



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2011

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 2011 issue of the NWDG newsletter. I'm sure that after the winter we've just had, I'm not the only one looking forward to warmer days, leaves on the trees and signs of new life in the woodlands. As usual, we are arranging plenty of woodland events over the next twelve months. Bookings are now being taken for the annual Excursion and you should all have received details recently either by email or by post. This issue includes details and booking forms for the 2011 bryophyte workshop, and the date and provisional timetable for the annual Woodland History Conference. Do put these dates in your diary now if you wish to attend.

Hope to see many of you at events this year.



*Oak at Gilmerton, East Lothian.
Drawing by Ben Averis.*

NEW PUBLICATIONS

If you have written, or co-written, a book or booklet which would interest our members, we can enclose your fliers with our mailings. This service is free to individual members. There is a charge of £20, to cover postage and packing, for organisations and non-members. We can also get books reviewed - just send a copy to the editor. Conversely, if you would like to review a particular book, please let the editor know. We are usually able to obtain a free review copy from the publisher and, if you review it, the book is yours to keep.

NATIVE WOODLANDS DISCUSSION GROUP NEWS

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Phil Gordon

If you haven't been on an NWDG Excursion in recent years, the 2011 excursion from 11th to 14th May looks like a good one to put in your diary. The plan is to visit Sutherland where the scale of landscapes is reflected in the scale of native woodlands. We promise an excellent programme which once again reflects feedback from previous excursions. We do listen! The wide range of interests of the members, spanning forestry, ecology and archaeology, will be accommodated. Plus everyone gets out into the woods which is what it's all about. Or is the networking and ceilidh really the attraction for you?

If you haven't been to our website recently (www.nwdg.org.uk) check it out for all the useful information on what we did last year and plans so far for 2011. The website is an expanding source of general information as well as now holding archived reports that contain a wealth of information on both woodland ecology and history.

Current new planting in Scotland is resulting in continued expansion in the "native woodland" area. Are we getting better at doing this? Are we getting the right trees in the right places? If you have strong views on this, we would be pleased to hear from you. Write an article for our next newsletter or come and do what it says on the cover – join the group in a discussion in May.

Best wishes for the rest of 2011.



Oaks at Tynninghame, East Lothian. Drawing by Ben Averis.

TREASURER'S REPORT
Peter Quelch

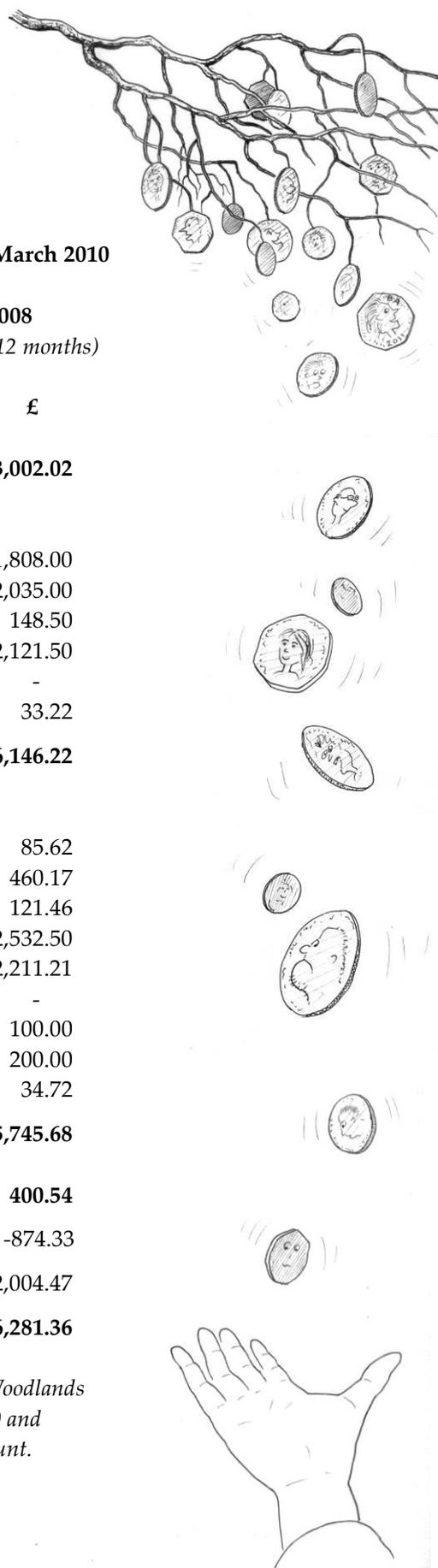
See table of accounts below:

NATIVE WOODLAND DISCUSSION GROUP
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS – 1st January 2009 to 31st March 2010

	2009-10 (15 months)	2008 (12 months)
	£	£
Cash Balance at 01/01/2010	6,281.36	3,002.02
Income		
Subscriptions	4,003.50	1,808.00
Workshops	1,690.00	2,035.00
Publications	96.50	148.50
Woodland History Group	2,016.00	2,121.50
Excursion	4,445.00	-
Bank Interest	0.98	33.22
Total Income	12,251.98	6,146.22
Expenditure		
Conference Calls	115.46	85.62
Newsletter	1,435.74	460.17
Website	266.18	121.46
Workshops	2,306.07	2,532.50
Woodland History Group	1,425.60	2,211.21
Excursion	4,905.66	-
Honoraria	245.98	100.00
Forestry Policy Group	-	200.00
Sundry	139.30	34.72
Total Expenditure	10,839.99	5,745.68
Accounting Balance	1,411.99	400.54
Outstanding at 31/12/2008	2,004.47	-874.33
Outstanding at 31/03/2010	114.24	2,004.47
Cash Balance at 31/12/2007	5,803.12	6,281.36

I certify that I have audited the financial records of the Native Woodlands Discussion Group for the fifteen months ended 31st March 2010 and confirm that they are in accordance with this Statement of Account.

Alison Mitchell
Aberfeldy
31st July 2010



MEMBERSHIP

Steve Brown

If you have not yet paid your subscription for 2011, please will you do this as soon as you can. If there is a membership form enclosed with this issue, it is because we haven't yet heard from you! Many thanks.

WEB-SITE

Alison Averis

The website www.nwdg.org.uk is kept up-to-date: please check there for the latest news of NWDG and other woodland events and activities. Please let me know if you would like to advertise an event there, publicise any woodland information or add your name to the Skills Exchange page.

NWDG WOODLAND HISTORY CONFERENCE: 10TH NOVEMBER 2011; PERTH **Coralie Mills**

We would like to give you advance notice of a date for your diary. The NWDG Woodland History conference will be held on Thursday 10th November 2011, at the AK Bell Library in Perth.

The working title for our theme this year is:

'Community, woodlands and perceptions of ownership: historical perspectives'

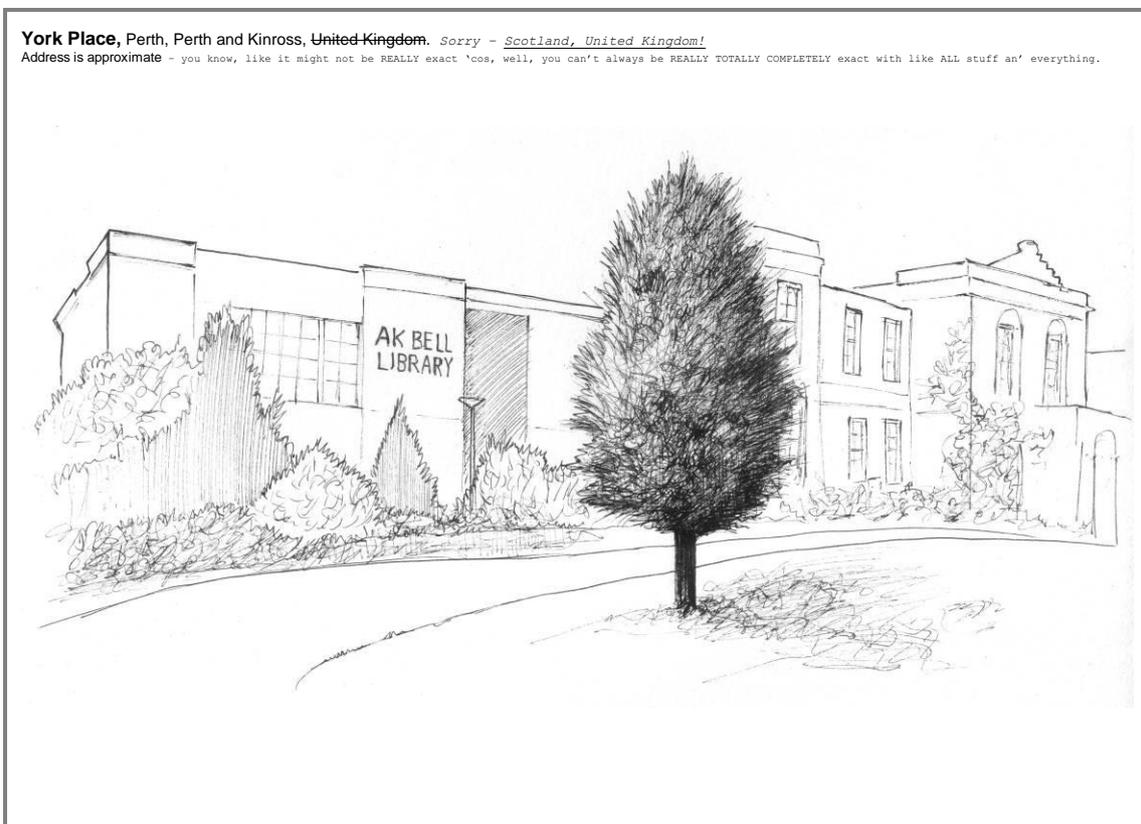
Through this theme we seek to explore the role of woodland history in the growing community interest in woodlands and in changing perceptions of woodland ownership.

We are delighted to announce that our key speaker is George Peterken who will consider these issues in relation to the Forest of Dean in particular.

The rest of the programme will be firmed up in the next few months. The programme and booking form will then be made available on the NWDG website and by specific mailing to NWDG members. In the meantime, please do keep the date free in your diary. The conference is also open to non-NWDG members, so please do pass on the information to anyone else who might be interested.

We have changed the venue in an effort to make travelling easier, especially by public transport. We hope that this, together with the topical theme, will encourage a good attendance.

With thanks from organisers Mairi Stewart, Chris Smout and the NWDG history reps (Coralie Mills, Jonathan Wordsworth and Peter Quelch). For any enquiries, please contact mairi_skye@hotmail.com.



The A K Bell Library, Perth

NWDG MERCHANDISE

Bryophytes of Native Woods: A Field Guide to Common Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland's Woodlands by Carol Crawford is available direct from Carol. The cost is £6.50 including p&p. Cheques should be made payable to The Natural Resource Consultancy, and sent to Carol at 4d New Bridge Street, Ayr, KA7 1JX. There are discounts for orders for 3 or more copies: contact Carol at tnrc@aol.com for more information.

We have stocks of **back issues of the Newsletter** from Autumn 2003 to Autumn 2010. Prices are £2.50 each including postage. Please order from the editor, making cheques payable to 'Native Woodlands Discussion Group'.

EXCURSION 2011

Ruth Anderson

Where are we going?

This year's excursion will be to Easter Ross and south-east Sutherland, based at Carbisdale Castle Youth Hostel, on the Kyle of Sutherland. Wintry weather has delayed us finalising the exact programme, but it will include visits to:

- Alladale Estate - native pine, discussion points including native woodland survey, woodland expansion/creation, dendrochronology, species introductions, access
- Amat Pinewood – neighbouring but different from Alladale
- Ledmore & Migdale (Woodland Trust Scotland) – most northerly ancient oakwood, with pine and birch too
- Other site/s - possibly aspen (River Shin), alder (Loch Fleet), ancient wood pasture (various).

There will also be an evening seminar centred on the Native Woodland Survey and related topics, plus the NWDG AGM, and a ceilidh on the last night.

We are joining forces this year with members of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) North Region, for the Alladale/Amat day at least, but some of whom (we hope) will be with us for the whole shebang.

When?

Evening of Wednesday 11th May, running through to lunchtime Saturday 14th May.

Starting with a short seminar on the Wednesday evening; then 2 full days visiting woods Thursday and Friday; with NWDG AGM Thursday evening and ceilidh Friday evening; and a half day visit on Saturday, finishing and departing around lunchtime.

How much?

Booking fee for whole excursion: NWDG members £60, non members £80 (which includes membership for 2011).

For part only of excursion, please get in touch.

Staying where?

Accommodation in this area is a bit sparse and scattered, so to encourage the usual convivial discussions at the end of each day's activities we have made a block booking at Carbisdale Castle Youth Hostel. For ease of admin, the accommodation deal is all-in, so if you want bed only at the hostel, or are staying for less than 3 nights, please ring/email me. You can of course make your own accommodation

arrangements if you wish, and a list of other places to stay will be available on request.

The deal at Carbisdale Castle will cost £105, and includes:

- Sleeping accommodation in bunkbeds in dormitories, bed linen provided by the Hostel.
- Two-course dinner Thursday and Friday evenings, breakfast Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings, and packed lunches for Thursday and Friday. Vegetarian option available.

The (separate) booking fee includes the cost of a buffet supper at the seminar on Wednesday evening.

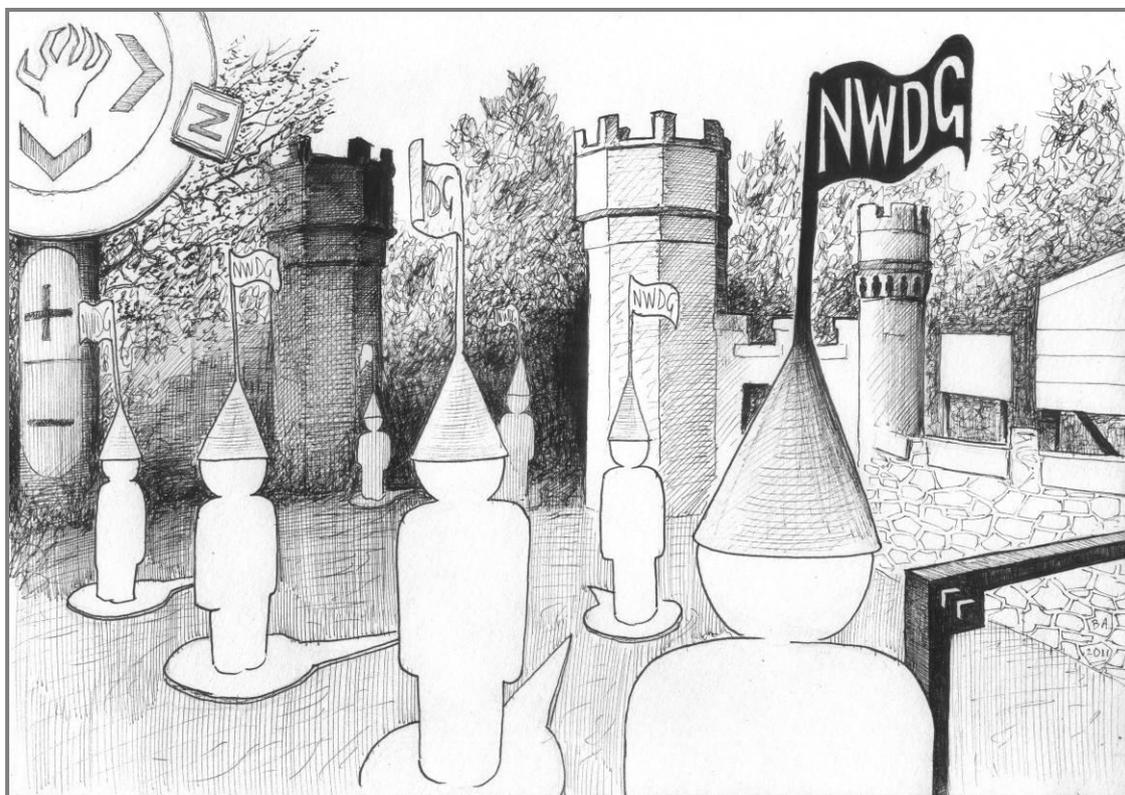
More info

Fuller details of the programme will be available next month. However, it would be helpful to have an indication of numbers as soon as possible, so ***please do book now, or at least get in touch*** if you are interested. If numbers are high, the programme may be expanded with a second option for at least one of the days.

Enquiries/bookings to Ruth Anderson

T. 01796 474327

E. ruth@dundavie.wanadoo.co.uk .



Entrance to Carbisdale Castle (drawing by Ben Averis)

REPORTS OF WORKSHOPS IN 2010

LICHEN WORKSHOP 2010

Claire Masson

The Lichen workshop took place in early October and was held in North Argyll by Andy Acton and Anna Griffith. Most of the participants met at the Ferrymans of Connel bar on Friday evening. Once the members of the groups were identified a nice meal was had before moving on to the village hall for an introduction to lichens to get us all started. There were 6-8 members of the group over the weekend, with most people classing themselves as 'beginners'.

Andy and Anna started by going over the key features that help with identification. Anna presented a very useful slide show which gave us the main pieces of information we needed to get started. We first went over what a lichen actually is - a good place to start! Lichens are composed of a fungus and an alga. The fungus provides protection and habitat for the alga and the alga photosynthesises providing energy. In this symbiotic relationship the fungi gain carbohydrates; the algae a wider niche. This has allowed lichens to exist in a wide range of conditions and on a range of different substrates: as abundant epiphytes on leaves, branches and trunks, on bare rock including walls and gravestones, and on exposed soil surfaces, to name but a few.

We went over the different fruiting bodies, vegetative propagules and other structures we might come across, which helped a great deal out in the field! We also went over the main morphological groups and their characteristics - leprose (powdery), fruticose (short and shrubby), foliose (leafy), squamulose (scaly) and crustose (crust-like), and what types of communities we were likely to see in different habitats and conditions.

We discussed how Scotland and particularly the West Coast are of international importance for lichens due to our oceanic climate, clean air, woodland continuity and history of less intrusive management. The variety of habitats supports different specialists within the lichen communities present. There have been 1600 lichens recorded in Scotland so far, a number of which are endemic to Scotland, and many others have a limited global distribution. We left the village hall late that evening saturated with information but enthused for the next day.

Bright and early on the Saturday morning we met to travel to Glen Nant, a mixed woodland due to the variation in underlying geology and soils, topography and historic management. Upon arrival at the site we were immediately set to work on some trees at the edge of the car park, which had excellent examples of *Lobaria* communities. This was a good place to start with the conspicuous, leafy *Lobaria* species proving to be among the easier to get to grips with, with an abundance of other lichens mixed through. Here we started with the differences between *Lobaria pulmonaria*, *Lobaria scrobiculata* and *Lobaria virens*, before going on to examine many

other members of the community, including *Leptogium burgessii*, a species typical of the oceanic climate, and *Pannaria rubiginosa* with its distinct 'jam tart' fruits.

When we eventually moved from the car park we took a slow walk along the path stopping frequently to look at interesting trees with various lichens flourishing upon them. The woodland has good stands of hazel to examine and we discussed the importance of hazel for lichens on the West Coast. The separate communities were very apparent now that they had been pointed out. We spent a long while in a sun-dappled glade learning the characteristics of members of the Parmelion community, with *Hypotrachyna taylorensis* and *Hypotrachyna laevigata* testing our skills. Usneion communities with lush, dripping lichens were amongst the easier to spot but the Graphidion community was also now recognisable. Examination of what appeared to be bare bark revealed a mosaic of variously coloured, whitish to pale brownish patches, with fruiting bodies seen as dots, dashes, jam tarts or lines.

Although it is not a lichen the group was very interested in the glue fungus *Hymenochaete corrugate*. This fungus decomposes wood as a food source, so glues stems where they join so the stem remains in place for the fungus to use, rather than falling to the forest floor. This fungi is associated with good quality woodland with abundant lichen interest.

On the walk back to the car park an example of *Collema fasciculare*, the 'octopus sucker' lichen was found at the last minute. It wasn't the most impressive example proving to be a bit dry to see the features easily, so a sample was taken back to the village hall.

That evening we looked at what we had found that day under the microscopes and tested what we had learned. This really made the information we had listened to sink in. We got the chance to wet the *Collema fasciculare* sample, which made the 'suckers' much more impressive. We had a break for dinner, again at the Ferrymans, before returning to the hall where Anna gave an excellent talk on the importance of Atlantic hazelwoods, some of which have occupied the West Coast for up to 9000 years, as shown by pollen records. The characteristics of hazel bark and the dynamics of hazel stools mean that there is continuity of habitat for lichens to colonize, and combined with the climate and open nature of these woodlands you have ideal conditions for lichens to flourish.

The next morning we all met to travel to Glasdrum Woods which is a mixed woodland with large areas of old sessile oak. As with the day before there was limited movement through the woodland as good examples of lichen communities kept distracting the group. Although some of us had felt confused the day before it turned out that some of the information had sunk in with some of the lichens we had seen the day before proving to be identifiable.

People have been directly involved with the management of Glasdrum from the 17th century and probably much earlier. The historic management was evident

when we stopped in an area of old planted oak. Here we discussed current management of the woodland, which has involved surveys to assess which trees could be removed to increase woodland diversity and improve conditions for lichens and other wildlife, without removing any notable species in the process.

To 'test' the group Andy and Anna asked us to split into two teams, which predictably ended up being the boys against the girls, and gave us a tree each to examine. We tried to identify all of the lichens on the tree surface and we actually did quite well with a group effort. I may be biased but out of the two groups the girls seemed to have the upper hand!

We were blessed with some gorgeous late summer sun over the weekend which added to the whole experience and proved to be the perfect conditions for detailed lichen examinations. A big thank you to Anna and Andy for hosting a very interesting and educational course, and for being very patient with all of our questions over the weekend.



The team at the car park (photo: Claire Masson)



The girls' team hard at work (photo: C. Masson)

BRYOPHYTE WORKSHOP 22 – 24 October 2010

Stan Phillips

One of the most interesting things about these workshops takes place in the first 5 minutes, when you look around at the assemblage of odd individuals who you're going to be spending the next two days with.

Youth was barely represented by Jess, an ex-student volunteering for the Woodland Trust. Age was warmly represented, on the other hand, and in varying degrees of ripeness. People were from a very mixed background being surveyors, interested

botanists, ecologists, rangers. Though having just written that down, it perhaps doesn't look as diverse as it felt. The participants were from a diverse background of personality traits, then, including confident ones, unconfident ones, boisterous ones, introspective ones. Oddly, quite a few, possibly because of the nature of their jobs, had spooky, disturbing stories to tell of being in remote locations and chancing upon some very strange people. People like us, perhaps.

With the exception of Ben Averis, our leader, thankfully, the group was pretty much at the beginner level when it came to the mosses and liverworts.

After a poetic evening of introductions to bryophytes, typically *Ben*, the first day centred on the woods around Inchree, near Onich. Basics were pretty much covered that morning (creeping mosses, upright mosses etc), the highlights being the differences among the large sprawling ones such as *Rhytidiadelphus loreus* and *Pleurozium schreberi*.

In the freezing afternoon we began to venture into the more specialised oceanic flora of these western woods, somewhat enhanced by the amount of limestone outcropping in the woods producing such finds as *Scapania aspera* and *Tortella tortuosa*. Or, indeed, just as tortuous for us beginners, *Ctenidium molluscum* and *Loeskeobryum brevirostre*.

Despite their importance, and jewelled aesthetics, tiny leafy liverworts on the bark of trees caused frustration in some quarters, I noted. One participant in particular had spent the previous two days working on a hill in relentlessly sheeting rain, and they had been cleansed of patience. I could empathise with that, and was pleased to see that after a dry (but cold) day in the woods and a good night's sleep, their spirits picked up the next day in the grandeur of Glencoe.

Much of the interest here, towards the top of the burn emanating from the Hidden Valley, was also liverworts; and though they were bigger, there were more of them.

The track to the Hidden Valley has become a very busy place, and no doubt many of the walkers there returned home with tales of very strange people in remote locations behaving oddly by enormous boulders. Some of us even seemed to be using a magnifying glass to look at a boulder which was at least the size of a Transit van.

Contemplating the lines of people marching towards the lip of the coire, I muttered something about the impossibility of taking a 'natural break' here. "I just have" said Richard, ghosting in from my left and continuing up the hill. I looked around astounded that he'd managed this, inoffensively, in such an open, crowded place, and marvelled at his grip on the outdoor life. Very well-briefed, obviously.

Nature called on several other occasions, too. At lunchtime Cathy was called and disappeared into a giant boulder field moraine forming the lip of the hidden valley

coire. She came back with tales of how the calling lead her to a cairn, interned within which was a cask, perhaps with the contents of the last person to visit that special place. *Terminal* moraine.

Being the conscientious sort, my own experiences were slightly less ethereal. The cairn had become quite a popular destination by now and so I set off to another boulder field nearby. Upon casually gazing at the surrounding vegetation I became quite excited by the sight of numerous very large leafy liverworts in the heath around my feet. Upon taking some samples back to Ben he insisted we visited the area; it was clearly an exceptional spot. I tried to tell him to avoid certain areas when showing the rest of the group the liverworts (a good selection of the spectacular northern hepatic mat species), and I know you'd like me to assure you that he did.



Pleurozia purpurea and *Racomitrium lanuginosum* (photo: Claire Carrigan)

The descent down the hill to our cars promised distant houses, warmth and proper tea made in a real pot. Our momentum was only briefly interrupted by further exciting finds on the massive boulders.

A pause, then we were off again, momentarily turning to view the sun, at last, backlighting a line of yellow birch trees giving away the gully leading to the Hidden Valley.



Participants react to finding *Douinia ovata* on a birch (photo: Stan Phillips)

HISTORY CONFERENCE 2010

SCOTTISH WOODLAND HISTORY CONFERENCE 2010

Chris Smout

This year's Scottish Woodland History Conference took place on October 27th, at the Birnam Conference Centre outside Dunkeld. About 50 members attended. The topic was 'Woods as Working and Cultural Landscapes, Past and Present'. Angus Winchester of Lancaster University opened the day with a talk on the woods of the English Lake District, which perfectly exemplified the theme. The Lakeland woods had been managed by the local farmers for a wide variety of purposes, ranging from tanning, cooperage and basket making, to nutting and potash manufacture: ash pollards in particular were valuable for leaf foddering, a practice curiously difficult to document in Scotland except occasionally for holly. The oak woods were also much in demand for charcoal manufacture by the iron-masters of Furness (who also operated in Argyll in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and later by bobbin makers from Lancashire. There was often conflict between the farmers and the landowners who rented woods to iron-masters. Strong customary rights, of a kind unknown in Scotland, limited the owners' freedom of action. Nevertheless, the landowners became increasingly interested in commercial forestry from the late seventeenth century onwards, seeking to produce high quality timber. Then their understandable wish to harvest it in prime condition led, from the middle of the eighteenth century, to opposition from a new breed of objector, the aesthetic tourist who disliked seeing the picturesque ruined. These conflicts continued through the Victorian saga of using the Lakes for Lancashire's water supply, and in the inter-war years the Forestry Commission's programme of planting the local hillsides up with conifers was opposed by the National Trust, with partial success. Now events have run full cycle, with the Trust reintroducing ash pollarding on their properties to demonstrate the cultural history of the trees.

This excellent start was followed up by Christopher Dingwall's account of the history of woodland management at Stobhall outside Perth, which he had been tracing through various ownerships since the fifteenth century. Pleasure and profit had always been significant motives, though with different weights at different times. The monks of Cupar Angus used the woods as a hunting ground for the abbot, while also laying out the first rules for cutting, grazing and fencing. Stuart kings hunted and flirted in the 'pleasant forest', the Annexed Estates in the eighteenth century tried to make money out of it, later owners had successively planted beech and Sitka, and were now turning back to native trees. What was particularly striking was how the landscape itself clearly bore the trace of so many changes in sylvan practice and fashion.

Lord Doune then told the tale from the perspective of an owner, whose family had had the 'agony and the ecstasy' of managing the great forest of Darnaway, 7500 acres, since the Middle Ages. Of the earliest wood the most striking traces were the oaks fringing the Meads of St John, including one with the biggest girth in Scotland.

There was also a pristine tract of sessile oak, birch, holly, juniper and blaeberry, tucked away far from forest roads, only discovered to be particularly interesting by Nature Conservancy surveyors in the 1980s ('our eyes were opened'). The eighteenth century had seen big changes, with 13 million trees planted, used later for shipbuilding, tanning and bobbin manufacture. The twentieth century experienced the heavy fellings of the two world wars, the move to softwoods, and recently a shift back again to larch and hardwoods. Beech regeneration was a big and unwelcome problem where the oldest parts of the woods were concerned.



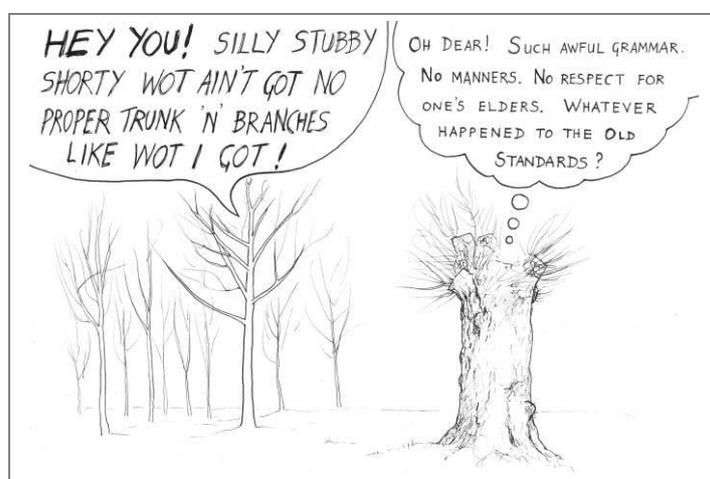
The Darnaway Oak. Drawing by Ben Averis.

Darnaway's owners and foresters had over the centuries been through the whole gamut of timber production, sporting use and landscape amenity, to which had been added in the last hundred years concerns about recreation, ecology and recently even public health and spirituality. It is splendid that the forest is in such sympathetic hands.

The morning session was completed by Archie McConnel, Dumfries saw-miller, who took us down to the south-west to consider the effect of state law on the woods of one region. It was fascinating to follow how the law of unintended consequences had had such an influence. Restriction on the Irish exports of live cattle in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led both to an intensification of animal husbandry in Dumfries and Galloway (with obvious impacts on woodlands) and to an enhanced demand for tanbark from the local oaks as the Irish turned to processing their hides. With changes in tariffs, Scottish oak bark became less profitable, and twentieth century war and policy led rather to the planting of softwoods on which saw-millers depend today. One fascinating diversion was to tell us how the town council of Dumfries, in building their Mid-steeple in 1703, undertook what we would now call a cost-benefit analysis to see if they should use Norway pine or local oak, and came down in favour of local wood.

After an excellent lunch on the premises, we assembled for the afternoon session led by Helen Shaw's account of her palynological investigations into east Glen Affric in search of the dynamics of tree cover. Here, she suggested, cultural landscapes and human interference were less evident than in most places. The wood had encroached in parts on open moorland, notably to the east and west. In the middle of the glen there were traces of cycles of pine and birch, but with little trace of charcoal to indicate that fire was the agent. At the eastern end of the glen, now wooded, there had been open land with repeated evidence of fire going back to the Iron Age, suggesting just how long muirburn might have been practiced.

From Caledonian pine we moved to Tom Cooper's account of Rassal ashwood, where, by contrast, there was every sign of anthropogenic pressure in its history. The form of the trees in the wood pasture suggested a mixture of pollards and standards.



Most of them belonged to cohorts from 50 years either side of 1800 when the now-abandoned settlement in the immediate proximity was still in its prime. Regeneration and grazing must have co-existed then through some unrecorded form of management, which presumably involved close herding of the stock. This marvellous wood, the most northerly ash-wood in Britain and a National Nature Reserve, needs a new management plan to ensure its continued existence.

The afternoon's papers concluded with Helen McDade of the John Muir Trust explaining the Trust's vision of how woods fit into their vision for wild places. The answer was complex, as there is a wide range of practice on their properties, and many views both of locals and of the membership to take into account. The trust was suspicious of overly academic attempts to define the wild, which led to a lively discussion in the session after tea, when we discussed the relationship between the wild and the cultural, and attempted to come to terms with the day's events. It had been a good meeting; the papers fitted in with each other in a happy and partly serendipitous way. We look forward to another stimulating meeting next year, and welcome all new members to join us: please see the Native Woodlands Discussion Group website www.nwdg.org.uk for details.

OLD OAK COPPICE AT LOCH KATRINE: NWDG CORING PRACTICE

Coralie Mills

A weekend in November was spent at Loch Katrine, taking core samples in old oak coppice woods on the southern shores. Those of you who attended the 2010 NWDG excursion will remember this beautiful woodland, where the overgrown coppice fringes a stretch of the shore, intermingling in places with the old wood pasture. The NWDG coring workshop tutors, Colin Edwards and Coralie Mills, took the opportunity to invite recently trained NWDG members to hone their coring skills. We were fortunate to be joined by Gordon Gray Stephens and Alan McDonnell from the NWDG coring group; they helped us to get a really good set of samples and demonstrated a fine ability to retrieve intact cores and to hit centre, not always that easy on asymmetric trees. We even had the opportunity to practice the Spanish Windlass extraction technique when a long corer got stuck in the largest oak tree. Happily, it worked.



The samples were being taken for two studies, one a deadwood ecological project by Colin Edwards of Forest Research, the other a woodland history project by Coralie Mills for Forestry Commission and the National Park Authority. All of the samples have since been mounted and prepared for tree-ring analysis, work which will be completed within the next couple of months. Dendrochronology will reveal when coppicing last took place and identify the age of standard oaks, all helping to tie into documentary evidence for the woodland history of the area, and the wider story of the oak coppice industry in Scotland. The growth dynamics will also be examined through the tree-ring records.

The South Katrine oak coppice represents one of the later stages of woodland management in this area, and is associated with woodland archaeological features such as charcoal hearths, coppice enclosures and trackways. This research builds on

a prior project on Katrine historic wood pastures (Mills, Quelch & Stewart 2009 -see www.dendrochronicle.co.uk on the Projects page where you can download a PDF summary of that project). One interesting aspect will be to compare the age of the coppice and standard oaks with those in the nearby wood pasture areas. The wood pasture oaks *look* older but are they?

The research is intended to contribute to a greater understanding of the wooded cultural landscape, which is remarkably rich at South Katrine, and which contains a record of the changing interactions between humans, woodland and land-use over much of the last millennium, from baronial hunting forest to pre-improvement farming and wood pasture, to intensive sheep rearing and commercial coppice. These interactions have created a legacy of great biodiversity and rich landscape features, but now the challenge is to maintain and enhance these assets in a very different world, with all those old land-use practices gone. So this is not history just for history's sake, though of course history is interesting; the intention is to use the past to inform the future and to assist with management and conservation planning. Outreach events and talks about the area's landscape history also continue, the aim being to enrich people's enjoyment and appreciation of this less well known and more remote part of the Katrine catchment.

With thanks to FCS for access, and the team of fellow corers, Colin, Yvonne, Alan and Gordon.

If anyone would like to know more, please contact Coralie at coralie.mills@dendrochronicle.co.uk



Alan and Gordon coring coppice stems at Loch Katrine: Photo Coralie Mills.

ARTICLES

SHARE YOUR FAVOURITE WOODS ONLINE, AND BE PART OF SOMETHING BIG...

Jill Donnachie

NWDG members already know woods are fantastic places to spend time and experience nature, whatever the season. But many people don't know where to go and how to get the most from their visit.

The Woodland Trust has for the first time joined forces with the National Trust, RSPB, Forestry Commission, and the Wildlife Trusts to launch **VisitWoods**, a collaborative project aimed at encouraging more people to get out and enjoy all that woodland has to offer.



Why do we want more people to visit woodland? As well as being a beautiful environment rich in nature, numerous studies show that visiting woodland offers huge benefits for people in improving physical health and mental well-being. Woods are also fantastic places for families, children and grandparents to enjoy time outdoors together, and a great place to learn and engage with nature. Woods are also a cheap or even free leisure option at a time when people are counting their pennies.

A nationwide survey conducted as part of the five year project shows that a major barrier to people visiting and enjoying woodland is the lack of information about their local woods. For the first time, VisitWoods brings together all the major woodland owning organisations in one place.

At the heart of the project is **visitwoods.org.uk**, a new interactive website showcasing all the woods you can visit across the UK (including over 6,000 in Scotland). Search for woods by location, by name or with features such as ancient trees, heritage, special wildlife interest, ancient woodland and more. The website is designed to act as a gateway to site-based information, searchable maps, inspiring ideas, and free downloadable resources. Adding to the richness of the content are comments and photographs provided by wood visitors keen to promote their favourite woods to others. **This is where we really need your help.**

Currently there is little information on the site about the unique ecology, archaeological heritage and ancient trees we are lucky enough to have in Northern Britain. The stories, blog comments, links and photographs of NWDG members would really inspire those we're trying to encourage to enjoy the wonders of woodland through the seasons. And it could make a real difference to people who have never visited a wood before – an important audience for this project.

Uploading your photos and comments is really simple. Just go to visitwoods.org.uk, find your favourite wood, register and add your reviews and images to our blog or photo gallery.

Who knows – you may even discover a new wood yourself!

Thanks in advance for your support. If you'd like to know more, please contact jilliandonnachie@woodlandtrust.org.uk

VisitWoods is a partnership project, led by the Woodland Trust Scotland which receives funding from Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and People's Postcode Lottery.

NEWS FROM OTHER WOODLAND ORGANISATIONS

THE NATIVE PINWOOD MANAGERS VISIT TO GLENMORE, CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK, IN 2010

Charlie Taylor

History

In ancient times Glenmore belonged to the Stewarts of Kincardine, but in 1685 an Act of Parliament ratified that it was owned by the Duke of Gordon. Throughout this period it was described as a great "firwood" with ongoing harvesting and transport of timber down the River Spey.

In the late 18th century an English company (Osborne and Dodsworth) felled many of the larger trees and created two sawmills on site (one powered by a windmill, the other by water). Glenmore was still considered relatively remote at that time and the operation required floating loose logs down the Luineag (which had been deepened and straightened) and Druie rivers, before being rafted down the Spey. However, this effort was sustained due to the high value of the timber during the Napoleonic War and the company completed their long-term contract four years ahead of schedule in 1805. Much of the timber was used for building ships at Garmouth, situated at the mouth of the Spey. It is thought that 47 ships were built during this period with a gross weight of over 19,000 tonnes, which gives some idea of the scale of removal and the quality of the timber.

Following this intense period of harvesting, it was reported in 1834 by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder that “the Glen More forest is fast replenishing itself”. This cohort of regeneration was followed by 20 to 30 years of sheep grazing. After that, it became a deer forest - including the construction of Glenmore Lodge in 1866.

Large areas were felled by the Canadians during the First World War and transported by a light railway to Aviemore. After the war (1923), the area was bought by the Forestry Commission from the Duke of Richmond and Gordon – one of the earliest forests purchased by the new public body. There followed an active period of reforestation – involving fencing, draining, hand turfing and planting of pine and Norway spruce.

During the Second World War approximately 80 ha of pine were felled – probably reflecting the lack of mature timber at that time. After the war there was a further era of reforestation – this time including Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine. It was also declared as a Forest Park in 1948. By 1973, the total area of the forest was 1670 ha.

The Norwegian special forces that had trained in the area during WWII introduced the locals to skiing. This, coupled with a growing interest in outdoor activities, meant an increasing number of visitors to the area. The public road that now dissects the forest was constructed in the 1960s and visitor numbers increased significantly. In 1971, FC sold the upper ground to the Highlands and Islands Development Board to encourage the growth of tourism – particularly winter sports.

In 1976 the Ryvoan Pass area (121 ha) was declared as a pinewood reserve and leased to the Scottish Wildlife Trust. In the early 1990s the FC placed a much greater emphasis on conservation - as part of the campaign to restore native pinewoods on the national forest estate. This was reinforced by the creation of a Forest Plan in 1994 with a key aim of restoring the native pinewood. Subsequently, the area leased at Ryvoan was taken back in hand and the upper areas were bought back to allow development of the upper tree-line.

The Forest Plan was renewed in 2005 and was subject to a wide-ranging consultation to reflect the developing range of issues and designations – National Park, European conservation designations, National Nature Reserve, speed of felling and neighbouring interests. Over 65 groups or organizations were involved in the process and the new plan sets the long-term vision and detailed plans for the next 10 years.

Current objectives

The current Forest Plan for Glenmore gives the following vision:

“Glenmore Forest through the centuries has met the needs of both local people and the nation - it shall continue to do this through this millennium. In future years it will remain a vibrant ecosystem, with a wide variety of tree ages and types, with significant international and

national biodiversity value. Equally, it will remain a socially important forest providing for the needs of local people and visitors to the area who will draw inspiration from the wild land characteristics of the forest. Diversity will be an important element in what will be predominantly a native forest, with quiet areas “left for nature” and others which will continue to provide opportunities, through employment and tourism, in the area.”



Current management issues

Felling – since the early 1990s (and our last visit in 1993), there has been an ongoing felling programme of non-native conifers. Initially, these were removed by whole tree harvesting using skidders and winches. However, due to concerns over ground damage this was changed to short wood extraction by forwarder. Within ten years the whole of the south side of Loch Morlich had been cleared of non-native conifers. However, the new Forest Plan slowed down the proposed rate of felling on the north side of the glen where the extensive areas of non-native species are highly visible. The concern was that overly rapid removal would have a negative impact on the landscape. Some of these areas comprise un-thinned mixed stands of Sitka spruce, lodgepole and Scots pine which are also well utilised by capercaillie. Attempts have been made to thin these stands and to halo thin around residual granny pines. However, apart from sustaining these scattered trees it was thought that there was limited benefit from further thinning. In fact further thinning may encourage undesirable Sitka regeneration.

Thinning – there is an ongoing thinning programme with 500 to 600 ha of Scots pine designated for continuous cover forestry systems. This includes variable density thinning of plantations and the artificial creation of deadwood by topping standing trees. In these areas there has been a good response by blueberry and capercaillie usage. In addition, other areas have been designated for minimal intervention. For

all these areas, the group suggested that it is important to develop a long-term vision for each stand to give context for ongoing management decisions.

Regeneration (native and non-native) – following the felling, there has been a considerable amount of regeneration of a range of species. This has included Scots pine and some native broadleaves, but also a considerable amount of Sitka spruce. The spruce has either been pulled by hand or cut – using contractors and volunteers. This extensive programme (over 1000 ha) has been largely funded by BP through the Scottish Forestry Alliance project – amounting to approximately £100,000. The broadleaved regeneration is mainly limited to near Loch Morlich where there is a seed source. There was considerable debate on whether further broadleaved seed sources should be established elsewhere in the forest or simply left to gradual expansion over a long timescale.

Montane woodland – on all the upper margins there is significant regeneration (mainly Scots pine) and the forest is expanding up the slopes. This now extends above 650 m and is fairly dense in some places. There are also patches of juniper regeneration above the boundaries of the older forest.

Deer – in 2000, it was estimated that there were approximately 30 deer per 100 ha (both red and roe). In co-operation with neighbouring properties a sustained cull means that this figure is now approximately 8 per 100 ha. Following the initial red deer cull, roe deer quickly built up in response. The new residual populations are also much more productive, so culling efforts will need to be sustained (approximately 20 red and 40 roe deer per annum). During this period deer exclosures were used to monitor browsing levels.

Capercaillie – the area is a Special Protection Area for capercaillie and the local population has responded well to the forest management practices introduced over the last 20 years. This has included the removal of the internal fences, most of the march fences, predator control (mainly crows) as well as the different approaches to thinning in the plantations. As the ground vegetation responds to reduced levels of grazing then the forwarder tracks in the thinned areas may prove an additional valuable function as pathways for young chicks to move around the forest.

Recreation – the forest has been divided into three recreation zones. There is a high use zone around the Loch Morlich area including the visitor centre, campsite and forest walks. Further out there is a lower use zone where a low level of visitor facility development will be allowed. The final zone is designated for minimal development where the main emphasis will be on conservation.

Research – there is a long history of experimentation dating back to plots established in 1929 by Mark Anderson. These plots tested different approaches to encouraging natural regeneration - such as burning, mulching, vegetation removal and cultivation. They were also fenced (which remained intact until the late 1970s) to prevent deer browsing – it was interesting to note that there was little natural

regeneration with just deer fencing. The only treatment that produced significant early regeneration was strip cultivation which resulted in over 4000 stems/ha. At the last assessment in 1999, there had been an overall recruitment of over 1500 stems/ha. In the other treatments, there has been much less regeneration but the gradual recruitment has still resulted in 150 to 200 stems/ha. The original trees are 300 to 350 years old and are now beginning to reach senescence. Recently, Forest Research has set up a thinning experiment to investigate options for “naturalizing” pine plantations by variable density thinning.

Snow damage – the heavy and prolonged snow this winter has created a lot of crown damage to mature trees and stem breakage in saplings. There was discussion on the influence of similarly snowy winters in the past on the morphology of the older trees we see today.

Changes since our visit in 1993 – the most obvious is the removal of the mature non-native conifers over considerable areas and, following the effort on removing spruce regeneration, the healthy new generation of Scots pine now present in many areas. There are also encouraging signs of broadleaved regeneration on the south side of Loch Morlich and the expansion of the forest onto the open ground above

The future

It was heartening to note that we are in another period where this ancient forest is “fast replenishing itself”. However, there is still a lot of work for the local FCS team to do. In addition to continuing the programme of felling non-native conifers and removal of spruce and lodgepole regeneration, it will be important to sustain the thinning programme in the Scots pine stands. This will not only provide biodiversity benefits but also maintain the attractive character of this forest which draws so many visitors.

Future meetings

It was confirmed that Beinn Eighe would be the venue for 2011, hosted by Eoghain Maclean of SNH. The group last visited this pinewood in 1992 and hope to include an additional half day extension to visit Shildaig as well. The proposed venue for 2012 would be Mar Lodge.

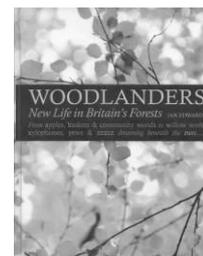


Pine near Mar Lodge. Drawing by Ben Averis.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NEW PUBLICATIONS

WOODLANDERS: NEW LIFE IN BRITAIN'S FORESTS

Edited by Ian Edwards. Published by Saraband, Glasgow, 2010.
320 pp, hardback, illustrated in colour. ISBN 978-188735469-1. £25.00



Woodlanders is a book about current human activities in and associated with British woodland. The cover photo of birch leaves in spring catches the eye with its fresh and lively look. Inside, the layout is attractive and well-designed, with lots of good photos. The introduction describes how our previously common connections with woodland – to do with such things as agriculture, silviculture, hunting, crafts, and use as a playground for children and a retreat for lovers – dwindled almost to extinction by the mid to late 20th century, but that since then a huge resurgence of interest and activity has taken place. The rest of the book explores this resurgence. Current use of timber as a building material is described. There is a chapter about our harvesting of woodland materials for purposes such as food, dyes, herbal products, compost, basketry, furniture, quiches, wood-turning, coracles, boats and firewood. Another chapter looks at ways in which woods give us inspiration – for art, writing, poetry, storytelling, songwriting, music and folklore. Other chapters describe the use of woods for community projects and events, and the various ways we manage woodland for such things as timber production and community use and the planting of new woodland. The text is well written and the authors clearly have a thorough knowledge of their subjects.

I agree with other reviewers that this book is an intelligent and thought-provoking source of information and inspiration for people with an interest in these subjects. Some of these 'resurgence' activities can come across as rather self-indulgent or 'alternative' (for example tree festivals, yurts, tipis, fairy workshops and herbalism) or only-for-the-rich (for example several pages of timber-building that seems beyond the reach of most of us who cannot afford the necessary resources and time), and as such they may help to perpetuate the commonly-held view that sustainable living is a luxury for the affluent middle classes. Ordinary folk who regularly go walking or mountain-biking in the woods may feel under-represented here. Likewise those involved in pheasant-rearing and shooting, which takes place in many woods and puts food on our plates. However, a bit of occasional self-indulgence or luxury has probably always had a place in most people's lives (and where do you draw the line between luxury or self-indulgence and more 'ordinary' but not strictly essential activities like going for a walk?), and on balance I think this book is a positive contribution. I was glad to see a section on venison production, which provides us with good food and can be of ecological benefit to the whole woodland environment. And it's good that the section on coppicing mentions the importance of western hazels for lichens, mosses and liverworts, and advises people to get these checked out before they start hacking away at those stems. Oh look – those two sections were written by NWDG members!

Ben Averis

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING COURSES

NWDG BRYOPHYTE WORKSHOP 2011

Ben Averis

This year the autumn bryophyte (moss and liverwort) workshop will be on the island of Skye. We will be based in Broadford and will look at some sites in the south of the island, in the area shown in the picture below. This area has a rich and varied bryophyte flora, and we will look at woodland and nearby heath, mire, crags and limestone pavement. The course will begin with an indoor introductory session on the evening of Friday 21st October 2011, and there will be field visits on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd. It will finish in the late afternoon of the 23rd, at the end of the second field visit.



View in Strath Suardal, looking toward Blà Bheinn. Drawing by Ben Averis.

NWDG LICHEN WORKSHOP 2011

Details of the NWDG lichen workshop have not yet been finalised but will be posted on the website as soon as they are available.

Flora, Fauna & Foraging



on Tanera Mòr, in the Summer Isles

Explore the wild Island and its habitats with knowledgeable local ecologist Viv Halcrow

Discover the role wild plants and animals have had in people's lives through history

Encounter fascinating creatures and plants of the land, sea and shore

Venture to other islands aboard the MV Patricia

Taste a Seashore Soup made from foraged plants and creatures

Create coloured yarn from natural plant dyes

Enjoy good company and tasty home-cooked meals

Relax in a cosy cottage on the peaceful Island with spectacular views

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Dates and Prices (both Full Board on Tanera Mòr)

*Weekend course:* 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2011; £180 per person

*Full week course:* 11<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011; £530 per person

*Contact:* Lizzie Williams | [lizzie@summer-isles.com](mailto:lizzie@summer-isles.com) | 01854 622 252

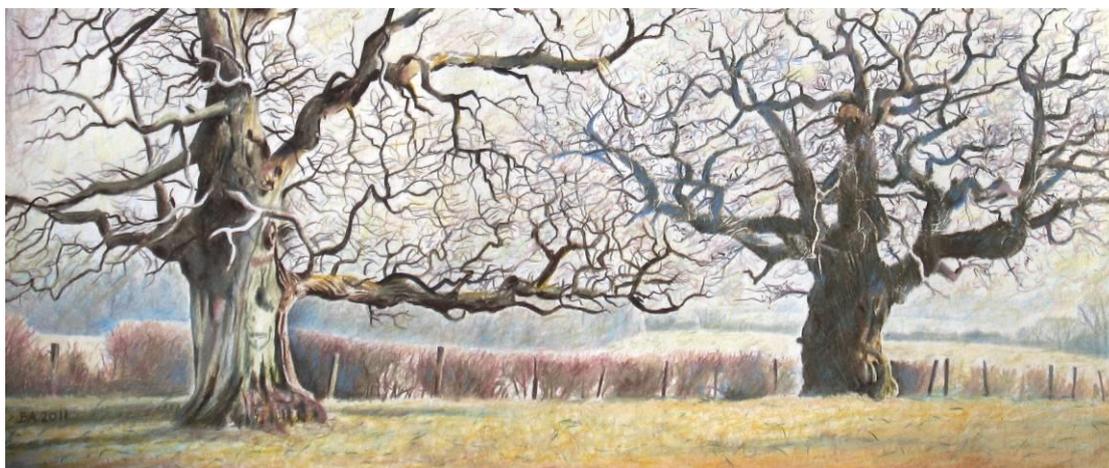
*More information at:* [www.summer-isles.com/flora-fauna-foraging.asp](http://www.summer-isles.com/flora-fauna-foraging.asp)



*The Summer Isles, from Achiltibuie. Photo by Ben Averis.*

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*East Lothian veterans. Drawing by Ben Averis.*

## NATIVE WOODLANDS DISCUSSION GROUP CONSTITUTION

Name: The organisation shall be the Native Woodlands Discussion Group

Aims and objectives: The purpose of the group is to encourage interest in native woodlands, their ecology, management and history.

Membership: Membership of the group will be:

- a. Individual
- b. Family (1.5 x full rate)
- c. Concessionary (0.5 x full rate)

Membership of the group will cease 18 months after the payment of an annual subscription. Committee will advise the Meetings Organiser for the year of the fee for attendance of non-members.

Officers and committee:

- a. The group elects a committee. The committee shall co-opt or appoint such officers as are considered necessary. Officers will be eligible to vote at committee meetings.
- b. Committee members shall serve for three years, but shall be eligible for re-election.
- c. The chairperson shall be nominated by the committee and endorsed by the Annual General Meeting.
- d. All members are free to attend committee meetings.

Accounts:

- a. The financial year shall be 1 April – 31 March
- b. The committee will set the annual membership fee before the end of October.
- c. The treasurer will keep accounts and present a financial report by 15th March each year. The accounts shall be independently audited by a competent person before presentation.

Annual General Meeting: An AGM shall be held at such a date as is determined by the committee. Notification of that meeting shall appear in the newsletter at least one month prior to the AGM.

Business at the AGM shall be determined by a simple majority except changes to the constitution which shall require a two-thirds majority of those members present. Family membership entitles up to two votes if both are present.

The chairperson and the treasurer will each submit a report at the AGM.

Meetings: The committee shall organise or authorise any member to organise such meetings as considered desirable.

Publications: The committee shall approve such publications as are considered desirable, and which carry the group's endorsement.

## NWDG OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives: The purpose of the Group is to encourage interest in native woods, their ecology, management and history, with a particular emphasis in Northern Britain.

Activities:

- \* Organise at least one Field Meeting with related discussion each year.
- \* Organise Workshops on subjects suggested by members.
- \* Issue Newsletters (currently two per year) with an emphasis on members' contributions.
- \* Maintain contact with like-minded organisations through the membership.

Membership: This is open to any interested individual (there is no corporate membership).

Subscription: According to the following categories -

|                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Ordinary individual  | £20.00 p.a. |
| Family               | £30.00 p.a. |
| Concessions./Unwaged | £10.00 p.a. |

Subscriptions should be sent to the Membership Secretary (see inside front cover for contact details). There is a £2 annual discount for those paying by Standing Order: please ask for a form.

## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Copy date for the **Autumn 2011** newsletter is **15th September 2011**. The newsletter will go out in October.

The following types of contributions are always welcome:

- Group or organisation reports
- Woodland reports/updates
- Articles about anything to do with woodlands
- Shorter items of news, e.g. new groups/initiatives/projects or personnel changes
- Letters to the editor
- Reviews of books or other publications relating to native woodlands.
- Illustrations - cartoons, logos, pen and ink drawings of trees and wildlife etc..

Contributions can be up to 1500 words long. They should ideally be word-processed in Word for Windows and sent by email or on floppy disk. Please include full contact details with any contribution. Contact the editor if you have something to contribute but are having difficulty meeting a deadline, or if you have an idea for an article you wish to discuss.

No Frills Please! Articles should be submitted in Arial 10-point font in 'normal' style (no headings text and body text), and should be left-justified with no division into columns, nor with hanging indents or text boxes. Use italics where necessary but please avoid underlining, square bullet points, 'clip-art' and automatic rather than manual paragraph numbering. Tables and diagrams, obviously, may be in different fonts or in boxes where necessary. Line drawings and clear photographs are welcome, but please be aware that colour photographs may not look as good in black and white. Thanks very much.