



Journal & News

No. 33 Summer 2002

JOHN
MUIR
TRUST

The Curtain comes down in Karelia

John Muir Award in Finland and Russia

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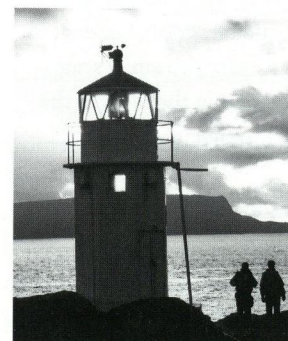
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The views and opinions stated in this
membership journal are not
necessarily those of the John Muir Trust.



Fresh light on the visual qualities of
wild land, page 40.

Above: Isleornsay light by Gordon Brown
Opposite: Torridon village by Phil McLean.
Cover: On John Muir Award trip to Karelia
by Sam Baumber.

Director's Notes

Green Energy – the challenge facing the Trust



One of the biggest issues to face the Trust at the present time is the move to create more green energy from renewable sources, through developments such as wind

farms, hydro-electric and wave power schemes.

This is a welcome move but it is one which poses a major dilemma for the Trust. We are committed to safeguarding and conserving wild and beautiful places as part of the global environment, and to supporting local communities and encouraging local economic activities.

A major wind farm development will undoubtedly help the global environment through reducing the burning of fossil fuels and resultant emissions into the atmosphere. At the same time it may produce important local economic benefits.

However, in wilder remoter places such as a windfarm will be a considerable visual intrusion destroying the wild land experience which is of such enormous importance to us all.

The Trust supports moves by the

Westminster Government and the Scottish Executive to increase power obtained from renewable resources, not just because it helps us meet European and worldwide environmental commitments but because it makes plain good sense.

Reducing the burning of fossil fuels and emissions into the air is no longer a desirable option but an absolute necessity. There should therefore, in my view, be a general presumption in favour of developments creating energy from renewable sources.

Having said that, there are undoubtedly very fine areas where the wildness and scenic beauty would be seriously affected by development – even on a small scale – and I would argue that in those areas the presumption must be against development.

The dilemma is in deciding which areas should carry the presumption against. So much hinges on what we mean by wild land and how we define it. What may be wild to a visitor from the town is 'home' to people living in the countryside.

All our landscapes are affected by people to a greater or lesser extent over hundreds, in many cases thousands of years, and we have very little land that can approach the concept of wilderness as it might be applied in a pristine sense in other parts of the world.

But there are very wild places in this country which must be cherished,

safeguarded and protected, and if the John Muir Trust will not take up arms for those places then who will?

The remoter land owned and managed by the Trust undoubtedly falls into this category and there are many other fine places where the Trust will be anxious not to see development which destroys the sense and feeling of wildness which is so important both to people living in the Highlands and Islands and to visitors.

Trustees meeting on Skye in June discussed the whole issue thoroughly and decided the Trust must have a clear statement of policy and guidelines relating to developments aimed at creating energy from renewable sources.

This is important both to guide the Trust in reacting to proposed developments elsewhere and to considering proposals including those from local communities on or near to Trust land.

Proposals will need to be considered on their merits. But one way of approaching this is to have a gradation of response, going from active support for developments in areas such as the cultural landscapes, where humans' land use is obvious, to opposing development in the wild and remote hinterland where human impacts are minimal and where there is a real sense of wildness.

Trustees have set up a working party to report as a matter of urgency on these issues and Trustees will be discussing this whole matter again.

The Trust is to conduct a survey of the

potential for renewable energy sources on its own properties, taking into account the economic potential for local people and for distributing green energy to the national grid. The siting of any such development and its visual impact will be a major part of that survey.

We are also undertaking a further environmental audit of our own activities to ensure we are following best practice in everything we do.

In the meantime we are watching with close interest development proposals elsewhere. A major area of concern is in the position in the Flowerdale Forest south of Loch Maree (often referred to as at Shildaig/Slattadale) where proposals are being prepared for a hydro-electric scheme in what is undoubtedly one of the finest wild areas in Scotland.

This proposal will highlight all the dilemmas involved in this subject. The development will produce environmentally friendly energy and a great deal is being done to minimise the visual impact through having low dams and undergrounding of pipes. In addition the scheme may generate an income stream for local community developments.

At the same time a development – even carried out in a way aimed at achieving minimal impact – will undoubtedly detract from the wildness and beauty of an outstandingly fine area.

We are determined that the Trust will not take a negative stand on this issue either here or elsewhere.

We welcome the move towards a more responsible approach to energy generation and wish to be proactive in encouraging green energy. We are committed to supporting local communities in their vital role as guardians of the local environment. And we want to maintain the qualities of wildness which make parts of the Highlands and Islands so valued by both local people and visitors.

This is quite a challenge – and one which will be in the forefront of the Trust's thinking for many years to come. ■

Nigel Hawkins

Coronation Eve on the Ben

In this year of royal events, the JMT Glasgow Group heard from Roy Humble of how his uncle, Ben Humble, and George Maskell, celebrated Coronation Eve in May 1937. The two climbed Ben Nevis's Castle Ridge, reached the summit in deep snow, then toasted the health of the new King and Queen in tea, staying on in glorious sunshine for 2 hours. They then descended Number 3 gully. But that was just the start:

'...We set off again, heavily laden with our supply of fireworks and much extra clothing. We ascended by the same gully, where our glissade tracks were quite icy, and had to cut steps with our ice axes. At 11pm we approached the cornice, and as I got over I saw at once a sickle moon in the sky and a huge bonfire by the shores of

For contributors

The Journal & News welcomes words, photos, illustrations and ideas. Please contact the editor by the end of April about contributions to the Winter 2003 Journal.

- Words can be sent as paper, floppy (Mac or Windows) or email. Please save and send WP files as Plain Text.
- Pictures are best sent as artwork, transparency, black & white or colour prints. We reserve the right to edit contributions, and accept contributions at the sender's risk.

Loch Linnhe. We hurried to the summit; it was by now very dark and terribly cold.

'It was a dramatic moment when our first rocket went up...our biggest and best we reserved for the last...it soared to a tremendous height, higher than fireworks had ever gone in Britain before.

'After midnight we sought our steps leading to the gully by torchlight and roped over the cornice once more. The great cliffs on either side were ghostly again and a canopy of stars sparkled frostily. It was an eerie journey down to reach the haven of our hut. Thus was the 1937 Coronation celebrated on the summit of Ben Nevis.'

• *Roy Humble, who lives in Canada, has given the JMT his uncle's papers on his projected book on Ben Nevis, which never came to fruition. We hope to carry more of this fascinating legacy in the next Journal.*

New Trust for Schiehallion's neighbour

Paul Jarvis

ON 10 MAY 2002, the Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust (HPCLT) became the owner of Dun Coilich, wonderfully described as an unremarkable hill next to a remarkable hill. Dun Coilich lies on the eastern boundary of Schiehallion, alongside the road. It is a moderate sized hill of 572 m (about 1750 feet) in height, sitting in 420 ha. Like Schiehallion, it has been heavily grazed and browsed by sheep and deer.

Its purchase is Perthshire's first community-led land buyout and was made possible by generous support from within Highland Perthshire. Like the JMT, HPCLT is a charitable trust and a company limited by guarantee, and was set up in February with the initial goal of making the purchase. The HPCLT aims to engage the community and to focus on education, of all ages. We hope, particularly, to involve young people in Highland Perthshire, through projects in schools and on the ground.

The property has a Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) in place. The whole area is fenced, formerly to keep deer and sheep in, now to keep them out. With the aid of the WGS, we aim to re-establish native woodland over about half of the area during the next ten years. The vision of HPCLT is to restore the vegetation, wildlife and

biodiversity to something approaching its former glory. Our aim is for the community to participate in this and to see and learn from it. We hope that young people will go back in 20 years' time and be able to say 'I planted that tree; I helped create this marvellous place'.

The area is now being surveyed for its biological, geological and archaeological resources. Another immediate priority is to ensure that visitors to Dun Coilich can park safely, and the Trustees of HPCLT are seeking funds to finance this and other projects.

The inspiration for the purchase came in the first place from Nigel Hawkins, the director of the JMT, because he saw that it would reinforce the actions of JMT on east Schiehallion; and the initiative was warmly supported by Andrew Thin, our Chairman, who has connections with Dun Coilich going back to when he was a boy. The Trustees of HPCLT hope that the connection will develop into a harmonious partnership as both trusts restore and enhance the common environment. ■

• A web site has been set up at www.hpclt.org to keep everyone informed: look us up! For membership of HPCLT contact coope@foss5.freemove.co.uk.

• *Paul Jarvis is a Trustee of the JMT and of the HPCLT.* ■

Gabriel's Stone

Bonnie Johanna Gisel

IN JUNE 1999 I STOOD in the Colorado River, drawn by its power, beauty, and spirit. At Lee's Ferry river runners put in to raft down to Lake Mead. There is a sense of anticipation among the rafts, dories, guides, and adventure seekers. I did not have a map to trace a course to the river nor did I drive down to Lee's Ferry from Marble Canyon. I was delivered to the river by a friend, Roderick Frazier Nash, author of *Wilderness and the American Mind*, with whom I share a deep abiding reverence for wilderness.

I had never been to the southwest. But rather than tour guide, when Nash and I arrived at a wild place, he said nothing. I was free to experience wilderness unencumbered. The language of the rock was unfamiliar, the landscape vast and overwhelming. We listened. Nature spoke.

I stood in the Colorado River at Lee's Ferry, scooped several small stones from the river, and put them in my pocket. I dipped a dry cracker into the rusty water in remembrance of all who found their way to this sacred place, and shared the communion offering with Nash. Baptized in the river, transfigured by the Canyon, with river pebbles in my pocket, I returned to Madison, New Jersey, to spend the next seven weeks teaching environmental history at Drew University.

In August with a plan but no map, I left Madison, and headed for Maine. I boarded a train in New York City, arrived in Boston, and boarded a bus. Nash and I would meet in Bangor, Maine. He had agreed to narrate portions of a film by Huey, an independent filmmaker, on Mount Katahdin, *Wilderness and Spirit: A Mountain Called Katahdin*. From Bangor we drove to Millinocket and from Millinocket into Baxter State Park. It was not long before I saw moose near Roaring Brook. Though I have camped in Yosemite, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks in California, in the Adirondacks in New York State, and travelled through the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington, Baxter State Park was the wildest place I had been.

From Roaring Brook to Chimney Pond, the trail climbs 3.3 miles over rocks and boulders, past streams, through islands of mud and moss. The trail is steep and difficult. The 'carry-in, carry-out' policy at Baxter State Park requires that each hiker command a pack the contents of which must be brought down to Roaring Brook. There is no food, no treated water, no place for refuse at Chimney Pond. Essential gear is carefully packed, and each article of clothing discriminately chosen for the precious shell it will provide. I carried one stone plucked in June from the rusty Colorado River in my pocket under the

weight of my pack, pressed between plan and encounter – journey ballast, a gift to Chimney Pond. The stone would commingle the river and the pond, link in some primordial way the spirit of the tectonics that swirled and collided and created the soup of our existence.

As Nash and I climbed toward Chimney Pond, half way up the trail we met Gabriel Leader and his parents, Martha and Landon. Scattered over rocks and boulders were the contents of their three packs – shirts, jackets, sleeping bags, pans, plates, cups, forks, spoons, food, and Andrew, a

carefully repack and continue on to Chimney Pond or stuff everything haphazardly, return to the parking lot near Roaring Brook, and head back to Boston, climb aborted. We, like many other climbers who passed them, would leave them to their fate, their encounter well beyond plan now; but the remainder of our climb was weighted by concern. The closer we got to the end of the trail, the more unlikely it appeared we would welcome them into camp that evening.

We arrived in camp at 5:30 and soon after, the film crew. I sat to rest, eyes fixed on



Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River. Photo: Bonnie Gisel

stuffed toy rabbit. As with belongings of which we are so fond that they must travel with us regardless of the course, much of what the Leaders carried belonged at home. They admitted their mistake to all who would listen. As sympathetic as any of us could be, no one would carry extra gear to camp – the trail, too arduous. The Leader family debated whether they should

Katahdin raised before me – granite altar. Blue sky served as a screen upon which puffy white clouds billowed past. It was beautiful, wildflowers and quietude, clear water and solitude. Before us stood a mountain with attitude; and in its shadow it was wise to recognize its authority. At dusk, as the sun chipped off the eastern ridge of Katahdin, I headed from the crew



May afternoon on Katahdin just below the South Peak. The Knife Edge Trail from Baxter Peak (behind camera) to Pamola Peak (background) is 1.1 miles. Photo: Jeff Wood

cabin to Chimney Pond. There I crouched on a rock with the stone from Lee's Ferry cushioned in my hand. I gazed over the pond and remembered the rusty river water of the Colorado. As light reflected off the pink granite rampart, it filled the air with dreamy atmosphere; and I also remembered the rich warm sandstone walls of the southwest. I examined the stone, rolled it in my hand, considered its course, and closed my hand around it.

Gabriel and his mother, Martha, arrived at Chimney Pond to filter water – the only source at the end of the steep trail. They had repacked gear, reevaluated plan, realigned themselves to wilderness encounter, and pressed on to Chimney Pond. I was glad to see them. A sense of well being settled over our wilderness village. In the dusty light my eyes were drawn to Gabriel, a delicate child with soft brown curls tucked under a canvas hat. In appearance he was more culture than nature. I would expect to find him poised

behind a grand piano rather than preparing to embark on a difficult scramble up Cathedral Ridge to the summit of Katahdin.

He and I shared water words and mountain thoughts. I showed Gabriel the aberrant stone. Plan now wind. I wondered what purpose the stone would serve so far from the rusty waters of the Colorado? It would find its tenor, like belongings of which we are fond that travel with us wherever we go, like gifts from the heart that find a course of their own, packed between thought and dream, encounter and imagination, place and sacred space, wood and water. Up into the air I cast the stone and out in the pond it landed with a tiny splash, only detectable to Gabriel and to me. Quietly the stone settled among the millions of other stones that slept in the pond and formed a carpet upon which the moose slowly migrated over to the marshy meadow under the lip of Katahdin's summit. I returned to the crew cabin.

Community at Chimney Pond is refreshing as is the air. Humans, red squirrels, and moose are friendly, congenial. In the stillness of life below the mountain, it is possible to count the eyelashes of forgiving quadrupeds. There is a mingling of spirit and good listening. Two days had passed since I met Martha and Gabriel Leader at Chimney Pond with my river stone. In that space of human time, the Leader family had climbed Katahdin to Baxter Peak. In the ozone-laced morning air I set out for the pond and greeted Martha Leader. We were both preparing to leave our wilderness village that morning, to return down the trail, to respective cities and lives. Martha spoke of the previous day spent with Gabriel on Baxter Peak. The day after our meeting at the pond, among the pink granite shards upon Katahdin's summit, Gabriel picked up a small sharp mountain stone and placed it in his pocket. He would carry it, he said, to the Grand Canyon, to the Colorado River. To the river he had never seen, he would prepare for a journey the following summer – a stone plan, an encounter, history, wind.

While on the bus from Bangor to Boston, I sat behind Terry Bowman and Patricia Duncan, who met on the Appalachian Trail. They too climbed Baxter Peak, the same day Gabriel, Martha, and Landon Leader ascended Katahdin. Terry and Patricia were heading south to Springer Mountain in north central Georgia, where the Appalachian Trail begins. From Springer Mountain they would travel west to the Grand Canyon. Out of my pocket I took a

small pink granite mountain stone. On the day they were to arrive, I thought about Terry, Patricia, Gabriel, Martha, Landon, the Colorado River, the Grand Canyon, Mount Katahdin, Chimney Pond, and stones. ■

Bonnie Jobanna Gisel is an environmental historian, a John Muir scholar, the Curator for LeConte Memorial Lodge, Sierra Club, Yosemite National Park, and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Cultural History and Humanities at Drew University, Caspersen School of Graduate Studies.

She is the author of Kindred & Related Spirits: The Letters of John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr, University of Utah Press, 2001, and is working on "Calypso Borealis" to "Save the Redwoods" The Published Essays of John Muir: 1866-1920.

Wilderness and Spirit; A Mountain Called Katahdin, will be released in September 2002 and available on video. Contact bueyfilm@nlis.net or www.agate.net/~ile/buey.

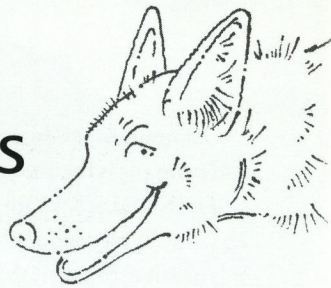
Baxter State Park, a wilderness area of 202,064 acres, was a gift to the State of Maine by former Governor Percival P. Baxter. There are 46 mountain peaks and ridges, the highest being Baxter Peak at 5,267 feet. Visit www.katahdinoutdoors.com or Jeff Wood's excellent hiking site at www.mountkatahdin.net.

For the Grand Canyon, visit www.thecanyon.com.

For the Appalachian Trail, visit www.fred.net/Kathy/at.html.

Working with wolves

Chris Wilmers



THE LAST WOLVES in Yellowstone were shot in the 1920s by the National Park Service. The animals were so vilified that even wildlife campaigners advocated their removal, although some later changed their minds after they came to understand the importance of the predators for maintaining the ecosystem, and suggested that wolves should be reintroduced. In 1973 the grey wolf was protected under the newly passed Endangered Species Act; and in 1995, after 20 years of litigation involving environmental, hunting, ranching, state and Federal interests, 14 wolves from three different packs were live-trapped in Canada and released in Yellowstone...

I discovered the intensity of local feeling about the wolves at the Blue Goose saloon in Gardiner, Montana, on one of my first nights at the Park. A local woman at the bar asked me what I was doing in Yellowstone, so I told her I was here to study the wolves and their associations with scavengers. Her expression became less friendly and she asked me what I thought of the wolves being in the Park.

'I think it's great,' I said. 'It's good for the ecosystem and in the long run it should benefit the economy.'

'Oh, my God,' she said. 'I can't believe it. Don't you know that wolves are breeding with all our dogs?'

'That's very unusual,' I said, surprised.

'Well, they are, everybody knows it and it's no wonder, them both being descended from dingoes.'

'Are you sure about that?' I asked. 'I had the impression dingoes were domestic dogs brought over to Australia by aborigines.'

'I can't believe you're a biologist and you don't even know that,' she replied. After a pause she looked inquisitively into my eyes. 'You voted for Clinton, didn't you?' she blurted.

Nowadays I say I work with ravens. ■

• *Chris Wilmers is a graduate student at Berkeley.*

This extract is from an article which first appeared in The London Review of Books, 7 February 2002. www.lrb.co.uk

Illustration: Jan Nesbitt

Please keep used stamps coming in to Alison in the Edinburgh office. They raise money for the Trust and keep Alison usefully occupied.



What did you do on John Muir's Birthday?

The North Wales JMT Group, inspired by Del Davies, celebrated the day by a pick-your-own-route journey down the Conwy: from dawn to dusk, from source to sea. Mike Nurse tells the story.

THE MOOR, THE SKY and the waters of the Migneint were many tones of brown and grey. Through moving veils of wind blown rain and sleet, grey silhouettes of mountains paled to the horizon. Towards Snowdon the higher mountains were streaked with snow. Over the lake black-headed gulls flew in frenzied unison, whilst a pair of sandpipers bobbed on the shore, and a solitary incongruous swallow,

Evening across the Conwy estuary.

Photo: Mike Merchant



new arrived, scythed the air.

Apart from a small fisherman's boathouse, a track and a fence, the shallow basin of heather moorland around Llyn Conwy (English 'Conway') at nearly 500m on the Migneint was a

pretty good wilderness, especially at dawn – 6am – on 21 April, John Muir's birthday.

The greys lightened and the browns grew richer as we walked north. Pen y Bedw was crossed in a sleety squall, but it brightened and robins were still singing a dawn chorus when we descended into forestry land. At Penmachno the village was stirring; a smell of fried breakfast came from the inn and the sun shone briefly. Field paths past deserted and ruined farm buildings and empty holiday cottages led to the Machno and Conwy gorges.

Each flower has its season. The day before the flowers of the purple saxifrage were finished on high crags west of the Conwy, but now down the lane and by the river wood anemones formed white mats and carpets under the trees. A dipper bobbed on a stone and flew up to its nest in the overhang of vegetation on top of a large tree stump long grounded in the river.



Del Davies.

Photo: Mike Nurse

At noon, with bags of litter gathered on the way, we reached the meeting place at the confluence of Llugwy and Conwy, north of Betws y Coed and nearly at sea level. The sun was out and it was warm. There were swallows overhead and pale yellow-green leaves burst open from their buds almost as we watched. It was time to picnic. A family of ducklings walked down the far bank beneath plastic bags and sheeting hung by floods on the bushes. A member, having evangelised and (JMT) leafleted a passing couple, crossed the thigh deep river with two poles and some difficulty to collect plastic waste. A toddler in our party looked with questions down holes. A drake goosander splashed down in the rapids by us, and, as if for fun, rode the waves to the pool below.

At dusk we looked out from the Great Orme west over Conwy Bay. Only Puffin Island peeped from a dark bank of cloud over Anglesey which hid the final setting of the sun. To the south the ancient Welsh castle hill of Deganwy stood above the urban spread around the bay to Conwy. Later the light of Penmon lighthouse flashed in the night across the bay.

It was good to have passed John Muir's Day between mountains and sea; wilderness and town; winter and summer. ■

Firms boost Award projects

We've received our first grant under the Landfill Tax Credit scheme, from Viridor in Dunbar. The £5685 grant was given to support Mandy Calder's John Muir Award work in East Lothian to target groups of excluded young people in Dunbar, Musselburgh and Tranent. Aims include raising awareness of the local environment, increased self-confidence, experience of working in teams, and opportunities for decision making.

Landfill Tax is a direct levy on the disposal of waste to landfill and the first truly 'green' tax in the UK. Landfill operators can channel 20% of the tax collected into environmental projects.

- The **Gannochy Trust** have been supporters of the John Muir Trust for many years and this year they are helping the work of the John Muir Trust across the Perthshire and Tayside area. The grant of £10,000 will be used to match fund the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for North Scotland and will provide support for participants in the Award.

Transplant surgery

The Trust has been fighting erosion of the machair on the Sandwood estate for some years. Conservation manager Cathel Morrison writes about a hands-on course in early March.

FOURTEEN HARDY VOLUNTEERS turned up at Oldshoremore from as far afield as Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Elgin, and including a couple of locals.

A load of brashings (laid in the badly eroded dunes to help stabilise the sand and create a suitable area for planting the marram grass), had come from near Lairg, 50 miles away, which goes to show the dearth of trees in this area. Robert Elrick, a local contractor, took a huge bulk container load of the brashings. They were loaded by machine and were so packed they had to be unloaded by machine as well, so the tangled mass of very limp brashings took some determined effort to get pulled apart. We had some excellent help from Johnny Rob, local crofter and entrepreneur, with his trusty tractor and trailer, carting from the road end to the area we were working on.

To say the weather was mixed is an understatement, we had gales, rain, sleet, snow, thunder, brilliant sunshine, which showed Oldshoremore Bay and the coastline down to Handa Island and Stoer

Point at its very best. Some hardy souls braved shorts and T-shirts for a couple of hours but most of us stuck to our long johns and woolly vests.

We were fortunate to have Nick Everet who is an area officer with SNH in Aberdeen on the course. Nick had done marram transplanting before, so after a quick lesson from him we set to with a will and in a very short time had an impressive area of bare sand looking like Frank Sinatra's head after his hair transplants. In fact the method used is quite similar, just digging it up where it grows profusely and planting where it is bare, only with poor Frank it may have been more painful.

Brashings laid across a badly eroded dune area. Photo: Cathel Morrison



Seeing the area planted in the past by volunteers, and how well the marram has taken, gave everyone encouragement and added a sense of value to their labours. We discovered the best area for sourcing the plants was just inland from the main beach dunes, where growth is most vibrant. Marram grass is probably the most important plant in the formation of the species-rich machair. It has the ability to grow in bare sand and initially forms the dynamic dune system, making the sand stable enough to be colonised by the myriad plants, some of which are extremely rare, that eventually create the machair pasture.

We also enjoyed the company of a dozen Golden Plovers and a few Sandpipers who

It is believed the machair grassland has been modified by man throughout its development on the sandy coastal plains of north-west Scotland. Therefore, traditionally, machair supports extensive grazing regimes and unique forms of cultivation that rely on low-intensity systems of rotational cropping. Oldshoremore and Sandwood has one of the largest and least disturbed examples of machair on the mainland. The machair grassland is uncultivated and, mostly, grazed. It represents floristic communities not found on any other machair, for example mountain avens.



Ready for action, and the elements!

Photo: Cathel Morrison

reckoned we had lost our marbles – especially when we started barbecuing sausages in the middle of a hailstorm. But everyone really enjoyed the exercise and hope to come back for future courses. We shall have to look out for a reinforced spade for big John Smith from Elgin, as the normal ones are not much better than toothpicks in his hands.

Each workday was rounded off with the consumption of copious quantities of an amber medicinal compound, which Nick Everet and Ryan Evans had procured from two grateful nuns in Aberdeen. Taken as an oral antibiotic for the cuts and scrapes acquired during the work, the compound is to be highly recommended as it immediately lessened the discomfort and produced a feeling of well being toward the sufferer's fellow men.

Grateful thanks to all the volunteers for the hard work and also to Mrs Otter for supplying tea and biscuits. ■

• *The next course may be in March or April 2003. Watch the Members' News for workparty details.*

'That's it for another year!'

TOM DAVIES and DAVE BONE recall the final work parties of 2001, in the dark days of November.

Dave at Strathaird: 'An hour later we are still smoking twigs.'

IT'S FRIDAY EVENING as I park outside Clach Glas, the Trust cottage on the road to Elgol normally used as a base at this time of year. The usual Torrin beach campsite isn't as welcoming on a windy November night! Only six have arrived by retiring time, so the spare tents are thankfully left empty.

Saturday morning is dark, breezy and damp. Around 9am, a healthy number of people begin to gather. Keith Miller and Andrew Campbell arrive, and Andrew is asked about the weather forecast. 'Erm, not good at all – in fact, rather grim!' Well, with people from as far away as Manchester, we're certainly going to do something! Andrew briefs us on the weekend's possible activities. With a westerly wind getting up, the preferred choice of uplifting by boat of the litter mound on the beach down Glen Scaladal is clearly not on. Instead, on offer there are trees to plant, brash burning, tree nursery care and derelict fence removal. We reconvene a mile back up the road by the Keppoch plantation to pick

our tasks.

One party disappears up the Bla Bheinn path bound for a 'half-day' (Keith's estimate) of fence removal. The remainder eye up the phalanx of fallen pine trunks lining the rise, most of it windblown, some cut. The aim is to burn the most visual material by the roadside. Though only spitting with rain, it's clear everything is saturated. Nevertheless, armed with paper, matches, a few gallons of diesel and a glint of optimism, we split into three to see who can get the first fire going.

Three feeble columns of smoke rise, and go out as the rain comes on. An hour later, we are still smoking twigs, when Keith successfully starts the chainsaw, to discover, miraculously, dry wood in the core of the logs. At last, there's more fire than smoke and the fires are heaped high, whole tree trunks are gleefully piled on and the cleared area grows. As the sky darkens, we've cleared to the skyline with ever lengthening journeys for brash, so we break off.

The fires are tidied up and left to rage – no chance of them spreading! The wet, mud covered volunteers retire to cottage and B&Bs. The rusty fence removers

return after dark, their half-day's work still not done! The cottage is a comfortable retreat and Keith joins us after tea for some rounds of the bottle and a convivial evening of gossip and debate.

Sunday morning is still wet, of course. An augmented group leaves with Keith to make sure of the fence. For the rest, Andrew has some not so young 30 cm Birch trees (due out last year) to go near the burning site – an area just above the road is being planted with native species.

Andrew, as usual, picks the perfect spot for a demonstration and a square of turf is inverted sweetly and easily to receive the first tree. Most had done some planting before and knew that stones and roots were often to be hit! Soon, spade wielding volunteers, clusters of trees in hand, are scattered about the site, stopping from time to time as frequent showers permit views across the loch.

Lunch is leisurely taken, perched on tree stumps. However, the boxes of trees call... As the afternoon goes on, people trickle off homewards when they feel like it. The rain comes on with a vengeance, and as it darkens, there are only three of us with Andrew. The remaining trees are quickly sunk into the ground: 450 have gone in, a good day's work.

The fence removers did a good job, returning, as usual with Keith, after dark. And that's it for another year's work parties – despite the Skye mist, there are satisfying visible results, everyone had a good time, and we expect to be back again!

Tom in Knoydart: 'In the cafe we contemplate our sanity.'

As the general forecast was not good, we (my brother John, Shelagh and myself) decided not to walk in the nine miles, but take Len Morrison's boat across Loch Hourn. In the Shiel Bridge cafe, where we coincidentally met Dot, a good friend from previous workparties, we contemplated our sanity.

At Arnisdale, minimum visibility with rain plus gusty wind, we trooped aboard, with a spare engine just in case, and off we moved into the swell. In the bow, watching an unfazed Len plus the squalls whipping up surface water, I quickly learnt a wave was going to drench me when the throttle was cut back. A flat calm section of the loch was 'the eye of the storm', Len said.

The little camping area was more bracken covered than normal due to lack of activity in the summer. Unfortunately, the weather put paid to any thought of a gettogether or campfire. There were two Andrews, who I learnt next morning had come by the Mallaig boat, walking from Inverie. Total stoics – it's a very long way in the rain and November gloom from Inverie to Inbhir Dhorrcail.

When we retired the burn had been too high to cross but by morning using overhanging branches it was manageable – just as well, as the bags of trees had all been dumped from Len's boat 2 km the



other side, near Coire Odhar. The plan was for all to tree-plant except Keith and me, who would continue to the new fence beyond Li. Keith gave me a waterproof notebook and pencil to take down the 10-digit coordinates of each deviation in the fence line, no matter how slight, plus all stiles, sites for stiles and discarded materials. It was very pleasant work despite the frequent squalls, as the views were superb.

We were also looking out for signs of wildlife, particularly deer, and soon noted their fresh droppings, and then two magnificent stags, two hinds, a young stag and a final group of eight. We determined that they had entered by broken watergates and resolved to come back for repairs. Mapping the fence took much longer than expected and we had to stop just beyond Coire Odhar, struggling back in the dark.

The tree planting team had also run out of daylight. Shelagh told me numbers had increased, as Dave Bone and Will Williams were now camped with us, having spent the night in their tents on the track from Kinloch Hourn at an impassable burn. Two more arrivals, Donald and Chris Payne, had also been benighted on the track. On arrival they had dumped their gear, found the workparty and were delighted to help, remarking that they had been on the way for two days and were determined not to go home without planting trees. All in all it was a super day with plenty of atmospheric including rainbows, but no

evening campfire as the rain became constant from about 7pm.

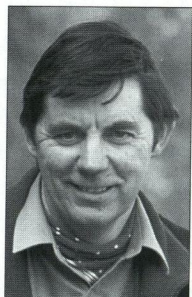
Sunday dawned dry, but the burn was impassable. Each person now had the option of working on the top path with Keith clearing ditches and culverts, or with Andrew checking trees and fencing. On the top path I was delighted to note how obvious the woodland now is when going up through the old enclosure area. Thinking back to all my tree planting over the last eight years I really got a good feeling to see the results. The work was not difficult and it was just good to be up there with the magnificent views.

As Len was due for the first boatload at 2.30 everybody was back at the site in good time, including the two Andrews who had decided to opt out of the walk back to Inverie. The boat trip back was lovely, although there was a swell and Len needed to tack up the coast as far as Rubha Ruadh; we had a clear sky and wonderful all round views.■



Artist David Wilson at work on Glamaig. Photo: Will Boyd-Wallis

Capturing mountain moods



**A profile of
DAVID BELLAMY
continues our series
on artists
and photographers
who have supported
the John Muir Trust.**

Personal background: where were you born and brought up, where do you live now?

I was born at Pembroke Castle, but unlike Henry Tudor, on the 'wrong' side of the moat! These days I live in mid-Wales.

What got you started painting? Did you have formal training?

I had no formal training, but have always been interested in visual art. As a youngster I used to win regularly the art competition in the local eisteddfod. It was only when I began mountain climbing that my painting took off - before that I simply messed everything up. Nature threw everything at me and I suppose I took it as a challenge to try and capture the scenery in sometimes ridiculous conditions such as lashing rain or snowfall, or in below zero temperatures. Many times, such as by Loch Toll an Lochain whilst painting the face of An Teallach, I had to stop working and dance

around boulders to recover my warmth before continuing the watercolour - the washes had frozen, of course, and sticking frozen brushes into your armpits to defreeze them does little to boost morale ... I use watercolour because there is nothing quite like it for capturing mountain moods.

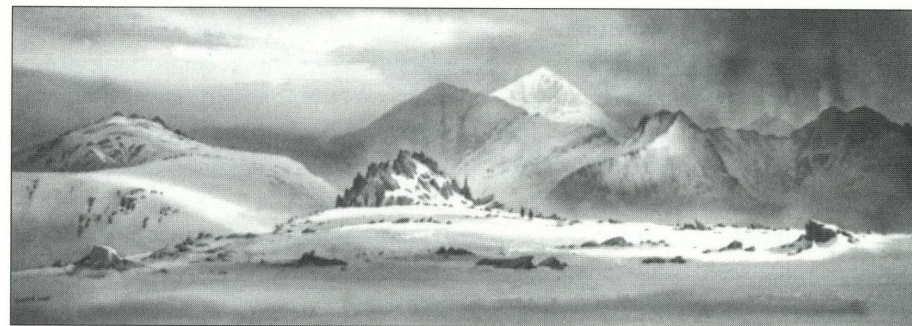
What was the first painting you sold and for how much?

The first painting I sold was a portrait of someone's dog in 1962, for the princely sum of 7/6d.

What inspires you in terms of landscape and nature? Have you got any favourite areas of the UK or further afield?

Craggy mountain scenery is my first love, especially in its more visually exciting moods. I love getting to the summit, but so often never make it because I become distracted in other directions. The interaction of mist, clouds and crags is truly inspirational.

For years I painted the duller colours of the brooding mountains, but after experiencing the light and colours on the limestone of the Italian Dolomites I was really hooked on the more flamboyant colours. The Triple Buttress print, for example has been warmed up considerably by adding reds, as the original scene was in virtual Stygian gloom, with ferocious blasts of wind



Detail of 'Castell y Gwynt and Snowdon from Glyder Fach', watercolour, available as a greetings card.

picking me up at times and tossing me about like a pea in a boiling cauldron.

As far as mountain areas are concerned, it is hard to beat the Western Highlands, and my local patch, Snowdonia. I also enjoy wild coastal scenery, with Pembrokeshire being a great favourite.

Is there a particular artist you admire from the past or present who has influenced you?

J M W Turner, probably the greatest of all English painters, and whose name is now sadly linked to the Turner prize, has undoubtedly been a great influence in both technique and subject matter. Others include Thomas Moran and Albert Bierstadt for their stunning vistas of the natural scenery of the American West, and who, like John Muir were influential in gaining protection for such glorious scenery.

Does the pressure of producing 'commercial' pictures change the subject/style of your painting?

Commercial pressures are never far away, whether painting for an exhibition or a book. This tends to reduce the time for experimentation and for painting those subjects I am especially interested in. I enjoy doing enormous paintings of glaciers, for example, but not many galleries will take such things, for as Jenny, my wife says, 'I don't want that thing in the lounge - it frightens the living daylights out of me.'

How do you go about creating a new painting?

A painting begins with the initial sketch - there may well be years between the two processes - when I try to capture the essence of the scene, mainly what excites me about it. With the painting I draw in the composition, sometimes doing intermediate sketches to clarify in my mind what I wish to achieve. The sky and mood are so important that that is a prime

consideration. Then I let fly with the paint, generally working from top to bottom, gradually building up the detail.

If you could give one tip to those who enjoy landscape drawing and painting, what would it be?

Sketch and paint from nature, allowing it to be your guide, as you learn so much from observing the natural environment in all its various moods and seasons.

When did you become interested in the Trust and why did you become a member? Have you got any views on the values of wild scenery, either for those visiting it, or looking at paintings of it?

I became a member of the Trust when it was formed, as I was in touch with Denis Mollison quite frequently at the time. I joined because I feel passionate about the wild places, and desperately want to help preserve them. My living owes much to wild landscapes, so I feel strongly that I should put something back into it. This I try to do by highlighting threats in the media and also via exhibitions at times. Paintings are a superb way of putting across the sense of beauty of the mountains. Whether we walk, climb, cave, paint, or whatever, we should all try to do our little bit for the wild places. We certainly cannot leave it to politicians.

What are your current projects and have you got any particular ambitions for the next few years?

My next book, *Coastal Landscapes*, is

being published by HarperCollins in September, and now I am working on a book on Pembrokeshire, with further wild landscape book projects beyond that. At this moment I am about to take a group of painters to Peru to work and trek in the Cordillera Blanca and on part of the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. In places we will be using llamas to carry our paints and brushes, and hopefully won't have the sort of animal-related problems as in Nepal, where a passing yak ate a painting of Everest! ■

• *Further information on David's work can be found at*
www.Davidbellamy.co.uk

Upgrade your windows for 70p

Why advertise the dealer you bought your car from? Carefully remove the offending sticker in the rear window, and replace with one promoting the John Muir Trust. You will see a big change in the drivers stuck behind you on the M6.

If you're lucky enough to have no car, don't despair. The stickers work in house, car and office windows, however tame the neighbourhood. JMT stickers, 70p each post paid from the Edinburgh office.

The International Year of Mountains

From an editorial in *The West Highland Free Press* by WILL BOYD-WALLIS, Policy and Partnerships Manager:

THE SLOGAN of the International Year of Mountains is: 'We are all mountain people'. All of us, especially in the Highlands, are connected in some way to the mountains. They not only inspire us and enrich us, but they are the cradle of many a Highland community.

Since 1983 the JMT has worked hard to care for wild, mountainous places and their less wild surroundings in the clear knowledge that in many different ways we are all dependent on them being managed carefully for both the present and the future. Through owning land on Skye, in Knoydart, Lochaber, Sutherland and Perthshire, the Trust has an active involvement with a wide range of communities associated with mountainous country. The JMT is privileged to be able to work hand in hand with the people to whom the mountains are most important.

It is easy to forget that mountains are more than just piles of rocks. Their very makeup and structure is a source of great fascination and they are home to a myriad of plants and animals living in a relatively

natural state. The wildlife and scenic grandeur experienced in these areas is the vital attraction not only to the many visitors to the Highlands, but also to residents. The International Year of Mountains is a timely reminder to all of us never to take for granted the quality of life we gain through being in these beautiful and inspiring surroundings.

What would the Highlands be without its mountains? It has been said that Fort William would scarcely exist today were it not for Ben Nevis. Practically every business in that area markets itself in some way through the name of Britain's highest mountain. The success of many Highland products can be attributed not only to their quality, but to their local identity, which in many cases is closely linked to mountains.

It is no coincidence that many of those who have a deep love of the Cuillins will, as an act of respect and reverence, find themselves unwittingly savouring a beer of the same name!

Poems on the following pages, to mark the IYoM, are Mountains by Alec Wilding-White, and Grazie Montagne by the Italian mountaineer Battistino Bonalo, translated by Alec Wilding-White.

Mountains

Alec Wilding-White

*Great things are done when men and mountains meet;
This is not done by jostling in the street.* WILLIAM BLAKE

Turmoil and exhaustion. Will it not cease?
Excess of thought; where's the escape,
Through to the wonderments? Release is smothered
Though ever it waits, closely at hand
Behind prisons of taught thoughts.

Freedoms thus boxed, and wonderments manufactured.
Unreal. Yet ever the mountains call, offering,
Knowing; ready to confide.
There we must search till no longer alone;
Lest footsteps of desolation pursue us
Evoking a sadness, hiding the peak's joy.

Not hearing their silence withholds a love
Yearning to rekindle averted eyes
Till all see as one. Then comes a healing:
That silence, seen/heard in long upward sweeps
Of green grass, twisted trees, long shadows of dark
Worth searching, thrust of peaks snow-tinged with feeling:
Silence, heard even in thunder, in down-tumbled
Rushings of streams; in the voice of each version
Of wind. Believed in, each tells.

We must keep the mountains; their knowledge even when
Not with them; their durability, their wisdom, their
Age-long experience, above all their tones of deep
Feeling; all ever offered to those who
Entrust peaks with all we feel, and thus with
Our souls. Some call it all Snowman, others Christ.
It is the real you, the real me, emerging.

Grazie Montagne

Thank you, mountains for having given me
lessons about life, because
by exhausting myself I have learned
to relish rest, because sweating I
have learned to appreciate a sip
of fresh water, because tired I have
stopped and been able to admire the
wonder of a flower, the freedom of
a flight of birds, to breathe in the
perfume of simplicity, because alone,
merged into your silence, I have
seen myself as in a mirror and
terrified, have confessed my need for
truth & love, because enduring I
have savoured the joy of the peak
perceiving that true things, those
that lead to happiness, are reached only
with difficulty, and he who does not
know difficulty shall never be
able to understand.

Battistino Bonalo

Crek-crek!

Your chances of hearing the corncrake are growing – a bit. We talked to the RSPB about the campaign to save the species.



MOST OF US TODAY would think of the corncrake as a bird of the wild. It's true that you have to go to the fringes of these islands nowadays to hear the male bird's call, the unmistakable rasping noise usually rendered creak-crek; and that your search will probably lead you to the remoter islands of Scotland, notably the Uists, Coll and Tiree. But this is not the corncrake's choice.

A century and a bit ago, the bird was distributed all over the British Isles, mainland and islands alike, and it was common enough fare to feature in Mrs Beeton's Household Management, where a rather unappetising drawing shows two of the large blackbird-sized creatures on a platter and a spit.

The corncrake has been forced to live where it lives now. The corncrake skulks (as ornithologists put it) in tall vegetation, like hay, cow parsley or flag irises. Farming improvements – mechanical mowing, tidier fields, and cutting hay early for silage – reduced its habitat where they didn't actually kill the birds. Numbers fell from tens of thousands in the 19th century to a low of 480 in 1993. (Corncrake censuses, by the

way, count calling male birds only.) Only where traditional farming and crofting persisted did the corncrake keep a toehold, and it was in those parts of the Scottish islands that the drive to bring the bird back from the brink of extinction began.

The first research started in the mid-1980s, and a second programme in the early 1990s provided the knowledge for the Corncrake Initiative, funded by the RSPB and SNH, and supported by the Scottish Crofters' Union. The strategy of this and other government-backed incentives such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Premium Scheme and SNH's SPA corncrake management scheme has been to pay crofters and farmers to extend the habitat of corncrakes and other grassland birds. This has also been complemented by reserve management, particularly by RSPB.

Corncrake-friendly mowing (CFM) is a simple but radical change in practice. The harvester works outwards towards the field edges, not in towards the centre. The birds, if they're forced out by the mowers, can escape through cover to refuge in the field edges, and stand a much higher chance of surviving the harvest.

Left: Corncrake calling. Photo: Robert Smith
Right: Corncrake among flags. Photo: RSPB

Other measures include delaying the hay harvest till after 1st August, and leaving fenced spaces at field edges and corners for iris beds and other kinds of cover. This early season cover has become limited by increased grazing pressure, particularly by sheep. Traditional cattle management is generally good for biodiversity, and is encouraged.

Andy Tharme, Species and Habitats Officer with the RSPB Scotland, describes their success as 'modest – but significant; the population has gone up by 34% since 1993, the first increase after nearly a century of decline'. The biggest centres of population are the Uists, Benbecula, Barra & Watersay (262 in total), and Coll and Tiree (205 in total). There are no sizeable populations on the mainland. Skye has about 20 birds, in Trotternish and Waternish core areas.

Because of their liking for cover, and lack of flying enthusiasm during the breeding season, you're unlikely to see a corncrake, unless you're very lucky or you use the RSPB's viewing platform (Coll) or visitor centre (Balranald, North Uist). You are, however, more likely than a decade ago to hear the creak!

Starting this year, the range of government incentives for farmers has been replaced by the country-wide Rural Stewardship Scheme. It is unclear yet how

the takeover, and the funding, will compare. The RSPB is watching the new scheme anxiously. If it fails to deliver it could mean the end for some farms and crofts, as well as corncrake populations. It seems clear that a partnership between conservationists, estates and crofters will remain the core of the effort to keep the species alive in Britain.

Although the JMT's properties are not in the core corncrake areas, we support crofters and other tenants who take part in

biodiversity programmes, and our senior conservationist Keith Miller is on the Biodiversity Action Plan group for the corncrake.

The Sandwood Estate is one place that Andy thinks has potential: 'Birds turn up on a fairly regular basis along the coast there, and at Kinlochbervie and Oldshoremore. We (the RSPB)

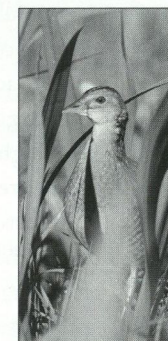
have management agreements a

few miles away with farmers and crofters in the Durness area, which is the only mainland site where corncrakes return year on year. It's also interesting that the North West Cattle Producers' Association is looking at ways to keep cattle management going in NW Sutherland, because it brings biodiversity benefits as well as sustaining crofting.' ■

• *RSPB Scotland publishes The Creak, an annual newsletter.*

• *www.corncrake.net, English and German versions*

• *Naturally Scottish: Corncrakes. Colour booklet, SNH Publications*



On the Border, on the Brink

a tale of eco forest travel by Hilary Parke

A LONG THE RUSSIAN BORDER something extraordinary was happening ... so much so that it had attracted the attention of the media. Arina, a student from Petrozavodsk, was holding steady a wicked tangle of rusting barbed wire so that April, from Scotland, could cut it free from the undergrowth. They were both so absorbed in their task of taking down part of the Iron Curtain that they failed to notice the cameraman from Moscow Television who was enthusiastically filming them.

This was the first ever John Muir Award international exchange expedition to Finnish and Russian Karelia. Ten UK participants and three UK leaders had joined up with leaders and young people from Finland and Russia in order to explore the wilderness on foot and by canoe, to experience other cultures and to carry out conservation work in one of the most remote old-growth forests in northern Europe.

The UK participants, aged from eighteen upwards, came from all walks of life and had not met until a preparation weekend in Perthshire. On the River Tay many had experienced their first taste of open boat canoeing ... and of capsizing!

On our arrival in Finland, we headed for Metsäkartano, one of Finland's excellent Youth Centres. Arriving in the early evening, we were welcomed by the centre's staff and offered a toast of forest fruits in beautifully-carved wooden cups, before setting off in canoes for an atmospheric paddle across the pine-rimmed lake to an old logging camp, where we were to sleep that night. Here we cooked supper on an open fire with the Finns, Germans and Russians with whom the residential was being shared, and on the following morning, in order to break the ice we played games, cooked traditional lunches and made forays into the forests to learn backwoods survival skills such as fire lighting, navigation and foraging for wild foods. Then it was on to Aittolahti, a rustic but well-equipped cabin in the woods where we experienced our first traditional Finnish sauna and were able to swim in the lake to our heart's content.

Finland is very much a forest culture, so it was fitting that the next day was spent in the forest, where officers from Metsähallitus, the Finnish forestry service, demonstrated their methods of sustainable management. We learned the importance of strimming saplings and leaving the brashings to rot down, of



Participants and leaders from Scotland, England, Finland and Russia heading for Lake Paanjärvi in Russian Karelia. Photo: Hilary Parke

looking after the health of the many watercourses and conserving the few remaining areas of original old-growth timber. The leaders, who had planted pine trees during their previous 'recce' visit in May, were able to see how well they had grown, before we were taken on to experience another aspect of the forestry business, the logging and pulp mills. Here it was clear that Finland has sorted out its own forest economy, in terms of sustainable management, pretty well, but we felt considerable concern at the amount of irreplaceable old-growth Russian timber that was coming over the border to be pulped. A satellite image, seen the following day, at Kainu Nature Reserve, showed very clearly the difference between ancient (dark green) and younger (paler grey-green) forests:

the line between the two types of forest faithfully followed the border between the two countries. On the Russian side, large pink scars betrayed the huge areas of previously untouched forest that are being logged daily and as we drove into Russia we passed a constant stream of fully-laden timber lorries heading for the Finnish logging mills.

Sanna, our Finnish tour guide, had feared that getting a large multi-national group and a canoe-laden trailer across the border at Vartiuss would be difficult, but in fact it all went very smoothly, mainly because of her excellent organisation and also perhaps because the customs and border officials recognised some of us from May, when there had been much conferring and telephoning before we were allowed across.

Once in Russian Karelia, we were welcomed at the trans-national Friendship Park at Kostamuksha, a large steelworking city which has now become the co-ordinating centre for the Kostamuksha Strict Nature Reserve. On the Finnish side of the border, at Kainu, we had visited the modern purpose-built and expertly laid out interpretive Nature Centre, featuring multimedia shows, interactive computer stations and topical exhibitions. Its Russian counterpart, housed in an old council building in Kostamuksha, clearly enjoyed considerably less funding but we were struck by the enthusiasm, ingenuity and dedication of the Russian staff for this wonderful wildlife initiative which transcends the borders built by man.

Soon we were setting up our tents on a narrow peninsula between two lakes, getting a fire going and exploring the spooky decaying bunkers and watch towers that recall so poignantly a darker period of Karelian history. That evening, as the light slowly dimmed, we heard how the residents of the area had been forced to leave their homes and that where we were now there had once been houses and a church. Scarcely a trace of habitation remained in the overgrown forests but for those of us from Scotland, there were powerful parallels with the Highland Clearances.

That night was the first of many to be spent congenially around a fire or at banya, (the Russian equivalent of the sauna), swapping experiences and breaking down the cross-cultural barriers. Somehow we managed to get everyone on their feet

dancing a hectic Strip the Willow, then the Finns taught us a Karelian folk dance and the Russians plied us with endless humorous toasts, to everyone and everything under the sun.

The next day, Friday 17th August, my journal entry reads:

'In spite of a late night, we're soon on the road, armed with wire cutters and heading for no-man's land. We emerge blinking from the vehicles to find ourselves in 23° of heat, on a bleak fuel station forecourt that glares at us in the harsh sunlight. Beyond it is the border control post, with a sentry-topped watch tower and two guards lounging languidly outside. Beside the parking area, behind a pile of huge rocks, the Iron Curtain threads its tangled red barbs through rising saplings and scrub, supported by a line of black, T-shaped posts. We watch, silent and overcome by the singular power of the occasion, as Sergei's chainsaw roars suddenly into life and begins ripping away at the tarred timber. As the first one topples we cheer, then there is a surge of energy as this multinational little team spreads out and sets to, snipping and rolling, unthreading and tugging, all the time cautiously liberating the young branches from the sprawling tendrils of wire.'

That night, still sweaty and scratched, we arrived at our first Russian billets, in the private homes of the villagers of Voknavolok, to find banyas and supper awaiting. Over the next week, our lives became a patchwork of exciting journeys by canoe, meetings with strangers who

soon became friends, bouts of practical conservation work, fascinating insights into rural lifestyles that have changed little over the centuries, and threaded through it all, the routine of life on the move.

As we neared the Arctic circle, the long bright days blended together, interfaced by fleeting periods of twilight. Cold, light nights huddled around camp fires gave way to scorchingly hot days as we paddled forth on the capricious waters of Lake Paanajärvi. Here we were deep into the true Karelian wilderness, passing seemingly endless old-growth forests, hearing the cries of sandpipers by day and owls by night, camping amid the massive trunks on deep, springy beds of cranberry and blueberry. Sergey and Julia, the National Park Rangers, were a fount of fascinating information on the history of the forests and of the Sami herders, whose survival depended entirely on their reindeer herds. Shamanism and superstition interlaced their lives; the trees seemed to have absorbed a sense of deep mystery and even half an hour spent in solitude in that vast wilderness brought a sense of real connection to the deeper aspects of life.

On our very last night in Russia we skipped going to bed altogether, in favour of spending our last few hours talking, singing and playing Toss the Birch Bark Slipper together. We had set out as a group of 23 very different individuals from extremely varied backgrounds but the challenges and shared experiences of our journey had transformed us... into a mutually supportive team and also into

friends. So it was with a sense of real community that we shared both the delights and downsides of the trip, and expressed our deep concern that humanity should not despoil, through tourism, logging or any other activity, this last, vast but infinitely vulnerable northern wilderness.

At 2am we reluctantly doused the fire and began to gather our belongings together. 'The only thing we haven't seen on this trip is the Northern Lights, but otherwise it's been totally brilliant,' someone was saying, just as someone else, pointing upwards, gave a shout. Waves of light were rippling across the sky, radiating out from a point directly above us. The Aurora Borealis, light show of the gods indeed! What more perfect finale to our epic journey could there have been, than those five minutes of reverence and wonder? ■

• Hilary Parke is a volunteer leader for the John Muir Award.

Cover picture: Ray Lamb, an Award leader who was instrumental in setting up the trip, with a bit of the iron curtain. Ray is an Edinburgh based community education worker. The photographer Sam Baumber, also an Award leader, has just completed a geography degree at the University of Edinburgh.



Wild Writing on Mull

The John Muir Award's first Conservation and Creative Writing course was held on the Isle of Mull. Fiona Russell and Mike Merchant give their impressions.

Mike: I left – one day early at that – completely exhausted, with barely the strength for a black pudding breakfast in the CalMac cafeteria. Part of it was the 4.30 alarm call from the Bendoran Cottage rooster. The rest must have been three packed days of physical, mental and spiritual activity. Bendoran is a collection of lovely buildings tucked into the hill a few miles from the Iona ferry. As well as catering for such courses it's home to Trish and Paul, directors of Highland Renewal (of which more later). This is how it happened.

Tree day: Debbie (Debbie Hall, the artist and writer leading the course) introduces us to Tireragan. This small estate on the Ross of Mull has been managed for conservation by Highland Renewal for the last eight years. There's a stiff south-easter as we walk in over blanket bog. A few miles on we see the ruined township of Tireragan, before we cut back through regenerating woodland, above the coves and cliffs, to an extraordinary tree.

The big oak has grown down from its bole for many many years, roofing and

filling a tiny glade with a sprawl of twisted limbs. It's also our classroom for the morning. Soon we are in pairs, one blindfold, the other leading in silence, introducing their partner to the sounds, scents and textures of the place. It takes trust. And more trust is to come, with the invitation to look directly into our partner's eyes, for minutes on end, with intervals to recover your own identity. It is strangely comforting, something that we grew away from long ago.

Still under the oak, Debbie tells us the syntax of the haiku, and sends us off for half an hour to find the haiku moment – if it comes. I see a handful of shore-birds sinking like one onto the tideline and suppose that the moment is there.

We walk back to do our bit for the estate, removing hundreds of tree sleeves and piling them at the farm. It's getting colder and rather than wait for the minibus we walk a few miles back to Fionnphort. The first flags are in bloom. No more writing that day, that I remember.

Exercise day: The south-easter is still on, and now with rain. We work all morning round the big kitchen table, kicking off with a ten-minute spell of 'writing practice'. The main rule is to keep your writing hand moving at all times. You also have to lose control, be concrete and specific, not think, and accept junk if

that's what comes out. Debbie gives us starters, like *She was a summer dancer...* every so often. I can only say try it – and wouldn't it be nice if you got paid by the word! It's followed by more drills to foster image-making skill, using similes and kennings (like widow-maker, wave-carver).

A third and rather spectacular exercise has us write lines to express a given emotion, as personified by the four elements, a hand, and a human. Then we try a poem about the bit of ourselves that corresponds to various wild things: raven, seal, oak tree and so on. A huge amount of energy is going round! – watch the trips to the coffee jar.

Some wind down tramping six miles through the rain to the big beach nearest the house. As the evening's entertainment, we tell how, through reading and in other ways, our awareness of the natural world grew up. It is perhaps no surprise that it goes on very late, and that the unremarkable looking bunch of people have some remarkable life stories.

Beach day: And outdoors again, we head for Tireragan bearing curry, tagliatelli, and plenty of water. It's picnic day! Still the wind is hammering in, though today bringing brightness and showers. We reach Traigh Gheal, the white strand: a perfect crescent, bounded by cliffs, guarded by rocky islands, graced with a camping sward, and the last resting place of some tons of plastic jetsam. There are already two dumps, and for an hour or so we add to them, and we do make some



'Our classroom for the morning'. Under the big oak. Photo: Mike Merchant

impression. A boat comes in July to ship the stuff out, and I don't envy them.

It is six hours since breakfast, and energy is flagging. Debbie lights a fire and in the embers she heats the curry, the pasta, and her face and fingers. After shovelling some down I explore the opposite cliffs. The sun comes out and the sea turns turquoise and ultramarine; the cliff is warm pink granite with big holds, and beds of juniper.

Next, we make mandolas: circular artworks from natural things, that will fade away – that bit at least is easy on a beach. An amazing variety are made, from sand, weed, flowers, sticks, stones... You are not meant to photograph them but I do.

At 7, the day is at its best, and we walk out, through sunlit glens and the first midges of the year. It's 10 by the time we're back at Bendoran. The participants fall urgently upon tea, cognac, whisky, apple crumble, sandwiches and their beds.

Fiona: Wildwriting day: We wearily dragged ourselves out of bed to lashing rain, but with memories of the previous long, but inspiring day at Tireragan. Debbie soon got our pens working again with first an exercise of 'wild drawing' of the face of the person opposite, pen not to be taken off the page and no peeping down at the results. Another way of seeing. Then, as she played music, we were asked to 'wild write' whatever came into our heads, but 'keep that pen moving' as the music changed without warning every few minutes. As we read out our work, we realised how our subconscious minds had been taken over by the nature of the music – anything from bullfrogs filling the room to unhappy life experiences appeared unexpectedly on our pages.

Our final exercise before lunch was to try the format of the Malaysian pantun: eight lines written into four stanzas in a precise and specific manner so that each line was repeated twice. Again, astonishingly creative results. A late lunch and then writing up pieces for a booklet of course work. Until the evening meal it was time to walk, think, write or chill out.

Paul returned from his few days with eagles on Lewis, and we enjoyed his company and that of their daughter, young Erica. Then a last visit to the turf-roofed 'cave' to brainstorm the highlights and



Art that will fade away: everyone admires Penny's mandala. Photo: Mike Merchant

challenges of the course, before receiving our Discovery Award certificates.

We returned to the kitchen for a session of frivolity, hilarity and gregarious giggling. Young Erica joined us and we were delighted at her poem *The Sun* and then her poetry reading. What a young talent! It was late again before we departed to pack and fall exhausted into bed.

Goodbye day: At breakfast we presented Debbie with a book for her hard work on what had been an inspiring and happily exhausting few days: a superb course that exemplified the memory of John Muir, the writer, the conservationist and the explorer, in so many ways. Thoroughly recommended. Then big hugs and fond farewells, and off to ferries with hopes to keep in touch and meet again. Perhaps for the Explorer Award on the same lines, but slowing the pace just a little! ■

Cumbria Award Group Explores Inverpolly

Will Williams

The John Muir Award is taking off in Cumbria. Gavin Shelton of Cumbria Youth Alliance recently brought together 22 organisations to discuss Award development and to hear Dave Picken, JMT education manager, explain the scheme.

Some experience already exists through initiatives by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust, as Rachel Osborne explained. And some schools, notably the John Ruskin School at Coniston, have already introduced the Award, through excellent work by Carol McNeill, a teacher and expert orienteer.

The support was overwhelming. A JMA Cumbria Advisory Group has now been set up, and the first Basic Leader Training course arranged for July, helped by a donation from a Cumbria 'Action Learning Group'. Funding for a development officer is being sought.

Will Williams, a JMT Trustee, has been closely involved, and in May he joined a John Ruskin School party in an Award trip to NW Scotland. This is Will's story of the week.

THE 10 TEENAGERS' Award task was working out why the Inverpolly area is as it is today. They had to get to grips with the landscape and geology, vegetation changes and the history of animals, and finally to consider the effects of man and the conservation of the area's exceptional wild qualities. I joined the group, Carol, and James Dawson, a part time teacher and experienced outdoor enthusiast, to help with geology and vegetation history, and the planning.

The students had trained in outdoor survival, camping and navigation, and carried their own kit and food for the week. Needless to say, the week's camping was a learning experience in itself.

Our first stop was the Royal Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to see the 'big picture' of the geological history of Scotland. Then to Dynamic Earth, also in Edinburgh, where the interactive time machine took us back to the big bang, the 'pea soup period', the creation of continents and the movement of Scotland across the globe. Finally, a session on glaciation arranged through the educational services at Dynamic Earth, and off we set for Inverpolly.

From the top of Stac Pollaidh, we had an excellent overview of this spectacular wide area and they described it in their own words – *remote, barren, boggy, wild, rocky, tranquil, treeless, wet, wide open valleys, misty, dangerous, sculptured, big lochs ...*

Our first campsite was between Stac Pollaidh and Cul Mor, and a river running onto a beach of recycled sand from the Torridonian Sandstone gave us an insight into conditions thousands of million years ago when the sandstone was laid down. The climb of Cul Beag gave us the opportunity not only to look more closely at the Torridonian Sandstone but also the effect of glaciation on it and the Lewisian landscape – ice moulding, u-shaped valleys, hanging valleys and erratics.

To develop their navigation skills the students plotted their route from the campsite to Knockan Crag and then in small groups walked this, and to our relief got there safely with their 26 lb packs, even though the last section was through a thunderstorm!

At the Knockan Visitor Centre, they saw what happened when Scotland collided with England about 500 million years ago and how the Moine Thrust came about. The thunderstorm provided the perfect ambience.

A camp at Loch Assynt was a good base to explore the limestone caves near Inchnadamph where many species of animals now extinct in Britain were found. These included lynx, lemmings and brown bear. Jan Breckenridge of Scottish Natural Heritage had given us the full list. This fired the imagination of the group and they were really inspired to find more as they disappeared with torches into the caves!

Carol and I had set out a geological orienteering course that morning at 6 am

– this could be the first of its kind! At each control point they were to identify the rock, whose types included the Lewisian gneiss, the Torridonian Sandstone and the Cambrian Quartzite and Pipe Rock. Heavy rain in the afternoon put an end to this.

A night at Achmelvich Youth Hostel was a chance to dry out and to sleep on a mattress – also for a ‘wild dip’ in the sea, though some hadn’t bargained on coming out as a family walked by! In the comfort of the hostel, they produced plasticine models of the Moine Thrust, the quartzite cap that had protected Cul Mor and Stac Pollaidh from erosion, and also the movement of Scotland across the globe.

The last part of the trip let participants test their findings on a walk from Loch Assynt to Suilven for an overnight camp, and then a long walk out to Inverkerkaig. Seeing pine stumps in the peat, the effects of red deer on young trees, the Scots Pine on the Loch Assynt islands, and an actual pollen diagram, they could visualise quite a different tree covered landscape. The remains of settlements indicated that this area was once much more densely populated. The trip ended with tea cakes and ice cream at Achins, Inverkerkaig and a well-deserved sleep at Achiltibuie YH, before the long journey back to Cumbria.

I do not think that the youngsters realised how much they had achieved and learnt during the week. The geology is so complex, yet they took it in their stride in a most relaxed and enjoyable way – the excellent interactive exhibitions at



The John Ruskin School group at Inverkerkaig, with author Will Williams (L) and teachers Carol McNeill and James Dawson (R).

Edinburgh had also helped. Their outdoor skills were impressive, as to set off over wild Scottish terrain with a map and compass, and not always in good weather, is quite a challenge.

The group only left their footprints, but took away so many memories and an experience that they will always remember. Doing the John Muir Award gave a strong sense of purpose and a challenge, and they certainly rose to the occasion. With their notebooks, photographs and drawings they will go on to give a presentation at their school.

Yes, they could have addressed the

same question in the Lake District and that may be the next project. The trip to Inverpolly did however, stretch their minds and provided a nice stepping-stone between the success of the John Muir Award in Scotland and its development in Cumbria. For those that went, life in Coniston will never be quite the same! ■

• *JMA Cumbria Advisory Group:*
contact Gavin Shelton, 01772 894104,
cya@gavshelton.co.uk.

The Ben – What's the Point?

WILL BOYD-WALLIS, Policy and Partnerships Manager, explains what the JMT is up to on Britain's highest mountain.

WHEN THE JMT ANNOUNCED that it was to purchase Ben Nevis Estate there was a clamour of excitement. To many people it was seen as a great opportunity to tackle some of the greatest land management challenges in our mountains. Others argued that Ben Nevis was a national responsibility, and should not rely on the generosity of individuals. Some believed that the issues of access, and conservation, and the safety of the 70,000 or so people who climb the Ben every year are just too contentious for the JMT. As a member of JMT staff with the prospect of having a personal responsibility for Ben Nevis Estate, I too was apprehensive. Now, two years since the day Andrew Thin carried the legendary snowball off the summit, I relish the fact that the JMT had the guts to go for it.

The 1700-hectare Ben Nevis Estate is a peculiarly shaped patch of land. If you were to climb Ben Nevis on the well-trudged 'Ben path', it would be about two hours (for most mortals) before you even

entered the estate. If you were to tackle the North-East Buttress, despite spending a whole day on Ben Nevis, it would be a whole day before you stepped onto the JMT land.

The giant bulk of the Ben, at 4406 ft (1344 m) covers only about a quarter of the estate. The rest, which all drains into the Water of Nevis, includes the tops of two other 4000 ft peaks, Carn Mór Dearg and Aonach Beag, and the equally grand Stob Coire Bhealaich, Sgùrr a' Bhuic and Sgùrr Chòinnich Beag. The south slopes of all these hills are leased as part of the Steall grazings to Ewen Campbell from Torlundy.

Many will know the native woodland alongside the spectacular gorge in Glen Nevis. We aim to increase the area and diversity of the woodland, without fencing. Birch dominates; but we would also like to see less common species such as bird cherry, scots pine and oak proliferate.

From day one, we were made very welcome by the *Nevis Working Party*, which was set up before we bought the estate. We actively supported the group, which last autumn published its *Nevis Strategy*. It is soon to be constituted as the *Nevis Partnership* (a limited company with charitable status) whose objects will

include: *to promote awareness and appreciation of, and care for, the area's special environmental and other values, including its 'wild country' characteristics.* The JMT will serve as a director on its board, thus having a direct input into the management of a larger area including the North East Face, Allt a' Mhuilinn, Glen Nevis and the north flanks of the Mamores.

The Nevis Partnership can access EU or lottery funds and JMT recently contributed towards a funding adviser to put together the packages to kick-start the Nevis Strategy.

Thankfully it's not all just about planning and strategies. There are things we can and are doing now to look after Ben Nevis Estate. During the few months when the summit of the Ben is snow free we can get rid of the appalling accumulation of rubbish left behind by its less conscientious visitors. This summer as part of International Year of Mountains, along with members of the Lochaber Mountaineering Club we will be removing other debris, including the now defunct orange shelter on the summit.

A major aspect of managing Ben Nevis Estate is managing its visitors. A huge number of people climb Ben Nevis without any idea of the hazards of the North East Face or the steep sections of west and south facing flanks, and a few will do so to their ultimate cost. Having said that, we feel it is important to recognise that all mountains are potentially dangerous, and on Ben Nevis perhaps more than anywhere, people need to be informed of the risks. We have

been working with the Nevis Ranger Service on a leaflet to ensure that walkers and climbers understand the need for caution and also to care for the mountain environment.

Most people accessing the North East Face of Ben Nevis will do so via the Allt a' Mhuilinn. The *Lochaber Mountain Access Group*, which started life during the foot and mouth crisis, is lobbying for repairs to the Allt a' Mhuilinn path and for it to take a less circuitous route towards the Ben via a fabulous viewpoint on the way. Their view, shared by the JMT, is that the viewpoint could provide an excellent low-level 'Ben Nevis Experience' for many visitors who might otherwise against their better judgement head up into Coire Leis. This may be one way of accommodating the needs of walkers and climbers and reducing pressure on the upper reaches of the path.

So ... what's the point in owning Britain's Highest Mountain? Well, the truth is we only 'own' a significant part of it, and ownership when it comes to mountains can be a dirty word. We are faced with some serious conservation management challenges. As Scotland's highest mountain Ben Nevis is and will always be unique, and will require unique solutions to its problems. ■

• *A 30-page summary of the Nevis Strategy is available from Highland Council in Fort William, 01397 707234, lochaber.area@highland.gov.uk.*

Knoydart Notes

Hamish Brown

PEOPLE DON'T FORGET their initiation to the Knoydart world of variable wonders. One friend I took there suffered the awfulness of heatstroke (which is like bad seasickness; you feel you are dying and wish the end would hurry up), another was drowned crossing what is normally a trifling wee burn. If my first visit (1953) was fairly conventional, the Munro-bagging predictable, the final soaking traditional, I have had some odd landfalls since.

One one occasion I wanted to land at the head of Loch Nevis. To save ferrying me and the dog (the only passengers) from the *Western Isles* to the shore by dinghy, Bruce Watt headed for a sheer cliff west of Camusrory. With immaculate judgement he brought the bow to a foot off the cliff, we stepped off onto a rock ledge, and the boat glided away again. A voice called, 'Well, you are the climber now, so climb.'

I had a party of kids in Knoydart for the first time in 1963 and we had a camp near the tautological but often aptly-named Loch an Dubh-Lochain. They were given a Knoydart soaking, what RLS called 'meteorological purgatory', and I've a slide of our sixties remedy for wet clothes: they pulled on pullovers, up the way like long johns, down the way as normal, held them together with underpants and dried out

their garments by wearing them on top. You didn't tell the parents everything.

We went to a bothy to dry off at a fire – and found two others there. Hearing the boys had been up and down Luinne Bheinn in just three hours they went off at 5 pm, were back at 8.45 pm and had a good thrashing which we later read about in a Grampian Club Bulletin. We kept the fire going till they were in. By then our clothes were dry, scorched, burnt or melted.

In 1974 during the 'all the Munros in a single walk' trip I camped at the same spot. I'd arrived at Knoydart short of fuel and ended cooking on Zip firelighters – and have a sympathy for sooty, old-fashioned chimney sweeps ever since. I was able to buy a carton of milk at Inverie and sipping it at camp that night was a real treat. I hoarded half a carton for breakfast.

A mouthful or two of the milk was lumpy to swallow and I was rather disgruntled that it could have gone off overnight. When I keeked into the empty carton there was a drowned slug at the bottom – one of those big black beauties. They had supplied the unexpected protein for breakfast. 'Living off the land' you could say.

Some research is called for on this *pulmonata* species. In Knoydart on another occasion at the end of a long hill day I found I could not pull my right foot out of



MV Western Isles at Mallaig.

my boot. After an immense effort my foot came away, leaving the stocking still in the boot, firmly fixed at the toe. Standing on the boot and heaving eventually freed the stocking. A squashed black slug had been the superglue involved. ■

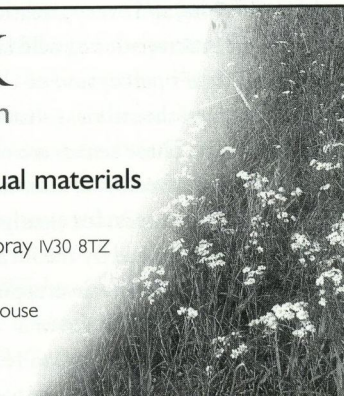
• *Hamish Brown MBE, author, photographer and mountaineer, is an original JMT member with a lifetime of wandering the Scottish hills. In the next Journal, Hamish recalls some memories of Sandwood.*

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Needed: sensitive eye

Alan Wightman

THE PROPOSAL for a small scale hydro-electric scheme in the Shildaig/Slattadale area of Wester Ross has been the subject of much criticism on the grounds that, in one critic's words, 'it will destroy the very last areas of wild and beautiful land in Britain'. This is desperate stuff.

There is understandable concern to protect wild places, the *raison d'être* of the John Muir Trust, but before rushing to judgement on proposals like this in the highlands, we need to try to define what we mean by the term 'wild land'. Is it a large tract of land devoid of the hand of Man – no roads, fences, bridges, telephone poles or electricity pylons to disturb an untamed landscape? Some areas in the north might meet such a definition. But most areas would not, and there is probably not one definition of wild land to satisfy everyone, and every situation.

Certain characteristics of wild land touch upon one's perception of remoteness, and the stillness that accompanies it. These senses are not necessarily disturbed by all man-made objects in remote areas: for example a bridge over a river used by the local community, a toy-like train creeping along the contours of Ben Dorain, or a lighthouse on a remote headland like Isleornsay.

These examples encapsulate two important factors: assimilation and scale. It is not necessarily a matter of hiding the object. If it will be visible, it is important that it is in scale with its setting, and has a non-reflective and quiet appearance. With large elements like a dam or a viaduct, it is especially important that their design should be of a very high order: the large Émosson dam in the Swiss Alps (opposite) has the virtues of simplicity and of appropriate scale in the setting of high mountains. The visual impact is thus of a man-made structure in tune with the dominant mountainous terrain.

In the post-war hydro-electric programme Edward MacColl, the Hydro Board's senior design engineer, demanded high standards of design, entrusting it to a design engineer working with an architect. Nowadays public scrutiny is more rigorous, and it is normal practice to prepare environmental impact studies. In the context of the Shildaig scheme a study would provide reliable information by which to:

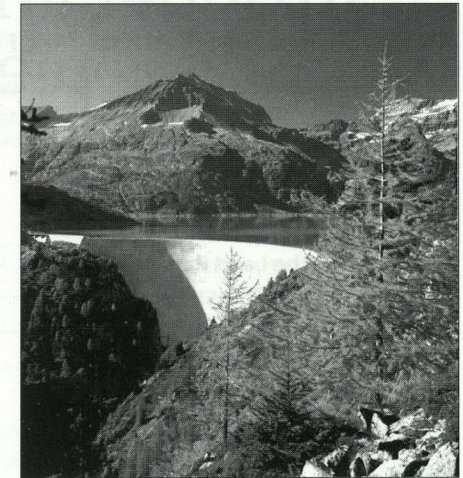
- visualise the size and detailed design of the weir and ancillary structures
- ascertain the means of concealing the pipework carrying water to the turbines
- illustrate in detail the construction of temporary and permanent roads

- explain the ecological impact especially on the local river system

Design issues apart, the background to this project is the urgent need to develop sustainable sources of energy. Scotland is well placed to develop sources of clean energy, especially from hydro power, an immense resource, with its installations having a long life and needing little maintenance. In principle, therefore, new hydro schemes are to be encouraged. Scotland could greatly increase the present level of generation and would be free of the threat of more nuclear power stations. I believe that in principle the JMT should support renewable energy proposals, including small scale hydro schemes, in the interest of meeting the targets set by the Kyoto Agreement.

The local community is a related matter. Would the JMT embrace the principle of small hydro schemes if the power was supplied direct to the community, and not via the grid? That would help local communities survive through lower energy prices, which in turn might attract new businesses.

To sum up, while the protection of wild places remains a key objective, the parallel aim must be to develop sustainable sources of clean energy as quickly as possible. When the impact studies of the Shildaig scheme are available for assessment, the two primary skills needed for this will be those of the ecologist and the architect. These are almost the exact words which I heard Frank Fraser Darling speak at a tutorial, when I was an architectural



In tune: the Émosson dam

student with an interest in landscape and the protection of the rural scene.

A sensitive eye is needed in assessing both the design of the man-made elements of the Shildaig scheme, and the disturbance and modification of the site into which they are to be fitted. If the outcome of the assessment, in ecological and architectural terms, is favourable, then there should be little fear of significant change in that part of Wester Ross, let alone of adding to the present levels of degraded land in Scotland which so upset Fraser Darling. If the local community were to benefit directly from a small scale hydro scheme, then that would be an additional important factor. ■

• *Alan Wightman is an architect living on Skye. He wishes to thank Dick Balharry and Chris Carter for their help in the preparation of this article.*

Stronger line on access, please

Nigel Hawkins wrote (*Journal & News Winter 2002*) that 'commonsense has prevailed' on the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill. DEREK SIME of Stirling says that the Bill, as introduced, is a considerable improvement on the 'misguided' draft, but that in some areas common sense has not yet prevailed...

- The powers of local authorities to restrict access appear to be ill-defined, which might lead to pressure from landowners to close off land unnecessarily (as happened long after last year's FMD outbreak had subsided).
- There appears to be little provision for footpath maintenance.
- While I have no objections to reasonable restrictions when shooting is actually taking place, and advertised by notice on a day to day basis, there remains the potential for 'land used for recreational purposes' to be interpreted such that large areas of open hill used as sporting estates are simply closed off for much of the year, without valid reason.
- The provisions made for the Crown Estate may place at risk access to large areas of hill country, including Lochnagar.
- The Bill perhaps takes the issue of curtilage too far, in allowing it to extend

to farmyards, through which main hill routes often pass – there should at least be a requirement to provide a reasonable alternative path, if a farmyard itself is to be restricted.

- One of the most draconian clauses is that on access during the hours of darkness. This could prevent access to many hills from late October to March, when the best winter hill conditions can be found, because of the limited hours of daylight. This could lead to the criminalisation of law abiding hillgoers, and to accidents, when hillgoers are hurrying back to beat the 'curfew'. This clause is simply not acceptable. I suspect too that it would become virtually unenforceable.
- Much good work was achieved on a voluntary basis by the Access Forum, but it appears that this Bill is still in danger of throwing much of it away. Voluntary schemes like Hillphones have done much to bring hillgoer and landowner together – this Bill still risks driving them apart, and achieving the opposite of its intention.

I therefore think that the Trust has taken an over simplistic, and optimistic view on this Bill, which, as it stands, could seriously damage the existing goodwill between landowner and walker in Scotland. I would have hoped that the Trust would have maintained a stronger view on this vital topic. ■

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A working week in the life ...

Rob Bushby, John Muir Award Manager for Scotland

HAVE YOU EVER READ those Sunday paper 'A Day in the Life' articles and wondered how you'd be able to capture what you do on a day-to-day basis? Apparently I've volunteered to meet this challenge (thanks, Dave Picken) and give a flavour of a week at the hub of the John Muir Award.

In essence, the John Muir Award is a wonderful initiative to work for. For anyone with an affinity for the outdoors, encouraging folk of all ages and backgrounds to experience and enjoy wild places, to put something back, and to share those experiences, is a great way to spend your working life. And having worked in the field of outdoor education for 15 years, I haven't yet come across a better tool for promoting a holistic approach to environmental and outdoor activity.

The job has three main strands: responding to John Muir Award enquiries – discussing how initiatives meet criteria and generally overseeing this information and activity; getting out and about visiting and networking; and tackling various ongoing Award developments.

I was determined not to begin 'no one day is the same', but clichés are clichés for a reason. As the John Muir Award Manager for Scotland, I do have to say that no one day is the same. A recent week gives a

typical flavour of the diversity of John Muir Award activity and what I get up to.

Monday: Staff meeting. With a growing staff team and an evolving Award scheme, these monthly get-togethers are a vital way of comparing notes on what we're all up to. They alternate between agenda-led meetings, open discussions on broader topics such as our vision for the John Muir Award, and out-and-about activity days, on which we're involved in a collective staff Award.

Tuesday: Over the Forth Road Bridge to Fife. It's always heartening to get out and see for myself what groups are up to, and discuss potential John Muir Award involvement with new organisations. Fife Ranger Service have been great advocates for the Award; however, a key player has recently moved to New Zealand. A handover chat with his replacement confirms continued enthusiasm for the Award, and gives us a chance to clarify partnership arrangements, and discuss the excellent work being done under the Award banner.

I squeeze in a visit to Buckhaven Youth Theatre to float the idea of making a video for our fifth birthday celebrations in September, and make it to St. Paul's Primary School just in time for lunch. (Yes, you still get treacle sponge and custard!)

Lively 11-year olds take me on a tour of the wildlife garden they created in their school grounds, show me their poetry, art and t-shirt designs, and we quiz each other about John Muir (he features in their studies as a Scottish Victorian hero) and the work of the Trust.

I catch up with Mark Pearson, an inspirational Air Training Corps Adventure Training Officer, who has created a 100-strong Air Cadet Conservation Group in less than a year, using the Award structure as a focus for activities. We manage a quick tour of sites around Falkland where they are carrying out conservation projects, and I recruit a Cadet for a scholarship on an Outward Bound course.

Wednesday: Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association (SCRA) conference and Prince's Trust Volunteers presentation. The John Muir Award is delivered primarily through organisations who become Award Providers. As such, Countryside Ranger Services are important working partners due to the wide range of groups they work with, their local knowledge, networks and expertise, and their educational and community focus. Whilst we have some great partnerships on the go, there's vast untapped potential and I'm glad of the chance to speak to the SCRA conference at New Lanark, especially when their theme is 'New Educational Directions for Countryside Staff'. I talk about 'Where we've come from, where we're at, and where we're going' and am disappointed not to receive a bouquet of flowers as the previous (female) speaker did.

I nip off to Paisley to present certificates at a Prince's Trust Volunteers 'graduation' ceremony. The team, a mix of unemployed and employed 16 to 25 year-olds, undertook their John Muir Discovery Award as part of a 1-week 'team challenge' trip to Beinn Eighe, where they took guided walks with rangers, planted trees and did footpath maintenance. I arrive back at New Lanark just in time to see TOSS Youth Theatre perform a stunning interpretation of Muir's life and philosophy that moves even the gnarliest of Rangers present. Book them for our fifth birthday.

Thursday: Training for Trainers. As a way of 'franchising' the John Muir Award, we have targetted longstanding volunteers and key staff from a range of organisations and designed a programme to enable them to train others in the delivery of the Award scheme. This means that volunteers can assist in running our Basic Leader Training courses, and the Award can feature in their in-house training programmes. An impressive gathering represents the Green Team, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, BTCV, Ardroy and Ardmay Outdoor education centres, Cumbria Youth Alliance and Scottish Wildlife Trust. We spend the day exploring the Award's training package, issues associated with training others, and the wildlife in the graveyard that neighbours our office.

Friday: And relax...sort of... A day in the office to keep on top of all the bits and pieces that need keeping on top of – letters, e-mails, phone calls, report-writing... and try to make progress with ongoing

initiatives. I enjoy the developmental side of the job, whether it's producing an information handbook or new leaflet, creating a newsletter, or working on a strategy for the Award, and these office days are when I crack on with this kind of stuff.

At the end of the week, I feel as though I've contributed to the work of the John Muir Trust as a whole. The aims of the John Muir Award – increasing awareness of wild places, encouraging people to take

responsibility and value wild places, among other things – relate closely to those of the Trust and its priority of 'winning hearts and minds to the cause of wild land conservation'. What energy I have left at the weekend goes on quality time with my two daughters (two and a half and 3 months), and possibly getting out on the hill – not forgetting to catch up on the Sunday papers! ■



Our new corporate members

Heart of the Lakes and Cottage Life have joined the Trust's Corporate and Business Supporters Scheme as Gold Corporate Members. Founded in 1975, Cottage Life is the oldest established holiday letting agency in Cumbria and now the company offers a vast range of properties within the Lake District National Park.

The company is also one of the key supporters of the Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership. This innovative scheme raises funds from visitors and



Sue and Peter Jackson with Alison McGachy.

tourism businesses to maintain and enhance the Lake District. Peter and Sue Jackson from Heart of the Lakes & Cottage Life are on the board of the partnership and also provide office space for the two employees.

By becoming a Gold Corporate Member of the John Muir Trust, Peter Jackson wanted to support our work in protecting the wild places of the UK.

If you would like more information about Heart of the Lakes & Cottage Life please look at their website at www.heartofthelakes.co.uk or contact Peter on 01539 432321. For more information on the work of the Lakes Partnership please look at www.lakespartnership.co.uk or contact Kirstie or Simon on 01539 434630.

Financial Advice & Services Limited

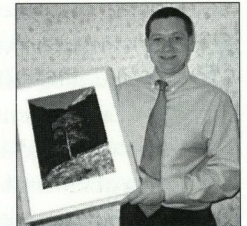
from Kent have provided the Trust with much needed core funds for a number of years now. With the introduction of the Corporate and Business Supporters Scheme, Ruth Morgan, the Managing Director, felt that providing more formal support would be of an advantage to the Trust. 'The company tries to support the Trust in many ways as we believe in what they are trying to achieve. We talk to other companies about the Trust and distribute leaflets to local outdoor shops as well as provide financial support.'

Hay Nisbet Press Limited from Glasgow has provided print services to the Trust for over four years including production of our Journal, Members' News and Christmas cards. Established in 1840, Hay Nisbet is one of the oldest Scottish printers around. Paul Goddard, one of the company's sales executives, said that as printers they are environmentally aware and have a green practice for waste disposal. Paul continued: 'Hay Nisbet has joined as a Bronze Corporate Member because we believe in what the John Muir Trust is doing in Scotland, and because we love the country.'



Katie Jackson with Hay Nisbet sales executive Paul Goddard

Building relationships is important with any business but especially for charities who rely on donations to support aims. For over 10 years the Trust has worked with **Burns & Harris printers** in Dundee for production of its Annual Report, Journal, Members' News and Christmas cards. Mark Dewar, managing director of the company, said 'The John Muir Trust has worked tirelessly to protect wild land in Scotland for nearly 20 years. By providing financial support for their work, Burns & Harris hope that they will continue to do so for at least another 20 years.'



Burns & Harris's managing director Mark Dewar

Dartmoor Artists, by JMT member Brian Le Messurier, is the first book to bring together the work of artists inspired by Dartmoor from earliest times to the present day. More than 100 paintings, sculptures, photographs and illustrations are shown in colour. The large format book is available at £19.95, post free in UK, from Halsgrove Direct, Halsgrove House, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6SS. Tel 01884 243242, Fax 01884 243325, www.halsgrove.com

Stop and Think call to 'Three Peaks' challengers

THE JMT HAS JOINED in a warning call on the problems caused by mountain 'challenge' events.

Growing numbers doing the Three Peaks challenge (to climb Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours) are causing traffic congestion, intrusion, litter and noise pollution during the summer months.

In May, the JMT met in Lochaber with the National Trust, the Snowdonia and Lake District national park authorities and the Highland Council, to discuss the problems and what can be done to reduce them.

They called on all participants to follow the Code of Practice developed by the Institute of Charity Fundraising Managers when embarking on a Three Peaks Challenge.

Will Boyd-Wallis, the Trust's Policy and Partnerships Manager, said: 'Visitors to the Ben Nevis area are always welcome and very important to the local economy. However, large scale three peaks events contribute little except disruption to local people and damage to the environment.'

National Trust Area Manager Fiona Southern said that 'In June 2000, 30,000 trips were recorded on one of the most

popular routes up Scafell Pike whereas in August that year only 7000 were recorded which shows just how much more congested it can get during peak Challenge months.

'We urge people to consider other ways of raising funds and to think twice about taking part.'

John Ablitt, Snowdonia National Park Authority's Head of Recreation and Communication said: 'Snowdon is usually the last peak to be climbed, often at night, and there are considerable problems with rubbish being emptied from buses and left to be disposed of.' ■

• *Copies of the Mountain Challenge Code of Practice can be obtained from any of the organisations or from the ICFM, Market Towers, 19 Elms Lane, London, SW8 5NQ (0207 627 3436).*

Letters for the January 2003 Journal

- Please send your letters by the end of October.
- Short ones are better. Long ones may be edited for length.
- We will include any email address unless you say not to.

'I am writing about John Muir'

MY NAME IS DAVID MCCALLUM (Greeny), 37, janitor at St Paul's School, Glenrothes, Fife.

I am writing about John Muir (who?), the John Muir Trust (what's that?).

Until around one year ago my philosophy was 'cut trees down, who cares about the environment ... I'm not going to be here. Wildlife – got nothing to do with me.'

Then one of our teachers, Mrs Doherty, came to me to say that they were thinking of planting a mini woodland area as part of the John Muir Award Scheme. I voiced my complaints, all negative: e.g. vandalism, encouraging folk at night, especially as my house and garden are next to the area proposed.

After the plans were shown to me I thought - not too bad this idea, the kids will learn a lot when this gets bigger and they will respect the area. So I got involved!!!

Along with the kids, digging, planting, making paths, clearing, learning about John Muir and what he was all about, I have now started to look at the world with different eyes and a different attitude. My children also are now being changed because they are the ones who will be here when I am gone, their children and their children.

Myself and my kids and my dog now regularly walk through woodlands, over hills etc. just looking and acknowledging how beautiful this place really is.

I recently went on an outdoor activities

course at Ardroy in Argyllshire. The scenery was amazing. I was asking one of our leaders about the area and why the trees were all being cut down? He said they can plant trees which SHOULD be growing in that part of the country. So thanks to the John Muir Award Scheme I am learning things that I didn't even care about a year ago.

My outlook on life, planet, plants and wildlife is turned full circle. I am trying to teach my children the same.

So all I can say is a big thank you to the teacher, Mrs Doherty and Mr John Muir.

I have been converted.



This is some of the group that David worked with last year to create the wildlife garden at St Paul's RC Primary School, Fife. The class has progressed to the Explorer Level of the John Muir Award this year, with a residential week at Ardeonaig Outdoor Education Centre.

Books

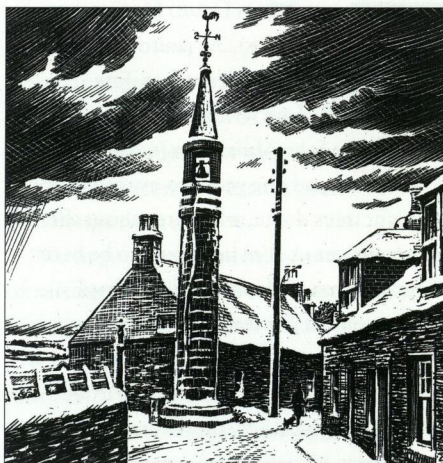
Colin Gibson was the first 'nature writer' I read, through his weekly column in the Dundee *Courier* from the 1950s onward. Much later I realised how good he was, as both writer and illustrator, and was lucky enough to have a short working contact with him.

Colin's daughter Gillian Zealand has done us a great service by bringing out a book with 48 of his 'Nature Diary' pieces, each with characteristic scraperboard drawing. They cover all of Tayside, and a bit beyond – for example the tale of a very watery painting trip to Glen Affric.

The drawing of Drumlithie (right), in the Mearns, I chose first because it's a fine picture, that captures the glowering depths of winter: a heavy grey sky and worse to come! But also because his peculiar gift was to celebrate the whole of an area – the small towns and villages, farmlands, sea cave and cliff, the moors and the wildest mountain tops – as part of the same fabric.

Colin Gibson had a poet's ear and an encyclopaedic knowledge of his territory, and this book should encourage people to explore the places, especially the less well known ones, that he wrote about and drew so well.

Mike Merchant



• **Colin Gibson's Nature Diary. £9.99**
from Gillian Zealand, Tayvallich, 6 Kirk
Road, Fowlis, Dundee DD2 5SB

SEA ROOM by Adam Nicolson,
2001; HarperCollins, hardback £14.99.
Although the author had known the
Shiantis for many years, it was only
recently that he began an attempt 'to tell
their whole story ... in as many dimensions
as possible: geologically, spiritually,
botanically, historically, culturally,
aesthetically, ornithologically,
etymologically, emotionally, politically,
socially, archaeologically and personally'.

The result is a vivid story of detection,
an unpeeling of many layers of the islands'
history, both natural and human, mixed
with evocative descriptions of what we
would now call one of our remotest and

wildest island groups. The volcanoes that
opened the Atlantic nearly 60 million
years ago formed the rocks of the Shiantis
and the seas around them: the resulting
turbulent waters stir up food for its huge
summer seabird population and make
small boat journeys hazardous. Yet for
over 5000 years these seas were seen as a
highway rather than an obstacle, so that
the islands present a microcosm of
highland history, from the stone age to the
eighteenth century clearances.

Among many thoughtful discussions,
those on ownership will perhaps attract
most attention. For Adam Nicolson
'owns' the Shiantis, passed on to him by his
father who bought them in 1937. He
acknowledges the moral claims of local
communities, but is sceptical as to
whether ownership of the Shiantis by any
one community would bring benefits he
cannot offer as a community-minded
owner. And both he and his shepherd
tenants – whom he acknowledges are in
many ways more owner than he is – are
equally scornful of an attempted takeover
by a conservation body 30 years ago, with
heavy-handed suggestions of visitor
management.

However committed one is to
ownership of wild places for public
benefit, it is difficult to argue against a
pattern of ownership that allows space –
sea room – for individuals like this.
Norman MacCaig asked (of Assynt):
*Who possesses this landscape? – /The man
who bought it or /I who am possessed by it?*
Adam Nicholson has had the good

fortune to play both roles. This book well
repays any public debt he owes for this
privilege, as does his philosophy of visitor
management: 'No one who comes to the
Shiantis need ever know that they are
welcome there. They can simply find it
wild and beautiful.'

Denis Mollison

**Plant a Natural Woodland: A Handbook
of Native Trees and Shrubs** by Charlotte
de la Bédoyère. £19.99, 128 pp. Search
Press Ltd, Wellwood, North Farm Road,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3DR
ISBN 0855 329 831

This is a very attractive and well-
produced book with innumerable
photographs, used to describe many
aspects of natural woodland in favour of
lengthy text.

There are three main sections. *Creating
a Wild Woodland* covers planning,
propagation, planting and protection.
Native Trees and Shrubs is an extensive list
of native trees (many of which are rarely
found in Scotland). Clear photographs of
all trees show flowers, seed and mature
trees – many of the latter are of wonderful
majestic trees. Text gives propagation
details, size, description and other points
of special interest, often using quotations
as in Keats' referral to oaks as 'those green-
robed senators of mighty woods'.

The Forest Floor is a guide to the plants
found in natural forests, again very well
illustrated.

A list of organisations and suppliers
who are willing to advise individuals or

groups planning to plant a native woodland is included at the end.

Perhaps this useful appendix was added because the author realises that no book can contain all the information required for a venture of this kind.

I found (as an amateur tree man) that this is a most instructive book, full of interest and information, written with enthusiasm and wonderfully illustrated.

Harold Jackson

FLOWERS IN THE SNOW:

The Life of Isobel Wylie Hutchinson

Gwyneth Hoyle, University of Nebraska Press \$29.95 ISBN 0-8032-2403-6

This beautifully written gem of a book, meticulously researched, tells the story of the life of a Scottish Victorian woman, Isobel Hutchison, who finds self discovery and freedom from the constraints of Victorian living by travelling alone to remote, and very often wild, places.

Travels in Britain, Europe and the Holy Land are included, but most of the book describes journeys to Iceland, Greenland (twice), the north Alaskan coast and the Aleutian Islands. Descriptions of the beauty, grandeur and remoteness of these places are interwoven effortlessly with a picture of the inhabitants, both natives and incomers. Their respect for Isobel is also clearly evident.

A self-taught botanist, Isobel brought and sent back to the British scientific community specimens of plants she discovered. She was also commissioned to

buy native artefacts. Her determination to fulfil her obligations and to achieve her objectives led her to travel in unconventional ways, especially for a lady of her times. She brought an insight of the beauties and wonders of these northern places to many interested people on her return when she lectured extensively and published in magazines.

Gwyneth Hoyle deserves recognition for bringing the fascinating and inspiring story of this little known Scottish heroine to our attention in this delightful book.

Roma Robertson

Contested Mountains

More views on the Cairngorms book

Adam Watson reviewed *Contested Mountains* in the Winter 2002 Journal. These responses to the review are from the book's author Rob Lambert and JMT member Peter Mackay.

Rob Lambert:

Can I reply to Adam Watson's review of my book *Contested Mountains* (White Horse Press, 2001). I am sorry that I did not write the book that Adam Watson wanted me to, but then I never intended to. Rather I wanted to present a deeply historical study of how we got to the situation we have today in the Cairngorms. To do this, I spent over 4 years researching in 28 different archives across the UK, looking at material that had never been published before and shedding new light on accepted wisdom about the emergence across the twentieth

century of landuse conflicts or ideals (National Park, National Nature Reserve and National Forest Park, in particular). I received a Rutherford Scholarship for History to undertake this research because, contrary to Adam Watson's belief, it was accepted that there was no real understanding (based on primary sources, not secondary sources as favoured by Watson) of why a Cairngorms NNR was designated in 1954, why a National Forest Park was set up at Glenmore, and why a National Park was not established in the Cairngorms. Other reviewers (from academia, environmental NGOs and government agencies) have stated that the great practical value of the study is that it contains a wealth of good new information and that it is balanced, impartial and dispassionate. The book is not intended to provide succour to any particular established environmental or developmental viewpoint, which obviously angers Adam Watson. Rather, I let the facts speak for themselves.

Watson takes issue with my historical scholarship. As a professional historian, I have to be accountable in all my research, and so I must provide extensive footnotes that show the exact source of my archival material, so that others may easily chase up the reference in the future. Yes, this makes for long and often tedious footnotes, but that is the nature of the game in history. Historians consider the Harvard style of referencing so beloved of scientists to be imprecise and vague. Before publication, all of the chapters in the book were sent

out to experts in the field for comment, and I was pleased to weave their thoughts into the text. As far as I am aware, the exhaustive Bibliography on pp 273-298 contains just about everything ever written on the Cairngorms. By starting the story in 1880 and thus focusing on modern history, I never sought to include Gaelic Speyside or Deeside, preferring to leave that to trained Gaelic scholars. Much of the content criticism that Watson hurls at me relates to the period after 1980. This book clearly ends in 1980, because so much has been written since then, so this is unfair and unjustified criticism. The reviewer did not put the book into historical context, nor did he ever really understand why it was necessary or important that such a book was written. As such, his comments do not seem to fit my book, rather his own burning need to apportion blame for all past and present ecological damage in the Cairngorms. Adam Watson just does not like people who disagree with him.

The Oxford scholar Hugh Trevor-Roper used to say that historians who chose to ride over wide geographical areas and across the decades (and across academic disciplines), must expect to get shot at by smallholders. Adam Watson is one such smallholder, who failed to see the bigger intellectual picture. I am pleased that my book has been warmly received not only in the UK, but in Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. There has been a tendency to treat Adam Watson as some sort of 'living

God'. He is not; indeed, I believe he is often wrong, and too often his own work is clouded by emotion and campaigning environmental zeal. Young scholars must use new evidence to challenge his entrenched views. Watson is a talented and respected upland ecologist, but he is a poor historian. The two disciplines require different methodological approaches, and just as I cannot easily step into his scientific world without feeling uneasy, lost or disappointed, so he cannot easily step into my historical world. I was particularly saddened by the rather personal insults delivered to me and Magnus Magnusson (who graciously agreed to pen a Foreword to the book), which have prompted readers of the *Journal* to say to me: 'typical Adam'. This lack of professionalism with those who disagree with his viewpoint, is why I was thankfully warned off interviewing him for this book.

A final word. Adam Watson disliked my use of the word 'balance' throughout the book, but if we are ever to resolve the debates at the heart of the last few decades of conflict in the entire British countryside then we do urgently need to strike a balance between competing attitudes to the land and Nature. My book describes how we have sometimes moved towards balance and sustainability, but more often have moved away from it. You just don't get any sense of 'balance' with Adam Watson.

CEHP, School of History, University of St. Andrews

Peter Mackay:

Although he is our Honorary Environmental Adviser Dr Adam Watson should not be allowed to get away unchallenged with his self indulgent, splenetic and unbalanced review of Robert Lambert's book. His six page outburst, complete with photographs irrelevant to the review, makes it clear that he did not like the book and that he is upset that neither he nor Dave Morris were interviewed by the author. However, in my view the main purpose of a review in our *Journal* is less to say whether or not the reviewer was disappointed or to demonstrate the reviewer's omniscience, and much more to say whether we, the members, would enjoy reading it. I have no doubt that, despite its imperfections, many will find it an absolutely fascinating account of the tensions which have existed since the 19th century between the various forms of landuse in mountain areas in Scotland, and the Northern Cairngorms in particular.

The book is expensive and, as Dr Watson says, the photographs are poor and the maps are deplorable – though to criticise the use of the anglicised form of Glen Einich seems pedantic (not least when authors Watson and Nethersole Thompson use exactly the same form in their outstanding *Cairngorms* of 1974) and the book could certainly have done with much tighter editing. But it is unfair to suggest that it is biased towards landowners' interests – and indeed it criticises the SMC for being too close to

the landowners. It is just as unfair to attack the author because he does not share Dr Watson's views on the 'myth of the law of trespass in Scotland'. Is this the same Watson whose *SMC guide to the Cairngorms* (1992 edition) urges us that it is essential to consider landowners' 'proprietary and sporting rights' and stresses the importance of rights of way? Is it the same Dr Watson who asserts with Nethersole Thompson in the section on hill walking in their *Cairngorms* book that 'walkers have no legal right to walk paths (other than rights of way) – but many landowners have allowed people to walk freely in the Cairngorms'? Surely it is difficult for a rational person to disagree with Dr Lambert's conclusion that 'the trespass law in Scotland is a morass of legal judgements and complications' and unfair to criticise him for not saying more on what is a highly technical and controversial legal issue – as the Justice 2 committee found when considering the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill earlier this year.

So I urge JMT members to leave most of Dr Watson's comments to the world of the PhD examiner – and enjoy the book's fascinating account of the access battles of the 19th century in the Cairngorms and the respective roles of the Scottish Rights of Ways Society, the Scottish Mountaineering Club and the Cairngorm Club; read too the chapters on the early days of tourism in Speyside and the tensions created by the postwar boom in outdoor recreation, and the gradually changing attitudes of landowners. The

chapters on the background to the designation of the Cairngorms NNR and the early arguments for and against a National Park are especially interesting to a modern reader, not least because of their extensive use of the files of public bodies like the Scottish Office, the Nature Conservancy and the Forestry Commission (now available for public inspection in the Scottish Record Office) set against the records of bodies such as SRWS, MC of S, NTS, and the SMC. The bibliography too is a useful list of reference sources for others interested in taking further work forward – despite only citing Dr Watson a dozen times and not referring to his apparently seminal 1977 article in *Scottish Birds*.

Dr Watson condemns the Foreword (by Magnus Magnusson) and the Introduction as being marred by conceit and bombast. That can fairly be said of his review. So I say to JMT members, having read the review, now read the book. Judge for yourselves – against the test of whether you found the book interesting and relevant to the issues the Trust and others are battling with today, not just in the Cairngorms but throughout our mountainous areas. Despite the book's admitted imperfections you will not be disappointed.

• *We apologise for transposing the captions in the original review.*

Letters

SHILDAIG HYDRO SCHEME

The green light

May I make just three comments on M J Scott's letter supporting the Shildaig/Flowerdale hydro-electric scheme because it is renewable energy and preferable to nuclear or fossil fuel power stations.

1. The choice is not either/or. The miniscule amount of power produced, 3.2MW at best, is equivalent to less than two wind turbines, a tiny increase in efficiency of Drax power station or a small increase in lagging of domestic hot water cylinders.
2. Would M J Scott be happy to see four lakes in the Lake District be dammed for power, say Buttermere, Derwent Water, Wast Water and Bassenthwaite Lake? I suspect there would be such an almighty uproar from the English public that the government would veto the plans immediately.
3. Don't be fooled. If Highland Light and Power get the go-ahead for Shildaig/Flowerdale it will be the green light for schemes on all the other magnificent rivers of the far north-west: the Ewe, Gruinard, Dundonnell, Kirkaig, Inver, Traligill, Laxford, Dionard etc.

This is a test case that lovers of Wester Ross must win.

Richard Gilbert, Crayke, York

Not renewable

Hydro power is renewable but the landscape moulded by that power over the centuries is not. Once the natural shoreline of these beautiful lochs is destroyed it can never be restored.

If JMT support the Shildaig proposals then they lose my support for sure. It was for the protection of wild landscape like this that I joined, not to finance fancy footpaths up Schiehallion and Ben Nevis.

Ann Bowker, Keswick

bowker@keswick.u-net.com

No more sacrifice

I am appalled that M J Scott is rolling over and lying down so easily. Yes, it is preferable to use renewable sources to provide electricity, but not at the expense of destroying large tracts of wild land.

We should be concentrating on being more energy efficient and making use of renewable schemes which do not involve sacrificing any more wild land. It doesn't matter how much the power companies say they will leave the land as it was, once the bulldozers move in it is too late. If JMT is to be true to its principles we must strongly object to this development.

John Wright, Carlisle

Investments

I was alarmed to read that the trustees were reluctant to invest the Trust's funds

in particular industries which it considered to be unethical, for example tobacco and nuclear power.

If it is unethical to receive investment income from such sources surely it is unethical to receive subscription and marketing originating from such sources.

I would suggest that the Trust should vet all of its members to ensure that it is not receiving any income from someone employed in an unethical activity.

Terry Jones, Carlisle

terryjones@cix.co.uk

Wilderness indeed

I've just renewed my membership – but only for the year. What concerns me is a degree of uncertainty about whether the Trust really thinks it is a wilderness charity. The view is often expressed – in the Journal – that there is no wilderness in Scotland. While it is a good debating point, I think we need to settle on a working definition. Clearly it cannot be land unaffected by direct human influence. Personally, I settle for 'places that require more than a day's walking at a reasonable pace to visit'. Ben Alder, Fisherfield, and Knoydart – where the Trust can and should be about wilderness management – all fall into the definition. Though my offered working definition sounds a bit legalistic, it does allow the spiritual quality of wilderness to be experienced, cut off for a while from the pervasive, intrusive, though admittedly useful technology of the internal combustion engine!

What made me join the Trust was the requirements of funds in the Nevis appeal. I still believe the challenge of managing areas that are so accessible and popular according to John Muir's principles is to be welcomed because it offers the opportunity of a fresh approach. But Knoydart or Nevis, wilderness management or wilderness principles, the Trust needs to accept that at least some of its land (and one would hope some that it hopes to acquire given the chance) is indeed wilderness. In this way, I feel that my contribution to the Trust is to an organisation distinct from others that justifiably claim to manage wild land.

Paul Wheeler, Chobham, Surrey

2001 election turnout

I write in reply to John Wild's letter about the low turnout at the 2001 election of Trustees.

Couldn't it be true that 84% of the membership were satisfied with the performance of the Trustees and therefore didn't feel the need to vote? The 16% probably consisted of those people who feel that if they are given a vote, then they must use it, and also a minority of members who wish to force their extreme views on the majority. In an organisation such as JMT, I do think that if the vast majority of members thought that the Trustees were acting in conflict with its objectives, then they would not wait to say so.

John Wright, Carlisle

Members' Services

Adverts for members' own businesses and ventures are free on these pages. The size is one sixth of a page, and the suggested word count is 50-60. Discounts to fellow members and donations to the Trust are welcome, but are not necessary for inclusion. For a reasonable charge, you can have a bigger ad, or have it placed elsewhere. Contact the editor.

- *Please mention the Journal when replying to ads!*

Do you want to keep advertising?

If you want your ad to continue in 2003, please contact the Journal editor to confirm it, by the end of October at the latest. In fact, why not do it now?

- We ask members to confirm their ads each year because it's the lowest-overhead way of keeping these pages up to date. Thank you for your understanding!

GALLOWAY Self catering

Rose Haugh, Laurieston is ideal for exploring Scotland's remote southwest.
A comfortable house with a cosy fire and all you need for a relaxing holiday.
Hillwalking, forest walks, lots of wonderful wildlife.
Sleeps 8 at a pinch, but terms reduced for small numbers.
Caroline Paterson, tel/fax 01224-595561

GLEN LYON, PERTSHIRE BEN GRIANAN COTTAGE

Luxury self-catering cottage situated at the head of Glen Lyon. Sleeps 4/5 - 3 bedrooms.
Log burning stove with solid fuel central heating. Pets welcome. Non-smokers only.
Ideal for walking, fishing and relaxing.
Contact Mrs. M. Fenna, after 6 p.m. at
Ballechroisk Court, Killin,
Perthshire. FK21 8TD.
01567 820206

Glendale, Skye

Scure More House, Glendale
Self-catering cottage, 3 bedrooms, sleeps 5,
linen provided
In North Skye
about 15 mins drive from Dunvegan
Lovely coastal walking

Ann MacSween
Tel 0131 229 3734
or
6 Ettrick Grove, Edinburgh EH10 5AW

Glen Affric/Loch Ness

Brewer's Cottage is in the conservation village of Tomich, near Glen Affric and Corriemoney RSPB reserve.
Lots of Munros, woodland and moorland walks. Sleeps 4 in comfort; all facilities.
Set in 4 acres of natural woodland.
Good pub 5 mins walk.
Special JMT rate of £200 per week.
Dave & Ailsa Peck. 01456 415280.
peck@cali.co.uk

SANDWOOD ESTATE

Oldshoremore, 2 miles Kinlochbervie
Near sandy beach and fishing

Modern 6-berth caravan,
April-September

Cottage, sleeps 3, available all year

J Mackenzie, 152 Oldshoremore,
Kinlochbervie, Sutherland IV27 4RS

SANDWOOD ESTATE

Far northwest of Scotland
Two self-catering family bungalows at Oldshoremore on the edge of the Sandwood estate. Three bedrooms, sleep 5 and 6.
STB 3 and 4 star.
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hugh.everett@bigfoot.com
www.ambeliavilla9.co.uk

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sheena@lagandorain.f9.co.uk

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www.skye-wightman.co.uk

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www.lgfc.org.uk

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Bed & breakfast

Mr John Kubale
Strathaird House, Strathaird
Isle of Skye IV49 9AX 01471 866269
strathairdhouse@skye.co.uk
www.strathairdhouse.skye.co.uk
£25-£30, also self-catering £175-£250

Mrs J Donaldson
Fairwinds, Elgol Road
Broadford Isle of Skye IV49 9AB
01471 822270
janet.donaldson@talk21.com
2 Double, 1 twin, £20, STB 4 star

Mrs C Shearer
The Shielling, 2 Lower Harrapool
Broadford
Isle of Skye IV49 9AQ
01471 822533
snakesalive@skyeserpentarium.org.uk
www.skyeserpentarium.org.uk £14 - £22

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Millbrae House, Broadford
Isle of Skye IV49 9AE
01471 822310
£16 - £20, private facilities

Mr R Vander Vliet
The Blue Lobster
Forester's House, Glen Eynort
Isle of Skye IV47 8SQ
01478 640320 £18 Also self-catering

Mrs E Barraclough
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Sutherland IV27 4RP
01971 521325
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Mrs Barbara Christie
Swordale House
Swordale, Broadford
Isle of Skye IV49 9AS
01471 822272
Barbara@swordalehouse.freemove.co.uk
£18-£24

Mrs Melanie Mitchell
Clashview
Kinlochbervie
Sutherland IV27 4RP
01971 521733
Mob: 07901 675071
Single/Double/Twin/Family

Kinlochbervie Hotel
Kinlochbervie
Sutherland IV27 4RP
01971 521275
Fax 01971 521438
klbhotel@aol.com
£45 (summer), £35 (winter)

Self-catering

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Rowanlea, 1/2 of 6 Torrin
Broadford, Isle of Skye IV49 9BA
01471 822763
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Mr R Gordon
Balgour
Dunning, Perthshire PH2 0QL
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Mr & Mrs Kubale
Strathaird House, by Elgol
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strathairdhouse@skye.co.uk
www.strathairdhouse.co.uk
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West Croft, Kirkhill
Inverness IV5 7PB
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www.raasaycottages.co.uk
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Edinburgh EH4 1DP
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beach, by Kinlochbervie.
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01626 852266 (Devon)
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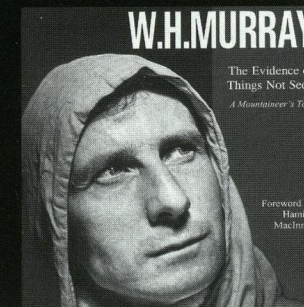
Mrs A MacDonald
165 Drumnaguie, Rhiconich
Sutherland IV27 4RT
01971 521780
£150-£200/wk

Mr R Vander Vliet
The Blue Lobster
Forester's House, Glen Eynort
Isle of Skye
01478 640320
£400/wk
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Tel and Fax 01971 521335
Anne.Mackay1@btinternet.com
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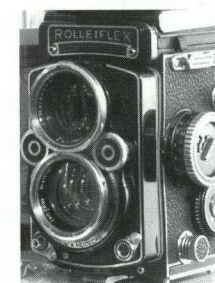
Mrs J Copping
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Broadford, Isle of Skye
01471 822669
jemimacopping@lineone.net
www.isleofskye.net/10torrin
Caravan at Torrin, sleeps 4
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In black and white



The Evidence of Things Not Seen

W H Murray's autobiography has just been published by Bâton Wicks, and will feature in the next JMT Journal.



In colour

We're always interested in seeing members' photographs and illustrations, colour or black & white.

**Contact the editor before
the end of October.**

Who to contact in the John Muir Trust

Main point of contact (Edinburgh office):

John Muir Trust
41 Commercial Street
Edinburgh EH6 6JD
Tel 0131 554 0114 or 0131 554 1324
Fax 0131 555 2112
admin@jmt.org

Director

Questions or comments about the Trust's aims, objectives and policies, or any other aspect of our work

Nigel Hawkins

1 Auchterhouse Park, Auchterhouse, Dundee DD3 0QU Tel/fax 01382 320252
director@jmt.org

Finance Manager

Trust finances and accounts; legacies

Gavin Stewart

Edinburgh office
treasurer@jmt.org

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Fundraising and membership recruitment

Alison McGachy

Edinburgh office
development@jmt.org

Policy & Partnerships Manager

Will Boyd-Wallis

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Dundreggan, Glen Moriston, Inverness-shire IV63 7YG
Tel 01320 340263 partnerships@jmt.org

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Fearnoch, 1/2 of 16 Torrin, Isle of Skye IV49 9BA
01471 822717
woodlands@jmt.org

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01471 866260
skye@jmt.org

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Cathel Morrison

Tel. 01971 521459
sandwood@jmt.org

Information & Promotions Manager

Trust meetings and events; Members' News; slide packs and display material

Katie Jackson

Edinburgh office
promotions@jmt.org

Administrative Manager

Merchandising, volunteering, general enquiries

Donna Mackenzie

Edinburgh office
admin@jmt.org

Membership Secretary

Membership applications and renewals, address changes, direct debits, Gift Aid Scheme and donations.
Please quote your membership number if possible.

Jane Anderson

FREEPOST, Musselburgh EH21 7BR
Tel 0845 458 8356
membership@jmt.org

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News, articles, pictures and adverts for the Journal & News

Mike Merchant

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

Conservation Activities Co-ordinator

First point of contact for conservation activities

Sandy Maxwell

T/R 69 Hyndland Street
Glasgow G11 5PS
Tel 0141 576 6663
conservationactivities@jmt.org

Who to contact in the John Muir Award

Main point of contact (John Muir Award Edinburgh office)

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Edinburgh EH6 6JD
www.johnmuiraward.org
Tel & fax 0845 458 2910
info@johnmuiraward.org

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David Picken

Edinburgh office
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Manager for Scotland

Rob Bushby

Edinburgh office
rob@johnmuiraward.org

Manager, East Lothian

Mandy Calder

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eastlothian@johnmuiraward.org

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Leader training, fundraising trips, summer residential programme

Angus Miller

Edinburgh office
programmes@johnmuiraward.org

Administrator

Georgia Macleod

Edinburgh office
info@johnmuiraward.org

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For more information on how your company can support the work of the John Muir Trust by becoming a Corporate or Business Supporter, please contact Alison McGachy on 0131 554 0114 or write to her at 41 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6JD. You can also email her at development@jmt.org.

Opposite, top: Eric Meadows' photograph from Elgol in September 1960 was taken on his fifth visit to Strathaird.

The highest croft on the west hillside which faces the Cuillin had a small cottage, home of John MacIntosh's mother; she is by the fenced enclosure for the haystacks. The picture shows how the oatstacks were made, the sheaves placed upright and the whole held together by a rope wound round it. There are also two small haycocks in the foreground.

In those years there were no fences between crofts. The inbye land was used for arable and hay, so to prevent the house cows from wandering, they were tethered to an iron pin. The other characteristic of the crofts was the abundance and great variety of wild flowers in the hay meadows.

Eric first stayed at Elgol in 1947, while compiling his book *The Skye Scene* (Oliver & Boyd, 1951). 1960 saw his first visit to Sandwood: 'I linked these wild places long before the John Muir trust did', he says; 'It also seems that my photographs are about the earliest colour ones of these places known so far.'



Opposite, bottom: Chris Townsend, wilderness writer and photographer, sent this shot of Talus Lake and Tombstone Mountain in the Yukon Territory, north-east of Dawson city. It was taken in August. Chris's work is on the web at www.auchnarrow.demon.co.uk and [www.redstart.net/Chris Townsend/index/htm](http://www.redstart.net/Chris_Townsend/index/htm).

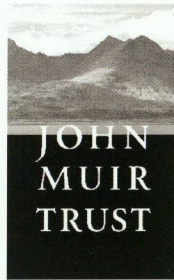


Inside front cover: Torridon Village by Phil McLean. Phil says:

'It is of Torridon village and Mullach an Rathain of Liathach, from the A896 in Annat. It was taken on a late September morning while walking along the road from the campsite to get to the start of the path to Maol-cheann Dearg, the day's objective. It was taken with a 28-80 mm lens at 80 mm, and was polarised.

'I am always drawn to portrait-format pictures of the landscape since they can be quite striking; they often make you see the landscape in a counter-intuitive way. I like this shot for its solid blocks of colour, which give it an almost abstract feel. Upon closer inspection, there are also interesting directional lines on the hillside which break up the strong horizontals. It also emphasises just how much Torridon is dominated by the mountains, which look almost vertical when seen head-on.'

As we went to press Phil was a final year student at Edinburgh University. He's a keen hillwalker and photographer. You can see his work on the web at members.aol.com/phillmcl/



The John Muir Trust

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

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