

# Lothians Conservation Volunteers

In support of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

## Annual Review 2010-2011

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**Lothians  
Conservation  
Volunteers**

[www.lcv.org.uk](http://www.lcv.org.uk)

Greetings and welcome to this, the first LCV Annual Review. If you have not been in on the discussions, the circulation of LCV's quarterly newsletter *The Puggled Mucker* has fallen dramatically in recent years as most members choose to get the information it contains from the internet. For this reason, LCV has decided to focus on online publishing and produce only an abbreviated *Mucker* for paper distribution. However, do not despair if you prefer paper: all the extra bits of the *Mucker* will now be published annually.

So, what kind of year has it been for LCV? There has been a good turnout for tasks resulting in a near record number of workdays. We have managed to replace our aging garage doors and resurrect our tap following its unfortunate encounter with sub-sub-zero temperatures in its very first winter. We have two newly-qualified drivers—and should soon have a third—which will help to relieve the pressure on those regular drivers who have been making extra efforts over the last year or so. We have run a First Aid course and we are just starting to pull together plans for a MiDAS course using funds kindly donated by Sinclair Knight Merz's Corporate Social Responsibility Scheme. All in all, a busy and successful year. Let's hope we can say the same next year.

*Louisa Martin, Co-ordinator*





## Lothians Conservation Volunteers

We are a Scottish Charity, run entirely by volunteers, and we've been doing conservation work in and around Edinburgh for over forty years.

We belong to the BTCV Community Network. Our funding comes from the clients that we work for, and also by grants from organisations like Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Charity number SC020384

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### The Editor Writes...

Finally the sustainably-harvested oaken Editor's Desk and matching bookcase replete with past *Muckers* have been installed in my flat—well, if I'm honest, just a memory stick and a shoebox—so it must be time to thank Nicola Murray for her three years of hard work and commitment as Editor. I'm sure you'll agree that her continued improvements in terms of content and aesthetics have left the *Mucker* in rude health. Hopefully it will survive the forthcoming major surgery...

So what's different about the *Annual Review*? Well, the detailed task and social programmes are now stored online. Our plan is to continually update the website over the course of the year with the usual residential task write-ups, occasional articles and recipes etc and then publish them in paper format in this—the *Annual Review*—each Autumn.

So we now have a more spacious publication in which to print a wider array of items related to our work. This issue features a series of articles related to Bawsinch: retired Reserve Convenor Colin McLean reflects on 41 years of our—and his—involvement there, Ian describes our recent walk on Arthur's Seat and we hear about some of the work of the Ranger Service in Holyrood park.

Matt's talk given to the SWT AGM is reprised, and there are updates from Ken and Martin on the subject of previous LCV tasks and socials. Tony and Trevor write around the topic of our week in Scone Palace while Christine's delicious-sounding lasagne awaits you. And that's not to mention the numerous photographs of us at work and play—some resurfacing after many years in the archives.

Thanks go to all contributors. This is your newsletter, and items from all LCV members are welcome. Most formats can be accommodated—handwritten, drawn, photographed or electronic. Just get in touch with the editor via [mucker@lcv.org.uk](mailto:mucker@lcv.org.uk) if you have something you'd like to see included. Welcome to the first of—hopefully—many LCV *Annual Reviews*.

Sarah McConachie

# In & around Bawsinch

LCV has long-established links with Bawsinch which is always a popular addition to the task programme. However, its tranquil beauty belies its rather more turbulent history. Here Colin McLean—who retired as Reserve Convenor in his 90<sup>th</sup> year having nurtured the reserve from its infancy—expands.

## Bawsinch and LCV

At the foot of the Royal Mile, South of Holyrood, rises the much-eroded core of a 325 million year old volcano—Arthur's Seat. Formerly a lofty snow-covered peak, time and weather have smoothed it down to the 251 metre hill we now see. A mere million years ago, part of the ice sheet flowing to the sea ground to a halt at the hill, broke off, and started to melt—so Duddingston Loch was born. About



Bawsinch circa 1979

Photo: John Dewar Studios

10,000 years ago most of the ice nearby also melted, and the surroundings of the loch sprang up: a jungle of aspen, birch, alder and willow. We know that the area was home to moose, red deer, wild boar and probably most of the other post-glacial fauna and flora. With a growing Edinburgh so close, urban influence increased

until in 1923 the public-spirited owner of the loch, William Haggerston Askew, presented it and its environs to the nation as a bird sanctuary within the Royal Park.

During the 1939 – 45 war Bawsinch, near the loch, was used as an army camp, and then as a home for continental peoples who could not return to Europe; but the dust settled and then urban development was proposed. Because of its proximity to the Bird Sanctuary, SWT objected to this, won the case, and bought Bawsinch for £10,000 in 1970. This is where LCV came in. LCV was first known as 'The Scottish Wildlife Trust Conservation Corps' and was seen as the practical, hands-on arm of the Trust. Innumerable tasks followed from this, and from the management decisions made by SWT CEO Bernard Gilchrist. Bernard was the chief forester of Tanzania, back home from Africa, and he laid down the bare bones of management as follows:

- To protect the bird sanctuary
- To provide new habitats for wildlife
- To provide more grazing for geese
- To provide opportunities for conservation education



Conservation Corps & Colin work by the gate

So it has been over the last 40 years, the Corps—now LCV—has helped to realise these objectives with a heavy emphasis on creating new habitats for wildlife.

The seven hectares SWT acquired was a bit of a mess. Buried in the nettles and brambles lurked a profusion of rubbish. Ruined buildings, dead dogs, patches of tarmac, ammunition boxes, mounds of broken glass, old prams and thousands of HP sauce and milk bottles – mostly empty! The Corps set to with a will to clear this lot up. Over late 1970 and early 1971 they collected 11 skips full of rubbish, had seven enormous bonfires of the more combustible objects and gained a lot of singed eyebrows and a few wrenched backs.

Meanwhile, thoughts on habitat creation were refined, to aim for environments which were now at risk in the countryside. These were:

- **Mixed woodland:** containing all the 44 native British species of trees, and a few individuals of the most common introductions
- **Scrub:** by fostering young hawthorn and elder bushes already present
- **Ponds:** by excavation to the ground-water level
- **Reed bed:** by extension of the small area of reeds at the west end of the loch
- **Wild flower meadow:** by cultivation and sowing
- **Goose grazing area:** creating an area of short mown grass to help feed the greylag goose flock hefted on the loch.

The two hectare Goose Green was cleared and sown to grass in 1972. Not only grass came up, however, and pulling invasive willow herb and nettles by hand became a major task for LCV until better cutting arrangements were made with Holyrood Park.

A chestnut paling was strung along the public road boundary of the reserve—later reinforced by LCV planting a hedge of hawthorn—to repel boarders who managed to surmount the fence. These hawthorns have since become a major food source for the berry-eating redwings which arrive every November from Sweden.

Tree planting started in 1973 when LCV established a little tree-nursery in the North West corner of the reserve. This proved a flop as the nursery was quickly overwhelmed by butterbur, but—nothing daunted—they rabbit-fenced, dug a patch next to the Goose Green and started again. Clearing this ground and weeding the young trees became a frequent May and June task in the Seventies. Most of these trees were planted out nearby in 1976 and weeding the young oaks, Scots pine, aspen, birch and all the other 44 species became an annual task.

In the winter of 1975 pond digging began with the machine excavation of big ponds Matthew and Luke, which resulted in enormous mounds of spoil. LCV tackled these and wheel-barrowed hundreds of loads of soil across the Goose Green to form a bund from the reserve gate to the Connell Hide, which was then being built. The bund allowed folk to enter the hide unseen by the birds, or from other parts of the reserve.



Conservation Corps breaking ground at Bawsinch tree nursery, 1972

Three other smaller ponds—Mark, Volunteer and John—were dug out entirely by hand—usually LCV hands—and sometimes under fire! Volunteers digging out the pond of that name were subjected to a fusillade of air-gun pellets, originating from rude boys prowling the Innocent Railway. However, a counter attack spearheaded by Yorkshire bills and mattocks dispersed this menace. Another obstruction encountered by LCV pond-diggers was the Immovable-Green-Cone-Eater. This gentleman delighted in chewing the immature cones of Scots pine, whilst they were still soft and green and, having started his mastication, could not be moved until he turned a shade of green himself. Wisely, LCV ignored him and went to dig a pond elsewhere, to join the total of 14 new ponds in the reserve.

Most wildflowers don't grow at all well in topsoil, so in 1984 LCV helped to remove the topsoil from a patch of the Goose Green and sowed the exposed subsoil with a wildflower seed mixture. The following year this was augmented by sowings of cowslip, woad and Dyer's greenweed. There was another massive sowing of cowslip in 1987. Most of these seeds grew and proliferated and, along with plants of yellow rattle lifted from our other reserve at Addiewell, have formed the wee flower meadow we now have.

One of the more important features of Duddingston/Bawsinch is its reed bed. In Scotland reed bed is a rare habitat, but very productive in terms of biodiversity. It also supports some special birds, like bitterns, bearded reedlings and hundreds of sedge warblers and is a happy refuge for water voles which are having a hard time and need help. So, in 2003 it was decided to extend the reed bed by greatly enlarging John pond into a shallow lagoon of the loch and planting it up with bulrush and common reed. LCV took on the messy job of planting these marginal plants into the mud, and now this lagoon—known as the Ridley—is a dense 3 metre high thicket of the two reeds; a perfect home for reed bed birds, and an ideal rest stop for our swallows when they arrive exhausted from Africa in April.

LCV has had tasks at Bawsinch every year since 1970. Many others have shared in the re-creation work of the reserve, but the hard work and commitment to conservation of the Corps has been the keystone in building this jewel of biodiversity in the middle of our city.



Conservation Corps clearing scrub

Some conservation organisations stand on the sidelines, wringing their hands, collecting money and producing a glossy magazine. LCV does none of these things, but gets off its backside, rolls up its sleeves and works. Long may your spirit last, well done.

Colin McLean

*Photos taken from SWT Journal, Vol. 15, part 3 Sept 1979 and from the Bawsinch archive courtesy of Colin McLean and Ken Knowles—Ed.*

### **Guided walk around Arthur's Seat: LCV social event August 2011**

At 13.30 hours on 6 August eleven of us rendezvoused with Matt McCabe at a top-secret location in Holyrood Park—OK, it was the Park Rangers' HQ right in the middle of the parade area.

The rain started on cue as the tour set off, but no matter as Matt led us to St. Margaret's Well—the first stop—where he explained its ancient origins. Next, we walked to the foot of the Radical Road, temporarily closed to the public on safety grounds after a rockfall. He explained the reason for its existence, being both an enterprise designed to put unemployed weavers to a useful task and to dull their strong political views, hence the name. Remember the really tough LCV tasks you've been on—path-building, scrub clearance—did you feel like going on a march or taking part in a riot afterwards?

Anyway, we then started climbing a little on the walk, and reached Camstane Quarry, which has provided a source of material for some of Edinburgh's buildings—well the stone ones at least! Matt also explained how the park had been shaped by the passage of Ice Age glaciers. He then told us about Arthur's Seat and its well-known history as a volcano—luckily long extinct: imagine the effect on house prices otherwise!

Further on and up, and after passing the faint remains of an ancient fort we came to the edge of Salisbury Crags, affording fine views over much of the city. This offered a lovely stroll along and down to Hutton's Section: a little corner of the park devoted to James Hutton, a geologist whom some see as the one of the 'forgotten people' of Scottish intellectualism.



Camstane quarry



Explaining the volcanic history in situ



Hutton's Section

It was time to start moving back through the park, taking in Hunter's Bog – home to a variety of pond-life, and also giving the name to a local running club. Time was up, and we were back nearly where we started, before heading for refreshments.

Not many capital cities have such a vast expanse of flora, fauna and earth history right in their heart, and freely open to all. Thank you very much Matt, for providing such a knowledgeable insight to such a site.

*Ian Dickson*  
*Photos SMcC*





## Conservation volunteering in Holyrood park

I freewheeled down the cycle path as Salisbury Crags towered above me, then tried to look innocent as I passed the ranks of policemen, barriers and 'No Entry' signs which signalled the Royal Garden Party. But cucumber sandwiches and small-talk weren't on my agenda: I had volunteered to help the Historic Scotland ranger service with one of their Biodiversity Surveys.

This is a programme which runs throughout the year and monitors species such as maiden pink, bees, butterflies, burnet moths, swans and—today's task—common rock rose.

While common rock rose, a British native, is not itself endangered, it is the larval food plant for the northern brown argus butterfly, which is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. This butterfly had been absent from the park for over 150 years, returning a few years ago. Since that time, the rangers have actively managed the areas of rock rose by monitoring their whereabouts and cutting back any encroaching gorse. This has led to a sustainable population of these rarities right on our doorstep.

Today's job, led by the rangers, including Matt McCabe, was to visit two sites where the rock rose had previously been recorded and note its presence or absence. We scrambled up the hill, reaching some very fine views across Bawsinch. We found one clump of rock rose with the aid of binoculars as it was surrounded by a giant gorse hedge and a precipitous drop—not ideal for getting a closer look.

We then walked back to the Education Centre via the Radical Road underneath the Crags, finding some rock rose in a considerably safer location. Matt pointed out the site of last year's big gorse fire highlighting the profusion of otherworldly viper's bugloss emerging from the ashes.

Other species we found included restharrow, a six-spot burnet moth and banks of wood sage, a food plant for the rare plume moth. Surveying this in May, the rangers



Common rock rose



Survey in progress

look out for the head of the plant drooping as this indicates active larval activity.

I'd highly recommend these surveys to anyone with a couple of hours to spare. No experience is needed and it's interesting to take part in a facet of conservation which doesn't involve slashing and burning, LCV-style. I wouldn't, however, recommend the cycle back up the hill...

If you'd like to find out more about volunteering in the park contact Katy on [Katy.Firth@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Katy.Firth@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or 0131 652 8150.

*Sarah McConachie*



*The community woodland committee had sourced a novel yet affordable outdoor classroom suitable for all weathers.*

*Nicola Murray*

# Views

## Regal rhoddie bashing: summer residential at Scone Palace

Considering the almost mythic role that Scone Palace and its famous coronation stone play in the Scottish psyche, it is perhaps surprising that so few LCV'ers seem to have ever visited Scone, which is just three miles outside Perth. Given that the Palace is also home to a spectacular collection of exotic pine specimens in the renowned 'Pinetum' and that Douglas himself was gardener here, anyone with a passing interest in forest conservation has even more reason to visit Scone. However, this year's summer residential gave nine of us the chance to rectify these cultural oversights by exploring the gardens and woods and touring the stately interior of the Palace. Perhaps more volunteers would have opted to stay for the full duration if they had known that our accommodation was to be the large Chauffeur's House, part of a stable conversion within the palace grounds, where the four 'full-timers' each had a bedroom to themselves.

So, perfect location and accommodation... but the most important component of a successful resi is a good host. Don Pritchard, the relatively new head gardener at Scone, has great plans for both restoring some of the neglected features of the grounds—the huge walled garden for example—and for improving the woodlands to increase biodiversity and access. His boundless enthusiasm and great generosity made the week truly memorable.



Trevor tends one of the fires

But what of the task itself? In the absence through injury of Scottish Native Woods' Simon Lockwood, we were forced to abandon bridge construction plans, and fell back on LCV's perennial favourite slash and burn task: a week of truly epic rhododendron bashing. Large areas of the palace woodlands are densely overgrown with infesting *R. ponticum* which strangle the light and life out of the wood. Don hopes to clear these out and restore a native understorey, supporting greater wildlife diversity whilst also improving the aesthetics for the visitors.



Before...



...and after

Throughout the week we tackled one large quadrant of woodland, to the south of the main palace drive. Starting at one end, we cut and burnt our way towards the palace: clearing all the rhododendrons and felling large numbers of box trees, probably ornamental escapees; a few sycamores were fair game too. Throughout the week unexpected refreshments were laid on by Don, with the palace restaurant supplying flasks of hot soup at lunch each day, occasional tea and coffee urns and even Scone scones one day—although the jam did attract the abundant wasps. Four and a half work days, and a dozen huge fires later we reached the far end. We had transformed an impenetrable jungle into open mixed woodland—interspersed with non-natives: western hemlock, sycamore and beech—ready for understorey planting with hazel and thorn trees etc.



Crannog Centre: making fire

After the first day's foul weather, the temperature rose and the sun came out, and surprisingly the midges stayed away. However, we did benefit from the weekend's torrential rain on our rest day trip to visit the impressive river gorges and falls at the Hermitage near Dunkeld and the Birks of Aberfeldy. On our action-packed day we also visited the Crannog Centre on Loch Tay and saw how our ancestors made use of the local timber to construct stilt houses over the loch.

The final ingredient for the perfect week was the vast quantity of gourmet food that we managed to serve up from our two borrowed camping gaz stoves. I suspect that we all eat more and better when away with LCV for a week than when slumming it at home. A final night barbeque party rounded things off, and left us all keen to head



Dinner al fresco



Three LCV anniversary T shirts make an appearance on the resi: 40, 30 and 25 years

back to Scone for future work parties. We probably owe Don some path and bridge work in return for the unmitigated pleasure of a week of rhododendrons, but I'm sure we would all be up for more of the same.

Thanks to everyone who came along for all or part of the week and especially to David for organising the catering and once more to our host Don.

*Trevor Paterson*

*And thanks to Trevor for leading and driving and Louisa and Greg M for providing the photos—Ed.*



## **Scone and the man who gave us the Sitka spruce**

For the summer residential of 2011, in this its 40th year of operation, LCV went to Scone. A small select group of us had the right good fortune to live and work for a few days in the sumptuous grounds of Perthshire's Scone Palace with its long history of royal attachments and, of course, we felt quite at home.

The splendid palace grounds with its lime tree avenues bordered with primulas and bluebells and its stands of North American conifers extend to 100 acres, and were landscaped by the third Earl of Mansfield in 1805. In 1848 the magnificent pinetum was established and includes many western hemlock and noble firs as well as four Sitka spruce noted for their size and uniformity. Other notable trees include the Scone Douglas fir, raised from the original seeds sent back from America in 1826.

On Moot Hill, within the Palace grounds, the Kings of Scotland from Kenneth MacAlpin, through Shakespeare's Macbeth, The Bruce himself and finally Charles the Second in 1651 were crowned seated upon a block of Devonian sandstone. For a week we walked in the footsteps of these ancient kings and for a while these wooded grounds rang to the sound of saw and axe. As the staccato crackles of our bonfires fade, the acrid whiff of wood smoke dissipates and the subtle essence of rhododendron passes into the memory, let us remember that these same sounds and smells would have been very familiar to the young man who helped establish these woodlands and who is the principal subject of this essay: the explorer and plantsman David Douglas.

Born in Scone in June 1799, the son of a stonemason, Douglas acquired his early education tramping the woods and fishing in trout streams whilst skipping classes at the parish school of Kinnoul near Perth.

While serving an apprenticeship in the gardens of Scone Palace he began to develop a taste for botanical literature which led eventually to his being admitted to the infant Glasgow Royal Botanic Garden where he became a star student of Prof William Hooker. On Hooker's recommendation he was engaged in 1823 by the Horticultural Society of London as a botanical collector.

That year the Society invited Douglas to botanise in the north-eastern US, and in June 1823 he sailed from Liverpool bound for New York. By mid-August he was in Philadelphia looking at plants and by September he was in south-eastern Canada collecting seeds and cuttings of fruit trees as well as wild woody plants.

Having investigated and collected along the valley and floodplain of the Niagara River, he returned to New York and sailed for home on 12 December 1823. The many specimens Douglas brought back made his trip a publicly acclaimed success. When word came in the spring of 1824 that the Hudson Bay Company—HBC—



David Douglas

was willing to sponsor a plant collector to investigate along the Colombia River, Douglas was the immediate choice: on the 25 July 1824 he boarded the *William and Mary* outward-bound for Fort Vancouver on the Colombia River. The rewards of his collecting were immediate and numerous. Almost every day he was in the field he was finding material new to botanical science as he travelled extensively throughout the HBC's Colombia district between northern California and the Colombia basin. In the Athabasca Pass he performed the unusual feat of climbing a mountain of 9,156 feet in five hours, alone and without equipment: he named it Mount Brown in honour of Robert Brown the prominent botanist, and he named another peak Mount Hooker.

The year 1826 found Douglas deep inland climbing the high mountains of north-eastern Oregon and various tops in the Cascade Range. Rain and snow in the early months of 1827 made collecting impossible and in late March he and a small party set out to return to England via Hudson Bay. This action involved going up the Colombia River, crossing the Rockies and then making their way to York Factory on the southern shore of the Bay carrying all of the new collections. They reached their destination on 28 July and sailed for England arriving in Portsmouth on 11 October 1827.

Douglas' harvest of plants and seeds established a record for the number of species introduced by an individual into Britain, the leading country in botanical research. It was this 1827 collection which brought the Douglas fir into cultivation and other notable introductions included Sitka spruce, sugar pine, western white pine, Ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, Monterey pine, grand fir, noble fir and several other conifers that transformed the British landscape and timber industry. Also included in this collection were numerous garden shrubs and herbs such as the flowering currant, salal, lupin, beard tongue and California poppy.

Many of the species were valuable and were distributed among appropriate institutions. Douglas' discoveries were exhibited at meetings of the Horticultural Society and published in scientific periodicals. At 29 he was a celebrity and was admitted with honours into the Linnaean, Zoological and Geological Societies of London. From 1830 to 1833, Douglas botanised from Puget Sound to Santa Barbara, Califor-



nia and in the Sandwich—Hawaiian— Islands. In March 1833, having lost the vision in his right eye, he set out to return to England through British Colombia to Sitka, Alaska and then across Siberia. He went north to the Fraser River and thence to Stuart Lake. Unable to find a party of traders going to the coast, where he intended to embark for Sitka, he was obliged to go back down the Fraser. On 13 June his canoe shot over a cataract below Fort George and was lost. He and his guide were spun through a whirlpool and disgorged onto the rocks.

Douglas saved some of his instruments but lost his botanical notes and collection of over 400 specimens. He arrived back at Fort Vancouver in July on the verge of starvation and broken in spirit.

On 18 October 1833, Douglas left for the Sandwich Islands, arriving at Honolulu on 23 December. On 12 July 1834 he was taking a mountain trail on Mauna Kea in northern Hawaii when he disappeared. He was 35. His gored and trampled body was found at the bottom of a cattle trap occupied by an enraged bull. Mysterious circumstances surrounding his death have given rise to speculation about whether it was an accident, murder or suicide.

The richness of Douglas' character, the variety of his skills and his boundless enthusiasm, energy and endurance enabled him to compress into a decade the accomplishment of a lifetime.

At a time when some 92,000 species of plants were known worldwide, Douglas had brought back to Britain about 7,000 species, many of them new to botanical science. A man who lived to search and died, perhaps of curiosity, Douglas has been described by a historian of science as *'one of our greatest and most successful exploring botanists, to whom the world is deeply indebted'*, an opinion that no one would gainsay.

### Footnote

The Sitka spruce, named after the former Russian capital of Alaska on Baranof Island, is the largest species of spruce and the fourth largest conifer. After being introduced to these islands by Douglas it was found to do well in Scotland's wet windy climate and became an important tree in the Forestry Commission's plantations. Although not always a favourite with wildlife conservationists, when planted in great blocks of tightly packed rows it is still of major import as a timber and paper producer. It is particularly valued for its fast growth rates on poor soils and on exposed sites where other tree types fail.

Sitka is used widely in musical instrument manufacture and its structure makes it an excellent conductor of sound. The wood is also an important material for sailing boat and aircraft wing spars and the nosecones of Trident missiles. The Wright brothers' *Flyer* was built using it; and it was a major component in the construction of the de Havilland Mosquito of 633 Squadron fame.



So when next you see the serried ranks of Sitka marching along the skyline of your favourite viewpoint, remember a great Scot and the lovely sound of your favourite guitar.

*Refs. The greater part of my account of Douglas' life and work was taken from 'Dictionary of Canadian Biography'*

*Tony Irving, LCV Tree Nursery Manager*

### **LCV social event: Pond party**

You may recall that we hosted a social event in March 2010 when several LCV members helped to dig a bog garden and pond in our back garden—see *Mucker 150, summer 2010-Ed*. We recently had a barbeque so that we could show people how it was progressing.



The pond shortly after its creation

The pond was simply filled with tap water. Some advice recommends getting some 'pond sludge' from a nearby watercourse to start off your pond but this can also bring invasive species, therefore we decided to wait and see what would find the pond. To prevent it from looking like a large puddle we purchased plants from BTCV's Jupiter Nursery which all have Scottish provenance. Ramshorn and pond snails were bought from Essex and came in the post—I hoped they would get on with the Scottish creatures that started to find our pond!

Soon enough the birds started to use the beach area to drink and have a bath. Next, pond skaters arrived followed by diving beetles, regularly resurfacing to take a breath before diving once more to hunt. Then came water boatmen, with their un-



Common frog



Emerging damselfly

mistakeable rowing movements under the water. Frogspawn appeared this year and we have had the occasional frog visiting for a few days. The best moment was watching a damselfly hatch out and dry its wings on a stem of greater spearwort before flying off.

The bog garden has seen the pendulous sedge, monkey-flower and ragged robin all become established, and having five flowers on our small yellow iris was very satisfying. It is amazing how little space you need and how quickly nature uses the new environments provided. Well worth all the digging.

*Martin and Sharon Brownjohn*

*Photos: Martin Brownjohn*

## **Glasdrum revisited**

We visited the national nature reserve of Glasdrum near Oban in early July 2011. LCV has previously worked at this site to cut back young birch trees and provide open glades for butterflies, under the guidance of SNH ranger John Halliday.

One particularly rare butterfly which only lives at a few sites on the West coast of Scotland is the checkered skipper. This was an endangered species but we were lucky enough to get a sighting of more than one on our visit, showing that at Glasdrum they are doing well. We were also lucky enough to see an otter, running down the banks of one of the streams on the site. Glasdrum is a varied site in a beautiful location on the hillside above loch Creran. It was good to go back to a site that we have worked on and see the butterflies which our work was intended to benefit.

*Sarah and Ken Humphreys*

## **LCV – the first 40 years**

### **Excerpts from a talk by Matt McCabe given to the SWT AGM 21 April 2011**

The aim of this talk is to explain about some of the work Lothians Conservation Volunteers have done over the past forty years.

#### **LCV: Who We Are**

We are a charity run entirely by volunteers. No-one is paid for what they do and many of us balance work and personal commitments. Despite this we still manage to do an incredible job to protect Scotland's landscape, wildlife and wild places.

In 2010, 86 members came out on task with us and our committee consisted of 15 members.

#### **LCV: What We Do**

We run practical conservation tasks every Sunday for numerous clients. We also have regular residential tasks, for example in 2010 we built a dyke for Lochalsh Community Woodland at Balmacara. This year we will live and work in the gardens of Scone Palace.

We have a large membership with a wide and diverse range of skills which allow us to undertake many different tasks. These include:

- **Habitat management** such as meadow raking at Vogrie Country Park
- **Tree felling and aftercare** at Pease Dean
- **Tree planting** at Spottiswoode
- **Pathwork** at Beecraigs
- **Bridge, step and boardwalk construction** at Beecraigs, Gore Glen and Springfield Mill
- **Invasive species control** such as removing Himalayan balsam from Bawsinch and piri piri burr and sea buckthorn from Gullane and Aberlady Bay

#### **Sites We Work On**

In 2010 we completed 621 workdays on 53 tasks at 26 sites. That year SWT was our largest client after we totalled 138 workdays, running 12 tasks on Lothian reserves such as Addiewell, Bawsinch and Red Moss near Balerno.

Other SWT Sites we have previously worked on include , Pease Dean near Coldingham, Linhouse Glen near Dedridge, Woodhall Dean near Dunbar and Roslin Glen.

Our other major clients are Midlothian Council Ranger Service with their sites at Vogrie, Springfield Mill and Roslin Glen. For the West Lothian Council Ranger Service we have done a great deal of pathwork at Beecraigs Country Park and for East Lothian Council Ranger Service we have worked on numerous coastal and inland sites.

We have numerous other clients but year after year SWT remains our largest.

## Testimonials

*'The great thing about LCV is that over the years we have developed an excellent working relationship with the organisation and volunteers. The participants are extremely experienced and knowledgeable and volunteer works are of a consistently high standard. The value they bring to our sites is exceptional. Most of all we enjoy the company, banter and good cheer.'*

Jo Cooke, Senior Ranger, Midlothian Council Ranger Service

*LCV are ace! If you want the work of 100 folk to arrive in a single minibus, if you want a large patch of impenetrable scrub to be cleared in a day, if you want a very capable and highly motivated workforce who can crack on of their own accord, if you want a laugh... call...'*

John Harrison, Ranger, East Lothian Council Ranger Service

## LCV Website

This is becoming the main point of communication for the group, containing all of the information found in our newsletter, the *Puggled Mucker*, plus additional news items. It is also the repository for risk assessments and documents such as our constitution, and there is the opportunity to purchase a fine selection of LCV clothing such as T-shirts and hooded tops.

## History: 40 years young and still going strong

September 1970	Lothians Conservation Corps founded
Mid 70s	Name changed to Lothians Conservation Volunteers
1989	Purchase of garage in which to store van and tools
1992	SNH funding
	9 June registered as a charity
	First fundraising ceilidh
1993	Tree felling course
1995	25 glorious years
1998	Purchase of toolshed
2001	Tasks hit by foot and mouth
2010	<i>Puggled Mucker</i> online

## Conclusion

To conclude I'd like to offer a personal perspective on LCV—why I continue to be so involved with this organisation and why I find LCV so deeply inspiring.

Working as a Ranger in Holyrood Park I've led many guided walks and I always take people to an area called the Camstane Quarry. At around 400 million years, it's the oldest area of Holyrood Park and is in actual fact a fossilised beach, a sea shore. I always try to impress on the audience the sheer magnitude of that time span: 400 million years. **400 million years!** It's neither today nor yesterday. It's a time span so staggering that the human mind simply can't cope. So I'd like to try and put that into perspective.



Camstane Quarry's fossil beach

Imagine a short journey of 400 steps, maybe to the local shop or bus stop. Imagine each step you take transports you a million years into the past, then you've travelled four hundred steps and, naturally, arrived back four hundred million years ago, back when the oldest rocks in Holyrood were being formed. On that scale all of recorded human history: from the first known system of writing in Mesopotamia; from the most 'ancient' stone circles and giant pyramids; encompassing all the great civilisations which have risen, prospered, crumbled and ultimately fragmented; all the religions which have sparked and died like a match; all the petty wars that have erupted and been extinguished; all the probes we've put onto other planets and even out of the Solar System; all the births, deaths, loves and losses we've ever endured; everything, **every-**

**thing**, on that scale, would fit under the very back grip of the heel of your walking boot. Before you've even taken your first step you're way beyond human history.

What a thought! Awesome, isn't it? It really brings home the ephemeral nature of humanity – we're a flicker, a bolt of lightning across the geological landscape. And yet, and here's the vital point from my perspective, what incredible power we have to change that landscape beyond recognition. In the blink of a geologic eye. And what incredible responsibility that puts on our shoulders.

Reading the headlines, it's so easy to become despondent: the climate is changing more rapidly than in all history, indeed than in all prehistory. Species are becoming

extinct far faster than ever before. Oil wars are erupting in North Africa and the Middle East. And all these things are, beyond doubt, our doing.

Really, what hope is there? I truly and firmly believe that there is an abundance of hope. Where does that hope come from?

Well, when I first became Task Organiser I had the unenviable job of arranging our annual summer residential. I sent out an email explaining what I was after to an umbrella organisation which represented community woodlands. Within a few days I'd received around fifty replies from community groups across Scotland, each of them seeking our help with their own small conservation project. Each protecting a diminutive corner of countryside. And each of these groups is made up of individual people.

That's where the hope lies. Not with Governments and nations, although they of course have their responsibilities too, but with groups of dedicated, likeminded **individuals**. Individuals can, and do, change the world. Individuals the like of which constitute LCV. Individuals who, week after week, month after month, year after year; in horizontal rain, snow and (occasionally) head splitting sunshine, endure sunburn, midgies, freezing temperatures and drowned wellies whilst giving up their spare time in the name of conservation. And we've been doing that for over forty years now.

That's where the hope lies.

*Matt McCabe, LCV Task Organiser*



## Christine's Carrifran veggie lasagne

Thanks to Christine Johnston for this recipe, tested on an arduous Carrifran residential.

### Notes:

Equipment: 2 large LCV baking trays; needs an oven at Gas 5 for about 45mins; foil for the garlic bread and to cover the tins; small whisk for the sauce

Advanced planning: the lentils don't need to be soaked overnight but can take  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  hr to cook. The vegetable quantities are approximate – just ensure that you have enough sauce to fill 2 layers in each of the baking trays. The cheese sauce can be time consuming so start it right at the beginning. I like to have a lot of sauce so that the top of the lasagne is well covered so you could make a bit more than the minimum amount!

### Ingredients:

500g dried lasagne sheets

*For the tomato sauce:*

500g brown or green lentils, cooked

Oil for frying

3 onions, chopped

4 – 6 cloves garlic, chopped

3 courgettes, chopped

1 large aubergine, chopped

200g mushrooms, chopped

2 or 3 red or yellow peppers, chopped (optional)

2 tins (800g) chopped tomatoes

Tomato puree

Dried Italian herbs or mixed herbs

Salt & pepper

*For the cheese sauce (minimum amount):*

100g cornflour

80g butter

1 litre milk

300g Gruyere cheese, grated (+ extra for sprinkling on top)

2 tsp mustard (optional)

*To serve:*

For the garlic bread:

3-4 short French sticks

250g butter, softened

$\frac{1}{2}$  bulb garlic, chopped

For the green salad:  
2 or 3 lettuces, shredded  
Some rocket leaves (optional)  
5 tomatoes, chopped

### **Method:**

Get the lentils boiling in a pan of water. Start making the cheese sauce: melt the butter slowly in a pan. Add the cornflour to make a roux and cook for a while, stirring all the time. Add the mustard. Start adding the milk slowly and keep stirring to avoid lumps. Once it reaches a pouring consistency, let it cool slightly then add the cheese.

At the same time start the tomato sauce: fry the onions and garlic gently in a large pan until soft, then add the mushrooms and keep frying gently. Fry the courgettes until soft then spoon out on to a plate; next fry the aubergines, then the peppers. Once cooked add them all to the onion mix. Add all the rest of the ingredients and season to taste. Mix in the drained lentils once they are cooked. Allow the tomato sauce to simmer for about five minutes or until ready to put in the baking tins.

Layer the lasagne and sauces in each tin. Start with a layer of lasagne sheets, then tomato sauce, then a small amount of cheese sauce. Follow that with layers of lasagne, tomato sauce, lasagne and finish with cheese sauce on top. Sprinkle with Gruyere. Cover with foil and place in the oven.

Make up the garlic bread by combining the butter and garlic into a paste. Cut the bread into 2cm thick slices, but only cut half way through the bread, and spread the paste on to the cut sides of the bread. Wrap in the foil and place in the oven for about 25 minutes.

Make up the salad just before serving.

*If you are willing to share your vegetarian culinary secrets send a recipe—for ten—to [mucker@lcv.org.uk](mailto:mucker@lcv.org.uk). Unsure if your cake or pudding will pass muster? Samples obligingly tasted by the Editorial team—Ed*





## **Review of the year**

This is a shortened version of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2010 – 2011. A full version of this is available on our Yahoo newsgroup or upon request.

## **Work carried out**

In the year to April 2011, LCV ran 63 tasks for 14 different clients at 23 different sites. In total, we did 684 days of voluntary work (2010: 621, 2009: 654) for conservation projects in Scotland.

We had an average of 10.2 volunteers on each task (2010: 10.8, 2009: 10.7). Scottish Wildlife Trust was our biggest client, receiving 153 (2010: Scottish Wildlife Trust, 138) of our total workdays. We continue to maintain a close relationship with the SWT Lothians Members Centre, as shown by the number of different local SWT sites that we visit. Midlothian Council was our second biggest client, receiving 140 workdays (2010: Midlothian Council, 90).

The residential week in summer was well attended. We went to Lochalsh and built an extensive drystone dyke.

## **Minibus**

LCV runs a minibus that is used to transport tools and volunteers to the work sites. The minibus is used exclusively for the purposes of the group, and this year it was driven 3,527 miles (2010: 3,157) on task. The minibus is vital for our operation: it allows us to welcome volunteers who do not have their own transport, and gives us the means to transport bulky tools in safety. We plan to replace this bus with a new one in 2019.

## **Tool store and garage**

LCV owns a wide variety of tools. One of the strengths of the group is that we can provide the client with volunteers who are fully equipped for the task. This year has seen a continued investment in new tools and safety equipment to ensure that our volunteers have everything they need to do an excellent job.

During the year we made significant investment in our buildings:

- We completed the installation of a tap in our garage. The total cost for this was £2,679—some of which appeared in last year's accounts. This tap represents a significant commitment for the group in both capital expenditure and ongoing maintenance, but provides major advantages in efficiency and safety from having a source of drinking water on site.
- We replaced the doors to our garage, at a total cost of £1,945—this will appear in next year's accounts.
- We rewired the garage—£417—improving the safety of the electricity supply.

## **Publicity**

A total of 48 new volunteers (2010: 45) came on their first task with us during the year. Our website is responsible for the majority of new recruits. During the year the site was visited 9,375 times (2010: 9,476), and in March 2011 received 887 unique visitors. We also attract a significant number of volunteers from the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, by word of mouth and by attendance at local volunteer fairs.

## **Tree nursery**

LCV runs a tree nursery in which we grow native trees of known provenance. Our Tree Nursery Manager plans the planting in the nursery in consultation with our clients to enable us to provide trees that they require. Being able to provide quality trees of known provenance is important for tree planting projects.

It can take up to four years to grow a tree from seed to a size that is suitable for planting on a reserve, and the Tree Nursery thus represents a considerable investment of volunteer time and effort. We are grateful to the City of Edinburgh Council for providing us with a site for our tree nursery.

## **Conclusion**

It has been another busy year for the group. We have again run a wide variety of tasks to maintain the enthusiasm of both long-standing and new volunteers, and our residential tasks have been popular and well-attended. Retaining new volunteers continues to be our biggest challenge in the year ahead. The committee focus on planning to ensure that there is a supply of volunteers willing to take on senior roles in the group as they become vacant.



# News

## Leading tasks and driving for LCV

We are always looking for new volunteers to lead tasks. There is a description of how to lead a task on the LCV website—look under ‘how to’—and training courses are run from time to time. Normally an experienced leader would be around as backup for the first few tasks. If you might be interested in leading tasks for LCV, please get in touch with Ian our Leader/Driver organiser—contact details overleaf. Minibus drivers are also needed—if you are a relatively experienced driver, the first step is to get in touch with Willie our Minibus Officer—contact details overleaf. Our aim is that all LCV drivers will also receive MiDAS training, which involves theoretical and practical aspects of safe driving. We can also arrange D1 training for those who need it.

## LCV clothing

Image Scotland is a company based in Musselburgh that supplies a good range of branded outdoor clothing. See [www.imagescotland.com](http://www.imagescotland.com) for their catalogue. They have a large green screen printed version of the LCV logo on their database that works well on anything from T-shirts to high visibility jackets, along with a smaller multicoloured embroidery version that is better for fleeces, hats etc. Phone Mark Herron our Membership Secretary—contact details overleaf—if you would like to purchase a garment branded with the LCV logo for your outdoor activities.

## Paper copy *Puggled Mucker* and *Annual Review* subscriptions

If you would like to receive a paper copy of the quarterly *Puggled Mucker* newsletter and our *Annual Review* the cost to cover printing and postage is £4 per year. Please send a cheque payable to ‘Lothians Conservation Volunteers’ to Mark Herron—contact details overleaf—and let him know if your contact details change.

## LCV Online

Don’t forget that you can check the task and social programme online at [www.lcv.org.uk](http://www.lcv.org.uk). The website is a mine of useful information for leading tasks, working the kettle and catering for large groups on residentials.

## Keep up with LCV news

Join our Yahoo! online discussion group, where we publish LCV news, discussions about LCV activities and social events. To subscribe contact David Nutter, LCV Webmaster—contact details overleaf.

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**Newsgroup**

To join our newsgroup send an email to [webmaster@lcv.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@lcv.org.uk) Full details at [www.lcv.org.uk](http://www.lcv.org.uk)

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