

IAN RETURNS!!!

I'm sure you will all be pleased to know that Kate and I returned safely from our adventure, with nothing more than a few infected insect bites and a non-infectious tropical parasite to put a downer on an amazing trip.

Guyana is a country about the size of the UK but with a population about the size of Liverpool! Most of that population, about 80%, live on the narrow coastal strip of flat reclaimed land to the North of the country bordering the Atlantic. Here they grow rice and sugar cane. Did you know that Demerara sugar comes originally from the area surrounding the mouth of the Demerara River in Guyana?

Once you get past the (rather grim) coastal strip the rest of the country is covered in almost virgin rainforest, until you get into the deep South of the country where it opens up into savannah with isolated areas of rainforest covered mountains. This is where the true native Amerindian people live in small isolated villages. My brother-in-law had been teaching in one of these small villages, so our first aim was to travel down to see him. In theory this is a journey of about 300 miles, so by UK standards should not take too long, however it took us almost 3 days and included travelling by minibus, motor boat and two tractor and trailers fully laden with people and supplies. So much for the "luxury" busses I showed in the last issue!

The main highlight of our trip was a five day trip through the rainforest and up rivers to get to Kaieteur Falls, the worlds largest single drop waterfall, recently shown on "Land of the Jaguar". This journey saw us hiking through jungle, having a close encounter with a highly venomous snake, and camping out in hammocks under a tarpaulin

Another part of our journey found us in a remote village only reached by boat or very occasionally by air, where dug out canoe was the standard form of transport across flooded savannah and through mangrove swamps.

I'm still not sure if it's good to be back, but at least the volunteering can recommence.

To find out more about our trip come and see the photos on Thursday 25th September (See Events programme) Ian Brown



SEPTEMBER'S EVENTS

TUESDAY 2nd SEPTEMBER

10.00am-12.00pm.
Heather Patch Gardening,
Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR
Visitor Centre, Dromore Farm.
NX554637

SATURDAY 7th SEPTEMBER

10.00am – 12.30pm
*Guarding the Nith Guided Walk with
Jane Brann, Council Archaeologist*
Booking Essential 01387 260154 or
email Jane.Brann@dumgal.gov.uk

TUESDAY 9th SEPTEMBER

10.00am-12.00pm.
Hedge clearance
Meet at Cream o' Galloway
NX600518

TUESDAY 16th SEPTEMBER

10.00am-12.00pm.
Clearing Cally Guided Walk Route.
Meet Murray Usher Visitor Centre,
Cally Woods,
Gatehouse of Fleet. NX 605560

WEDNESDAY 17th SEPTEMBER

10.00am – 12.30pm
*Cally Designed Landscape Guided
Walk with Jane Brann, Council
Archaeologist*
Booking Essential 01387 260154 or
email Jane.Brann@dumgal.gov.uk

FRIDAY 19th SEPTEMBER

9.30am onwards
Interpretation Work at Kirkconnell
Flow NNR
Meet Kirkconnell Flow car park,
near Mabie Forest, NX932703

SATURDAY 20th SEPTEMBER

10.00am – 12.00pm
Beach Watch Beach Clean,
Meet Knockbrex car park, Carrick.
NX576501

SATURDAY 20th SEPTEMBER

11.00am – 1.00pm
Beach Watch Beach Clean,
Meet RSPB Mersehead Reserve car
park, NX925554

SUNDAY 21st SEPTEMBER

11.00am – 1.00pm
Beach Watch Beach Clean,
Meet Rockcliffe Beach car park,
Rockcliffe. NX847537

TUESDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER

10.00am-12.00pm.
Heather Patch Gardening,
Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR
Visitor Centre, Dromore Farm.
NX554637

THURSDAY 25th SEPTEMBER

7.30pm -9.00pm
*Travelling around Guyana,
Ian's holiday presentation*
YMCA Drop In Centre
Gatehouse of Fleet

SUNDAY 28th SEPTEMBER

9.00am – 12.30pm
River Nith Clean Up
Meet Greensands, beside the Rowing
Club, Dumfries. NX968766

TUESDAY 30th SEPTEMBER

10.00am-12.00pm.
Stream Bank Clearance, Cally Woods.
Meet Old School House, Cally Woods,
Gatehouse of Fleet. NX600557

THURSDAY 2nd OCTOBER

9.30am onwards
Footpath Clearance at Torr Point,
Auchencairn.
Meet Red Haven and Torr Point
Car Park, Auchencairn,
NX812523

Fleet Valley NSA

The Fleet Valley NSA Volunteers undertook a variety of tasks and events over the summer. One morning was spent litter picking and removing ragwort from beside the beach at Carrick. Ragwort is a very widespread plant in the area. Unfortunately it is extremely toxic to horses as it causes liver damage so it should be removed especially from grazing pastures and hay fields. The Volunteers were also involved in a litter pick in Garries Park before the Gala and in cutting back brambles, buddleia and other trees that encroached on the paths and might injure people leaving the park in the dark after the firework display. A further morning was spent in tidying the path at Port Macadam.

Jim Logan



BBQ and Toads

The summer BBQ was a great success. We met up at the Mersehead reserve and walked out to see the Natterjack Toad nurseries tucked behind the dunes. These consisted of simple plastic lined shallow ponds protected by mesh to prevent predators from attacking the tadpoles. Near at hand were several flat pieces of wood to provide shelter for the young and adult toads. We were lucky enough to see both the tadpoles and the adults with the distinctive yellow stripe down their backs. Then back to the visitor centre for the magnificent buffet prepared by Anna Johnson and a chance to chat while watching the bird life outside the windows of the centre.

Jim Logan



The Stelage Wood Survey and Cally Dyke Survey

At a meeting in the Murray Arms, Eykolina de Zwart and Nick Coombey told the Volunteers about progress on the Stelage Wood Survey and the Cally Dyke Survey respectively.

The wood survey had been completed and plans were being drawn up to improve the woodland pasture. Natural regeneration would be encouraged and additional saplings would be planted to replace dead trees and expand the area of woodland pasture. Young trees would be protected by planting them within areas of gorse or by enclosing in wooden fences. It was hoped to encourage public access by installing gates, creating paths and possibly picnic tables within the wood.

Nick Coombey had analysed the results of the Volunteers' survey and considered that the priorities were

- 1 to rebuild a stretch of the deer dyke near a well used footpath and install an interpretive board explaining the function and construction of the walls in the estate.
- 2 To re-instate the haha south of the Cally Hotel
- 3 To repair parts of the boundary walls which are visible from the main roads.

Dry stone walling can be a very expensive business (£25-£60 per m²) so it was suggested that volunteers and trainee wallers should be used wherever possible to assist professional drystone wallers.



Jim Logan

World Ocean Day

Jim and Pauline Logan took their shell collection to World Ocean Day which was held at Port William. The day was a great success with a steady stream of visitors who viewed the stalls and took part in the many ocean related activities. The Logans and Ian also led several successful beach walks over the summer.

Jim Logan

Meeting with the Environment Minister

On the 21st August the Environment Minister, Michael Russell, visited the area to open the NSA Viewpoint at Knockbrenn. After the opening Anna Johnson introduced the Minister to Ian Brown and Ron Forster and Jim and Pauline Logan representing the NSA Volunteers. As well as hearing about the work of the Volunteers, the Minister discussed the problems of Japanese Knotweed control. The opening was followed by a buffet lunch at the Mill on the Fleet where the Minister heard more about the National Scenic Areas.

Jim Logan



RIVER NITH CLEAN UP

In the last issue, volunteers were informed about the successful cleanup of the River Nith by organised by Morris Service. Well Morris has been busy organising again and has arranged for another Nith Clean Up on Sunday 28th September to coincide with World Rivers Day 2008. Morris will be meeting the many volunteers at 9am at the Greensands, Dumfries (beside the Rowing Club Premises) and hopes to finish by 12.30pm. Please support Morris with this if you can. All litter pickers bags and gloves provided. For more information contact Morris on 01387 265644 or by email: morris.service@tesco.net

Marine Conservation Societies Beach Watch Weekend

Every year Marine Conservation Society organises a national recorded beach cleaning weekend. This year it will be held on the 20th and 21st of September. The Fleet Valley Volunteers will be carrying out a beach clean on Saturday 20th from 10am till 12pm at Carrick, the RSPB will also be organising one at Mersehead on the Saturday from 11am-1pm . On the Sunday the National Trust for Scotland will be carrying out a beach clean at Rockcliffe from 11am-1pm. If you would like to attend any of these events, either just turn up on the day, or contact me for further information.

Hedge Laying

In March three brave volunteers attended a hedge laying weekend at Auchencairn despite very adverse weather. The weekend was very successful, and more importantly the hedge looked very green and lush this summer despite its brutal treatment

I am organising a further two weekends, **4th and 5th October** and **1st and 2nd November** to try and complete the laying of this prominent hedge within the East Stewartry National Scenic Area.

If you are interested in attending these events please contact me.



*Morris & Ian Brown lay a hedge.
2nd March 2008, Torr Farm, Auchencairn.*

*Chris Frear
www.frearphoto.co.uk*

For more information about any of these events please contact Ian Brown, National Scenic Area Communities Ranger on 01387 260180, mobile 07824708110 or email ian.brown2@dumgal.gov.uk