

SPRING JOURNAL
ISSUE 1



nevis



BEN

GLEN

PROJECTS

PEOPLE

VOLUNTEERING



Fàilte chridheil.

BY FREJA MACDOUGALL

Hello and a very warm welcome to Nevis Landscape Partnership's Spring Journal, our new quarterly publication highlighting everything that makes this vibrant, beautiful landscape so special.

Step inside to meet the team, explore the projects, engage with the environment and get really excited and inspired about conservation in Glen Nevis. Now more than ever, the land needs all of us to give a little back from time to time. Each season we aim to bring you the very latest from the Ben, the Glen and the people who are working to protect and enhance our wonderful, natural playground.

Leis na beannachdan.

If not you, then who?



Nevis Landscape Partnership are extremely grateful for the generous contributions Heritage Lottery Fund and all of our project partners make to ensure Ben Nevis & Glen Nevis are looked after. But what happens in 2019, when the projects end and the funding runs out? If we don't make a serious effort to safeguard Ben Nevis & Glen Nevis it won't take long for all the amazing work our team, our partners and our volunteers have put into the land to become undone.

For a landscape that gives so many of us a place to play, grow, learn and escape to: it deserves our help.

Text "TBNFoo £5" to 70070
paypal.me/NevisLandscape



The Path Projects

BY DOUGIE SINCLAIR

The Ben Nevis Mountain Path

The Ben Nevis Mountain Path is one of our largest projects. We are repairing the entire length of path between Achintee to John's Wall, the first big corner after Halfway Lochan. Last winter we tackled the most difficult sections on the zig-zags above the Youth Hostel junction as far as the new bridge Rio Tinto put in. The work was completed to an excellent standard; robust enough to withstand the heavy traffic and, more importantly, the high rainfall. Like all paths, the Ben Nevis Mountain Path will still require frequent maintenance to prevent the rapid deterioration that will inevitably occur if neglected.

This year, we will complete three more sections. The first will be from the new bridge (mentioned previously) to just past "Windy Corner". The second section, which is already finished, made use of the stone collected high up on the slopes of Carn Dearg last year and flown down recently. This was not a priority section however it was an excellent use of the stone. The third contract this year will take place lower down the path focusing on a badly washed-out section in need of professional maintenance. The stone for this section will come from the slopes above Achintee and will blend in with the mountain far better than the imported stone we are having to use elsewhere on the hill. Using imported stone is a concern and we have made every effort to use it sparingly. Where we have used stone from quarries, it is noticeably less-weathered than stone from the hill however over the years it will start to blend.

On the less technical sections, lower down the hill, we are working with National Trust for Scotland's Thistle Camps to give volunteers from all over Scotland a chance to get involved with nine week-long working holidays, three have already taken place and had a huge (positive) impact on the beginning of the mountain path. Anyone with a hard-working attitude and good level of fitness is more than welcome to join in!



Polldubh

The Polldubh Craggs are of special interest to every rock climber in the area, maybe even Scotland. The area has played a significant and important part in the development of climbing in this country. Over the past few years however, the area has been become overgrown and under used. It is our aim, through devegetation and introduction of a natural, landscape sensitive path network, to bring people back and introduce new climbers to the area. We also intend to create a route along the bottom of Polldubh Craggs linking Lower Falls to (the recently repaired) Paddy's Bridge. This will create a circular, off road route in upper Glen Nevis. Much of this work will be done with help from anyone wanting to be one of our "Conservation Climbers". An initiative between Nevis Landscape Partnership, The Polldubh Club & Dave MacLeod to combine climbing and conservation for everyone to get involved with.



North Face Path

The North Face Path (the one that takes you down to The CIC Hut from the Halfway Lochan) is receiving some light attention. We have completed a section at the top, before you drop down below the cliffs, which crossed a particularly boggy section with many eroded routes. This has been achieved with the use of previously collected stone from the slopes of Càrn Mòr Dearg above. This is the theme of this particular path, light touch, with the emphasis more on defining one line from the many and making it the route of choice with a bare-minimum of constructed features. One attraction of this project is the use of the The CIC Hut as a base for volunteer work parties. We're hoping this will open it up to a much wider group of folk wanting to get involved.



Riverside All-Ability Path

A very different project altogether! Together with The Highland Council and local contractors we are opening up the quiet side of the River Nevis to people who are perhaps not so able. We are replacing the current bridge, constructing a smooth, low gradient path and improving the access ramps on and off the Youth Hostel bridge. Ben Nevis & Glen Nevis are not just for the young and fit.

A Light In The Dark

Dun Deardail

BY MATTHEW RITCHIE

Forestry Commission Scotland's Archaeologist Matt Ritchie is your guide to the archaeology of Dun Deardail, where excavation of the impressive hillfort is helping archaeologists shine a light into the mysterious Dark Ages. He explains how volunteer diggers have come from near and far to help learn more about the ancient fort, using scientific methodology to piece together the buried clues and enable us to better understand the prehistory of the Glen Nevis.

The excavation aims to investigate the possible entrance to the fort, the techniques of rampart construction, destruction and to explore the nature of occupation within the hillfort (looking for evidence of houses, hearths and workshops). The results will inform ongoing conservation management, specifically visitor pressure, particularly access pinch points and visitor erosion on the ramparts and flanks of the hillfort.

“The first and second seasons focused on two main aspects of the fort the enclosing rampart wall and the internal terraces. Excavation has revealed the rampart wall was far thicker than we originally thought and was probably topped with a strong timber palisade or timber superstructure. We also found slots for horizontal timbers within the wall, further evidence of its construction and even recovered traces of the charred timbers themselves.”

Martin Cook, AOC Archaeology Site Director

The majority of people involved with the excavation are volunteers, both locals and visitors. The project also ensures local schoolchildren get to face the past and get their hands dirty digging it up! AOC Archaeology also organised school-visits which saw children create Pictish art and stories.

“For many local people this is probably the most exciting aspect of the Nevis Landscape Partnership. Taking part on the dig and learning more about our ancient history has been a wonderful experience.”

Patricia Jordan, Excavation Volunteer & Director of Nevis Partnership





The Dun Deardail Archaeology Festival took place during the dig and attracted many families and visitors eager to explore the fascinating history of Glen Nevis. The Scottish Crannog Centre expertly demonstrated ancient cooking, crafts and workmanship whilst a minibus shuttled visitors up to the excavation site. Nevis Landscape Partnership trainee volunteer rangers were also on-hand to offer kids (and big kids!) Pictish “tattoos” and name badges. The Archaeology Festival will be held again this year to coincide with the final year of the excavation and finale of the Dun Deardail project. The one thing we knew for sure about Dun Deardail was that it was once destroyed by fire, a blaze so intense that it melted the very rocks of the rampart. We now have a much better idea of when the fort was built thanks to radiocarbon dating indicating the fort has been around since 500BC. We are also beginning to better understand the construction of Dun Deardail. The excavation has been hugely successful, combining volunteer opportunities with exciting new archaeological research and it was great to share this with people at the Archaeology Festival. It was also fantastic to see so many people taking in the spectacular views from the fort, relaxing in the sun and “enjoying listening to the gentle scrape of trowels”. The wonderful thing about archaeology is that for all the forensic investigation and laboratory analysis, we still need to use our imagination to recreate the past. We linked ‘The Sorrow of Derriu’ – a famous Celtic myth linking Iron Age Ulster to a Scottish hillfort – to the burning of Dun Deardail (‘Derdriu’s fort’).



The creative narrative has been included in a new Forestry Commission Scotland Outdoor Archaeological Learning resource, encouraging teachers to explore the use of archaeological methodology in the classroom and outdoors. It also shows how the important archaeological work at Dun Deardail is already influencing and inspiring the wider world.



"Glen Nevis has so much to offer, I wish I could be a trainee ranger forever!"

Hannah Bathgate
Nevis Trainee Volunteer Ranger
Lochaber Geopark Project Assistant

I started my trainee-ship last summer, moving to Fort William for the post of Trainee Volunteer Ranger.

It was the most amazing twelve weeks of learning, training, meeting fascinating people and spending my days in Glen Nevis. Susan, Volunteer Coordinator, did a fantastic job of squeezing in so much training into just one summer.

I have gained invaluable work experience and been lucky enough to keep in touch with so many inspirational people with a real passion for their work and the environment.



"Five days a week in a beautiful landscape meeting the best folk."

Peter Struthers

Nevis Trainee Volunteer Ranger

Environmental GeoScience Student

Firstly, I love the Highlands and Islands and I am also extremely passionate about the environment. The Nevis Training Project brought it all together for me.

I have a huge appreciation for how this landscape was formed, something I was able to explore as a trainee ranger on the fascinating North Face Survey surrounded by geology experts. Just one of the many perks of my twelve weeks in Glen Nevis.

Dougie is my biggest inspiration. John Muir deserves a mention too but he wasn't out moving huge boulders on the Ben Nevis Mountain Path, Dougie was!

Being a tiny part of the process to regrow the Caledonian Pinewood Forest has been huge for me. The whole traineeship in fact was amazing. Eat less meat & volunteer more folks!

A Place Between the Pines

Future Forests

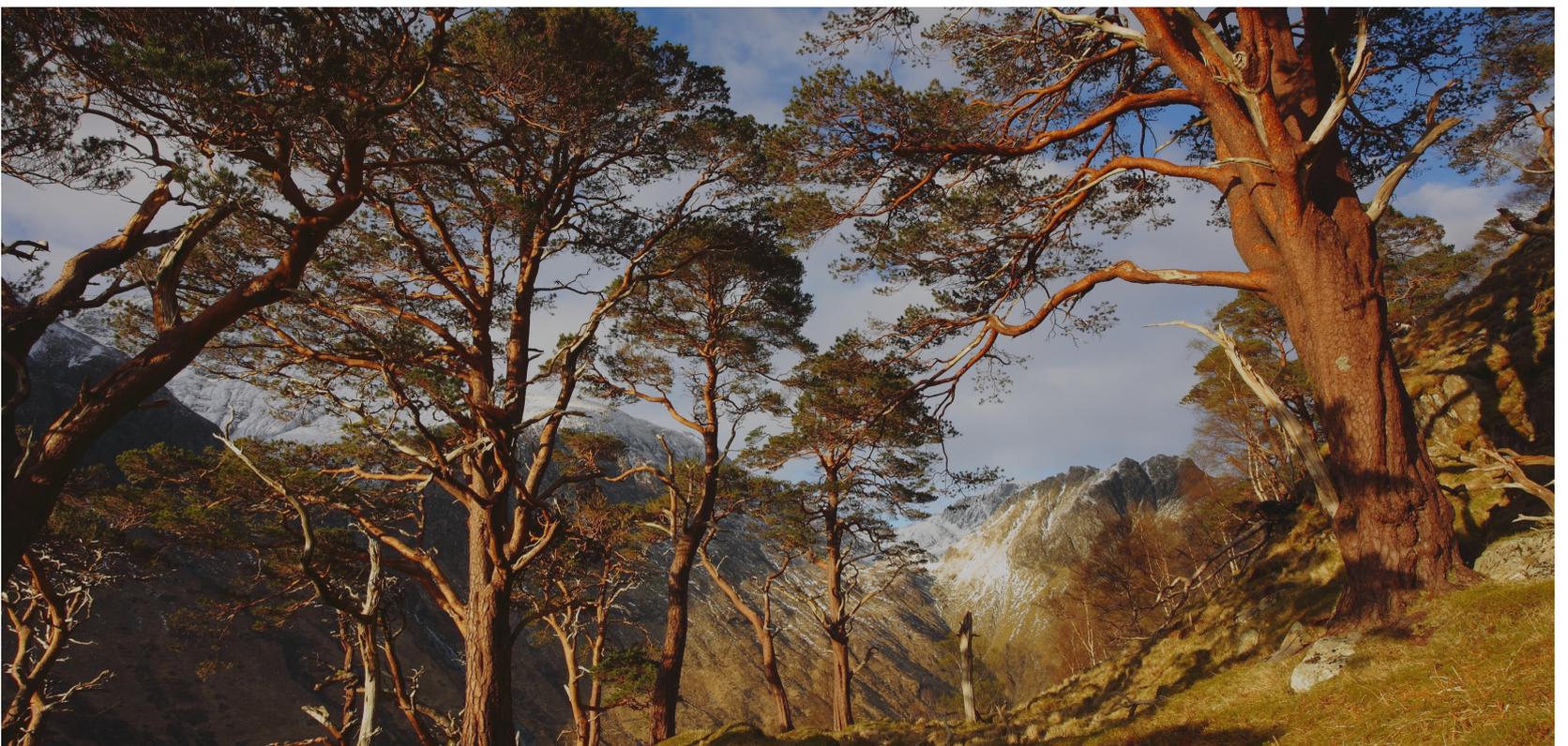
BY LEWIS PATE

Nevis Landscape Partnership have nineteen projects forming a programme of varied, crucially important environmental work. Integral to the success of the conservation and enhancement of Glen Nevis are two projects; **Future Forests** and **Pinewood Restoration**.

Together with Scottish Natural Heritage & Forestry Commission Scotland we have made progress over the past three years in several key areas.

Pinewood Restoration began by removing Sitka Spruce from a logistically challenging site above Achriabhach, this was completed last year with a view to repopulate the clearing with native pines.

With the site cleared and the trees not yet ready for planting we turned our attention to wildlife, in particular Barn Owls, Tawny Owls & Pinemarten. A combined effort from volunteers, trainee rangers and Filcris (a company specialising in recycled plastics) saw the production of over forty owl boxes and five pinemarten boxes which have been installed in Glen Nevis & Leanachan Forest. All boxes are checked twice a year and already we are seeing signs of roosting owls and, unfortunately, pinemarten who enjoy snacking on owl eggs. This was quickly addressed by adding aluminium protectors to give the owls a chance to roost in peace. We are currently planning to introduce new wildlife viewing facilities in Glen Nevis. Watch this space for updates.





The **Future Forests** project continues to grow with the help from local schoolchildren, qualified climbers, volunteers, community groups and the fantastic teams at Forest Art & Trees for Life.

Whilst the trees continue to grow at various sites in Lochaber we have been getting Glen Nevis and Ben Nevis ready for them. Ten enclosure sites are now fenced, protected from deer and ready for Scots Pine saplings with three additional sites planned for fencing over the coming weeks. Whilst Pinewood Restoration is entirely based on Scots Pine, this project has seen over two thousand locally collected Aspen, Rowan, Hawthorn and Holly planted alongside Scots Pine.

Our baby pines are local to Glen Nevis, their seeds coming from cones collected in the upper parts of Glen Nevis near Polldubh Crags from mature "Granny Pines".

Tiny native trees that will grow up big and strong in Glen Nevis just like the little hands that planted them.

Throughout the year there are ample opportunities to get involved in both **Pinewood Restoration** and **Future Forests**. Nevis Landscape Partnership run "Conservation Club" days every month which involve everything from fencing to box-building and everything in-between. These projects are also the focus for one of National Trust for Scotland's three Thistle Camps they will be running in Glen Nevis this year.

We are looking forward to another fantastic year of planting and cone-collecting with a great team of volunteers.

Nevis Landscape Partnership Events

nevislandscape.co.uk/events

nevislandscape.co.uk/volunteering



March 4th
Path Party

March 14th
Pine Planting

APRIL
Litter Pick
Thistle Camp

March 25th
Lever & Mulch

April 1st
Path Party

MAY
Litter Pick
Herb Walk
Herb Workshop
Gaelic Landscape

April 20th
Customer Care

April 21st
Leave no Trace

Being able to do something fun that has a direct positive impact on our landscape was awesome! Not to mention getting to hang out with folk all happy working towards the same cause alongside you. With Nevis Landscape Partnership & Friends of Nevis it seems that there's endless opportunities to lend a hand.

Dan Timmis, Friends of Nevis Volunteer & Three Wise Monkeys





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