly in July, sunshine preferred) and the presence of a prospering population of water vole. Sightings of either are never guaranteed, although torrential rain usually is. This past year was no exception, although the downpours did not prevent our industrious volunteers from greatly improving an area of badly eroded path just below Coire Guibhsachan.

There is a reliance on 'joined-up' efforts within the glen, with volunteers, community groups and local authorities coming together in the name of partnership. In the same spirit, Nevis will soon benefit from the placement of wildlife cameras gifted by CARE International, one of the Three Peaks Challenge charity groups that are taking a pro-active approach to the sustainable management of Nevis.

We hope to gain new insight into a range of species – additional learning that I suspect will lend itself to some colourful local school project involvement. It's just another example of how Nevis touches visitors and local people alike.


PHOTOGRAPHY: SARAH LEWIS

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About the author
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For more on this property, visit **www.jmt.org/ben-nevis-estate.asp**

Photography
1 Members day at Nevis (the banana skin was carried out ...)

Pine in Nevis gorge with the slopes of Ben Nevis behind

PHOTOGRAPH: NAME HERE

Dram, fine, splendid

...need we say more!

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