

NSA VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER APRIL–MAY 2016

Forthcoming events

WILD SPRING FESTIVAL - across the region until 10 April

From star gazing to coastal foraging and everything in between! There are lots of events that will get you looking more closely at the natural world around us. See inside for further details.

Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve

Wednesday 27 April & 1 May 2015 7-9h – Spring Amble and a May Morning Stroll. Join the Reserve Officer on an early morning guided wildlife walk. The walk suits all abilities and all ages across a mix of habitats including woodland, reed bed and merse. If you want to experience the reserve's wilderness comfortably then waterproof and walking boots are a must, binoculars and hot drink flask are a plus. Booking is essential – tel. 01387 272400 or email southern.scotland_admin@snh.gov.uk

Cairnsmore of Fleet National Nature Reserve Consultation Event

Friday 8 April 17-20h at Gatehouse of Fleet Community centre. Come and share your ideas about how to strengthen links between the Reserve and the community.

Newton Stewart Walking Festival 6-12 May. The festival is a great way to go on wonderful walks in the care of experienced leaders. Two walks to highlight in the NSAs this year are:

Saturday 7 May 'The Clints of Dromore to the Banks of the Fleet' which combines a moorland section, in the shadow of the Clints of Dromore, with a riverside path along the lovely River Fleet.

Sunday 8 May 'The Solway Riviera: from Sandyhills to Kippford' is a spectacular walk along cliff tops and through secluded villages with magnificent views at every turn.

See www.newtonstewartwalkfest.com for more details.

Kirkcudbright Botany Group. There are a series of meetings scheduled in April/May: **10 April Palnackie; 23/24 April River Nith south of Dumfries; 16 May TBC; 30 May Castlefairn.** Dates are provisional and will be confirmed nearer the time with meeting points, etc. Please contact David Hawker for more details: davidhawker3@gmail.com

Training Days

Tuesday 5 and Wednesday 6 April -The [Capturing Our Coast](#) (CoCoast) project has arranged the dates for two training days in Dumfries and Galloway. Both events will take place at [Colvend Village Hall](#) with field visits to nearby coastal sites. A [booking form can be downloaded here](#) and when completed should be returned to cocoast@sams.ac.uk. Information about the project was included in the previous newsletter.

Saturday 23 April – Water vole survey training. See article inside for further details of this Biosphere project.

FLEET VALLEY NSA

Wednesdays 10am (unless otherwise advised)

Please contact Ron Forster (tel. 07711 362645) who will advise of meeting locations and tasks arranged.

EAST STEWARTRY COAST AND NITH ESTUARY NSAs

RSPB Mersehead Reserve

Every Tuesday - Meet **10am** at the Wildlife Garden, Sulwath Centre. Supervised by RSPB

National Trust for Scotland

There are opportunities for volunteering with NTS at Rockcliffe and at Threave estate.

For details of tasks please contact Judy Baxter at jbaxter@nts.org.uk or 01556 503702

SMUGGLING STORIES AT COLVEND SCHOOL

Our project was inspired by Joseph Nelson's grave which is on the coastal path near Rockcliffe. This bit of coast was known for smuggling because of its secret beaches and rocky caves. It is in the East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area.



Colvend Churchyard



At Joseph Nelson's grave



Having a swing!



Our story headstones

In the class we learnt how to make books with Hugh. We decided to write some Solway Stories and poems of our own, inspired by our visit, and they were all collected into a book. The grave rubbings were used to make a cardboard gravestone for our display, and we each designed a headstone connected to our stories.



Making decisions with Hugh Bryden about our artists' book

It was great having an adventure and exploring this part of the Solway coast.

Lilli Bell P7 and Millie Hird P5
Colvend Primary School



There are still lots of events taking place over the next week or so - wildlife watching opportunities to suit all ages and interests. All information is on the website www.wildseasons.co.uk but here are a few events that may be of interest:

Friday 1 April, 20—22h - **Dark Sky Above – Stargazing Evening** at Kirroughtree Visitor Centre. Join one of the Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers for an introduction to the stars and constellations. A warm drink and tray bake are included in the cost, as well as some fireside treats.
Adults £12.50. Booking essential 01671 402994. Spaces are limited.

4 April to 8 April, 20h – **Stars and Stripes Badger Watching** at WWT Caerlaverock.
Watch wild badgers feeding just outside the observatory. Unique opportunity to watch badgers in comfort whatever the weather. Refreshments available.
Adults £7.50. Booking essential 01387 770200 info.caerlaverock@wwwt.org.uk

Wednesday 6 April 13-14.30h - **Land Rover Tour of Drumlanrig.**
A 1.5 hour breath-taking tour of the stunning woodlands and policies surrounding Drumlanrig Castle.
£20 per person. Booking essential. 01848 331555 rangerservice@buccleuch.com

Saturday 9 April 14-16h - **Galloway Glens Landscape from Parton Viewpoint.**
A short walk up to the viewpoint above Parton (quite steep and could be muddy), through the landscape that is part of the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Project. Find out what the project is about and how to get involved.
Booking essential 07702 250958.

Saturday 9 April 16.30-20h. **Spring Coastal Foraging Walk.**
An introduction to foraging on the coast at Carrick Shore. Over the walk you will receive expert tuition on how to find, identify and mindfully harvest, preserve and cook 30+ wild edibles. A fun, informative and truly memorable evening with treats and tasters throughout. Adults £35.
Booking essential. 07900 692478 mark@gallowayfoods.com

Saturday 9 April 20.30- 22.30h - **Natterjack Nights** at Mersehead RSPB Reserve.
Come along at dusk and you may hear the toad chorus as the male toads come down to the shallow pools to sing to the females. Bring a torch and wellies.
Adults £5. Booking essential. 01387 780579 mersehead@www.rspb.org.uk

PLAN A VISIT TO CARSTRAMON WOODS IN MAY

The glorious spectacle of bluebell carpets is hardly known outside the UK, as we have half of the world's population of native bluebells. Bluebells thrive in old-established broadleaved woodlands where the trees are wide enough apart to allow light to reach the ground. They often occur in woods that were coppiced and generally European woods have not been as intensively managed as those in the British Isles.



The industrial growth in Gatehouse in the 18th Century put demands on the surrounding countryside, with much more intensive use of farmland and the regular coppicing of oak trees at Carstramon and Killiegowan Woods. The bark of the oak would be harvested prior to cutting as it contains chemicals that were used in the leather tanning industry - and there were two tanneries in Gatehouse that needed to be supplied. Much of the timber would be used to make charcoal, which was in great demand, and the remains of charcoal platforms are evident at Carstramon.

Unusually bluebells were not mentioned by the early English herbalists as their work was based on their predecessors – and the Greeks and Romans botanists did not know the plant. The earliest reference is in the mid-16th Century when they were referred to by their common folk name 'crow toes'.

The gummy sap from bluebells bulbs has been used for many purposes with Bronze Age people using it to set feathers upon arrows, and in more recent times to bind pages into the spines of books. Starch from the crushed bulbs was used in Elizabethan times to stiffen ruffs of collars and sleeves.

Native British bluebells are a Local Priority Species and there is believed to be a recent decline in numbers, probably caused by woods becoming too shady. Carstramon Wood is a nature reserve owned and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Anna Johnson

WATER VOLE SURVEY – VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED!



Image: northeastwildlife.co.uk

develop future work. One of the actions was to gain better knowledge of where the priority habitats and species are located in the Biosphere Area.

The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Natural Heritage team have recently completed the [Natural Heritage Management Plan](#), which aims to provide information on the status, conservation and requirements of High Focus Habitats and Species within the Biosphere. The next step was to agree actions and targets with input from a wide range of individuals and organisations that have an interest in Natural Heritage across the Biosphere. This event took place at the Catstrand in March and provided the Biosphere Team with lots of information to help

Water voles are one of the nine High Focus species selected as being of great importance and concern within the Biosphere, one of the aims is to achieve a better understanding of their current presence and the obstacles to widening their occurrence. A water vole project is therefore being undertaken which will bring together groups that have previously undertaken water vole studies, along with volunteers new to such work. Surveying will take place during April and May then again during August and September, each volunteer choosing when to survey in those periods. All participants will need to be trained in the survey methodology.

The training day is on Saturday 23rd April 2016. For more details and how to get involved please contact Wendy Fenton at: wendy@gsabiosphere.org.uk

CONSULTATION ON CAERLAVEROCK AND CAIRNSMORE OF FLEET NATIONAL NATURE RESERVES - YOUR COMMENTS NEEDED!

Further to the article in the last newsletter just a reminder that the consultation process on the new management plans for the National Nature Reserves (NNRs) at Caerlaverock and Cairnsmore of Fleet are still underway. Scottish Natural Heritage are very keen to get views on how people and local communities could link with these special places. The consultation on Caerlaverock NNR runs till 8 April 2016. The [consultation leaflet](#) provides a summary of how it is proposed to manage the reserve over the next 10 years. If you would like more detail [read the draft management plan](#).

Let SNH know what you think by [emailing them on this link](#).

The consultation on Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR runs till the 22 April 2016. The [consultation leaflet](#) provides a summary of how we propose to manage the reserve over the next 10 years. If you would like more detail please email SNH and they will send you a list of objectives and tasks. In addition, there will be two drop-in events - why not come along and have a chat about it?

Gatehouse of Fleet Community Centre
From 17.00 to 20.00 on Friday 8 April

Creetown Gem Rock Museum
From 17.00 to 20.00 on Friday 15 April 2016

FLEET VALLEY VOLUNTEERS ON FILM

The Fleet Valley volunteers have featured in a film celebrating six of the best LEADER projects in Scotland. One of the projects was *Making the Most of the Coast*, which highlighted the great coastal resource on our doorsteps. Over the life of the project many groups were involved in researching the history and wildlife of the coast, creating art works and taking part in events to raise awareness of the importance of the Solway Coast. Children from Gatehouse School and other local schools as well as the Fleet Valley volunteers took part in beach clean-ups and the volunteers were recently asked to do a clean-up for the film being made of the projects <https://vimeo.com/158084555>



The Knockbex path which features in the film

BAGS OF HELP



A big thank you to all those who shopped at Tesco between 27 February and 6 March and voted for the Cally Woods and Deer Park project. Thanks to the votes of local shoppers, the GDI's project was placed second and this means that we will have £10,000, to be spent largely on completing the restoration of key features of the Cally Walls which we began way back in 2008. While we have concentrated on completing the boundary wall on the approach to Gatehouse and we are currently completing the boundary wall between Enrick farm and the A 75, which will enhance the view on the approach to the town, we did not have the funding to complete the sunken dyke nor the Deer Park walls beyond Cally Mains. There are also other walls, such as the Orchard wall surrounding Cally Gardens, which need to be cleared of vegetation and fallen branches before further restoration work. As with other dyking projects the Bags of Help project will provide plenty of opportunities to clear walls and create habitat piles and also develop our dyking skills.



VOLUNTEERS COMPLETE WIDE RANGE OF PROJECTS

Thanks to the excellent turn out of volunteers this spring and the relatively good weather on volunteer days the Fleet Valley volunteers have completed a wide range of tasks. Volunteer work has included completing the clearing of timber from behind the Enrick dyke and the creation of habitat piles. (photo of volunteers having completed habitat piles); clearing the paths near the Temple in preparation for the inspection of the Temple by inspectors for the Scottish Civic Trust, My Place Awards; beach cleaning at

Carrick and work on the Knockbren path for the Making the Most of the Coast film; clearing back the encroaching verges on the Port Macadam path and improving the drainage at the side of the path; clearing the stream at Garries Wood to improve the view between the two bridges and a survey of the Cally water courses, which will allow the volunteers to plan further work on the water courses as appropriate.



Creating habitat piles at Enrick wall



Fleet Valley Volunteers ready for pathwork

Volunteers set out to survey the Cally water courses



Francois briefing volunteers before they headed off for the fences on the Clints of Dromore

A LITTLE HELP FOR THE BLACK GROUSE

The newly felled plantation by Cairnsmore of Fleet can act as a magnet for black grouse. The Forestry Commission and Scottish National Heritage had support from the Fleet Valley Volunteers to mark fences to prevent black grouse fence strikes. They joined François Chazel, Scottish National Heritage Reserve Manager at Cairnsmore National Nature Reserve to place wire clips on the boundary fence. (see photo above right).

The volunteers also cleaned the picnic benches and chairs at the Cairnsmore Visitor Centre and cut back old vegetation to prepare it for the summer season.

Images of the volunteers in action can be seen on the Facebook page of Scotland's NNRs

David Steel

ANTONY CURTIS WOLFFE MBE

The well-known architect and town planner, Antony Wolffe died on 27 January 2016. One of his last projects was his report on the Cally Temple in 2011 which was the basis of the successful funding for the project to restore the historic neo-Gothic building tucked away in the Cally Woods.

Antony worked as an architect for 65 years moving to Gatehouse of Fleet in 1952 where he was Burgh Surveyor for over ten years. He was an expert in restoration and conservation, sensitively renovating country houses, churches, farms and mill buildings throughout the region. He was a part-time inspector of historic buildings and assembled the first statutory list of buildings of architectural and historical interest for Dumfries and Galloway. Amongst his many other roles he was president of the Galloway Preservation Society, president of the Architectural Society of Scotland a Trustee of the Architectural Heritage Trust and Trustee of the Murray Usher Foundation. In 1975 he was awarded the MBE for services to architecture.



Happily, Antony was able to visit the restored Cally Temple in May 2015 and was still researching the architects of Cally in the weeks before he died.

Alison Steel



A spring bouquet was just a small gesture to express our continuing thanks to Alison for her endless patience in compiling and producing our regular newsletters – they would not happen without her.

Alison would welcome any volunteering news or photographs for inclusion in future editions. Please contact on steel0209@gmail.com or 01557 814226.

If you would like any further information about anything in this newsletter contact Anna Johnson, NSA Officer, Anna.Johnson@dumgal.gov.uk 01387 260242