

NATTERJACK TOAD EVICTIONS



Photo courtesy of Jim Logan

THURSDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

POWILLIMOUNT

Meet: Powillimount car park, Arbigland Estate, Kirkbean NX989564

In March 2009 the Sulwath Connections 'View from the Road' Project had the car swallowing pot holes at Powillimount filled in and the car park resurfaced. The final stages of this current refurbishment, is to repair the collapsed dyke along the back of the car park. However it is possible that this tumbled dyke and the potholes themselves could have provided refuge for a small but important population of natterjack toads. So, in order to rebuild this dyke, we must try to ensure "that no toads were harmed during the construction!" The NSA Countryside team has been tasked with erecting an exclusion fence around the area to be repaired, and the NSA Communities Ranger has the job of checking the pitfall traps positioned inside the fence on a daily basis, until any toads have been removed. Once the wall has been rebuilt, it will continue to provide good foraging sites for the toads, as well as potential hibernation hidey-holes.



Implementing the Management Strategies for the National Scenic Areas



SEPTEMBER 2009

FOCUS ON AUCHENCAIRN

The NSA Communities Ranger has been approached by members of the Auchencairn community; to see if the NSA Countryside Team could assist them with some much needed maintenance work in their area. Roy Wilson is hoping to set up a group of interested residents, who will help him maintain locally important assets such as the Hugh Paton Memorial Path around Auchencairn Bay, and the Millennium Garden, but until he finds these willing volunteers I have said that the NSA team will happily help boost his numbers. However, if anyone who reads this newsletter and happens to live in or around Auchencairn, please contact Roy or myself.

HUGH PATON PATH AUCHENCAIRN BAY

The Hugh Paton Path and other footpaths at Torr Farm were established with grant aid back in 2004. The footpaths have proved to be popular with local residents and visitors from a wide area. The Hugh Paton Path and several other paths in our area are included in the Core Footpaths Map currently in preparation by the Council. However, this designation does not mean that the paths will be maintained by the Council in future. Sections of the paths require periodic clearing of vegetation, particularly across the head of the bay. Litter also accumulates in this area especially after storms and spring tides. Ian Brown, the National Scenic Areas Ranger, has a team of volunteers he can call on when required to undertake this kind of work. However, he covers all three National Scenic Areas in Dumfries and Galloway and consequently his team is spread rather thinly. They do undertake work in our area and recently cleared gorse from parts of the Balcary Heughs path. I would like to establish a list of volunteers in Auchencairn who would be prepared to give some time to help with footpath maintenance and litter clearance when help is needed. This would amount to about four days spread over the year. If you are interested in volunteering please phone me on 01556 640259 or email wilson.hallcraig@talktalk.net.

Roy Wilson

The first of these work days will be

HUGH PATON PATH CLEARANCE

AUCHENCAIRN BAY

FRIDAY 11th SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Meet: Auchencairn Millennium Gardens. NX799515

REPELLING THE CHINESE INVASION IN THE MILLENNIUM GARDENS

A crop of bamboo has escaped from the bed it was planted in, and is taking over the garden. Come and help the Auchencairn locals try to **stem** the flow!

WEDNESDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Meet: Auchencairn Millennium Gardens. NX799515

Balcary Point Coastal Path Clearance

Friday 07 and 14.08.09.

As they say, what a difference a day makes! The team had two gorse-clearing sessions at Balcary, the first on Friday 7th August, in brilliant sunshine, and the second a week later, in somewhat different weather, as the pictures will testify. However we made some impression on the gorse, which was appreciated by the forty or so walkers that passed us on the sunny day. (None at all on day two!). No doubt we will be back again shortly, since as we all know too well, it's a never-ending task.



Spot the difference! At least the wind and rain on the 14th made throwing the gorse over the fence easier than trying to get it over the cliff on the 7th!

Doug is entirely correct, as part of the Focus on Auchencairn, I have organised another day to try and finish this stretch of path.

COASTAL PATH CLEARANCE

BALCARY POINT

MONDAY 5th OCTOBER

9.30am onwards

Meet: Balcary Point car park. NX820494



First Aid Course 24.08.09

A combined group of NSA volunteers and other agencies staff enjoyed a condensed day course run by Stewart Richardson of Caledonian Adventures. His well-illustrated course included some fairly memorable video clips, which proved just how stupid people can be in pursuit of outdoor activities! Just as well there are skilled volunteers and professionals willing and able to go and patch them up! The day had an emphasis on scenarios we might encounter on our volunteering tasks, so hopefully we will be able to put it into practise should the need arise. There was a fair amount of hands-on (literally) experience of patient checking /handling and CPR techniques. Some of the dummies (the plastic ones I mean!) were not too cooperative when it came to being resuscitated!



Colvend Community Orchard 26.08.09

Another poor weather day for the continuation of this project – only Ian and Doug made it! Despite the continuing negative effects of the wind and rain, there was a little unexpected amusement from our trying to control a 5x50m length of geotextile, which needed to be cut down into three separate lengths to form the membrane for the path. Many thanks to Faith and Dan from Kirkland Estate who were passing as we wrestled to stop the liner lifting us over Colvend Parish Hall, and helped us get things under control. Having chopped it into suitable widths, we bedded it down onto the first section of the path, (which we had to clear of weeds again), buried the edges, and shifted about a tonne of bark chippings over it. It's starting to look good, although we are probably not quite half way round the whole path. Morning tea and coffee, and a later very welcome lunch were very generously provided again by Colvend Café. Many thanks to Becky and her colleagues. Definitely a venue to return to!



The Eagle has (temporarily) landed!



Nearly there, and ready for lunch!



One for Ian's archives

Photos and text courtesy of Doug Walker

Again, Doug has uncanny knack of predicting the future:

COLVEND SCHOOL COMMUNITY ORCHARD

MONDAY 14th SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Meet: Colvend Village Hall car park. NX867545

Fence Construction RSPB Mersehead

19.08.09

Back to the usual “summer” weather for the completion of this two-part fencing task around the Sulwath Centre. It’s amazing where sandy soil gets to when you’re wet through! Hopefully our work will stop the school kids running straight into the ponds, (although in some cases perhaps that would be preferable!).



Photos and text courtesy of Doug Walker

Bracken Management Rockcliffe NTS

13.08.09

Again, another sunny day for us to whip the bracken into submission around the Muckle Hill and Jubilee Path. Some good views too.



Photos and text courtesy of Doug Walker

GARRIES WOOD TREE SURVEY

The Fleet Valley NSA have been carrying out tree surveys of Garries Wood in Gatehouse of Fleet as part of the environmental assessment of the Wood. The majority of trees are native - oak, ash, rowan, birch, Scots pine etc with some exotics such as Douglas fir, sitka spruce, the ubiquitous sycamore and the more unusual grand fir. The volunteers have identified several trees that are likely to become hazardous and these will be reported to the Council for them to deal with.



Photos and text courtesy of Jim Logan

THE END OF THE JOKE?

After months of work, hopefully the end is in sight for the Cally Ha Ha. If all goes to plan, after weeks of clearance work and waiting, hopefully the dangerous dead elm tree that tried to kill Kenny will be felled, the fabled Forestry Commission digger will come and dig out the leaf mould in the ditch, and the dykers should be repairing the damage done over the years by encroaching trees, or weeks by the volunteers removing the old metal fence. There will be one more task to tidy up the loose ends, and then the volunteers can move onto the next Cally Walls project.



Photo courtesy of Jim Logan

TUESDAY 1st SEPTEMBER

10.00am - 2.00pm

Meet: Cally Palace Hotel, Gatehouse of Fleet. NX600550

STELLAGE WOOD REVISITED

At the end of 2008 the Fleet Valley Countryside team spent many a Tuesday morning working with staff from the Wood Pastures Sulwath Connections project building natural and manmade tree enclosures at the ancient beech plantation of Stelage Wood behind Gatehouse church.

I have recently been contacted by Eykolina Benny, Wood Pastures Project Officer for Solway Heritage, who tells me that the trees we planted are doing well, but unfortunately the dead hedge enclosures we made around some of the trees are sagging, and therefore are no longer the dense cattleproof barriers they once were. So I have organised for the Fleet Valley Team to go there next Tuesday to carry out some repairs.

DEAD HEDGE REPAIRS

TUESDAY 8th SEPTEMBER

10.00am - 12.00pm

Meet: First field gate on left, past the telephone exchange, as you head up the Laurieston Road heading out of Gatehouse of Fleet, NX603567



Photo courtesy of Jim Logan

ACTIVITY AND RESOURCE CENTRE VOLUNTEERS GO TO RSPB MERSEHEAD

The ARC volunteers came to RSPB Mersehead on Thursday 27th August to help RSPB and NSA staff and volunteers with planting up the new sensory garden, (in what was the old tennis courts, which the volunteers have been transforming). Richard and Harold assisted with planting up sensory flower beds in reused tractor tyres, and then spent the afternoon doing some much needed weeding by the wildlife garden gate to enable it to close. The ARC will hopefully be supplying the RSPB with regular volunteers, by coming along every last Tuesday in the month. If you would like to help assist them, please contact Ben Mitchell, RSPB Mersehead Assistant Warden on 01387 780579 mobile 07833747472 or email ben.mitchell@rspb.org.uk



Photos courtesy of ARC

**WILDLIFE GARDENING WITH THE
ARC VOLUNTEERS
TUESDAY 29th SEPTEMBER
11.00am – 2.00pm
Meet RSPB Mersehead Reserve
Visitor Centre, NX925561**

A SURVEY OF GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES IN DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

The Garden History Society in Scotland is undertaking a project to identify, survey and record 'non-Inventory' designed landscapes, i.e. regionally and locally significant sites, in Dumfries & Galloway. The survey and recording work will be undertaken by volunteers from the GHSS working with interested local groups. The survey and recording work will include ground survey plus archival research. On completion of the survey the data collected will be analysed by the GHSS to produce a value assessment of each site which is comparable to that of the Inventory.

The first stage of this project will be based in the vicinity of Dumfries, with a focus in properties within the Nith Estuary National Scenic Area.

An initial training day for volunteers has been arranged on the 22nd September, at Browne House in the Crichton, which will comprise an introduction to the project. The morning session will concentrate on the use of archival sources and maps, with the afternoon session looking at ground survey and recording methods.

If you would like further details or want to attend the training day, please contact:

Theodora Stanning
(Local Co-ordinator)

Tel. 01556 630244 e-mail t.stanning@virgin.net

VOLUNTEERING EVENTS

TUESDAY 1st SEPTEMBER

10.00am - 2.00pm

Ha Ha Clearance,
Cally Walls Project.
Meet Cally Palace Hotel,
Gatehouse of Fleet. NX600550

WEDNESDAY 2nd SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Fence Clearance
Meet RSPB Mersehead Reserve
Sulwath Centre, NX925560

THURSDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Natterjack Toad Fence
Construction,
Meet: Powillimount car park,
Arbigland Estate, Kirkbean
NX989564

TUESDAY 8th SEPTEMBER

10.00am -12.00pm

Tree Planting
Stellage Wood Survey
Meet First field gate on left, past
the telephone exchange, as you
head up the Laurieston Road
heading out of Gatehouse of
Fleet, NX603567
Note: there is very limited
parking on the Laurieston Road,
so please park by the old garage
site on Fleet Street

WEDNESDAY 9th SEPTEMBER

10.00am – 12.30pm

*Cally Walls, Designed
Landscape Guided
Walk with Jane Brann, Council
Archaeologist
Booking Essential*

FRIDAY 11th SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Hugh Paton Path Clearance,
Auchencairn Bay
Meet Auchencairn Millennium
Gardens. NX799515

MONDAY 14th SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Colvend School Community
Orchard.
Meet: Colvend Village Hall car
park. NX867545

TUESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER

10.00am -2.00pm

Cally Walls Clearance,
Robber's Gate
Meet: Robber's Gate, on the
B727, Cally, Gatehouse of Fleet.
NX610559

THURSDAY 17th SEPTEMBER

2.00pm - 5.00pm

*History of the Fleet Guided
Walk with the NSA Ranger and a
Council Archaeologist
Booking Essential*

TUESDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER

10.00am - 2.00pm

Footpath Maintenance
Meet Murray Usher Visitor
Centre, Cally Woods,
Gatehouse of Fleet. NX605560

WEDNESDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards

Bamboo Clearance,
Meet Auchencairn Millennium
Gardens. NX799515

TUESDAY 29th SEPTEMBER
No volunteering in the Fleet
Valley NSA

TUESDAY 29th SEPTEMBER
11.00am – 2.00pm
Wildlife Gardening with the
ARC Volunteers
Meet RSPB Mersehead Reserve
Visitor Centre, NX925561
If you intend to help with this
event please contact Ben
Mitchell, RSPB Mersehead
Assistant Warden on 01387
780579 mobile 07833747472
or email
[**ben.mitchell@rspb.org.uk**](mailto:ben.mitchell@rspb.org.uk)

MONDAY 5th OCTOBER
9.30am onwards
Coastal Path Clearance
Balcary Point
Meet: Balcary Point car park
NX820494

For more information or to book for these events please
contact Ian Brown, National Scenic Area Ranger,
01387 260180, mobile 07824708110 or [ian.brown2@dumgal.gov.uk**](mailto:ian.brown2@dumgal.gov.uk)**

Volunteers are reminded that Ben Mitchell organises a volunteer group on Tuesdays at RSPB Mereshead supported by the NSA Countryside Team. If anyone would like to join this group please contact him on 01387 780298 or 07833747472, or email [**ben.mitchell@rspb.org.uk**](mailto:ben.mitchell@rspb.org.uk)

TUESDAY 6th OCTOBER
Fleet Valley Task to be
Confirmed

TUESDAY 13th OCTOBER
Fleet Valley Task to be
Confirmed

WEDNESDAY 14th
OCTOBER
9.30am onwards
Kirkbean Glen Footpath
Maintenance
Meet: Kirkbean Village Hall,
Kirkbean, NX980590

TUESDAY 20th OCTOBER
No volunteering in the Fleet
Valley NSA