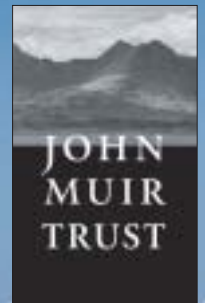


Journal

JOHN MUIR TRUST

Wild places for nature and people



January 2005

No 38

**Sustaining Wild Land –
conference pictures**

Award to Adam Watson

Sandwood stories

What's growing on Skye?



Faces of Ben Nevis

Declaration for the Wild

Arising from the John Muir Trust Sustaining Wild Land Conference,
21st and 22nd October 2004.

The UK and devolved governments must actively demonstrate that they recognise the importance of large areas of wild land and of all wild places as an integral part of our national culture and heritage by:

ONE: Encouraging and supporting people of all ages and of all backgrounds to experience and understand the value of wild places, for the benefit of their health and spiritual well being.

TWO: Supporting local communities and land managers by developing a new, broader range of grants and incentive schemes to help restore and enhance wild land.

THREE: Reviewing planning policy and legislation to strengthen the protection and enhancement of wild land.

FOUR: Establishing a forum to agree a national strategy for the appropriate siting of renewable energy developments.

FIVE: Ratifying the Council of Europe's Landscape Convention and embracing the responsibility to protect our national landscape heritage.

Finally...

We must all involve future generations in the care of wild land and wild places.

We must all take personal responsibility for reducing energy consumption and our impact on the planet.

To take this forward all those who have a stake in the management and care of wild land must work together for the benefit of present and future generations.

This DECLARATION FOR WILD LAND will be delivered to Government ministers on behalf of the conference by the John Muir Trust.

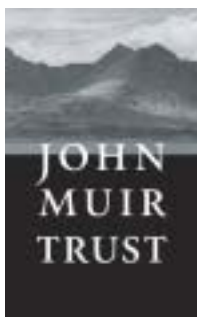
Wild land: a study in attrition

A digital study for Scottish Natural Heritage of Affric, Kintail and Knoydart, comparing 1950 (left) with today. In the core white areas, tracks, plantations and hydro schemes are either more than 5km away or are hidden. In the dark green areas those

features are less than 5km distant, and in the light green areas less than 3 km.

Report available from Mark Wrightham, SNH, 27 Ardconnel Tce, Inverness, mark.wrightham@snh.gov.uk.





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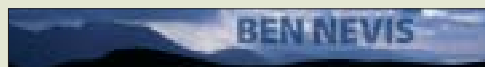
Cover photo: Ben Nevis from the Mamores by
Alex Gillespie, Fort William.

JOHN MUIR TRUST Journal

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Cover story: Faces of Ben Nevis

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Journal

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Mike Merchant

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Printed by Hay Nisbet Press,
Dilwara Avenue, Glasgow
G14 0SQ. Tel: 0141 959 3325

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HAMISH'S

Knoydart Notes

Donald Bennett

IF I KEEP COMING back to the subject of water–rivers–sea, this is hardly surprising, with Knoydart being ‘almost an island’ and access to it having the hazards of a boat crossing or potentially dangerous burns and rivers to pass. The rowan growing beside Sourlies bothy is a memorial to one river tragedy.

In docile mood the Allt Coire na Ciche can be a wee burn which can be boulder hopped without taking hands out of pockets—even in the rock slot where it is crossed on the path inland to the Mam na Cloiche Airde and Glen Dessary. At that place one Hogmanay a friend of mine, with his wife watching, was swept away and drowned, his body dumped in Loch Nevis by the spate, a loss over which I still grieve.

Whympers’ heartbreak words after the Matterhorn triumph and tragedy should be remembered, the warning that every step one takes can have consequences unimaginable, that a mistake can echo down to the end of one’s days and regret heals nothing. On the other hand we must ‘aye push wir dreams uphill’ as a keeper

once told me.

My friend was an experienced mountaineer, but he was pushy in another sense—and he paid the ultimate price for his moment of chancing things. There was a hard and bitter irony in his death for, months earlier, I had seen this very risk.

Two of us, setting off to walk across Scotland, paused by the douce, summer Allt Coire na Ciche. A rope had been stretched across as a safeguard in times of spate but I explained to my friend, not altogether convincing him, that the rope was a trap. If the water was dangerous enough to need such aid then the rope itself became a danger. Far from helping, anyone using the rope would be torn from grasping it and swept away. I cut the rope down. Then that winter, because the rope had been replaced, a friend would fatally prove the point.

The alternatives were to wait, to go up to an easy crossing, or to go down to where the force dies out at the river mouth; alternatives frustrating, boring or demanding, but safe. There’s no problem with the Allt Coire na Ciche now of course; the stream is bridged.

More sad than angry I followed up the tragedy and found the rope had been replaced by an outdoor centre running a ‘wilderness course’ (sic), a last irony, almost turning story into fable. We must not tame the wild. We must not cramp tigers in cages. Only in the wilds do we offer them respect.



John Muir Trust Activities Programme
www.jmt.org/programmes

0845 456 1785

■ *Hamish Brown MBE, author, photographer and mountaineer, is an original JMT member with a lifetime of wandering the Scottish hills.*

JMT lodges objection to 702 MW wind farm in Lewis

The Trust has objected to a windfarm proposal by Lewis Wind Power Ltd. Its main concern is the scale, which will have a 'major and significant negative impact on the quality of two important areas of wild land'.

The objection, posted on the web, says: 'The Lewis peatlands are internationally recognised for their conservation value. To permit a wind farm of this scale on such an important location is contrary to the growing global awareness of the need to protect habitat and species diversity.'

'The John Muir Trust fully recognises the need for the economy of the Western Isles to be reinvigorated, but is not convinced that the proposal will bring about the desired long-term, socio-economic benefits ... A proposal of this scale and controversy is in danger of turning the community against the potential for making the Western Isles a major centre for alternative energy.'

The JMT has also lodged a holding objection to the 133 turbine Eisein wind farm planning application, also on Lewis.

■ See 'Wind power concerns', Director's Notes, page 6.
www.jmt.org/policy/lewis04.html

High level planters



MM

If you'd like a regular stint of high level tree work, consider helping the Carrifran Wildwood. Philip Ashmole of the project says:

'There is an association dating back to 1998 between JMT and the Wildwood project of Borders Forest Trust, which aims to restore natural woodland and heathland habitats to an entire valley in the Southern Uplands near

Moffat.

'Many JMT members are Founders or Stewards of Carrifran Wildwood and both members and staff have done volunteer work in the valley on our Sunday planting days and on special occasions.

'Recently, however, we have been impressed by the benefits of individuals coming to work in the valley on a fairly regular (usually weekday) basis. Visits are arranged with the project officer Hugh Chalmers and usually involve joining him in high level tree

North Harris writers

North Harris Trust will be putting together a Friends of North Harris newsletter. JMT members who'd like to contribute their experiences of North Harris can do so through Will Boyd-Wallis. Suggested length is 100 words. Will's phone and email address are on page 1.



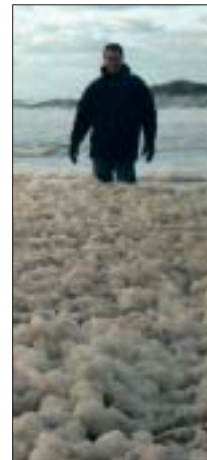
planting, fence removal or tree survival monitoring. If you live within reasonable driving distance of Carrifran and would like to get involved in this way, please contact Hugh@bordersforesttrust.org or Philip@ashmole.org.uk We need all the help we can get!

New gapper and what she does

Ruth Zawinski is the new gapper for the John Muir Award in East Lothian. That's gapper, not gaffer. A gapper is someone who has become involved in the Rank Foundation Gap Scheme, which gives some direction and work opportunities to young people aged 17-24, who have a gap in their lives. Ruth will be working with George Sim, East Lothian Regional Manager for the John Muir Award, based in Haddington.

Ian Proudler, development manager

Ian is the JMT's new development manager, responsible for fundraising, promotion and membership. He joined in October and the following month visited some of our properties for the first time. The picture, by Sandwood conservation manager Cathel Morrison, shows Ian up to the knees in sea-foam blown onto the beach.



Low-impact comp. winner



Lesley Haig won third place in an ideas competition to help her employer, Accenture, reduce environmental impacts. Her suggestion was to provide organic options for sale in the company's Café Mojo. Lesley opted to donate her £250 prize money to the JMT.

'I have become increasingly aware of the work carried out by the John Muir Trust over the past couple of years and support it wholeheartedly', she said. 1st and 2nd prize-winning ideas were 'Serious about Cycling' and 'Do you really need to print it?'

Silver Munroist

Next Easter, Frances Berry of Perth is climbing her last Munro, Beinn Dubhchraig, and combining evening celebrations with her 25th wedding anniversary. As an alternative to presents, Frances is suggesting that friends donate to Cancer Research UK or the JMT. Thanks, Frances, and we hope the completion goes well.

knoydart ad

Renewal and diversity...



It is nearly three years since we had a contested election to the JMT's Board of Trustees.

It's nice that members don't want to throw us off the Board. But any community needs renewal and diversity to remain healthy, and we Trustees are no exception!

You can help in this. Please think of what you could offer to the Trust, and consider being a candidate in the Trustee elections this spring.

You can find out more from myself, from any of the Trustees, or from the Director. There are details about the election in the current JMT Members' News. We look forward to hearing from you!

DICK BALHARRY Chairman of Trustees



Still winning hearts and minds...

Trustee Maude Tiso on Alison McGachy's achievements as the JMT's first development manager.

Alison (L) with Liz Hanna in the Cairngorms

ALISON'S appointment in July 1999 coincided with the John Muir exhibition 'An Infinite Storm of Beauty' in the City Arts Centre, Edinburgh, when she persuaded the city council to include photographs and text about the JMT. Liz Hanna, John Muir's great, great grand-daughter opened the exhibition, and Alison and Liz quickly became close friends: Liz has maintained links with JMT, and Alison has travelled to the US every year, taking time out *whilst on holiday* to develop links with the Sierra Club and the John Muir Memorial Association (US).

Alison took the John Muir-the-Writer-exhibition to San Francisco and launched it with a talk on Muir and the Trust. With Liz Hanna she attended the opening of the John Muir Trail in the Van Courtland Park in the Bronx, afterwards giving a talk. At various highland games she again set up and manned stands and then, through a mixture of talent and great charm, forged new links with members of the John Muir Memorial Association and potential new donors *at virtually no cost to the Trust*.

As development manager she greatly increased the finance the JMT receives through Lottery funding. She has also increased the number of foundations making donations to the Trust and the number of private trusts who support us.

Her undoubted ability, drive, generosity and winning smile made her friends with many of the above as well as JMT members, staff and trustees. Alison integrated well with Tiso staff at Commercial Street and not just for the delicious chocolate truffles she made for them at Christmas! After five years she was tempted away to become Corporate Relations Manager for the Edinburgh International Festival. It was therefore a surprise to find her persuading visitors at the Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival to buy cards and year-books and to join the JMT! At the Wild Land Conference, and the concert and ceilidh, there she was again- selling raffle tickets and engaging with visitors.

Last year she organised an event to bring the Edinburgh members together and she remains determined to re-energise this once-dynamic group. Her willingness to champion causes close to her heart puts her very much in the mould of John Muir himself.

So, although we all wish you well in your new post, Alison, we are delighted that you, and that winning smile, will still be around.

■ *At their meeting in December, JMT Trustees wholeheartedly agreed with Maude's words.*

Another showing for the Muir masterpiece



Rob Thomson

Andrew Harrison's one-man performance of Murray Watts' stage piece on John Muir was a palpable hit at the JMT's wild land conference (page 11). Now a wider audience will have a chance to see it, at a lecture in New College, Edinburgh, at 3pm on 3 February. Murray Watts and a guest divinity lecturer will speak as well, and Andrew will also perform a piece about William Wilberforce.

The lecture is open to the public, and for more details see the *Members' News* that came with this Journal.

Sustainable activities

A fully inclusive trail orienteering course opened in Glenmore Forest this winter. It was designed by an inclusive group (both disabled and able-bodied participants) on last year's JMT Activities Programme, in partnership with Karen Darke and Interventure.

The activities programme, which is based on sustainable exploration, spent 86% of its income in local economies last year. In 2005 it aims to provide an ecological footprint for each trip and for the programme as a whole.

■ See the 2005 programme enclosed with this Journal or contact Sam Baumber, activities manager, on programmes @jmt.org or 0845 456 1783.

AGM
Deeside, 7-8 May



At a recent John Muir Award presentation in East Lothian: John Donohoe (far L) with the Award recipients and Councillor O'Neil, Chair of Community Services, Councillor Menzies, Chair of Social Inclusion Partnership, Mark Ruggeri, Countryside Ranger, East Ayrshire Council, Mark Gibson, Craiggengillan Estate and Mary Hamilton, East Ayrshire Strategy for Youth.

Toby Clark

All in a day's work for the local Trustee

One of the many tasks that my local Trustee, John Donohoe, carries out is helping to present John Muir Awards. A good example of this is a recent trip down to Dalmellington, East Ayrshire, where a group of 'excluded' young people and two youth leaders rose to the challenges of the John Muir Award with the assistance of the Countryside Ranger Service. The 15-week Lifeskills programme concentrated on teamwork and confidence building, self-esteem and attainment, all structured around the Discovery Award.

A programme of mountain biking, abseiling, wildlife surveying, conservation work and building nest boxes for the locally rare willow tit, might sound like an easy option to you and me, but in reality it showed fantastic dedication from young people with often unstable and chaotic lifestyles.

It would have been easy to have simply posted the well-earned certificates to the group. But you cannot over-estimate the importance of recognising achievements in person. By having a Trustee present, the JMT sent a clear message to the young people that their commitment to wild places is valued.

As John told the young people at the presentation, 'Coming to a place like East Ayrshire, that has had a difficult recent social history, and seeing young people taking responsibility for their special unique wild places, is something that John Muir himself would have been proud of.'

This is just one example of the unstinting work of the Trustees, and I know that John Donohoe is not the only Trustee to support the John Muir Award in this way. If members would like to find out more about championing

Andy Jackson

It is with great sadness that we pass on the news of the recent death of Andy Jackson, Access Officer for the Scottish Canoe Association. He died very suddenly of an acute illness on Saturday 4 December 2004. He was an extraordinary young man and a strong voice for the wild waters of Scotland.

the work of the Award on a voluntary basis, then please contact the Award staff.

Toby Clark John Muir Award Regional Manager—West Scotland

■ Trustee elections will take place this spring—see page 4.

New slides for the speaker network

We have just produced a brand new slide set (also on PowerPoint) – a set of stunning images, with accompanying notes, to take people on a visual journey round Scotland's wild places. We now want to expand yjr JMT speaker network so that we can be more proactive about arranging talks.

If you volunteered to give talks through the last survey of members, we will contact you to check your wishes. Others who would like to be speakers, please contact **Katie Jackson** at the Edinburgh office (promotions@jmt.org). One good idea is to include a few JMT shots at the end of your own presentation.

If you are able to get involved in any of these ways, we will be delighted to hear from you!

See you in the autumn!



The next JMT Journal will reach you in October. We are switching from new year/summer publication to appear in spring and autumn. This will help us to get more advertising support and we think will make a better match with most members' outdoor year.

A NEW VISION FOR ASSYNT



MM

A feasibility study shows clearly how important the natural environment is, and the vision and future plans for the area will be firmly based on this.

Director's Notes by Nigel Hawkins



THE DECISION BY THE VESTEY FAMILY to sell the Glencanisp and Drumrunie estates after 70 years of family ownership creates an exciting opportunity to safeguard and conserve one of the most outstanding areas of wild land in this country.

Covering 44,000 acres the area has a myriad of beautiful lochs and lochans with spectacular mountains rising in the landscape. Suilven, Canisp, Cul Mor and Cul Beag are all highly distinctive and much admired mountains and rightly described by a leading newspaper as 'Icons of Scotland'.

An attempt by the Trust to acquire the area would have been in accord with both the Trust's aspirations and ten year aims and a crucial part of this would have been engagement with the local communities who have such a personal involvement in the area.

The communities have taken a lead in setting up community trusts – the Assynt Foundation and the Coigach Community Trust – to register an interest under the new Land Reform Act which gives communities a right to buy at an independent valuation if Ministers accept their plan and consider it to be in the national interest.

A feasibility study carried out for the Assynt Foun-



Assiir Mathewson

Top: Cul Mor, Stac Pollaidh and Cul Beag from Coigach. Above, Suilven from Fionn Loch.

dation shows clearly how important the natural environment is, and the vision and future plans for the area will be firmly based on this. Management of the deer is important with vegetation monitoring determining cull numbers and creating a real opportunity for greater biodiversity and for nature to flourish.

JMT has indicated its willingness to help and has taken part in discussions with local people. But if the communities wish to go forward alone we will very much wish them well in the venture.

A great opportunity exists to plan – and deliver – a new vision for this stunning area.

Wind Power Concerns

Moves towards generating electricity from renewable resources continues apace with proposals for wind turbine schemes occurring in many parts of the country.

To be able to respond thoughtfully and constructively, the Trust has prepared a *Policy Statement* on renewable schemes as they relate to wild land. The statement is linked to the definition of wild land contained in the Trust's *Wild Land Policy*. Both documents can be seen on www.jmt.org or are obtainable in hard copy from the Edinburgh office.

The renewable energy policy statement takes the stance that renewable development should not take place in core areas of wild land and that developments proposed for the periphery and surrounding areas should be appropriate in scale and meet local needs.

We objected to the Sheildaig-Slattadale hydroelectric scheme on the basis that even a small scheme should not be sited in the heart of a key wild land area. Ministers agreed and turned down that application.

It was the first time the Trust had made such an objection and Trustees considered that it should only be in special cases where there is a clear threat to important wild land that the Trust should commit limited resources to making detailed representation.

However, the Trust has now made a second objection to a renewable energy scheme – this time the proposal for a 702 Megawatt scheme with 200 turbines in North Lewis. Although not in the heart of a wild area, the development is very much on the edge of wild land and the sheer scale of the proposed scheme led to the

‘What there are not differing views on is the need for national recognition of the plight of fragile communities’

Trust deciding to make representation on the issue.

In doing so the Trust is very aware of the desperate need for new economy activity in the Western Isles – young people are still leaving in search of jobs. The Trust takes the view that strong local communities are key to safeguarding and valuing wild land in this country – and that they are crucial stakeholders in that land.

In Lewis, as in many other communities, there are different views on renewable energy proposals. What there are not differing views on is the need for national recognition of the plight of fragile communities and for national action to ensure that if a renewable scheme is rejected – or toned down – on environmental grounds that there is a viable and immediate economic alternative. That is easy to say, not so easy to achieve – but it must be done.

In his message to the Trust's Wild Land conference at Pitlochry (page 11) our Patron the Prince of Wales called for greater investment in harnessing the power of the sea through tidal generation.



Windpower concerns at Ullapool.

I think everyone recognises that that is the long-term answer. In developing and realising the technologies involved, Government investment must favour the Western Isles and other areas which are not only of the greatest need – but which have such enormous potential.

Thoughtful Approach

Opportunities for renewable energy developments are being considered in existing and pending community buy-outs of land.

In North Harris where the Trust is in partnership with the community led North Harris Trust a great deal of careful thought has been given to this issue.

A balance is being sought between the recognition that renewable energy schemes can provide vital finance for investment in the local economy and community and the need to safeguard the wild beauty of North Harris.

Proposals are being considered for three wind turbines to be sensitively located near to existing infrastructure – roads, buildings, transmission lines – and not in the huge wild area of the estate. The three turbines would produce the equivalent of the power required by the 650 strong local community and would therefore be of modest scale.

The community is to be congratulated on taking such a sensitive and realistic approach. The proposals are in accord with JMT's wild land and renewable energy policies and we support them.

Another aspect of renewable energy is the upgrade of transmission lines to carry the new power south. In response to five alternatives for routing overland transmission lines to carry increased capacity from the Western Isles, including the controversial route from Ullapool to Beauly, the Trust has argued for all transmission to be by marine cable taking the power directly from where it is generated to where it is needed.

The Trust's response to the North Lewis wind turbine proposal and the transmission line alternatives can be seen at www.jmt.org and copies can be obtained from the Edinburgh office.



Haven For Wildlife

A remarkable woman who has been carrying out her own re-wilding project in a beautiful part of the Scottish Borders has turned to the Trust to help safeguard her project for the future.

For the past five years Sheila Bell has been working almost every day on creating a haven for wildlife on Glen Lude hill, a short journey south of the small Borders town of Innerleithen. She has been out in all weathers planting native trees and shrubs in a project which has become the passion of her life.

The area covers 400 acres and was bought by Sheila in two areas – firstly hill-grazing ground from the top down the north side of the hill and secondly the area on the south side planted ten years ago by the Forestry Commission. Sheila is planting native species in both areas and intends over time to re-structure the exotic trees planted by the commission.

'I would like the area to be a haven for wildlife and to show what can be done to give nature a chance to flourish. This is a legacy for the future', said Sheila.

Sheila approached the Trust to see if they would be willing to become the long-term guardians of the area. Trustees inspired by Sheila's personal project agreed to the land being transferred to the Trust with Sheila retaining a life rent. The arrangement means that Sheila has full management of and responsibility for the land in her lifetime and afterwards the Trust takes over responsibility.

In the meantime Sheila has welcomed advice from the Trust and is happy for the Trust to help with particular parts of the project including possibly assistance from volunteers.

Visitors will I am sure respect Sheila's project and privacy – and rejoice that someone else is, in her own distinctive way, 'doing something for wildness'.



Left, above: Sheila Bell with Chairman Dick Balharry, land & property manager Andrew Campbell and senior conservationist Keith Miller on their visit to Glen Lude Hill. Photos Nigel Hawkins.

John Muir Trust Corporate Members

Corporate Membership of the John Muir Trust is vital to enable the Trust to protect wild places in the UK and we are delighted to thank our current Corporate Members for their valued support.

Gold Corporate Members

Anatom
Heart of the Lakes & Cottage Life
Scottish & Newcastle plc
Graham Tiso Ltd

Silver Corporate Members

MusicScotland.com
Sheppard Moscow Scotland Ltd

Bronze Corporate Members

Carsten Flieger Fotografie
Hay Nisbet Press Ltd
Profitmaster Systems Ltd
Sky Trail Limited

Benefits of Corporate Membership

Becoming a Corporate Member gives an organisation the opportunity to benefit directly from its support.

- For example, we acknowledge the Corporate Members shown above on our website, where there are direct links to their own sites.
- Corporate Members are acknowledged in our Annual Report—a valuable tool for demonstrating support for the conservation of wild land.
- On your becoming a Corporate Member, we arrange to make a presentation of a framed print of one of our properties, providing a great PR opportunity.
- We keep our Corporate Members informed of the Trust's activities and are happy to arrange a display or posters about the John Muir Trust's work for your reception area for a short period, so that your staff and clients are aware of your support.
- Corporate Members will also be invited to at least one event in 2005, giving the opportunity to network.

Business Supporter Scheme

This scheme is for companies that wish to support on-going or one-off projects that may fit more with their aims, particularly as company priorities often change from year to year. Business Supporters receive similar benefits to Corporate Members.

For full details of how Corporate Membership or the Business Supporter Scheme can benefit your company visit the Trust's website www.jmt.org, phone Allison Lock on 0131 554 0114, or email her at fundraising@jmt.org.

Allison will be delighted to find the right option for your company.

JOHN MUIR TRUST LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

THE JMT Lifetime Achievement Award was presented last October to Dr Adam Watson, BSc, PhD, DSc, DUniv, FIBiol, FArcticINA, FRSE. It is only the second such award ever made.

ADAM SERVED THE JMT as a founding Trustee from 1984 till 1997, and as an Honorary Adviser till 2003. He brought to the Trust immense expertise and authority from a lifetime's scientific work on the ecology of the Cairngorms, an unparalleled field knowledge of the hills, and intense personal commitment to their special qualities.

Born in 1930, and raised in the North-East of Scotland, Adam worked for the Nature Conservancy and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology for 40 years, mainly in Scotland, but also abroad. Although he 'retired' from ITE in 1990 he continues to work at the Banchory research station as an Emeritus Scientist. His wide-ranging writings include 15 books, over 500 other publications, and over 160 technical reports mostly on scientific research.

Adam took to the Cairngorms as a schoolboy, inspired first by the writings and then by the avuncular encouragement of Seton Gordon. From the outset he took an intense interest in a wide spectrum of wildlife and natural phenomena; his detailed field notebooks, extending over more than 60 years, are a model of systematic observation and recording. Thus in the 1940s Adam began monitoring snow patches in the Cairngorms – work which,



Adam with JMT chairman Dick Balharry, who presented the award certificate at our Wild Land Conference.

with his long-term monitoring of animal populations, bears directly on climate change and its impacts. He undertook pioneering studies of animal population dynamics and behaviour, particularly on red grouse and ptarmigan. Adam's scientific work is recognised worldwide for its sustained geographical concentration on a single hill range, but also for its exceptional diversity of subject matter.

But Adam's enthusiasm for the Cairngorms goes far beyond his work in ecology. In the 1950s he was part of the Golden Age of Cairngorms mountaineering when Aberdonians had the scene very much to themselves, and Bob Scott's bothy at Derry was the focal point of weekend activity. At that time he did much



ADAM WATSON

rock-climbing, notably with Tom Patey, checking routes for the first Climber's Guide to the Cairngorms. Adam was a pioneer of Cairngorm langlauf ski-ing, including the first marathon ski traverse of the Big Six Cairngorms. He joined the Scottish Mountaineering Club in 1954, and was elected an Honorary Member of the Cairngorm Club in 1981.

Adam is also one of the great names in Scottish conservation. His active involvement as a campaigner goes back over 30 years. He played a central role during the Lurcher's Gully battle in the early 1980s; at the Public Inquiry in 1982, his intimate knowledge of the mountains, his detailed records, and his huge commitment of time and effort were major factors in the ultimate success of the conservation case. He served on the Countryside Commission for Scotland in 1990-92, and on the Cairngorms Partnership from 1995-97.

Adam has always scorned conventional career paths and establishment honours; but as well as his John Muir Lifetime Achievement Award, he holds an honorary Doctorate from Stirling University, and his portrait hangs in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Adam has an easy rapport with all sorts of folk, from farmers and ghillies to Prince Charles. He has an admirable capacity for plain speaking, especially in the North-East Doric. He learned Gaelic to allow him to record the dying vestiges of Braemar Gaelic.

But he also has a very deep feeling for the natural environment. When Adam talks of 'Mother Nature' you feel that he is voicing a personal relationship; when he talks of the Cairngorms his passion is evident – *'I have travelled the globe widely ... but every time I return I still think that the Cairngorms are the most wonderful place on earth.'*

'They are certainly not the most impressive peaks but they have a beauty and mystery all of their own and I feel at home among them.'

SUSTAINING

MARKING OUR 21st ANNIVERSARY, our international conference in October was the first of its kind in Scotland. It was aimed squarely at Scotland's decision makers. The background is that threats to wild land are increasing, and recently there has been the additional threat of renewable energy schemes in inappropriate areas. Government must be alerted to the imperatives of enhancing and expanding one of our national treasures – the country's areas of wild land.

A Declaration for the Wild (in full, inside back cover) was the outcome of the conference, and we report elsewhere on progress in taking this message to government.

The conference drew over 250 people from around the world to the Pitlochry Festival Theatre, and attracted coverage in the local and national media.

■ *These pages show only a few highlights, and more words and pictures are at www.jmt.org.*



Taking a break: the Festival Theatre and BBC outside broadcast unit.

ENERGY



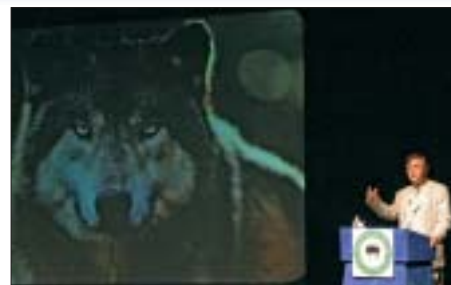
Cameron McNeish urged the Scottish Executive to act strategically, and proposed a moratorium on wind turbine masts more than 50m high. **Dave Morris** of Ramblers Scotland said that walkers, climbers and skiers who visit the world's mountains 'should connect their love of wild lands with questioning of our consumption of the world's resources'.

FOR ALL?



Lesley Riddoch, BBC Radio Scotland presenter, ran the discussion session on 'Wild land for all' with professional dispatch. Lesley went on to present her 12 o'clock show on the topic of wild land from an outside broadcast unit at the theatre (below L).

WILD THINGS



Several speakers wished that the larger mammals that used to roam Scotland were back again. The wolf is emblematic; beavers are a popular and rather easier prospect. The manager of one estate indicated that species reintroduction was firmly on the agenda, along with other rewilding measures. Above, with friend, **Nicholas Hanley**, a biodiversity expert with the European Commission, Brussels.



Fielding audience questions in the 'Wild land in Britain' session (L-R) John Thomson (Director, West, SNH), Donald John MacInnes (Chief Executive, Scotland Europa), Bob 'wise old man of the mountains' Aitken, Cameron McNeish (tgo editor and JMT Trustee), Martin Price (University of the Highlands & Islands).

WILD LAND

THE NAME OF JOHN MUIR kept coming up in the conference sessions. An interesting mention came from **Larry Downing**. An ex-President of the Sierra Club, Larry officially launched the John Muir Trust in Dunbar in 1988. Larry termed John Muir a great populariser, doing for wild land what Henry Ford did for the motor car and valuing wild land for its own sake, not for its commercial value.

On a bare stage with book, blanket, ladder, table and chair, **Andrew Harrison** (below) portrayed John Muir in a solo performance of a stage piece by **Murray Watts**. He inspired both the conference's first day audience and the Wild Land Charity Concert the same evening. There's another chance to see this performance, in Edinburgh – see the news pages.

JOHN MUIR



Conference photos by Rob Thomson, Lifetime Photography, Kirkcaldy.

SEEN & HEARD

■ *21 years ago the word 'wild' in this context was virtually taboo—it was feared people would think the Trust were a band of wild people with wild ideas and wild ways of doing things. Maybe they were right!*

Nigel Hawkins, Director, JMT.

■ *'The word is, the people will be back.'*

John Beatty quoting Jim Crumley.

● *John's AV presentation Wild—A dialogue of elements, now being seen round the country, was one of the visual highlights of the conference.*

■ *Holyrood [the Scottish Executive] feel they've done their thing with the access act. We need to keep getting at them, to keep it [wild land] on the agenda.*

Cameron McNeish.

■ *On power schemes: A moratorium at this point is a good idea. Oil development and fish farming were introduced at top speed and now windfarms are following. Some bad work is being done.*

Bob Aitken.

■ *The compensation culture: Tom and I offered to take children, teachers and parents from our local school for an outing up Ben Lomond. They had a wonderful day. We couldn't do it today. I've been retired 19 years and I wish I was still teaching!*

Rhona Weir, whose husband is the writer, naturalist and mountaineer Tom Weir.

PATRON'S MESSAGE

From HRH The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Trust

THE JOHN MUIR TRUST is now 21 years old – and in that period I have been Patron for some time – but in that short time it has made significant progress in managing wild land. If this work is to continue and develop it is vital that as many people as possible value the specialness of these places.

This is why I am so heartened that increasing numbers of young people are taking part in the John Muir Award, which encourages them to discover, explore and above all conserve wild places.

This year has seen some of the worst flooding on record in the British Isles and one can't help but sense that we are undermining nature's capacity to cope with the pressure which we are placing on her.

In many parts of the world governments and businesses are now working hard to reduce our impact on the global environment by seeking to increase the proportion of power generated from renewable resources. But I believe that great increases in renewable energy can and must be achieved without threatening the unique qualities of our most highly valued wild landscapes.

In this regard it must surely be sensible to pay greater attention to the potential of tidal and wave power generation in an island surrounded by such gifts from nature.

One of the major successes of the Trust over the last 21 years has been its ability to engage with local communities; seeking ways to address both their needs and the need to manage and sustain the natural processes that are at the core of wild land.

It is finding this balance which is posing a real challenge not just in this country but throughout the world, and the John Muir Trust is setting a fine example of how it can be successfully overcome.

The importance of the role of the John Muir Trust and others engaged in the care of wild land cannot be overstated. That is why I am delighted to be Patron, and I can only wish you well in what I am sure will be a most informative and enjoyable conference to celebrate your 21st birthday.

Prince Charles's message can be found in full on our website, www.jmt.org, as part of the Conference coverage.

MUSIC NIGHT



John Purser with students from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, seen rehearsing the world premiere of a piece written specially for the event. John is a former Trustee.

The premiere was part of our 21st anniversary wild land concert in the festival theatre, open to all comers and hosted by Iain Anderson of BBC Radio Scotland. Iain is a Celtic and traditional music luminary, and other giants of the genre were performing that evening.

They were Archie Fisher, Brian McNeill whose set included the John Muir anthem 'Muir and the Master Builder', and Mary Anne Kennedy, Ingrid Henderson and Arthur Cormack of the award-winning Gaelic band Ciar, who had the audience singing along in Gaelic. Or some of them.

Eric Maddern from Cae Mabon in north Wales sang and told stories; Andrew Harrison repeated, with a few extra touches, his solo evocation of John Muir (previous page).

■ **A FUNDRAISING DINNER, QUIZ AND AUCTION** at the Atholl Palace Hotel on the eve of the conference raised valuable funds for the JMT. We were helped by generous auction donations, and spirited bidders! Special thanks to SmartWool, who sponsored the pre-dinner drinks reception.



Clockwise from L: Myrtle Simpson, Hugh Simpson, Malcom Slesser, Patricia Howell, John Howell; Gina McNeish, Cameron McNeish, Jan Beatty, John Beatty, Miller Hogg; Andrew Raven, Ann Downing, Lawrence Downing.



TRUSTEES AT PITLOCHRY

John Donohoe, Steve Green, Peter Tilbrook (former Trustee), Paul Jarvis, Nigel Hawkins, Dick Balharry, Keith Griffiths, John Mackenzie, Will Williams, Chris Smith MP (former Trustee), Maude Tiso. Missing from the photo: Malcolm Slesser, Cameron McNeish.

GENERATIONS



HUNDREDS OF JOHN MUIR AWARD pictures, documents and Award materials filled the theatre's balcony (above). Downstairs was something else – the Zawinski family from East Lothian had brought their yurt, part of a family John Muir Award project in which they explored and recorded a river from source to sea. Daughter **Iona Zawinski** was the youngest person at the conference.

Visiting the Zawinskis' yurt (above R, with Iona) is **Rhona Weir**. Rhona's husband **Tom Weir** was first person ever to receive the JMT Lifetime Achievement Award. Tom, a pioneer defender of wild land, successfully opposed hydro plans in Glen Nevis in the 1950s. He's now in his 90th year and couldn't attend the conference, but he sent his best wishes from Gartocharn on Loch Lomondside. A meeting of minds (Right) – Iona with **Adam Watson**, Lifetime Achievement Award recipient of 2004.



OUR SPONSORS	ScottishPower <i>Principal sponsor</i>	BP	The Ramblers Scotland
		Scottish Forest Alliance Scottish Natural Heritage	Tiso Highland Spring

LEGACIES ARE VITAL TO THE JOHN MUIR TRUST in our mission to protect and defend wild land.

Please contact Scott Williamson, JMT finance manager, for an informal discussion, or for more information about how you could help our work through your will.

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

From a photograph by Alan Gordon

SANDWOOD STORIES



Mo Richards

EARLY DAYS ON AM BUACHAILLE

Ted Howard remembers the second ascent.

THE FIRST ASCENT had been by Tom Patey and Ian Clough in 1968. Tom Patey was subsequently killed abseiling off the sea stack at Whiten Head beyond Durness; Ian Clough was killed by a falling serac on Annapurna.

There were eight climbers in the second ascent in 1969—myself and Paul Nunn in alternate leads, and six brought up after a good belay was established—Clive Rowland, Tony Riley, Dave Peck, Malcolm Cundy, Trevor Briggs and Raymond Lambert (the man on the sea-washed ledge).

Knowing that the tide would be in by the time we descended, aid ropes were fixed from the base of the stack to the foot of the main cliff by Peter Phipps and Stephanie Rowland. It was not rough but a very strong rip current

runs between the stack and the cliff. To aid swimming, we had an endless loop of ropes between shore and stack. These were removed at the next low tide.

Tom and Ian had abseiled off a tape threaded round an 18-inch block wedged in a horizontal slot a few feet from the top of the southern face. It looked very dodgy to us. It was dodgy. The top of the stack was very friable, so we simply looped the whole summit with a rope. This was used to abseil down to the belay ledge, where a peg and sling facilitated another abseil to the stack's base.

Climbing the stack was just about eclipsed by the epic of getting eight of us back across and, as the tide also cuts off the retreat round the base of the cliff to the descent path, by the climb up the main cliff by all ten (including the two rope-fixers). Our thanks go to Dave Peck, loose rock and mud-meister, who led the lot.

Much to Tom and Ian's credit, we only found their single abseil sling on the stack. Our rope remained in position for over 20 years, and

Above L–R: Tony Riley's shot of the Alpha Climbing Club ascent in 1968; in July 1996, soon after the JMT bought Sandwood Estate, Keith Miller and Will Boyd-Wallis cleared the summit of rubbish.

became very difficult to see.

In one of life's strange occurrences, Paul Nunn asked me to accompany him and his wife Hillary to Sandwood Bay for another look at Am Buachaille in 1995, one week before he left on the ill-fated trip to Haramosh 2. In all the years of climbing in Sutherland since the 1969 ascent he had never been back. They were staying with me in my house in Sheigra at the time. We did a new route on the sea cliffs, traversed the ridges of Ben Stack, and walked from Tarbert to Scourie with Hillary—the latter two way out of character. When they left, I gave them a pot of my wife Sheila's jam, sold Paul a pair of Boreal rock boots in a bizarre reverse auction (Paul trying to get the price up,

ESTATES ABOVE

John Humphries

ENTHUSIASTS ENJOY the wild setting of the incomparable Sandwood Bay as they make their way north on the track from Blairmore. The JMT noticeboard at the beginning of the footpath gives directions to the far north-west of the UK, but few actually venture to these parts where even fewer people reside.

Yet beyond the boundaries of Sandwood lie two more defined stretches of land where wilderness is evident in its authentic form. Here is the Keoldale Estate that extends away as far as the eye can see to the moors of the Parph and the northern strip of the Pentland Firth coast managed by the Ministry of Defence. These are, literally, the estates above.

The waters that flow through Strath Shinary, Sandwood Loch and its magnificent beach mark the boundary of the land managed by the JMT. An exploration on the landward side of the valley, especially in the early Spring before the grass has

grown, can reveal some ancient settlements that are not marked on the OS maps. This is truly a forgotten region.

A man who is often recalled, however, is the late James McRory-Smith, the only recent permanent resident in this vast extent of moorland and lochan, who from the 1950s lived in a primitive dwelling at Strathchailleach. Yet he, perhaps, used his isolated existence of '40 years in the wilderness' to try to forget his involvement in the car accident in which his wife was burnt to death.

Sandy, as he was known, spent much of his time alone, fishing with remarkable skill, tramping the hills, listening to the radio and painting murals on the walls of his bothy. His artistic legacy remains. Sometimes, when shepherds were there, he would seek company at Strathan, a bothy still used by hardy travellers. They were the sort of people that he had discouraged!

However lonely the walker may be in this region, which has virtually no vehicular access beyond the road to Cape Wrath, there is always the elevated presence of the lighthouse and its beam. The structure was completed in 1828 by Robert Stevenson in the very top left-hand-corner of the British mainland. Its name is derived from the Norse for 'turning point.'

Yet 'wrath' is a word that could be asso-

ciated with the weather on this exposed headland where the Clo Mor cliffs have a sheer drop of 900 feet – the highest anywhere on the mainland. It is no place to be caught without shelter and so the bothy and beach at nearby Kearvaig can be welcome havens for those who need a rest on the long walk to the Keoldale ferry.

Apart from the summer minibus service to the now automated lighthouse, there is little human activity in the area. In the 1930s there were 35 people living on the Cape side of the Kyle of Durness and the old school-house is still evident. Up to ten children were on the attendance roll at any one time and the school remained open until 1947.

A building that is both derelict and symbolic is the Lloyd's Signal Station on the hill behind the lighthouse. Passing shipping had to signal details of their cargos and destinations. So here were ships, which often 'passed in the night', supplying information to a facility that, as time went by, passed, like its surrounding countryside, into oblivion. Do remember to visit sometime.

John Humphries is the editor of Hebridean Hostellers, the newsletter of the Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust that manages four crofters' hostels in the Western Isles.

Page head: from a photo by Jenny Hägglov.

me trying to get it down), shook hands through the car window and told him to take great care. In August we had a call from Reuter telling us of his death. How do they know? I've seen this behaviour before.

In those early days when virtually no climbs had been done, Tom Patey, a doctor living in Ullapool, had us all undertake a code of practice truly inspirational in its concept. He considered Sutherland to be God's last bit of sanity where, if climbs and adventures were not recorded, adventures would still be available for future generations. A climb undertaken from a guidebook is a done deal. An 800 ft rock face with no information available is the real thing all over again. We climbed under this ethos for over 25 years, only recording routes for ourselves—the Alpha Climbing Club. However, in the way things are, the routes were published for gain, and I for one think it was a great pity. Where will people go for their adventures in future?



Murals by James McRory-Smith on the walls of his bothy. Photo John Humphries.

GOING UP?

a joined-up vision for the Ben Nevis area



Catherine Williams

The JMT is one of four principal landowners in the Ben Nevis area. In 2003 we chose a partnership route to achieve our vision of how this difficult area should be safeguarded. Today we and other stakeholders work together through the Nevis Partnership. We talked to the Partnership's manager Jonathan Hart.

'Are you going up?' he wanted to know. He was a young Israeli lad, supermarket anorak already soaked. It was one minute to 9 on a stormy October morning and we were waiting to get in to the Nevis Visitor Centre. 'No, not today – and it's it's not a great day for it', I added. 'But I've only got today.' I had just come face to face with an overriding fact: they come here to get to the top, and more than a hundred thousand will get to the top, fair days or foul. That's the main reason why the Ben Nevis area needs concerted management.

About the partnership

THE NEVIS PARTNERSHIP is a charitable company, hosted by Highland Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. It sounds impressive. But it's nothing like the mini-national park office that I'd imagined. In a pleasant open-plan space in the Glen Nevis visitors' centre, with a desk and a big round table, you will find Jonathan Hart. At the moment that's it.

I put it to Jonathan (a John Muir Trust member, and ex-Outward Bound) that in the outdoor world, his was a job to die for. Well, yes and no. 'There's a huge amount of negotiation. Everything we do has to be joint, everything has to be agreed all round the table, and it's the

little things that take the most time.' His first year was mainly back-office work, putting admin and financial systems in place to enable projects to roll forward – projects long overdue, many would say. Here are a few things you'll see on the ground, now or soon.

Well under way is the track up the Allt a' Mhuillin into Coire Leis, from the treeline almost to the CIC hut. It remains a real mountain path, narrow, winding between the bigger boulders, without stone pitching, hopping the wider cross-drains on stepping stones. The push came not from landowners or quangos but from years of lobbying by the Lochaber Mountain Access Group. And among the public and voluntary-sector logos on the project signboard is the outdoor clothing company The North Face, who have committed £50,000 over five years. 'Hard' money like theirs is doubly or triply valuable for the extra 'cred' it gives the project and the public-sector funds it

Clockwise from above: view from the Mamores, one of the zigzags, funders of the Allt a' Mhuillin path, Jonathan Hart, the Ben summit, setting off from the visitor centre.

Nevis Partnership:
Web www.nevispartnership.co.uk
Phone 01397 701088



Alex Gillespie



Iain Ferguson



unlocks. Jonathan's pleased also at securing ongoing agreements that will cover upkeep.

Steall flats above the Nevis gorge is a wonderful place where the damage caused by heavy traffic on soft ground gets worse every year. Paths round here are due for attention this spring, with a lot of input from the JMT team who created the present, sustainable, path line up Schiehallion. The work area is between the gorge and the rising ground before Steall ruins. This is also the way from Glen Nevis to Corroul. Doesn't the partnership, representing business as well as conservation, have an agenda to exploit such remoter corners – by for example making easier links between the glens? Absolutely not, is the answer. Beyond Steall the Corroul path will remain untouched, apart from minor erosion control, as part of the wilderness core.

Further down the Water of Nevis, big improvements to the path between the lower falls and Paddy's Bridge (the footbridge about halfway to the road end) are under way. An intricate site: road, paths, car parking shoehorned round the falls. There are several payoffs to this project: encouraging visitors to leave cars lower down, and opening up the left bank of the river leading to the wonderful old pinewoods above the gorge.

Memorial cairns

A fourth project will create an all-abilities riverside trail beside the Nevis Centre, with a hide and including a memorial area. It's hoped that this spot, looking up to the Ben, will be acceptable to many of those who leave shrines and memorial cairns to loved ones on the summit plateau.

The next and perhaps most important path project is the repair

of the famous zigzags at the top of the Ben Path. 120 years old, they have at last started to suffer braiding and subsidence. Already in a poor state, they're deteriorating fast, and action is urgently needed. The partnership is applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for support. The work will be challenging in many ways: very high, very busy, very noticeable.

The meaning of the glen

Path work is a visible focus but there's plenty of 'softer' work in the portfolio. A heightened local sense of identity, the meaning of the glen and mountain to the current community, is one touchstone of the partnership's success. The first Glen Nevis Festival ran successfully in October, steered by the partnership and Lochaber's community arts team. Fèis Ghleann Nibheis had two dozen events, many for primary-age children. Another arts festival? – actually it is much more, especially for the way it ignores our notorious division between arts and sciences. To take one thread: Alcan did an archaeological survey of the lower glen which revealed many charcoal burning pits. The festival made the link with the national Big Draw week, and the result was a charcoal drawing day in a big tent, where children could 'meet the charcoal men', get their drawing materials, and then go on to some drawing using fresh Glen Nevis charcoal.

Looking further ahead, what issues might the partnership face in the year 2010? Top of Jonathan's list is 'the national park issue'. The partnership area is part of a much bigger land designation, the Ben Nevis and Glencoe National Scenic Area. Pressure for Scotland's third national park will build, he says, and we should think about the implications sooner rather than later.

Many issues are of course to do with visitor pressure. People are already thinking about the mountain biking world cup at Aonach Mor in 2007, which could bring 50,000 fans. The hunger to set foot on Britain's highest mountain will no doubt continue. With the glen road already at saturation in the summer, a transport and access strategy will be inevitable. Whether it means tolls or 'contributions', shuttle buses, a quota system or something else is still a bit further down the road.

Less tangibly, Jonathan knows that 'the wave of enthusiasm and cash' that launched the partnership will tend to flatten out. 'A big challenge for the next five years is sustaining everything that's now started to happen, and keeping our partners on board.'

And this is where we all come in: 'I want JMT members. We need energy and active involvement, and members of the JMT are the sort of people who can provide that.' How to get involved is up to members. It could be through a local group, or through education; it could be project- or activity-based, or it might come out of a different box altogether.

So don't wait to be asked. Jonathan Hart at the Nevis Partnership is waiting for your ideas and your involvement. If it works out you'll feel, like the hundred thousand summiters, that there's no going back, only going up!



Alex Gillespie



JMM

LIGHT AND FORM



DAVID WILSON's two paintings of Ben Nevis are among hundreds he has made in 10 years in Fort William. Drawn by the hills to Lochaber from his native north-east England, he came to painting after a degree in climatology and a first career in teaching. His paintings, he says, are 'impressionist works, studies in light and form – but mostly light'. J M W Turner is a major inspiration.

For some years David has worked from the Lime Tree Studio Gallery in his family's town centre home and B&B. At the moment it's a building site, as an 1800 square foot gallery is going up at the side of the Victorian house. It'll be, he says, the only sizeable public gallery space on the west coast beyond Glasgow. And he raised most of the £500,000 investment himself.

Also a qualified mountain guide, David loves the mountains and hates their exploitation, including, these days, the spread of wind turbines. The JMT's value, he says, is that it provides a platform for people to realise that 'at least in Scotland, we can prevent the worst happening'. That's why he's a long term supporter of the Trust, by giving the use of some of his paintings for cards, and donating a percentage of a recent show of paintings of JMT lands.

He's a founder member of Lochaber Mountain Access Group (LMAG) and in particular its work to restore and improve mountain paths, where even now he feels 'too little's being done, and too slowly'. He doesn't share anxieties about path programmes channelling excessive numbers onto the hills. 'LMAG don't want mountains to be exploited or overrun, but they do recognise people in increasing numbers want to enjoy the mountains—so sensitive and sustainable path work does need to be undertaken.'

- Gallery opening planned for summer 2005.
- www.limetreestudio.co.uk/



ON THE BEN

An echo of exhilaration

Resounds around an airy space

A darkening splendour is raised against the light

Age old, resolute and firm against the onslaught.

From 'North Face from Carn Mor Dearg' by Charlotte Wright

John Muir Award in action in Glen Nevis

John Cleare



In Glen Nevis, looking to Steall waterfall and the Mamores.

The Pupil Support Service in the Lochaber area have teamed up with the local Forestry Commission Ranger to work specifically with a group of young people with learning difficulties in Glen Nevis. The group worked towards their John Muir Award, and received support and co-operation from the Nevis Partnership.

The young people were encouraged to discover different habitats in the glen, and take responsibility for wild places by getting involved with some practical wildlife conservation.

Initially the group carried out surveys of the area to identify plants, insects, animals and birds that were found, and the results were mapped and recorded. A main focus for the conservation activity was practical tasks on paths in the area.

By simply spending time in wild places it was recognised that the young people gained a greater sense of nature, inspiring

deeper understanding and care. Duncan Cameron from the Pupil Support Service commented:

'The John Muir Award offers an excellent framework for learning out of doors. Our pupils have had the opportunity to develop many diverse skills including planning, team working, IT and presentation as well as hands-on skills in practical forest crafts. They have importantly also learned a lot about the natural environment within their own community.'

Finally the group shared their experiences of wild places through giving an enthusiastic presentation to their peers and friends back at Lochaber High School.

'The John Muir Award hits a spot that is often missing in education today, it is a fun way to learn', noted Duncan.

Toby Clark

THE BEN NEVIS MYSTERY

an investigation by Ken Crocket



SMC Collection

THIS IS THE STORY of a fascinating if flawed man – Clement Lindley Wragge of Ben Nevis fame. An impatient, irascible character who never learned how to massage the egos of others, Wragge was nonetheless an intelligent and cultured man. His story travels from the stones of Ben Nevis to the rock statues of Easter Island.

In his field, meteorology, he introduced several innovations and made suggestions which were later taken up by others. His name is linked to three countries – Scotland, Australia, and New Zealand, and he made his mark on all. It is also an unfinished mystery story, as you will see.

I had first researched into Wragge while writing a monograph on Ben Nevis. Chapter three of this is devoted entirely to Wragge and the Meteorological Observatory built on the summit of Ben Nevis, the ruins of which are visible to this day. Years later, I returned to Wragge's story, when I received an email from a descendant of Wragge. Terry Wragge, living in Australia, told me that Wragge's first wife was his great-great-grandmother.

Wragge was born in England on 19 September 1852. On leaving school, he rejected his parents' suggestion of the profession of law. For such a character, this would have been too staid a route! Instead, he sailed for Australia, working as a seaman. Some years were spent travelling through New South Wales and Queensland, following which he spent a year or two in San Francisco.

Returning to Australia in 1876, still only 24, he worked in the Surveyor-General's Department. One of his good ideas, sparked off by living in the arid areas of S Australia, was to divert water from the large rivers on the east coast, later a reality with the Snowy Mountains scheme.

He married his first wife in 1877, in Adelaide. He returned to England in 1878 and devoted himself to meteorology, taking charge of three stations in Staffordshire. At the same time, in Scotland the Scottish



A beturbanned Clement Lindley Wragge, 1852–1922.

Meteorological Society was drawing up plans for a mountain observatory, to be sited at the summit of Ben Nevis. Hearing of this, he offered his services for a preliminary series of observations. Wragge, described as a tall, lanky, gawky, red-headed man with big feet, would have his expenses paid by the society.

From June until the middle of October 1881, Wragge made a daily ascent of Ben Nevis, starting from Banavie at 4.40 am and making readings along the way, culminating in a two-hour session at the actual summit. The route followed a track along the south bank of the Allt a'Mhuillin, before heading up to the Halfway Lochan.

On the summit, he had made a basic shelter of stone and tarpaulin. Descending the mountain, again taking readings, he would regain sea level at 3.30pm. The unfortunate Mrs Wragge, meanwhile, made simultaneous observations at sea level between 5am and 6pm, 20 in all. She must have found it difficult to fit in the shopping!

For this groundbreaking work, Wragge was awarded a gold medal by the society in March 1882. In the summer of 1882 he again made daily ascents of the Ben, this time with the help of two assistants. Meanwhile, the fund-raising for the summit observatory was beginning, with Wragge applying for the post of superintendent at the new Summit Observatory, which was officially opened in 1883.

There are clues that he was not popular and, certainly, though he would have seemed to be an obvious choice for the job, he did not get it. He was not present at the official opening, in October 1883. But here we begin the mystery part of this story.

In his email to me, Terry Wragge told me that Wragge's first wife had died in March 1882, after being caught in a blizzard on Ben Nevis, taking supplies to her husband. This had come as a complete surprise to me, as I had never come across any such details during my research.

I decided to look further. A brief search of the newly digitised General Register Office for Scotland confirmed one of the points supplied by Terry. He had told me

The unfortunate Mrs Wragge made simultaneous observations at sea level between 5am and 6pm. She must have found it difficult to fit in the shopping!

that Clement had three children, one of whom, Rupert, was his great-grandfather. And Rupert's details are indeed on record, as having been born in August 1882, in the parish of Kilmallie, Argyll. His mother's details are also there, but they are extremely difficult to read. It looks like Louise.

But here is the first anomaly. Terry has said that she died in March 1882, yet Rupert was born in August of that year. In March Wragge was not making any known observations on Ben Nevis. Further, the Record of Deaths provides no entry for any Wragge. Are we looking at an embarrassing divorce with a dramatic cover-up story? I don't know and may never know.

To finish the points related to me by Terry – Clement re-married, to a Leonora, who then raised Wragge's three children. He was certainly back in Australia by 1884, because

Ben Nevis mystery – continued.



Gordon Jackson

Observatory ruins, with a dismantled summit shelter (now removed).

in South Australia he arranged regular observations on the summit of Mt Lofty for the purpose of comparing mountain and sea level observations, a natural continuation of his work on Nevis.

He was appointed Government Meteorologist in Queensland in 1887, and by 1893 had established many weather stations. The use of personal names for storms appears to have its roots with Wragge. Ivan R Tannehill's 1938 book *Hurricanes* says Wragge began giving women's names to tropical storms before the end of the 19th century.

Wragge in 1897 established a high level observatory at Mt Kosciusko, the highest peak in Australia, with the object of comparing those observations with observations at Merimbula on the adjacent coast. A parallel to his Ben Nevis intentions.

His weather bureau closed in 1903 through lack of funds and when he failed to get the head job at the newly established Commonwealth service, he left to set up an observatory in New Zealand. After several years' travelling he came to Dunedin, but it was 1910 before he finally settled in Birkenhead, bringing with him an Indian wife (presumably wife number three).

They moved into their home at 8 Awanui Street, Birkenhead. He founded the Wragge Institute & Museum, also the Waiata tropical gardens, in which he grew tamarisks and ginger, bananas and forty varieties of palms. Dressing in Indian clothing, and wearing a turban, this eccentric was widely believed to be Anglo-Indian. An enthusiastic lecturer, he began to attract tourists to the otherwise quiet and conservative Birkenhead.

Through lectures and newspaper articles, Wragge expounded his theosophical beliefs and displayed extensive scientific knowledge and inventiveness. He died on 10 December 1922 at the age of 70. He was working on a publication on the petroglyphs of Easter Island, on which he was, as with so many other subjects, an authority. His son Kismet K Wragge, 'First Officer' of the Institute, stayed on to keep the house and gardens open. Wragge is buried in the old Birkenhead cemetery.

Clement Lindley Wragge was a contributor to *The Tatler* magazine, with articles on the weather, and astronomy. The month before his death he had a note on astronomy, which included the following words. They perhaps make an appropriate end to this story of our eccentric weatherman.

And yet how lovely is Nature everywhere around us! But there are some people with eyes that cannot see, and ears that will not catch the music all around us. You are told to 'Prepare for Eternity,' and you are in Eternity this very minute, and always have been; and God, the Master Dynamo, is in you and in all things.'

■ Ken Crocket is a JMT Trustee and author of the definitive book on Ben Nevis.



John Muir Trust Activities Programme
www.jmt.org/programmes 0843 456 1785

LITTLE EARTH

a scientific celebration



David Wilson

Ben Nevis Observatory was twinned with Halde Observatory (Northern Norway) last year, to celebrate and connect the lives of two Victorian scientists who found inspiration at mountaintop sites. C T R Wilson, a young Scottish researcher, was stationed at Ben Nevis in 1894 and Kristian Birkeland, a Norwegian physicist, was responsible for building the northern lights observatory on Halde mountain in northern Norway in 1899.

The twinning was instigated by London Fieldworks as part one of their Little Earth project. Named after Birkeland's Terella machine, the project, 'an audio visual poem', explores how the scientists' investigations contributed to the advent of 'Big Science' and the contemporary understanding of space weather. On 2 October last year, a twinning ceremony in the West Highland Museum, Fort William, involved members of the Highland Council, the JMT, and the Royal Meteorological Society, representatives from Alta in northern Norway and people from the Lochaber area.

Artists Bruce Gilchrist and Jo Joelson of London Fieldworks introduced the Little Earth project. Later on board the Souters Lass Sami musician Marit Overli performed a joik (one of the traditional Sami songstyles) and Ali MacDonald, Lochaber Arts Development Officer, played the highland pipes.

The Little Earth project part two is a multi-screen video installation with footage shot at both mountaintop locations. It will open in the Wapping Project, London from 14 January–12 February before moving to Fort William where it will feature in the Mountain Film Festival.

Web: www.londonfieldworks.com

VEGETATION OF SKYE

Ben and Alison Averis

Keith Miller



Ben and Alison pick out some of the themes from nine years of surveying the JMT's unenclosed land on Skye.

YOU NEED ONLY LOOK at a map or photograph of this part of south-eastern Skye to start thinking that there might be some interesting plants in this wild and beautiful land of rocky mountains, cliffs, screes, gullies, woods, bogs, rivers, lochs and sea shore. And you'd be right. There's plenty of interest, as we've discovered having spent about seven weeks between 1995 and 2004 surveying the vegetation of all of the unenclosed land belonging to the John Muir Trust here.

This spectacular piece of upland scenery lies in southern Skye. It measures 14 km from Loch Coruisk in the west to Loch Cill Chrìosd in the east, and 20 km from Sconser in the north to Rubha na h-Easgainne in the south. The geology is very varied and the landscape equally so. Within this area are the smooth, scree-clad pink granite cones of the Red Cuillin, the bold grey granite ridges of Glamaig and Marsco, and the jagged black basalt and gabbro battlements of Blà Bheinn, Clach Glas, Sgurr nan Each and Garbh-bheinn. In the south and east are flat-topped basalt hills with conspicuous horizontal bands of cliffs, and low-lying areas of pale grey or yellowish limestone. Superimposed over the rocks are extensive blankets of peat which cover much of the gently sloping flatter ground.

Most of the low ground would once have been clothed by trees, with mixed woods of birch, oak, rowan, holly, hazel, wych elm, hawthorn and even pine mounting to about 400 m on the hillsides. Now it is almost all gone, lost to felling, burning and sheep



Rarities (above): the large, long-leaved, bright golden moss *Campylopus shawii*, and the moss *Myurium hochstetteri*, which has peculiarly thick, golden-tipped shoots. L, semi-natural woodland near Elgol. Below, dwarf juniper.

grazing over centuries to leave the desolate bare moorlands and hillsides which seem so precious and so special today. Though we may regret the loss of so much woodland, we have found that there is much to value in the vegetation which has replaced it. As elsewhere in the western Highlands and the Hebrides, with their cool and rainy climate, most of the vegetation is wet heath. Heather, bell heather and cross-leaved heath are dotted through a pale sward of deergrass and purple moor-grass which turns a beautiful golden colour in late summer. On steep and rocky slopes there are dark purple-brown heaths of heather and bell-heather. On level, peat-clad flats are blanket bogs, with an ochre-gold sward of cotton grasses, purple moor-grass, deergrass, heather and the fragrant bog myrtle growing through a deep quilt of Sphagnum mosses. Where water emerges from the ground, small flushes and springs cut through these heaths and bogs. There are small patches of grassland, and where the underlying rocks are rich in lime and other plant nutrients these swards can be full of small flowering plants such as lady's mantles, wild thyme, eyebright, buttercups, daisies, self-heal, water avens and fairy flax. Little patches of woodland, much of it with a low and scrubby canopy of trees, clings on in ravines, on cliffs and among boulders.

It is hard to be unmoved by the wildness and beauty of these subtly-coloured, sweet-scented patchworks of vegetation clothing the dramatic landscape. And wherever you go and the closer you look, the more you see. For example, on the black cliffs of An Stac is a vertical garden of rare herbs, ferns and grasses. Among the bare rocks of the high hills are scarce plants such as yellow mountain saxifrage, mossy saxifrage, alpine club-moss, alpine rock-cress, three-leaved rush, spiked woodrush, least willow and dwarf cudweed: plants which may have grown here ever since the end of the last ice-age about 10,000 years ago. On the wet slopes of the lower





Kath Miller

Beinn Dearg Mheadhonach, Beinn Dhearg Mhor.

Vegetation of Skye – continued.

ground are colourful swards of orchids and herbs such as ragged robin, buttercup, wild angelica, valerian, lady's smock and meadowsweet.

There is so much to say about these hills and too little space to say it, so let us just take two of the particularly special elements of the flora here.

The first is the oceanic bryophytes – mosses and liverworts which need a consistently wet climate with cool summers and mild winters. The western parts of Scotland and Ireland are ideal, as are the western coasts of Canada and Chile and, perhaps more surprisingly, high tropical and sub-tropical mountains in Africa and America and also the foothills of the Himalayas. This is thought to be the result of a once more continuous distribution which has been fragmented by the ice ages. So these are old species, and they tend to grow in stable, undisturbed places such as woods which have never been felled and heaths which have never been burnt. They come in a huge variety of sizes, shapes and colours, and some are rare. Two of the most rare are the small, delicate liverwort *Acrobolbus wilsonii*, found here in a sheltered gully, and the spiky-leaved *Scapania nimbosa* which grows in a few heaths on north-facing rocky hillsides. One of the more conspicuous plants is the bright orange liverwort *Herbertus aduncus*. Two oceanic bryophytes, however, are not only rarities which are more common in the Hebrides than anywhere else in Britain, but are also plants of open ground. One is the large, long-leaved, bright golden moss *Campylopus shawii*, which grows here in wet flushes and in the long, straight, shallow hollows in old lazy beds. The other is the moss *Myurium hochstetteri*, which has peculiarly thick, golden-tipped shoots massed together in tight cushions. It grows in rocky turf and on steep banks near the sea.

The second interesting element in the flora of this area is dwarf juniper: a coniferous shrub with prickly grey-green leaves borne on spreading, prostrate branches. Like most of the oceanic bryophytes it is sensitive to burning. At one time it may have been common throughout the west highlands and Hebrides, forming montane scrub above the tree-line. Now it is confined to rocky places where fire is not able to spread. The superb populations of dwarf juniper on the high, exposed granite ridges of Beinn Dearg Mheadhonach, Beinn Dearg Mhór and Beinn na Cró, and on the gabbro on Blà Bheinn and Sgurr na Stri, are some of the finest in Britain.

So this wild and dramatic place, so rightly prized for its scenery, has equally interesting and valuable vegetation.

Summaries of Ben and Alison's and of other surveys are at www.jmt.org/cons/surveys.html

cicerone press

North-West guide

Books

Jim Teesdale



The west flanks of Gulvain from Braigh nan Uamhachan, between Loch Arkaig and Loch Eil.

North-West Highlands, Hillwalkers' Guide by Dave Broadhead, Alec Keith and Ted Maden. Scottish Mountaineering Club, £22, ISBN 0907521819.

THIS NEW hillwalkers' guide replaces the SMC's 1990 district guide. This year's volume incorporates better design, crisp photography, new information and a fresh perspective—though at 1200 grams, it is a little heavy to carry into the hills.

The authors have extensive knowledge of this vast area and show a great love of the hills. Their stated aims are to introduce the routes, give background information, and provide a starting point for further reading.

There is an excellent introduction on the environment and safety, and detailed notes on geology and nature from invited specialists.

The region between Morvern and Sutherland is divided into 17 sections. The principal hills are often grouped to form appropriate circuits. Dozens of smaller peaks are a welcome inclusion. These include Ben Hiant in Ardnamurchan, and many of the remote Morar hills. There is more to hillwalking in Scotland than the 3000ft contour. Another appealing concept is the combination of Munros and smaller

peaks to make better routes.

There is much variety in the route descriptions, and no inference that these are the only ways up. Some peaks have many routes, such as Garbh Bheinn in Ardgour; others have one for both ascent and descent; and the rest have a definite direction, for example a traverse over Beinn Tharsuinn and Lurg Mhor in West Monar. Most importantly, the routes are enthusiastically described.

The design is flexible, and the text is sprinkled with maps and other data, enhancing readability. The photos are spectacular, with 150 colour pictures from 29 contributors, showing the country in different moods and throughout the year (Jim Teesdale has over 40 great shots). The maps are in colour and have been updated: crags have been removed but new forestry and tracks added.

The main digressions are concerned with climbing. Fuar Tholl and Triple Buttress are naturally included, but there is no elitism, as the authors mention the full gamut of climbs from the easiest to the hardest. Respect is paid to first ascentionists and the fell-running enchainments of the Mullardoch and Broxap (Glen Shiel Munros) rounds. As mountaineers, the

authors are clearly fascinated by the challenges of the hills. But there is much more to a climber's philosophy than speed and grading systems, as this work demonstrates. Exerting yourself in the hills develops a deep love and respect of the terrain, and a desire to preserve the mountains, the nature and local culture. This philosophy is evident in this work, and is one that I share.

With great photographs and inviting text, the North-West Highlands is luring me back to the hills already.

Nick Williams

Nick is a writer and photographer with 6 guidebooks on the Scottish Highlands and Islands published by Pocket Mountains. His next books, The Southern Uplands and The Lakes, appear in April 2005. Visit www.pocketmountains.com.

Gifford's classic climbs collection

The Joy of Climbing—Terry Gifford's Classic Climbs. Whittles Publishing, £19.95. ISBN 1-90445-06-3.

This has been a particularly difficult book to review for several reasons. I, for one, cannot decide if the 'book' is in fact simply a collection of published essays or a well connected series of linked chapters in the form of a book. I suspect the former.

As Gifford states, climbing is perhaps best described in the form of 1500 word essays. Putting aside the merits or demerits of the assembled whole, there are some delightful pieces, cameos almost, of some well known climbs throughout Britain, parts of Europe and the States. Gifford writes well at his best and evocatively too; his description of his partner's angst within The Chasm raised a wry smile, but equally I was annoyed at the error at the end of the chapter on Collie, when he fails to mention that the ill-

Books, cont.

starred SMC 'moratorium' on new route reporting in the NW of Scotland had been 'lifted' ages ago. This presumably points to an old article as indeed many of the other pieces must be. A helpful footnote of where and when published would have been welcome.

Despite the undoubted quality of the writing there remains a slightly aseptic feel about it all; granted it describes easier-graded routes, but these can be epics on occasion. It is the lack of a visible personality, the clean lines of the prose masking the person underneath. Writing can get in the way of an honest description at times and professional writers above all can be simply too slick by half, the basic gut level feeling of climbing smoothed over when a more jagged and raw presentation might work better.

Gifford is a world authority on John Muir the writer, and editor of several Muir collections, and so it is no surprise that the book has a final section on John Muir, in the form of a paean of praise, plus poetry entitled Ten Letters to John Muir – interesting stuff. All in all I like what I read, but have doubts to its composition. Compared to a painting, the subject is lost in the detail and a little more linkage and connection between the articles would have made for a better book.

John Mackenzie

● See members' offer opposite.

JMT MEMBER OFFER

Order direct and get Macc & Other Islands for £12 post paid, or two copies for £20. Other Graham Wilson books £10 per copy.

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Island traveller

Macc and Other Islands by Graham Wilson. Millrace Books, £13.95. ISBN 1 902173 155

Journeys, even mundane trips, can come alive if we are able to participate actively, view positively and, at the end of the day, recall passionately the places and the people. Good travel writers lead us through these experiences, for they have the gift of presenting information and incident through imaginative treatment.

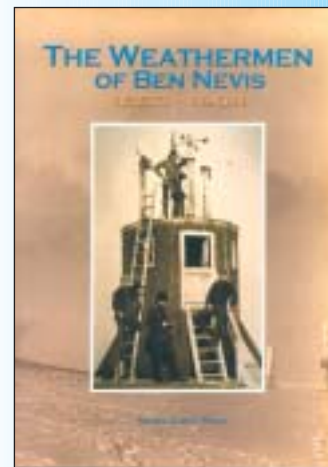
So I advocate your journeying through interesting places with Graham Wilson. He knows where he is going, from shore to summit, from barren rocks to treasure islands, and wants to share outlooks and insights as well as views spectacular and views held. Here geography, biography, history and story are skilfully blended.

Prepare for your visit to the remoter parts of the UK by enjoying his ways of looking at Jura and Sula, Mingulay and Hoy, the early provision of electricity at Kinloch Castle on Rum, the winter services on Barra, the religious demarcation zones of the Outer Hebrides and how Skomer's cliffs of freedom brought entrapment.

This book that brings landscape and personalities to life needs to have a place on your shelf and a corner in your rucksack. It shows us why people need mountains called Marilyn's to climb and individuals such as Millican Dalton to meet. If you still need guidance, call on Macc and Other Islands. You will be taken in the right direction.

John Humphries

John Humphries is the editor of Hebridean Hostellers, the newsletter for those who support the Gatliff Hostels (www.gatliff.org.uk).



Chronicles of the Ben's weathermen

This booklet (62 pages) is an excellent guide to Britain's highest ruins. At present, many who thankfully gain the summit of Ben Nevis will be puzzled by the remains of a building close by the summit – all that is left of the weather station built in 1883 with money donated by the public. The JMT, who now own part of Nevis including the summit plateau, will ensure that the ruins will be 'frozen' for ever more, with only remedial work being done to ensure public safety.

Marjory Roy, a meteorologist, has done a great service by gathering together no fewer than 67 illustrations, many deliberately sepia-toned, including people, weather charts and statistics, landscapes, as well as many fascinating stories from the 'glory' days of the Observatory. Her book makes a super post-Christmas present for anyone interested in the weather, Ben Nevis, or Scottish history. And that surely can't leave out anyone!

Ken Crocket

The Weathermen of Ben Nevis 1883-1904 by Marjory Roy appeared in summer 2004. Copies are £10 post paid from:

The Royal Meteorological Society, 104 Oxford Road, Reading Berks RG1 7LL.
www.royal-met-soc.org.uk,
0118 9568500.

Marjory Roy, Scottish Centre, Royal Meteorological Society, 1 Belford Avenue, Edinburgh EH4 3EH,
0131 332 3117.

Jesus and ecology

The Cosmic Circle: Jesus and Ecology, by Edward P Echlin. The Columba Press, Blackrock, Co Dublin. 160 pp, £5.99.

An unusual mixture of personal anecdotal material, a Christian paperback and an affirmation of the importance of the natural world. By a method familiar to readers of liberation theology and perhaps better known to environmentalists as 'walking-one's-talk', Echlin's method is information and exposition, followed by practice and on to reflection. In other words, not theories and principles but identifying your concern, finding a few kindred spirits and getting on with it.

Churchgoers will welcome the way in which he skips through the New Testament, setting Jesus firmly in his home country but avoiding all the familiar teaching of the gospels and pointing instead to the hills and the valleys, the rivers and the lakes, the darkness and the light that we normally simply pass over. No possible link with the natural world is missed and Jesus is the redeemer not

Binnein nam Beann



Mountains of Scotland

Six half-hour TV programmes on Scotland's mountains are now available on a DVD which will benefit the JMT. Originally shown on Scottish TV and Grampian TV with a Gaelic soundtrack, the programmes now have a choice of English and Gaelic commentary. They cover five mountain areas and a 'best of'.

■ Buy the all-region disc for £14.99 inc. p&p, either from the JMT direct (which earns us £1) or from www.mountainsofscotland.co.uk, or 0845 2250540 (to earn us 50p).

MEMOIRS OF A NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER

The Wind In My Face by Bridget MacCaskill.

Whittles Publishing, £19.95. ISBN 1 904445 14 4
This book presents some 300 nature photographs by Don MacCaskill, selected by his wife Bridget from the 4000 that he left when he died in 2000. In the introduction for each season, Bridget gives fascinating insights into the motivations of a nature photographer, and describes the often uncomfortable hours spent capturing the images. The photographs are beautifully complemented by poems by Jim Crumley.

Highlights for me are the sunlit close-ups of forest leaves, and the poem 'Woodland That Was Not'. In a book that places much attention on photo captions, I found some of them annoyingly anthropomorphic. Perhaps this just reflects how closely Don and Bridget MacCaskill have related to nature. We are fortunate that Bridget is sharing this personal collection with everyone who cares about Scotland's wildlife.

Katie Jackson



only of humanity but of the cosmos.

Non-churchgoers who sometimes claim they can worship God in the countryside and on the mountains will welcome Echlin's acknowledgement of John Muir as an environmentalist who has contributed to his faith, and will find their own understanding of worship enriched – and with no suggestion that church is where they ought to be.

The question he leaves us with is how we could be so appreciative of Christianity for what it says about people, and yet so unaware of what it has to say about nature and the universe; and Pope John Paul II is quoted with approval for his remark that 'Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God'.

Alec Gilmore

Ralph's further north

Hills of the North Rejoice! by Ralph MacGregor. Curlew Cottage Books, illustrated, £14.95 post paid UK, ISBN 0-9538703-2-4.

This is the second Ralph MacGregor 'live adventurously!' book, collected columns from the *Caithness Courier*.

The author lives near Thurso and many of his walking, biking, camping and swimming exploits are in

those high latitudes. But by no means all; Ralph ranges the central highlands too, and survives the West Highland way – in January, of course.

The biggest trip is 8 days by bike from Caithness to Kirkby Stephen by hill tracks and very minor roads; the wildest, the bringing in of the millennium on top of Morven, with gales, bitter cold and the Northern Lights, a night when the author deploys his oldest tent in case the new one gets trashed.

In the face of rain, midges, long miles and bad maps, the man (a JMT member) is simply indomitable, or perhaps barking. Either way, he's incapable of writing a dull sentence.

Read this book and bring wonder and madness back into your life.

MM

Publisher: 01847 895638,
www.curlewcottage.com

Members' Offers

The Joy of Climbing by Terry Gifford, *The Wind in My Face* by Bridget MacCaskill.

Shop price £19.95 each. Order direct from Whittles and get either title delivered to your door (UK) for £20.15, or both titles for £39.10.

Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath Mains Cottages, Dunbeath, Caithness KW6 6EY.
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Dùn Coillich recorded

Ravens over the Hill by Robin Hull. Perth & Kinross Libraries £9.95 + £1 p&p, ISBN 0 90545245 3.



A view through the ages over Dùn Coillich, the '1100 acre parcel of land' next to Schiehallion, in the care of the Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust.

The history includes much on the Scottish background, but JMT readers will likely find that Robin Hull's own researches in the field hold the most interest, and especially the stories he has gathered about the people who lived and worked in this area: keepers, farmers,

foresters, roadmen, and landowners too. One valuable source is Ian Campbell, whose son Andrew is the JMT land and property manager. There is a wealth of colour and facts here which on their own would more than justify the book.

Its other main themes include the clans, the estates and the highways, and some fascinating facts on public health. It looks forward, too, to the potential of 'this bald, unremarkable hill' where at present the trust is establishing an ecological and historical baseline. This book will surely be a valuable part of that process, and author and publishers are to be congratulated.

● *Perth & Kinross Libraries:*
01738 477016,
www.pkc.gov.uk/library.

Backpacker's Bible

The Backpackers Handbook by Chris Townsend. McGraw Hill, £11.99. ISBN 0 07 142320 6.

This substantial handbook by the *tgo* gear editor (and Journal contributor) is a manual on how to operate in the wilderness, and how to experience wild places and enjoy nature without suffering consequences such as blisters, hypothermia

and fights with bears. It contains vital information that every outdoor enthusiast should know, predominantly selecting the right footwear, backpack, shelter and food, and keeping warm and dry. All of this is very current as the book is now in its third update. Importantly for backpackers in Scotland, the 'vapour-barrier' theory is explained which is a good way of combating often Baltic conditions, and usefully it describes in fine detail how to use those GPS and altimeter gizmos.

An urban myth exists about a 'fresher' to the local mountaineering club who can't figure out how to attach his new gaiters to his wellies, and asks the club secretary if he should cut holes in them. This book will stop an individual making a similar faux pas in front of hardy mountaineers. Best of all, it makes good reading which will enhance the quality of your time in the wild.

Magnus Ross

STOP PRESS

Scottish Hill Tracks 4th edn has just been published at £16, and the new hill tracks map is available for the price of an sae from Scotways, 24 Annandale Street, EH7 4AN. Watch this space.

Boreraig waterfall

IAIN ANDERSON

Water, descending from a cleft rock,
drops a clear ten metres,
twisting, frothing silver and white,
making never ending circles
in the pool below.

The stream, now in spate,
splits the lonely silence
as it clears the rock.
A roaring, hissing sound,
mingled with splashing as it falls,
batters the tranquillity
of the pool below.

Within these sounds I half hear
the shouts of children,
eagerly dancing into
the cool refreshing water,
and the voice of a mother close by.

The after rain, azure sky throws heat
bouncing off mossy stone walls.
Those walls, which once were home
to the children of the clan, lie gaping
in this now deserted glen.

Rock slabs running down to the beach
jut into the sea-rolled dark pebbles,
and the gravel, ground down
into sand by the tides,
shifting noisily under each wave.

Rowans sip the burn. Twisting
roots cling to a fastness or rock.
They shade a path where the otter
still makes its humping way,
down to the empty shore.

On the headland, reaching out afar
to the sea-stretched dim horizon,
lie my ancestors, hidden beneath
piled stones in oval grey mounds.
Un-christianly laid to rest.

As I wander from home to home,
or finger the old standing stone,
I remember the joy of this place,
the work, and the ceilidhs we had,
the storms and the summer's sun.

But I can tell nobody now,
not the walkers, nor tourists, who
make a pilgrimage over the hills
to this fabulous glen of the dead.
If only—if only I could speak.

I hear their boots up the track,
and their voices, which mingle
with the gull's cry. Now I must go,
sliding silently I will soon melt
into stone roofless walls again.

On not conquering the Munros

The July Journal was most enjoyable and I particularly liked the short story 'Our Last Munro' by Eric Yeaman. However, this sweetly sad tale was marred by the following line: 'Our aim – to conquer all the Munros'.

The dictionary definition of 'conquer' is '...overcome by force, vanquish, get the better of, bring under bondage, subjugate...'

Therefore, I take great exception to the above terms being applied to the mountains; a practice usually employed by tabloid journalists and those with no love of the hills. No mountain can ever be 'conquered'. They were here long before us and shall remain long after we have gone.

I personally consider it a blessing and a privilege to walk upon the mountains and am both humbled and moved by the beauty and power of nature.

Lynne Rees
Builth Wells

Yaks for life

As a member of the JMT I understand that wilderness is something precious to treasure. I am also aware that trying to make a sustainable living in some of the world's wild and beautiful places is not easy. We 'escape' to the wilderness for a while to appreciate its beauty but for those whose home is the wilderness it presents a harsher reality.



Those, like me, who have been lucky enough to have visited the Himalaya may well have encountered a splendid high-altitude species of mammal, the yak (*Bos grunniens*). The yak is the only large and economically useful animal capable of living in the harsh environment of the Tibetan plateau and is an essential component of the life of the nomad communities of the regions of Amdo and Kham. During recent years, extreme weather (including prolonged blizzards in 1995/6

and flooding in 2003) has caused severe losses to the yak herds in these regions. In addition to providing emergency relief to the nomads, the Tibet Foundation has established a 'Yak for Life' programme which distributes animals to the hardest hit nomadic families. It costs just £85 for a female yak (dri) with calf. Information about the programme is available from the Foundation, 020 7930 6001, and on the Foundation's website www.tibet-foundation.org.

Marie Rabouhans
London

Common sense about parking

I'm seriously worried about some JMT members. On the one hand, not a journal goes by without some member berating the Trust for not buying huge swathes of land all over the place (Cape Wrath, Bernard J Heath, Journal 37). Then we have a member objecting to paying car park charges on a site not even owned by JMT (Pay and Display, John Allen).

Is it not common sense that if you can afford the car to get there then a small fee to park it is not unrealistic? If you fill the car and all contribute then the cost will be pence anyway and if the car park owners offer to share the proceeds then JMT might have the resources to start buying some of this land that members so desperately want!

John Wright
Thurstonfield, Carlisle

Developing the Trust outside Scotland

With reference to Peter Spratt's reply (Letters, Journal 37) to my earlier letter, my concern was and remains twofold. Firstly, the members' views had been sought and given: why go to the trouble of conducting the exercise in the first

place if the results are to be ignored? Secondly, I believe there is a serious risk of stretching our resources too thinly.

On the first point, it seems odd to argue, as Mr Spratt appears to do, that the existence of a minority of 22% requires that its objective be pursued. Surely it is the majority whose point of view should be recognised? I am unhappy to note that the Trust is still persevering with the notion of land purchase in Wales, despite its members' disapproval.

On the second point, I of course agree that there are areas of wild land elsewhere in the UK which should be safeguarded. I am however of the opinion that the Trust is not in a position to tackle these without a reduction of its effectiveness in Scotland.

Dr J A Bennett
King's Lynn, Norfolk



Wild land and Schiehallion

Further to Dick Balharry's piece in Journal 37 (July 2004) entitled 'Eagle Country is Wild Land', I would like to suggest that JMT is in a position to 'improve' one of its existing properties towards a wild land ideal, an ideal including the possible future presence of eagles, namely on Schiehallion.

The aims and objectives for the mountain have been well rehearsed and are available on www.jmt.org/cons/sch/manage.html. It is particularly important that we seek co-operation from our immediate

YOUR LETTERS

- please send letters to the editor at the post or email address on page 1
- send them by 1st July at the latest
- keep them as short as possible. Letters are accepted subject to editing for length.

Letters

neighbours the Forestry Commission and the Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust (the Dùn Coilich Group), from Perth & Kinross Council, and from local interests via the Schiehallion Group.

Schiehallion has always been a popular venue for visitors, and now that the new path is a well-known feature, even more visitors can be expected in the long term (10 to 20 years). It is not difficult to imagine that the next problem concerns car parking. The present car park owned by the Forestry Commission, at Braes of Foss, is inadequate. A long term project needs to be devised that will satisfy as many of the interests as possible, but as far as JMT is concerned, keeps the improved welfare of the mountain at the top of the agenda.

All parties are aware of the situation, and want an amicable solution. Having mulled this over for some months, I wrote a discussion paper entitled 'Wild Land and Schiehallion'. JMT members particularly are invited to consult this document and make comments, any comments at all, but particularly constructive comments.

The easy answer is to enlarge the car park, improve the toilet facilities, even widen the approach road. The eagle's answer might well be to go somewhere else, since they shun people.

A long-term solution should benefit

both people and eagles. If we can accept that eagles are a barometer of wild land, then the people, who have a choice and want more wild land, need to try for a solution that might include eagles. In the end the eagle will have to take it or leave it, and at present they leave it.

My contention is that a new car parking arrangement needs to be devised, and one which more appropriately than now solves JMT's problem, and blends with our neighbours' visions. It will be worth taking some time to devise this, and a financial package will be required to make it happen.

If JMT's good works are judged by 'productivity', how is JMT productivity judged? By how it increases its wild land credentials? Or will Schiehallion be just another country park?

Any ideas?

John Allen
Killin

● *John has opened a discussion on this topic on www.jmt.org. Reach the discussion through the news pages.*

What to wear on the hills

Thanks for the reference (Letters, Journal 37) to what Walter A Smith carried or suggested for walking in the mountains. When I'm reaching for waterproofs and lightweight this and that I sometimes think of George Borrow who traversed Wild Wales with a spare shirt, pen and ink and a bible, in a small leather bag.

Even Wainwright on an early walk the length of the Pennines carried very little and had to use his shirt tail for handker-

chiefs.

I wonder at photographs of a previous generation in collars and ties, or in long skirts or even short skirts. Did they go to Tiso's for their Harris tweeds? Did they suffer from exposure?

I wonder if it was easier to do long walks when almost every cottage or barn was a place to get refreshment or spend the night.

Jean M Mills
Eilean Scalpaigh

● *For John Muir's use of the necktie in mountain rescue see Terry Gifford's 'Hopelessly and forever a mountaineer', Journal 34-Editor.*

Markers on the Ben

I've read with interest the debate about waymarking on the Ben and elsewhere. My feelings are simple: there should be no new man-made features, and the existing ones should be removed as quickly as can be achieved. These include the cairns, the abseil posts, the Number 4 gully marker, and the Coire Leis shelter. I'd be tempted to include the CIC hut, but I'll leave that battle to another day!

Robert Craig
Paisley

crianlarich ad

sandwood

heart of lakes

IAN HUGHES

Ian Simpson Hughes, Bsc, PhD, FRSE, who died in June 2003, was by any standards a most remarkable man. A particle physicist of international repute, Professor and Head of Department at the University of Glasgow and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh at 44, he was the most friendly and human of people with a truly great sense of humour.

In 1939 he was evacuated for two years to his uncle's farm near Huntly in Aberdeenshire, attending the small country school. It was during this time that he was confronted by a seminal introduction to nature and to wild places. This was in many ways a turning point in his life, for from then on he was drawn to the hills and the great outdoors. On holidays as a teenager in Braemar he ranged on his own, deep into the high Cairngorms. In retrospect he always said that this was quite dangerous and would never be accepted nowadays.

During a year of post-doctoral research in Berkeley, California, he took time with his family to visit the Muir Woods and Yosemite parks and this had a tremendous influence on his life. An avid hillwalker and climber, he and his wife Isobel completed the Munros in 1985. Both his children and grandchildren have inherited his love of wild Scotland and this was a great joy to him. He was a longstanding member of the John Muir Trust and, until shortly before his death, of the Schiehallion Group. His interest in Schiehallion stimulated him to revisit Maskelyne's pioneering work to measure gravity on that mountain, and this resulted in his article in the JMT Journal & News (No 29, 2000).

Ian Hughes was a widely read person with a great many interests outside his work. He was also a very tolerant man, as many of us know, for when confronted by an incorrect statement or conclusion he would take time to correct it in the most gentle and patient manner. It must also be said that he was a singularly courageous man. He bore his final illness with a fortitude and determination which enabled him to come out of hospital to celebrate his Golden Wedding anniversary just a few days before he died.

He is survived by his wife Isobel, daughter Anne and son Colin, and grandsons Hamish and Malcolm, and is sadly missed not only by them but by all who were privileged to know him.

David Maisels



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paramo directional systems

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To change or withdraw the ad, please contact the editor by 1 June.

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AGM weekend. Deeside, 7-8 May 2005

HAVING STUDIED the Trust's Wild Land Policy on the website, I have to say there are aspects of it that I find most disturbing.

At best the document* could be considered rather highbrow and academic, and at worst some paragraphs could be construed as being secretive, selfish and elitist. We seem to be behaving far too much like a person who buys a Rembrandt and stores it in a bank vault. I am no expert on John Muir, but surely he was a socialist and his message was not only that wild land should be preserved but also that it should be available to everyone.

Should not the primary policy and object therefore contain the phrase *and to empower/encourage/enable more people to experience wilderness and be uplifted by it?* (I fully appreciate that the John Muir Award moves in this direction.)

The Trust's properties *are not our private fiefdom!* They were bought to a large extent with public money and as such are quasi public land. We are essentially custodians, and we have an obligation not only to conserve and protect them – which we are doing very well – but also to facilitate public access so that as many as possible within reason can experience wild land. This I feel we are *not* doing well at all.

What are we doing for hill walkers? and additionally what are we doing for our members? The answer at the moment is 'not a lot'. We have repaired a path on Blaven and one on Schiehallion, and I understand we are to install a toilet block at Sandwood. But unless we engage more actively with the hill-walking fraternity who are our biggest natural source of new members, the Trust is in danger of withering and becoming irrelevant except to a small chapter of dedicated conservationists. This is not in the spirit of John Muir.

■ For example the policy says that we should avoid the 'direct promotion' of any particular area. The JMT's policy purports to be 'neutral' towards walkers I

Wild Land Policy – available under 'policies' on www.jmt.org, and on request from the JMT main office.

What are we doing for hillwalkers? And what are we doing for our members? Not a lot.

TONY GLADSTONE wants the JMT to empower and enable more people to experience wilderness.

think – but my view is that it should be much more positive. Compared to other organisations such as the (Scottish) National Trust, English Nature etc. it is extremely unfriendly. At every entry into one of their properties there is a map with points of interest, directing people to the web site and inviting a donation. On summer weekends in the Lakes there are often kiosks in the NT's principal car parks signing up new members!! It is the lack of this sort of activity – communication with the public – that leads to the JMT being thought of as secretive.

■ The JMT does not advocate the construction of new paths in or into wild land. While I accept that there is currently not much need, I cannot agree with the principle that no new paths should *ever* be built on wild land. We have spent an immense amount of time and effort restoring the woodlands at Li and Coire Dhorrcail. It will not be really mature for at least another ten years, but at that time the only people to benefit will be those at Arnisdale who can look across the loch! I would propose (in about 10-15 years time) the construction of a shore path from Barrisdale via Inverdhorrcail to Li and thence over the Mam Li to Inverie. Walkers could then undertake a splendid (2 day) circuit over the Mam Barrisdale, camping at Barrisdale or Inverdhorrcail and returning to Inverie over the Mam Li. Sensitively constructed paths do not impinge on wilderness – they should be regarded simply as viewing platforms.

■ One thing we hillwalkers want is that the existing footpaths, both those on the map and those created by usage, should be adequately maintained; to make their

passage more of a pleasure, but especially to prevent unsightly lateral erosion as occurred on Schiehallion. The Trust's properties in Skye have a large number of footpaths on the map. Maintenance of these should I believe be a major part of the Trust's program and would probably create the equivalent of at least one man's work for the entire year. The track to Camasunary is in reasonable order, but the section between there and Coruisk was exhibiting severe lateral erosion four years ago: it is unforgivable I think that nothing has been done. I believe such tracks should be inspected at least twice a year and kept in good order. This would be expected of any other landlord. Paths on the Dunvegan estate have been worked on extensively in recent years.

■ There is also nothing in the policy about the problem of human waste and fouling. We should learn from the New Zealand Department of Conservation who provide pit toilets along most major trails. These are relatively cheap, normally hidden in woodland and fully vaulted to prevent contamination. They are also remarkably odour-free inside and out, and require minimal maintenance.

On a work weekend camping at Inverdhorrcail in May, there were 21 people, I think. I assumed a portable toilet would be brought by boat from Arnisdale and was appalled that this was not the case. I don't know just how much damage is caused, but in principle I find it quite indefensible that the John Muir Trust – that great defender of wild land – should be encouraging its members to crap all over it!

Should we promote our properties as Tony suggests?

Is the wild land policy elitist?

Should we do more path work?

And what about toilets?

Let us know what you think, please – by 1st July.