

Come along and join the Team:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL THE NSA VOLUNTEERS

Thank you all for all the hard work you have done for the project in 2008, I hope everyone has a good break, and I look forward to seeing you all out volunteering again in 2009.

Ian Brown

FUTURE VOLUNTEERING EVENTS

TUESDAY 6th JANUARY
No Volunteering

TUESDAY 13th JANUARY
10am onwards
Footpath Maintenance, Anworth Path
Meet Brickworks car park, Gatehouse
of Fleet. NX595562

TUESDAY 20th JANUARY
9.30am-12.00pm.
Rhododendron clearance, Cally
Woods.
Meet Old School House, Cally Woods,
Gatehouse of Fleet. NX600557

FRIDAY 16th JANUARY
10.30am—3.30pm
*Rockcliffe to Sandyhills Coastal Path
Survey*
Meet: Rockcliffe main car park.
Return transport will be arranged.

TUESDAY 27th JANUARY
10am-12.00pm
Footpath and Habitat Maintenance,
Anworth Path
Meet Town end of Port MacAdam,
Gatehouse of Fleet. NX595557

THURSDAY 29th JANUARY
9.30am onwards
Rhododendron Clearance
Meet Kirkconnell Flow NNR
car park near Mabie Forest, NX932703

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

Implementing the Management Strategies for the National Scenic Areas



Cairnsmore

The guys from the Walking Free centre had a great opportunity recently to be involved in building a brand new walkway set in the picturesque hills of Cairnsmore. Firstly we had to decide how we were going to tackle this project and instead of building it next to the old one, Ian and the lads decided to rip it up and use the existing base as the foundation for the new wheelchair friendly one. We built the walkway in sections securing reclaimed railway sleepers to the base using six foot stabs and then attaching five black runners to them, finally screwing down the numerous footboards. The men who took part really enjoyed working together as a team as this helps to build confidence, brings the lads closer together and enables us to learn new skills, enjoy the beautiful Scottish countryside and gives us all a real sense of achievement. Also working outside in all weathers brings out the best in the lads and is really good fun especially when you are clambering about carrying heavy pieces of wood and trying not to fall or dodging baby adders as Willie Gilmour, one of the staff members, found out to his surprise. All in all the guys thoroughly enjoyed the experience and really appreciate the work that Ian has provided for us and the friendship that has built up between the lads at the centre and himself. To finish off the walkway has been a great success not just for all involved but hopefully for all the people who will use it to discover the local wildlife and the stunning scenery of the Cairnsmore hills.

Kenny Boy and the boys



Tasks for 2009

I am in the process of sourcing tasks for 2009. If anyone has any suggestions for work within the NSAs please let me know.

You may have noticed the **Rockcliffe to Sandyhills Coastal Path Survey** task planned for **FRIDAY 16th JANUARY** this will be an opportunity for a leisurely walk along the whole coastal path giving us the opportunity to update the path condition survey and discuss future work. I do not require a large team of volunteers for this day as we will not be doing any practical clearance work, however if the weather is nice come and join me. Please contact me before the day, so I have an idea of numbers for arranging transport.

Coppicing

Our task on November 18th was to find and prepare stakes for a “dead hedge” to protect the planned plantings at Stelage Wood. Ian showed us how to do this using the age-old principles of coppicing.



A coppiced tree is first cut off a short distance from the ground to a “stool” from which a “crown” of new slim upright shoots arise. With time these shoots grow into longer and thicker rods and, being of the same age, they’re of nearly uniform length and thickness. A harvest of uniform rods – much valued by hurdle-makers, charcoal burners and stick-dressers - is thus possible.

Harvesting uses the simple technique of step-cutting. Starting with the outermost branch of each crown, its direction of lean is determined. Then a pruning-saw-cut is made on the “under” side of the rod to about one third through its width. A second cut follows, opposite the first and about an inch above it, on the “up” side, being continued until the rod falls neatly off its stool in the direction of



lean. A third sloped cut then removes the resultant “step” about six inches from the stool. This will shed rainfall and prevent stump-rot. The rod is then trimmed of surplus branches using a billhook, cut to the required length and if, needed as a stake, pointed.

On our coppicing expedition we practised the process on young sycamores – tree weeds *par excellence* – in Cally Woods. On a pleasantly fine morning six of us managed to produce about four dozen five foot stakes. This was a great session – easy paced labour with excellently sharp tools, and educational too. Now to find out what a dead hedge is.

Ted Percy

Wood Pasture and the Art of Dead Hedging

As mentioned in a previous Newsletter we are planting native trees in Stelage Wood outside Gatehouse of Fleet to replace the old beech, elm and oak now dying through old age (well some have been there for at least 300 years). The aim is to maintain and improve the wood pasture in that field.

Three sessions on consecutive frosty Tuesdays saw very good progress on the replanting. The young trees we were planting need protection against the cattle which graze the field. Three different types of protection were compared.

The first method was to build a fence with four stakes in a square linked together with wooden crosspieces and topped with barbed wire. One or four tree saplings were planted depending on the size of the enclosure.



The second method was to create a dead hedge around the young trees. The posts cut previously (see above) were driven into the ground about 1 foot apart to form a circle around the saplings. Pieces of gorse 3-6 foot long were cut in the field then woven between the posts to a height of about 4 feet.



The third method was to plant the tree saplings in the middle of an existing patch of gorse or bramble to provide a natural barrier to cattle. Each sapling was protected against rabbit damage with a plastic tree sleeve and a patch of weed-suppressing material. The tree sleeve also creates a micro-habitat around the tree which speeds up the growth of the tree which is further helped by the reduced competition from weeds for moisture and nutrients.



Jim Logan