

North East Mountain Trust

MOUNTAIN VIEWS

Number 49



Loch Tulla

Graham Neville

International Year of Mountains

Cairngorm Railway Saga

Slugain Lodge

Environment Earns Billions

2002 No 1 (Spring)

£1



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Editorial

2002 IS INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MOUNTAINS, a consequence of the Rio Summit 10 years ago. Events are happening all over the Globe, even in Britain, although none of the UK governments is supporting it. The nearest of these is in Ballater — a weekend hosted by NEMT in conjunction with *Ballater Walking Week*. See Roger's article inside, and the enclosed flier which has details and booking information.

Almost as long ago as the Rio Summit, Roger became NEMT Chair, but now he is standing down, and Jennifer moves from Vice-chair to Chair. Roger will, however, remain an active force in NEMT's campaigning efforts. See the article inside.

For the second time in under two years we report on a plan for housing on a very special woodland site on Speyside. Last time it was Boat of Garten, now in Nethybridge.

What we think was the last purely local climbing shop in Aberdeen (Marshalls) has been taken over by NevisSport. NEMT members will, however, be pleased to learn that they may claim 10% discount at NevisSport, except for some items already at rock-bottom prices.

The "Editorial Team", Jennifer Cook, Will Campbell, Denis Wilson, David Windle.

Opinions expressed in individual contributions are not necessarily the views of NEMT nor of the editors.

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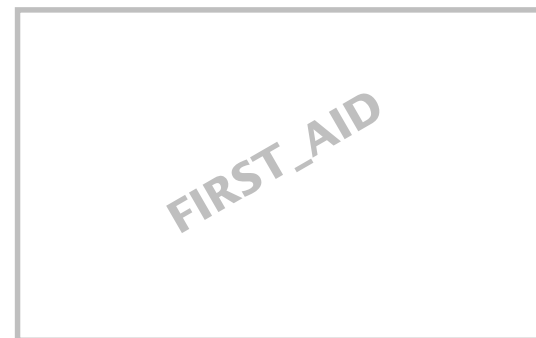
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International Year of Mountains Ballater Weekend Event

If you are anything like me your world view of geography is dominated by where important mountain ranges happen to be. I cannot look at any atlas without drifting towards the rugged areas where contour lines squash together revealing the peaks and summits of unseen mountains. There is where my imagination always takes me. My family holidays, much to my wife's chagrin, centre around mountains — Scotland, Wales, the Alps, Pyrenees, New Zealand, you name it. In Bulgaria to see the solar eclipse we all had to climb the country's highest peak while we were waiting for it to happen. In Norway in May last year at a conference, I had to hire a car, drive 200 miles, climb the two highest peaks in deep, deep snow and drive back to the conference. I've even climbed the highest object in Florida — that it was a watchtower in a citrus grove made little difference to my altitudinal acquisitiveness. With my partners in crime, Alistair Beeley and Andy Christie, I've climbed a number of Alpine peaks and, with Alistair, been to Alaska, and Africa too, in the pursuit of more spectacular mountains to climb.

In Africa though I saw something different. It wasn't just the awesome vistas of Mount Kenya and of Kilimanjaro, both of which were lifetime experiences in their own right, it was a human element. I was struck by the lives of Kenyans and Tanzanians living on the vast slopes of these mountains and by their struggles to make a living. I was touched by the dignity with which a Kenyan couple emerged from a crude plantation hut, roofed with banana-leaves, dressed in the best clothes they had and set off, shoeless, to walk 10 miles to church on a Sunday. I was impressed by the sheer determination of a Masai woman hell-bent on selling me a bangle I didn't want because it was nothing to me but the price of the family's weekly food to her.

This year is International Year of Mountains (IYM) and I empathise instinctively with its aims because I have seen, albeit fleetingly, just how hard it can be for some communities to live amongst the world's most spectacular mountains. In Scotland, we don't have that scale of problems but we still have difficult choices to make in how we manage our own world class mountain areas.

I want to tell you a little about IYM and why the Trust felt it should contribute by holding an event in Ballater in May this year.

IYM was conceived during the pivotal 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from which sprang Agenda 21 and the global blueprint for sustainable development into the 21st century. **Chapter 13** was concerned with "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development", and placed mountains on an equal footing with climate change, tropical deforestation and desertification as a key global issue in respect of the pressures we place upon them. In view of this the UN designated 2002 as International Year of Mountains and has asked Governments, NGOs and UN organisations world-wide to take positive steps to highlight the global importance of mountain ecosystems and the threat to communities that depend on them.

The overall aim of IYM is: *to ensure the well being of mountain populations by promoting sustainable development of mountain I regions*.

Specific objectives can be summarised as follows:

- To ensure well being of mountain communities by promoting conservation and sustainable development in mountain areas. To increase awareness and knowledge of mountain ecosystems, their

overriding importance in providing strategic resources to both highland and lowland people, particularly water supply and food security.

- To promote and defend cultural heritage of mountain communities.
- To pay attention to frequent conflicts in mountain areas and promote peace-making in those regions.

Achievement of these objectives should be approached through:

- Information generation and exchange;
- Awareness raising and sensitisation;
- Education, training and extension;
- Documentation of best practices and formulation of recommendations based on successful field case studies; and
- Promotion of mountain-specific policy formulation and legislation.

At the regional level IYM strongly encourages mountain conferences during 2002 and discussions regarding interactions between upland and lowland communities. Ultimately, IYM is asking governments to provide guidelines and appropriate

policies for sustainable mountain development and conservation. Currently, 46 countries worldwide have set up national committees to promote IYM.

The Trust has taken this call seriously and considers that IYM is an appropriate time and an apt context in which to bring people together to discuss issues in our own mountain backyard. A number of the IYM objectives and all of its suggested approaches are completely relevant to the problems we have in managing pressures we place on the Cairngorms. Even more pertinent to IYM is the imminent Cairngorms National Park and, how the Park Authority will manage recreational use.

So we have organised a great event in Ballater for the last weekend in May. It will be an activity-packed few days with lots of entertainment and walks centred around a seminar with the theme of "Recreational Management of the Cairngorms". We have attracted a number of high profile speakers for the Saturday

seminar and this will be a very interesting day on its own. We also have a Friday night slide show from Aberdeen climber Ronnie Robb followed by a Pub Quiz; a Saturday night Ceilidh with a really good band; led walks varying from young family to fitness freak level on Sunday and a walk with Adam Watson to see the issues for the management for yourself with a Cairngorms expert. Ballater is a fantastic venue, the great outdoors surrounds the town and the local community is keen to welcome us with lots of hospitality.

Conscious of the importance of IYM to local communities our event will also be the launch point for Ballater Walking Week, so we are collaborating with the local organising committee, Ballater Royal Deeside, for this week of further entertainment and led walks in the surrounding hills and mountains. Look out soon for a flyer advertising the Ballater Weekend event and book your

participation early so we can make it a great success for everybody. Bring along your family and persuade your walking and climbing friends to join in — they will have an enjoy-

Roger Owen, *Organiser NEMT Ballater Weekend*

able time in good company.

I, and other members of the Trust General Council, look forward to meeting you in Ballater!

Websites with further information:	
IYM	www.mountains2002.org/
Scottish national IYM project	www.iym.org.uk
Ballater Royal-Deeside	www.royal-deeside.org.uk

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The Cairngorm Railway Saga

Well, it's here! Construction has finished and we now have to see what we've got to live with. One thing's for sure. The coming years are going to be eventful. There are many twists and turns to come before this particular saga is over.

How is it running? Well, commissioning problems are still ongoing. They range from minor faults to more serious events. For example, in mid-January, the carriages came to an emergency stop, throwing passengers in the ascending carriage against the front window and seats. Fortunately, injuries were limited to cuts and bruises. Another time, also in January, the power failed causing the doors to lock and trapping passengers inside for an hour and a half.

**INJURIES LIMITED TO
CUTS AND BRUISES**

Hopefully, some of the more dire predictions will never come to pass. The similarity of the short tunnel section to the longer tunnel section on a similar railway at Kaprun in Austria where a disastrous tunnel fire occurred in late November 2000 has been commented on before. Although the detailed systems are different, the possibility of an incident occurring while a carriage was trapped inside the tunnel section due to power failure doesn't bear thinking about. As commissioning problems continue, it leads one to question the Company's ability to operate the railway safely

**CAN THE COMPANY
OPERATE IT SAFELY?**

Ever eager for publicity, Fergus Ewing MSP has called for the closed system at the Cairngorm Funicular Railway to be scrapped (Strathspey and Badenoch Herald 31st January) and has asked "Can anyone think of anything more absurd than spending £100,000 on a path that folk are not allowed to use if they travel by the funicular railway?" Well, most of us can! The agreement is legally binding and for an MSP to be calling for it to be scrapped is strange to say the least. The cynics amongst us might wonder if he was always planning to call for the scrapping of the agreement as soon as the money was spent. Mr. Ewing's motives in trying to protect local jobs are to be praised. However, maybe he should have studied the report prepared by the opposition groups some time back. They showed how properly managed eco-tourism could create more jobs than a funicular railway and not less.

**EWING WANTS THE
CLOSED SYSTEM
SCRAPPED**

The Company is in difficulty and appears to be looking to get out of the agreement. The trouble is that it would almost certainly have to go to court.

**COMPANY CAN'T BUY
DRINKS** Unfortunately, it's broke and probably would have difficulty affording a round of drinks in the Clachaig Inn. Opponents of the funicular, denied their opportunity of a free drink, will be watching closely to ensure that there is no public money put into helping the Company's court case.

In addition, the cost of breaking the EU conditions has to be considered. The EU funding of £2.7M is conditional on maintaining the legally binding agreement. If this is broken, the UK government has to pay back the full amount. The taxpayers among us need to remain vigilant to ensure that our money is not used to subsidise either lazy access for walkers and climbers to the northern corries or the environmental rape of the summit plateau as too many people trample over too much of it.

**SHOULD TAXPAYERS
SUBSIDISE
ENVIRONMENTAL
RAPE?**

Where do we go from here? The commissioning faults will eventually be sorted out and attention will shift to whether the Company is maintaining both the system and the necessary safety procedures properly. The North East Mountain Trust has always opposed this development and will continue to oppose it. Together with other groups, we will monitor and publicise any attempts to either break the closed system agreement or obtain more government subsidy. We will update you in the next Newsletter.

David Windle, 18 Feb 2002

[Ed: Mike Dales gave us some pictures of the area, but frankly we've had pictures of spoil-heaps, bulldozers, Keep Out notices in all the recent issues, so we didn't put them in]

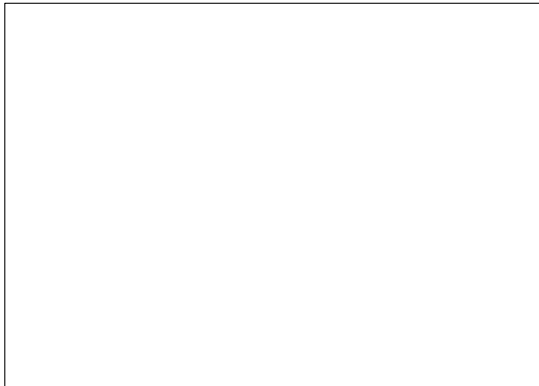
School Wood, Nethy Bridge

Summarised version of an original note provided by Roy Turnbull

Eagle Star Life Assurance has applied for planning permission to build 40 houses plus a business unit on 13 acres of the 124 acre School Wood on the outskirts of Nethy Bridge, Strathspey. Most of the houses are very likely to be sold as holiday/second homes, with 10 referred to as “low cost”, though Eagle Star are unable to say what that means. This application follows refusal last year of a similar application, for 48 houses, which was outwith the Local Plan allocation. This application is within the Local Plan.

The proposed development raises a number of issues, which are outlined below:

1. **An Ancient Woodland Site.** School Wood is listed in the Inventory of Ancient and Semi-natural Woodlands as a “long established semi-natural pinewood”. At present, it consists of Scots pine (with some lodgepole pine and Norway spruce) planted in the 1960’s, naturally regenerated pine of similar age, and older pines that survived wartime fellings. It is particularly rich in broadleaved trees: birch, goat and eared willows, aspen, juniper, rowan, bird cherry and whitebeam, and includes many fine specimens. Its soils are largely pristine, having developed undisturbed under Caledonian woodland for thousands of years since the last ice age.



Species identified in School Wood include red squirrel, pine marten, otter, capercaillie, crested tit, crossbill, woodcock, and several wood ant species. Flowering plants include Pyrola (wintergreen) species, as well as the orchids: Creeping Ladies Tresses, Lesser Twayblade, and Coral Root Orchid. The latter is known from only two other places in Strathspey.

The Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland in its response to the first draft of the present Local Plan 1991 stated “Woodland is a vital component of the Badenoch and Strathspey landscape and fundamental to nature conservation. There is an essential difference between remnants of the native woodland and plantation or newly planted groups of trees for amenity. Semi-natural woodlands . are not recreatable; new stands of trees and plantation . do not compensate for the loss of the semi-natural areas and additionally are often not of such high amenity and aesthetic value.”

School Wood is one of the remnants of (largely) native semi-natural woodland referred to above, and most importantly occupies a “stepping stone” position between Abernethy Forest and Craigmore Wood.

2. **Capercaillie.** School Wood lies 250m from Craigmore Wood and 500m from Abernethy Forest, and is sandwiched between them. Both these larger woods are Special Protection Areas under the EU Wild Birds Directive because of their importance for capercaillie.

The foremost UK authority on capercaillie, Dr Robert Moss (Emeritus Fellow of the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology) has stated “the proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on capercaillie”. The capercaillie populations in Abernethy and Craigmore are not self contained. Their long term survival depends on caper being able to move easily between woodlands. This proposal would make this movement more difficult.

The Wild Birds Directive requires that a development that would have an *adverse effect on capercaillie in or adjacent to these sites* (i.e. School Wood) *should only be permitted where*

- there is no alternative solution, and
- there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature.

In this context it should be noted that planning permission was granted for 15 affordable houses for young people in Nethy Bridge in March 1998. No development on this site has yet commenced, nor to my knowledge is any in prospect. Eagle Star include 10 “low cost houses”, in their application, though Eagle Star representatives before the Nethy Bridge Community Council on 10th January this year were unable, when asked directly, to give any indication of what they meant by low cost housing.

There is already provision for more than adequate affordable housing already granted planning permission within Nethy Bridge. This provides an *alternative* to Eagle Star's proposal, even if it is accepted that the latter would provide some low cost housing, which is doubtful. It is most likely that any development in School Wood would be to cater for the provision of holiday/second homes. This cannot be said to be required for *imperative reasons of over-riding public interest*.

It is also the case that there is provision within the Local Plan under "short term" (School Wood is "medium/long term") for approximately 60 dwellings around Nethy Bridge, which have yet to be developed.

Capercaillie are a significant economic asset, and wildlife tour guides rate caper as one of the top species that people visit this area to see. Many people visit Nethy, especially in April, just to see caper.

3. **The Village Setting.** The proposal represents an increase of about 15% in the number of houses in Nethy Bridge. As long ago as 1991, the First Draft Local Plan stated, "concern is emerging about the rate and scale of change in established villages. Unsympathetic cramming and expansion of communities is eroding their character and setting and threatening to overwhelm facilities, or creating imbalance in the social structure."

This proposal ignores several of the Principles laid down for Nethy Bridge in the Local Plan, viz.

- it does not "maintain a scale and form compatible with the village character"
- it does not "protect the village setting, notably the adjoining semi-natural woodland"
- it contributes to the "substantial number of holiday or second homes" leading to an undesirably unbalanced community.

4. **Lack of Need.** The 1990 Structure Plan provides the framework within which the Council's strategy and policies operate. The population change envisaged from 1988 to 1998 was from 10,807 to 12,029 i.e. an increase of 1222 for the whole District. The actual increase was 503 and the population of 12029 is not now expected before 2014 (figures from Highland Council). Clearly the original assumption has been shown to be wrong, and the allocation of any housing for School Wood is inappropriate, if the Structure Plan's Key Forecast statements are respected.

5. **Sewage Disposal.** The applicant proposes "a limited number of temporary septic tanks" for sewage disposal. This is because the Nethy Bridge wastewater treatment plant will not have the capacity for further development until upgraded in 2005–2006 (at the earliest). How many septic tanks, for how many houses, and for how long, is not made clear. Nor is it stated where the septic tank(s) would be, or to where they would discharge. The drainage from the School Road site flows through the primary school grounds, and from the Craigmores Road site into the Caoshan Fhuarain, (noted for its purity, and this week showing signs of otter activity).

However once *outline* planning permission is granted, the applicant would have a legal right to build septic tanks, even though these serious questions had not been addressed. Many would consider that this problem is grounds *on its own* for refusal of planning permission at the present time, particularly since the allocation for housing in School Wood in the Local Plan was "medium/long term".

6. **Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework.** Published by the Cairngorms Partnership in 1999 (after the Local Plan was finalised), the Framework gives "broad guidance on the nature and location of woodland." It recognises that fragmentation of existing habitats can be a potent cause of local extinctions and that the establishment and enhancement of woodland corridors should be a major priority within the Cairngorms area. This is also recognised in the EU Habitats Directive, which emphasises the importance of "stepping stone" features of the landscape, such as small woods, which are essential for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange.

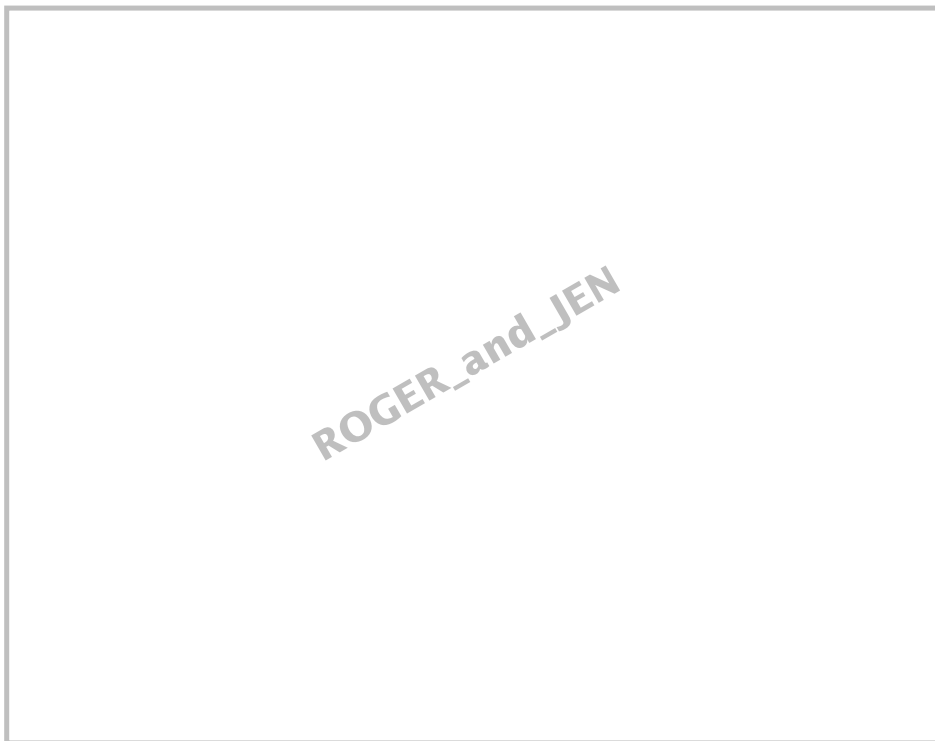
This housing allocation would damage the woodland corridor and fragment the woodland habitat of the two SPAs, and runs directly counter to the Framework and the Habitats Directive.

School Wood is an "ancient and semi-natural woodland" within the future Cairngorms National Park. It would be a terrible shame to greet the new park with an act of unnecessary destruction.

At the time of writing, this matter has still to be decided. Hopefully by the time that you read this, this inappropriate development will have been stopped.

David Windle

Old and New Chairs



Retiring Chair Roger Owen

At the last AGM Roger Owen stepped down as the Chair of NEMT. We say this every time — but it's always been true! — he will be a hard act to follow ...

Roger has been associated with NEMT since its inception in 1981; he is a founder member. He took up the

Chair in 1993 when Bill Brooker retired due to ill health. In his article on NEMT's Ballater May Weekend celebrating International Year of Mountains, Roger tells of his love of the mountains and his experiences. But he is not just a fine mountaineer. His day job as National Ecology

Manager with SEPA, means he has been the ideal person to promote the aims of NEMT. For example he was (along with Adam Watson) NEMT's representative on the Cairngorms Partnership Board. He had to turn down the offer of chairman of MCOFS (but he had to take our advice to do so — we knew he just did not have the time!).

His job with a public agency means that his views might be seen to conflict with his organisations' attitudes so his writing has frequently been signed by someone else.

That job is now taking up more time than he can give. His nine years of chairmanship have meant NEMT has had considerable influence on conservation, the environment and access rights.

Roger leaves with one final fling — masterminding the IYM event in Ballater.

New Chair Jennifer Cook

A hard act to follow? We've done it! Jennifer has been steering the Trust ever since I can remember — the real person at the helm. From Membership Secretary to Newsletter, Music Festivals, cycle runs, fundraising, the amount of her effort and time and her own special brand of unstop-

pable energy have been a mainstay of the Trust. Jennifer has navigated the rough waters of the new Scottish Parliament, Land Reform, the Fight Against the Funicular, and many, many other things. Please, NEMT members, give her all your support in what will definitely not be a clear channel free of reefs ahead ...

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News Roundup

National Park Developments

At the beginning of February, Allan Wilson, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development, responded to parliamentary questions from MSPs Margaret Ewing and Jackie Baillie on the status of the consultation process relating to the proposed Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks. On Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, Mr Wilson said that the Executive hoped to lay a draft Designation Order before Parliament in the near future. In relation to the Cairngorms, where the process is not as far advanced, Mr Wilson said the Executive intended to initiate consultation on a draft Designation Order in the near future. He also indicated that the Executive hoped to establish Scotland's first two National Parks by early 2003.

In a related development, Aberdeen North MSP Elaine Thomson initiated a members' business motion calling on the Executive to celebrate the International Year of Mountains by initiating discussions with the UK government to secure designation of the Cairngorms as a World Heritage Site. NEMT and the Cairngorm Club both took the opportunity to contact local MSPs indicating support for the motion. Both bodies however expressed doubt that designation would be achievable under the current recommendation from SNH that planning powers should not be given to the Cairngorms National Park Authority (unlike the proposal for Loch Lomond) but should remain with the five relevant local authorities.

In the resulting debate, Mike Rumbles and Robin Harper raised the need for strong unitary planning powers if designation criteria were to be met. It was also pointed out by members and confirmed by the Minister, Allan Wilson, that submission of the Cairngorms was not possible this year. UNESCO regulations only permitted one nomination per country which had to be submitted by 1st February and that Kew Gardens had been put forward for the UK. The Cairngorms is, however, on a list of possible sites for the future. It was also suggested that a submission stood a better chance of success once that National Park Authority was up and running. Replying to the issues raised, Allan Wilson indicated that the UNESCO criteria for World Heritage Status would be taken into account in the Draft Designation Order which would be put out for public consultation shortly. Following any revision arising from

the consultation, the order would be laid before Parliament and members would then have the opportunity to debate issues such as the size of the Park and planning powers.

A full report of the debate can be found on the Scottish Parliament web site at

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/official_report/session-02/sor0214-02.htm#Co16684

Glen Feshie Sold Again

Shortly before Christmas it was reported in the Danish press that Glen Feshie estate had been sold by Klaus Helmersen, who bought the estate from Will Woodlands in 1998. The purchaser was said to be another Dane, Flemming Skouboe, who is believed to have been motivated by his enthusiasm for hunting. The purchase price is believed to have been in the region of £8 million. Glen Feshie has now changed hands five times since 1967 when the Nature Conservancy Council passed up on the opportunity to secure the estate for the nation for £100,000.

In response to a Parliamentary written question from Roseanna Cunningham MSP about the amount of public money paid to estate owners since 1967 in the form of grants from the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Executive minister Allan Wilson replied that no grants had been given by SNH. Forestry Commission records go back to 1976 and since then Glen Feshie has received a total of £221,720.05, the largest and most recent being an award of £139,390.40.

Path Funding for Mar Lodge

Mar Lodge Estate has received grants totalling £511,000 from the European Regional Development Fund and from Scottish Natural Heritage. The cash will fund five years of footpath preservation work on the estate, which was bought by the National Trust for Scotland in 1995. Estate property manager Alister Clunas welcomed news of the award and stressed that it would not be used to create lots of new pathways but rather to restore existing paths which are heavily eroded and to prevent deterioration elsewhere. The work which begun in the Coire Etchachan Area in 2000 will continue and paths in other parts of the estate will also benefit.

Shieltaig Hydro Scheme

At the time of writing, a formal application from Highland Light and Power is still awaited for the proposed £6 million hydro scheme in the Wester Ross National Scenic Area. All has not been quiet however. Landowner John Mackenzie of Gairloch was recently quoted in the Ross-shire Journal and West Highland Free Press denouncing opponents of the scheme as “whingers and gironers who come from other parts of Scotland on holiday. Local opponents of the scheme have been quick to point out that the “whingers and gironers” make a vital contribution to the local economy and are attracted to the area by its outstanding landscape quality which they believe to be threatened by the proposed hydro scheme.

Local opponents of the scheme have established a web site at

<http://www.lowimpact.demon.co.uk/index.htm>

which offers an alternative perspective to that of the HLP web site at

<http://www.highlandlightandpower.co.uk/>

The issues they cite which give most cause for concern are

1. The transfer of water from one river system, the Badachro, to another, the Kerry.
2. The effect of major construction and artificial regulation of lochs and rivers on the ecology and wild land qualities of the Wester Ross National Scenic Area, and the impact on wildlife.
3. The precedent set for future developments in other protected areas.

The major elements of the HLP scheme are as follows. Weirs will be built on Loch a'Bhealaich, Loch a'Ghobhainn, Loch Gaineamhach and Loch na h'Oidhche to raise their levels by up to 2.5m. Two underground pipelines will transfer water from Loch a'Bhealaich, Loch a'Ghobhainn and Loch Gaineamhach to a new turbine house at Dubh Loch and from just below Loch na h'Oidhche to a new turbine house near the A832 road south-west of Slattadale. An underground cable will link the turbine house Dubh Loch with the national grid and an access track will be constructed from it to the road. The weirs and pipeline constructed on Loch a'Bhealaich, Loch a'Ghobhainn and Loch Gaineamhach will be inspected on a weekly basis by all terrain vehicles.

An earlier hydro scheme was the subject of a public enquiry in 1997 but HLP withdrew before its findings were released, thus ensuring the Reporter's findings would not be made public.

Nevis Strategy

Last November the then Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development Rhona Brankin launched a 10-year management plan for the Nevis area. The Nevis Strategy developed from consultations carried out in 1999 by the Nevis Working Party which involved the local community, land managers and other interest groups. It was supported by Highland Council, SNH and Lochaber Enterprise and received funding from the European Regional Development Fund. The plan aims to provide sustainable management and environmental protection for the Nevis area while maximising visitor numbers. Some local critics have expressed fears that the strategy is really part of a hidden agenda to turn the whole of Highland Region into a national park. This claim has been dismissed by SNH as “utter rubbish”.

Schiehallion Restoration

The John Muir Trust recently secured a grant of £506,500 from the Heritage Lottery fund in Scotland and a further £75,000 from Scottish Natural Heritage to be spent on Schiehallion. The money will provide 62% of the total project costs of £816,962 and will fund footpath and woodland restoration and interpretation of the mountain environment for visitors. Tim Wheatley, Senior Grants Officer with the Heritage Lottery Fund said “The proposals submitted for Schiehallion by the John Muir Trust were innovative and exciting and they were well received by the HLF Trustees. By awarding this grant to the Trust we are ensuring the future sensitive conservation of the mountain as well as open access to all visitors to enjoy its splendour.

Will Campbell, 24 February, 2002

Slugain Bothy Plan

The Mountain Bothies Association's controversial plans to build a bothy on the site of the ruined Slugain Lodge appear to have been scrapped. The idea for the proposal to build the bothy was first mooted at an Eastern Highlands Area Committee meeting of the MBA at Tannadice in April 2001. (cont page 21)

Progress on the Land Reform Bill

Since the last issue of Mountain Views, there has been considerable development on the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, the first part of which deals with Access Rights. Shortly before Christmas, the Scottish Executive published a revised version of the Bill, the original draft of which had been the subject of much criticism on all sides. The revised version addressed many of the concerns which prompted NEMT and numerous other bodies and individuals to respond during the original consultation period. Some concerns, however, remained and a further response was submitted to the Justice 2 Committee, which is the lead committee charged with taking the legislation through Parliament, in spite of a very tight deadline. That response is reproduced elsewhere in this issue and is also available on the NEMT web site along with our submission on the original draft.

Copies of the NEMT response were again sent to local MSPs and to the convenors of the parliamentary committees we were advised would be involved in reviewing the Bill — Justice 2, Rural Development and Transport and Environment. Some visits to MSPs have also taken place.

Both Justice 2 and Rural Development have devoted several meetings to considering aspects of the Bill and have heard verbal submissions from and questioned a number of witnesses. The Rural Development Committee in its meeting of 21 January took evidence on Access Rights from the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, the Ramblers' Association Scotland, the Scottish Outdoor Recreation Network¹, and VisitScotland. Justice 2 has also heard from a variety of interested parties on both sides of the access debate.

It is worth remembering that the Bill consists of three distinct parts. Only Part 1, which deals with Access Rights, was considered by the General Council to come within the remit of NEMT. Parts 2 and 3 deal with Community Right to Buy and Crofting Community Right to Buy — also highly important to the future of the countryside and of rural communities.

The legislative process is essentially a three part one. Part 1 is close to completion at the time of writing. The Justice 2 Committee will submit a Report to the Parliament based on the evidence it has taken and on a Report from the Rural Development Committee. A debate on the Bill will then take place and Parliament will vote on whether the Bill should go forward to Stage 2, in which Justice 2 will consider amendments. The amended Bill will then go forward to

Stage 3 in which the whole Parliament will debate it and further amendments can be proposed and voted on. There will then be a final vote. Stage 3 will be completed in a single day. If the Bill is passed, it will go forward for royal assent and, in due course, become law.

The Rural Development Committee's Stage 1 Report to the lead committee (Justice 2) has been posted on the Parliament web site. Its conclusions so far are fairly encouraging to recreational interests, including a recommendation that areas of concern such as business activity and night-time access should not be excluded from the Access Right. The Committee has also recommended that a duty should be placed on local authorities to work in co-operation with other local authorities and other agencies to develop and maintain a core path network, noting that such a duty is unlikely to be discharged successfully without suitable funding.

At the time of writing this is still very much an on-going process and the opportunity to influence proceedings through our MSPs will continue to exist right up till Stage 3. The proposed Bill is now much improved on the original draft and the signs are that further improvements are likely which should result in an unambiguous right of access to the countryside and with resultant benefits to Scotland's physical and economic health.

Will Campbell, 24 February, 2002

Slugain Bothy

(cont from page 19) The decision on the issue, however, was deferred until the October meeting of the committee at Charr bothy. At this meeting members raised concerns regarding the negative environmental and the visitor and visual impact such a project would have on the area. The meeting overwhelmingly rejected the proposal. Despite this the MBA Management Committee over-ruled the decision and pushed ahead with the plans. Worryingly the project appeared to be being progressed with little consultation with any other interested organisations. The issue came to a head at a well attended extraordinary meeting of the MBA in Blair Atholl in January 2002. Once again the proposal was rejected unanimously. It now looks as if the MBA have sensibly abandoned plans for this ill thought out project. Clearly the whole debacle has raised concerns for the MBA about the democracy and communication within the organisation. There is clearly a need for organisations like the MBA to consult fully with the wider mountaineering and environmental communities before going ahead with potentially controversial plans. (cont. page 24)

Book Review

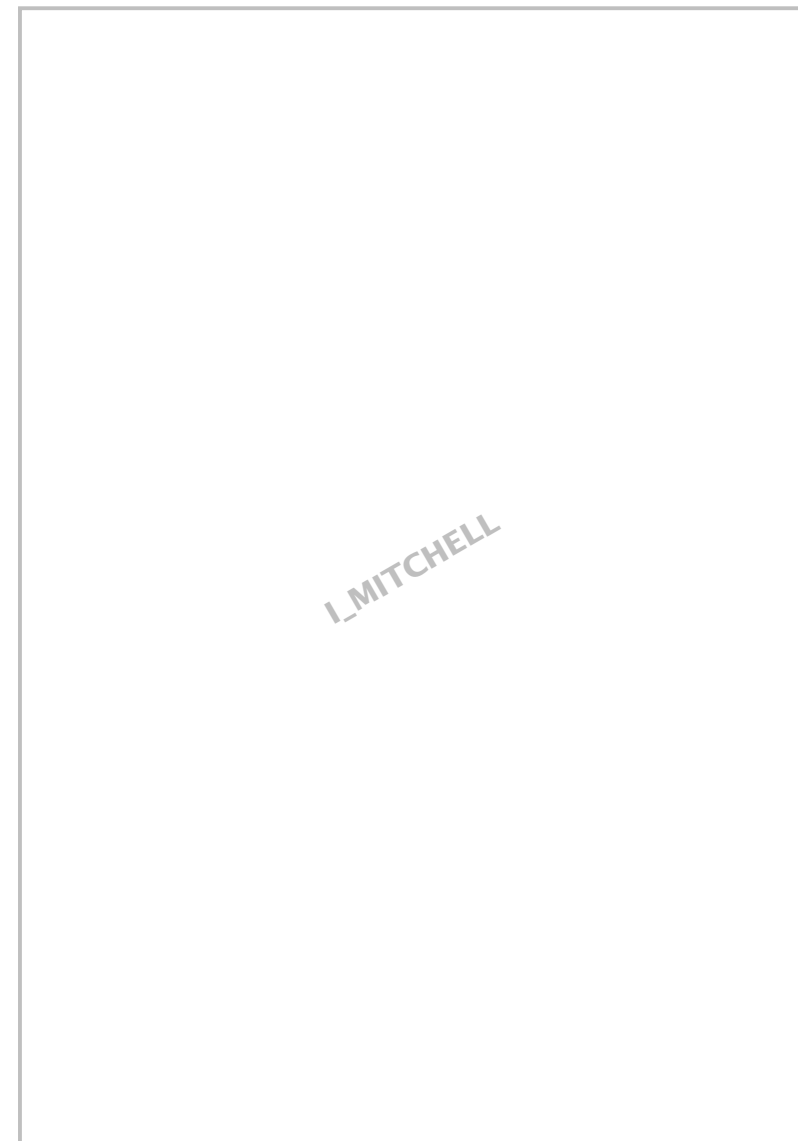
Ian R. Mitchell, *Walking through Scotland's History: two thousand years on foot*. National Museums of Scotland Publishing Ltd, £6.99. ISBN 1-901663-51-5

In this book, one of the *Scotland's Past in Action* series, Ian Mitchell presents a review of Scottish pedestrianism down the centuries. Conquerors and refugees, pilgrims and plunderers, drovers and caterans, fish quines and road builders — all tramped their way through Scotland's past. The book begins with the legions of Rome and takes us up to the travelling people whose nomadic lifestyle persisted into the last quarter of the 20th century and whose culture sustained a tradition of song and storytelling forgotten by most of the settled folk.

The story begins with the Roman general Agricola, who thoughtfully secured his place for posterity by acquiring the historian Tacitus as a son-in-law. Agricola invaded Scotland in AD 79 and campaigned as far north as the Moray Firth. The site of his victory over the Picts at "Mons Graupius" has been identified by some historians as Bennachie. Before the battle, Tacitus puts a devastating critique of the Pax Romana into the mouth of Calgacus, the supposed Pictish leader. The book contains a longer extract but the essence is encapsulated in the wonderful phrase "they create a desolation and they call it peace".

The legions in Britain apparently wore a specially strengthened version of the standard military sandal. We know less about the footwear of the early Christian missionaries whose influence was more lasting than that of the legions. From St Ninian in the 4th century to St Duthac in the 11th, a series of peripatetic holy men spread Christianity and are commemorated in numerous place names. Later in the Middle Ages came pilgrimages to holy sites, in which by all accounts the devotional mixed with the recreational and the Church found opportunities for income generation. St Andrews was the main destination in Scotland while Iona, Tain and Whithorn also received their visitors.

Notable subsequent travellers covered include the cartographer Timothy Pont in the late 16th century and the minor English poet John Taylor who undertook a walking tour for a bet in 1618 and travelled from Carlisle via Edin-



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burgh to Deeside and Speyside, ascending Mount Keen in the process. A rather more illustrious poetic walker was John Keats, who warmed up for his Scottish tour by walking from Lancaster to Carlisle via the Lake District before talking a coach to Dumfries. Keats and his companion followed a punishing schedule which included an ascent of Ben Nevis and took them as far as Inverness before Keats' deteriorating health brought the tour to an end.

Commerce, legal and illegal, continued to motivate travel too. The cattle trade illustrates both elements — reiving gradually giving way to legal droving. Whisky distilling was driven underground by punitive taxation after the Union of 1707 and illicit stills flourished in upland glens. A walking feat inspired by the failure of commerce was that of the Aberdeen contingent in the 1936 March against the Means Test. They covered the entire distance from Aberdeen to London on foot — the farthest travelled of all the political marchers of the times.

All in all, this book offers an intriguing description of how walking underpinned so much of Scottish history — social, economic, political and cultural. The author has also provided suggestions for routes which can still be followed today. We enjoy today the luxury of choice as to how we exercise our ability to walk. Our ancestors for the most part did not enjoy that luxury — though sometimes it's clear that the walking was for pleasure rather than need. Either way, the achievements celebrated in *Walking through Scotland's History* should encourage us to keep putting one foot in front of another whenever we can.

Will Campbell, 22 February 2002

Slugain Bothy

(cont. from page 21) Hopefully hard lessons will have been learned and the MBA can move forward.

The issue has also drawn attention to other developments in Glen Slugain in recent times. Two friends and I have noticed the estate road up the glen has been extended furthermore a new spur going north off the main glen road has been cut. We are currently trying to find out whether planning permission was required and if so was it sought. However it appears it may possible for estates to bulldoze new roads without the need for planning permission or to consult with others, this is of some concern.

It would be interesting to hear from others whether there are mechanisms for interested parties to become involved in discussions about developments

such as hill roads. If there is no such mechanism could this debate be taken forward by the NEMT.

Kenny Ferguson, MBA Maintenance Officer

[Editor's note: NEMT were invited to attend a meeting hosted by SNH to discuss this controversial issue in late January. This meeting was cancelled when MBA Management Committee advised they had dropped their proposals.]

Scottish Environment Earns Billions

An independent report launched last autumn by Scottish Environment LINK has established that environmental attributes are the main attraction for visitors to Scotland. *Scottish Environmental Audits No. 5: Tourism and the Natural Environment*, by Rory McLellan, establishes that visitors contribute £2.6 billion annually to the Scottish economy and support 180,000 tourism-related jobs. LINK, the liaison body for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations, including NEMT, has called on the Scottish Executive to ensure better protection for the environmental resource underpinning what is now Scotland's biggest industry. The report found that lack of co-ordination and often-conflicting objectives between agencies concerned with tourism and the environment made it difficult to implement policies working towards the sustainable development of tourism.

The report was welcomed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise Chairman Jim Hunter who described it as a "very timely contribution". LINK Chairman Neil Rankin said, "Looking after Scotland's environment must lie at the heart of any strategy for the Scottish tourism industry if its economic potential is to be fulfilled. The Executive must now move to ensure that a practical stewardship framework is put in place to deliver this strategy."

The LINK position statement "Scotland's 'Great Outdoors' — key to the future of Scotland's tourist industry" summarises the conclusions of the report and puts forward LINK's recommendations to the Scottish Executive. Perhaps the most important conclusions of the audit are that

- our countryside — including its wildlife, landscape and the ability to enjoy these — is the basis for attracting its visitors

Trust Report

- small, but important, niche markets depend on natural environmental assets and those of the archaeological and built heritage
- half of the top categories in *VisitScotland's* forecasts for growth areas in tourism fundamentally rely on natural environmental resources, as well as showing the positive link between the value of nature conservation designations and tourist income/employment generation in Scotland
- the benefits brought by tourism and recreation in the outdoors generally outweigh any adverse physical impacts and that there need be no question of discouraging further *tourism* development, *provided it is appropriate, high-quality and sustainable*

Key recommendations include

- elevating both tourism and the environment to Ministerial level
- cutting across the departmental and agency structures that slow up the changes needed to develop sustainable strategies for the tourism industry
- raising awareness, especially amongst Scottish people, of the critical role played by Scotland's environment and the opportunities it offers in providing benefits for our tourist industry
- improving the training of tourism managers and their staff in environmentally-friendly practices and an understanding of Scotland's landscape and environment
- investment in a public transport system that serves the rural, as well as urban, communities in Scotland so as to mitigate the adverse impacts of leisure transport on the environment

Both the report and the position statement are available on the LINK web site at <http://www.scotlink.org/stoppress.htm>

A printed version of *Scottish Environmental Audits No. 5: Tourism and the Natural Environment* can be purchased from Scottish Environment LINK, 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8DB for £6 inclusive of postage and packing.

Will Campbell, 24 February, 2002

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