

Lothians Conservation Volunteers

In support of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

puggled mucker



Autumn 2010—A Bumper 40th Anniversary Special
Issue 151

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**Lothians
Conservation
Volunteers**

www.lcv.org.uk

LCV is 40! Or 280 in dog years, 67 in birch tree years and but six in oak tree years. More usefully it means that we're somewhere in the region of our 2,000th task and 20,000th volunteer day. Impressive.

The year of LCV's birth—1970—was, I am reasonably reliably informed, the year that the Boeing 747 made its first commercial flight, Brazil won their third World Cup, the Beatles disbanded and Apollo 13 didn't quite make it to the moon. Also, you could buy a house for £5,000.

I wouldn't like to hazard a guess as to the noteworthy features of 2010 that people will remember in 2050, but we have had some major LCV events this year. We've put our new bus on the road, got ourselves a water supply and survived an invasion of shed-dwelling bees. We've been to several new sites including Loch-alsh for the Summer Residential.

And it's not over yet. Our 40th anniversary celebrations are imminent, we have a ceilidh planned for November 13 and there will be an autumn residential at Moine Mhor in October. All this in addition to our regular Saturday and Sunday tasks.

Here's to another 40 years, LCV!

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 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.

Scottish charity number SC020384



Supported by grant aid from
Scottish Natural Heritage.

The Editor Writes...

Well. I thought the last *Mucker* was big... Welcome to our bumper thirty-two page anniversary issue.

You'll find all the usual essential information on forthcoming tasks and social events in addition to a unique 'Remember the time...' section on page 14 where some of you have provided us with an extraordinary array of contributions to celebrate our 40th year, including poetry and even a song! You'll discover, if you ever doubted it, that LCVers' talents extend well beyond brash burning and birch pulling.

We'd like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has taken the time to make this issue of the *Mucker* special and wish all LCVers 'Happy Anniversary!'

This is your newsletter, and contributions from all LCV members are welcome. Most formats can be accommodated—handwritten, drawn, photographed, electronic. Just get in touch with me **by 25 November** if you have something you'd like to see included in the next issue.

Nicola Murray

Task Programme



September 4 SATURDAY ***Special Anniversary Tasks!***

Vogrie Country Park: **meadow raking** **thinning/burning brash**

Vogrie is a popular country park four kilometres south-east of Dalkeith run by Midlothian Council. About half the area is covered by woodland and scrub, with smaller patches of grassland, three ponds, an alder coppice and a conifer plantation. Over the years we have cleared the ponds, cut meadow grass, repaired part of a drystone dyke, cleared scrub, coppiced alder and planted trees.

As part of our 40th anniversary celebration weekend, LCV will work on some conservation tasks in the park on the Saturday. We will be conifer brash thinning/burning and meadow raking.

September 12

Roslin Glen: pathwork/meadow raking

Roslin Glen is a 19 hectare reserve to the east of Roslin village and on the south bank of the River North Esk in Midlothian. The site is owned and managed by Midlothian Council. It is a relatively undisturbed mixed deciduous woodland largely made up of native sessile oak, wych-elm and ash, with a shrub layer of hazel and holly. There are also some introduced sycamore, beech and Norway spruce trees which are gradually being removed.

The area boasts a rich woodland flora which includes dog's mercury, ramsons, wood-rush and various ferns. Dippers and kingfishers can be seen in the fairly

clean waters of the Esk. The area has been put under a Millennium Forest for Scotland grant scheme to return the woodland to a native mixture of trees such as ash, alder, oak, pine and birch. On this task, we will be improving access by working on steps and paths in the glen.

September 19

Red Moss: birch pulling

The main feature of Red Moss, which is a Scottish Wildlife Reserve above Balerno, is a raised bog. Over time, the sphagnum moss has built up. It now acts like a sponge as the water level at the centre of the raised dome is considerably higher than the nearby Bavelaw reservoir. To prevent the bog drying out, over the past 15 years we have pulled up any birch which has self-seeded. This is an ideal task for people new to conservation work. We need lots of volunteers to form a line to work systematically across the bog. This site can be wet so wellies are recommended if you have them.



September 26

Aberlady Bay: sea buckthorn removal

Situated on the coast, Aberlady Bay is a Local Nature Reserve owned and managed by East Lothian Council. It is a large area—580 hectares—made up of an open bay with sand and mudflats, as well as expanses of saltings, dunes and grassland. The area is best known for its birds, where over 200 species have been seen. There is also considerable botanical interest—you can see the full plant succession from mudflat to saltmarsh, to dune scrub and grassland. On this task, we will be clearing areas of invasive sea buckthorn. Sea buckthorn is quite prickly, so hard-wearing clothes are advisable.

October 1–3

Moine Mhor residential: birch pulling

Moine Mhor—the ‘Great Moss’—National Nature Reserve (NNR) is owned and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). It is a spectacular example of a lowland raised bog—a truly wild and beautiful landscape where little has changed for thousands of years. It forms the wild heartland of Kilmartin Glen. It is home to plants and animals specially adapted to the waterlogged conditions; there are glistening dragonflies in summer and graceful hen harriers all year round.

On this residential we will be working with the SNH NNR staff to help restore the bogland by pulling out birch trees which would otherwise contribute to the bog drying out.

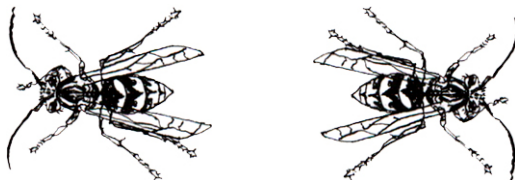
Accommodation is in the luxurious Kilmartin 'bothy' with cosy beds, en-suite showers and a useful 'drying room' for your gear in the event of rain. Duvets and pillows are provided, but please bring (single) bed linen with you. Book your place with Debbie by Wednesday 29 September at the latest.

October 9 SATURDAY Springfield Mill: birch thinning/brashing

Springfield Mill is a new site in the North Esk Valley between Loanhead and Bonnyrigg. A paper mill until the late 1960s, the site has now been reclaimed and restored as a wildlife area for use by the public. It has been seeded with wildflower mixes and planted with various native trees. Located at a bend in the River North Esk there are two seasonal ponds, areas of birch and willow woodland and grasslands. On this task we will be working with the Midlothian Ranger Service to thin areas of birch regeneration. We may burn the resulting brash and stack the larger bits of wood to form habitat piles for wee beasties such as beetles, grubs and woodlice.

October 10 Currie Community Woodland: burn clearance

Currie High School is fortunate in having a burn and woodland in the school grounds. The burn rises at a spring and continues through a woodland gorge to join the Murray Burn. The burn is an excellent habitat for fresh water invertebrates and the woodland forms part of a wildlife corridor which now surrounds the school, following extensive planting by Edinburgh Urban Forest Project. Over the last 12 years, the burn has been cleared of rubbish except for the first section, which offers difficult access. On this occasion, we will be repeating our regular task of helping to clear the burn to enhance the amenity and to improve the marginal plant diversity. Please bring wellington boots if you have them, although they are not essential.



October 16 SATURDAY Vogrie Country Park: pond clearance

See September 4 for a description of this site. On this visit we'll be clearing vegetation in and around the ponds. This will help to maintain a balance between open water and vegetation, in order to improve aquatic biodiversity. Please bring wellington boots if you have them, although they are not essential as LCV has a selection of waders.

October 17 Beecraigs Country Park: pathwork

Beecraigs Country Park, near Linlithgow, is owned and managed by West Lothian Council. It spans 370 hectares over the Bathgate Hills and comprises a commercially active conifer plantation, a deer attraction, a loch, a caravan and camping site and a large play area. Beecraigs is navigable by several way-marked trails and offers both the shelter of deep woodland and access to fantastic views over the Forth Valley. LCV has done a variety of tasks here, including tree planting and coppicing, drystone dyking, foot-path work, boardwalk construction, bridge building and step building. On this visit we will be working on paths within the site to improve access.



October 23 SATURDAY Easter Craiglockhart Hill: meadow raking

Easter Craiglockhart Hill is situated above Craiglockhart Sports Centre and is one of Edinburgh's seven hills offering excellent views across the city towards the castle and Arthur's Seat. The area is owned jointly by the City of Edinburgh Council and Napier University. We will be working with the Friends of Craiglockhart Woods and Nature Trail—a local group supported by the Scottish Wildlife Trust—who have produced a management plan and a trail leaflet, and continue to manage the site for wildlife. In the past on this site LCV has put in log steps, improved the footpath, cleared Japanese knotweed and built a nesting



platform for mute swans. On this visit we will be raking up trimmed grass to continue the development of a wildflower meadow.

October 24

Beecraigs Country Park: pathwork

This is a continuation of the work begun on October 17.

October 31

Bawsinch: tree maintenance

Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch are found on the southern edge of Holyrood Park, just below Arthur's Seat and only three kilometres from the city centre. Formerly a derelict industrial site, Bawsinch is a triangular area next to the south shore of the loch. This 26 hectare reserve, partly owned and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, is a bird sanctuary and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The area boasts breeding and wintering wildfowl, marshland with reedbeds and willow, patches of scrub and woodland, some freshwater ponds and an area of grassland named Goose Green. In the past LCV has felled trees, cleared ponds, built log bridges and cleared invasive vegetation. On this task we will be carrying out tree maintenance around a pond, so wellies are recommended.



November 7

Roslin Glen: path/stepwork

See September 12 for a description of this site. On this task we will be improving access by working on steps and paths in the glen.

November 13 SATURDAY

Beecraigs Country Park: pathwork

This is a continuation of the work begun on October 17.

November 14

Beecraigs Country Park: pathwork

This is a continuation of the work begun on October 17.

November 21

Addiewell: tree planting

Addiewell Bing is a long, narrow reserve of 21 hectares just south of Bathgate in West Lothian, which is leased and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. It is an

Most of the reserve is covered by woodland and scrub, but there are also patches of bracken, heather, open grassland and marshy ground with a rich variety of plants and birds. Originally, the area was planted with lodgepole pine to help stabilise the steep sides of this old spoil heap. More recently, these trees have been replaced with native species including oak and ash. In the past we have felled lodgepole pine, upgraded the footpath and cleared invading broom from areas of heather. On this visit we will planting trees.

Springfield Mill: birch/willow thinning

December 5

Bawsinch: tree maintenance

December 12

Roslin Glen: tree maintenance/planting

December 19

Addiewell: tree planting

This will be a continuation of the work begun on November 21.

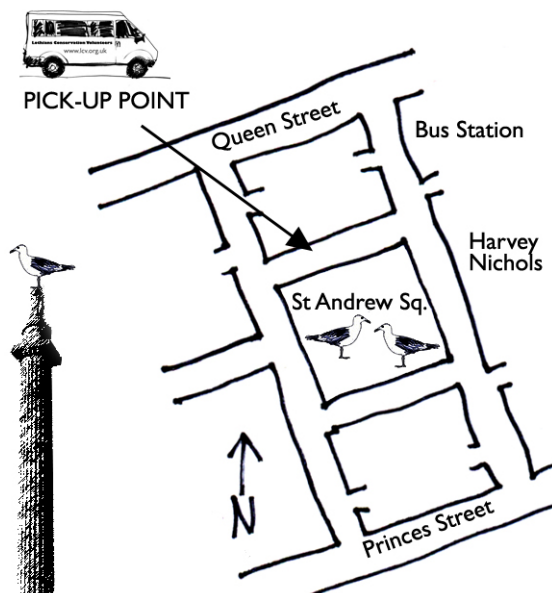
January 2011

New Year Residential TBC

As we go to press we are working to put together a winter residential or equivalent. Please check the LCV website for the most recent information on this.

How to book and what to bring

Day tasks



We meet on the north side of St. Andrew Square at 9.30 a.m. prompt—look out for our white minibus. We normally aim to return around 5.30 p.m. Bring a woolly hat, waterproofs, a packed lunch and boots or wellies—steel toe-cap wear is recommended. If you have your own work gloves, you might want to bring them, though we do have gloves that anyone can borrow. Pack plenty of drinking water and wear warm clothes. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided.

Transport is free, but please phone Debbie, the Transport Secretary, by the Friday evening before the task if you are coming—this is so that we know how many tools to take, whether there's room in the minibus and so that we don't go without you. Tasks are very popular, so you're advised to book early. We also only have 12 seats in the bus, so please come if you've booked, or someone else will miss out. If the bus is full, or it's easier for you, you can of course meet us at the site of the task, but again please inform the Transport Secretary, so we can let you know the meeting point and also when we expect to arrive.

Before you come on any task with us, please make sure that your tetanus vaccination is up to date. We don't cancel the task if it's raining.

Residential Tasks

Residentials are great fun—see the reviews in the *Views* section—and they allow LCV to undertake larger tasks further from Edinburgh. They involve a weekend away to work on the Saturday and Sunday. We leave on Friday night and usually take in a chip shop on the way. We get back to Edinburgh on Sunday evening.

Regardless of the time of year, bring a complete change of clothing so that you can get out of your work clothes in the evening. Remember that the weather can be very changeable, so bring a warm jumper and hat and above all don't forget a waterproof jacket and trousers and sturdy footwear. A sturdy bottle for drinking water is recommended. Unless otherwise indicated you'll probably need to take a sleeping bag and, if sleeping on the floor, a Karrimat or air-bed.

On residential tasks, breakfasts, lunches and the evening meal are organised by a volunteer. Everyone helps to prepare the food. The fare is usually vegetarian and there is plenty of it. Food for a weekend usually works out at £6 – £7 each. Pick-up is from St. Andrew Square at 7.30 p.m. on Friday, unless otherwise stated. If you want to go on a residential task, please book with the Transport Secretary. Normally, bookings will be accepted for weekend residential tasks up to the preceding Wednesday evening.

Before you come on any task with us, please make sure that your tetanus vaccination is up to date.

Monthly committee meetings

Every second Tuesday of the month, we have a meeting at 16 Forth Street, off Broughton Street, at 7.30 p.m. We leave a notice near the door with a mobile number to call so we can let you in. You are welcome to join us while we discuss LCV business. We often go for a drink in a local pub afterwards.



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 for backup for the first few tasks. If you might be interested in leading tasks for LCV, please get in touch with Simon our Leader/Driver organiser—contact details inside the back cover. 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 inside the back cover. 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 DI 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 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 inside the back cover of the Mucker—if you would like to purchase a garment branded with the LCV logo for your outdoor activities.

Paper copy *Puggled Mucker* subscriptions

If you would like to receive a paper copy of the quarterly *Puggled Mucker* newsletter 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 inside the back cover—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. The website is a mine of useful information for leading tasks, working the kettle and catering for large groups on residential.

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 in the *Contact Us* section of the LCV website.



Social Events

For all events it is better to book beforehand by emailing either Alexandra or Emma, social convenors—contact details in the *Contact Us* section of the LCV website—this way you can be updated if there is a change in arrangements. But, if you are not sure what you're doing until the last minute, for most events it is possible to just turn up. Updates on social events are sometimes circulated on *LCV News* our online newsgroup, see above for details.

Tues 28 September

Cinema Night

Meet us in the Filmhouse on Lothian Road at 7 p.m. for a drink in the bar and we'll decide what film we will go and see and where—with plenty to choose from between the programmes of the Filmhouse and nearby Cameo or Odeon cinemas.

Sat 30 October

Halloween Party

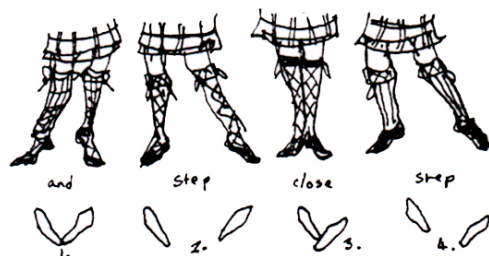
Venue TBC, watch *LCV News* for details, but come along in your best Halloween gear for the spooky LCV Halloween party. 7.30 p.m. Bring something to drink and nibbles.

Sat 13 November

LCV Fundraising Ceilidh

An opportunity to reel and jig as the nights draw in. There will be live music from the Belle Star Band—a popular ceilidh outfit—and a bar. Come to Southside Community Centre at 117 Nicolson Street from 8 p.m. for a great

night out and some aerobic exercise—the dances are led by a caller and very easy to pick up. The Ceilidh is also our most valuable annual fundraising event so bring along your friends to support LCV. Contact Martin, our Publicity Officer, for advance tickets—contact details inside back cover—or pay on the door. Tickets are £8 (£6 unwaged).



Mon 29 November

Pub Quiz at The Cumberland Bar

Come along and join team LCV at this pub quiz. It is free to enter—meet us in the Cumberland Bar on Cumberland Street in the New Town at 7 p.m.

Tues 21 December

German Market and the Big Wheel

Meet at 7.30 p.m. by the Scott Monument. Join LCV to visit the German Market on Princes Street for some *gluhwein*, a wander round the market and if you are feeling brave, a ride on the Big Wheel. We'll warm up afterwards in a nearby pub.



Remember the time...

A big thank you to all of you who provided vivid 'mini-memoirs' for this special 40th anniversary edition of the *Mucker*. LCV volunteers past and present and clients alike have taken stock of their LCV experiences, put pen to paper and described some choice memories for your reading pleasure. You might be surprised at the wellspring of creativity unearthed in the process, and at what we've got up to collectively over the last forty years...

Fond memories of LCV and my 3.6 person tent...

- 1996 Easter weekend by Roybridge. My first experience of real wild camping—waking up to frozen water bottles, rigid shoelaces and last night's pasta stuck to cooking pots.
- May 1997 residential on Arran. Camping by the old bunkhouse in the grounds of Brodick Castle and having a fabulous fancy-dress beach party to celebrate several volunteers' birthdays.
- 1998 Easter weekend by Fort Augustus. Pitching tents in wintry conditions and walking through thigh-deep snow over the Corrieyairack pass.
- 1999 Summer residential by Lochinver. Experiencing gales battering our tents at the base of Suilven. We're all in my tent playing a noisy game of scrabble, when David's neighbouring tent uproots itself into the loch and starts windsurfing at some speed...
- September 1999—LCV trip to Asturias in Spain. A herd of curious cows come to inspect our tents and we're forced to shoo them away with our walking sticks.
- 2000 Easter weekend in the Cairngorms. Me standing flummoxed in the middle of the Lairig Ghru working up the courage to inform my camping companions that I had misplaced my tent poles and could only offer them a sheet of canvas for the night...

Thanks LCV for some wild experiences!

Edel Sheridan

Close Encounters of the Feathered Kind

It was the summer residential on Rhum and, around 10 p.m., after a hard day's work and the usual excellent evening meal, we set off to go birdwatching on the slopes of Hallevat. Our mission was to experience the nightly event of Manx Shearwaters returning to their burrows en masse to feed their young.

I don't remember how far up the hill we climbed before settling into our sleeping bags on the grassy east facing slope. As darkness fell in came the birds, and I am not sure who was more surprised, them or us! The birds endlessly fluttered and fell amongst us, coming in in their hundreds to feed their chicks; one even tried to share my sleeping bag.

As dawn started to break the birds melted away and we saw the morning in with the most fantastic sunrise over the Sound of Rhum and the Cuillins of Skye. It was a magical moment!

Christine Johnston



Light my fire...

Darkest midwinter, Vogrie, and LCV are out for a spot of tree felling, brash clearance and bonfiring. Super! We do like to burn stuff. But what's this? The wood is green and sopping wet, there's no wind and it's raining like it means it. LCV's usual pyromaniacs mutter darkly and head for the tree felling. Are we defeated? We are not. We light a feeble flame. We feed it the weeniest small twigs we can find and we blow on it—and blow on it and blow on it some more. By lunch-time we have a feeble but persistent glow and it has stopped raining. Most of the group disappears for lunch in the dry but our baby blaze will not survive without attention. They return to find us slightly more light headed and not much

further on. But, then, suddenly, what's this? There are definitely faint crackling sounds and a suggestion of actual heat. Within fifteen minutes we have a blaze anyone would be proud of and are making short work of the brush pile. Who says you can't burn sog?

Louisa Martin

Five things I've learned since being a volunteer with LCV...

1. I like sea buckthorn tasks.

Not so much a baptism of fire; more like the death of a thousand cuts. It's exhausting and exhilarating.

2. I can fell a tree on my own.

At Vogrie in 2009 I felled my first and only tree so far. Yes, it was, admittedly, a small tree, but I felled it.

3. You get a better class of dog at Gullane.

Undoubtedly Gullane is the best place for dog spotting. No mangy mutts here, only the finest pedigrees.

4. I lop therefore I am.

I can divide the tools I've had to use into two distinct categories: Loppers = good and everything else = bad.

5. You learn something at every task.

I'm a trainer by trade, so learning is my thing. On some tasks you learn a new skill. On some tasks you learn that you're stronger and more resilient than you thought you were. On some tasks you learn from someone else's perspective, such as this Zen-like insight overheard on task at Bawsinch: 'Ragwort is yellow, but not everything that is yellow is Ragwort.'

Sharon Brownjohn



Looking forward...

I began coming along on LCV tasks in July last year, beginning with path-clearing at Bawsinch.

Edel had told me a little about LCV and its work a few months before, and I was looking for something useful to do with my Sundays, rather than the usual sitting-around at home, watching TV, occasional housework—does this sound familiar?

Since then, I've been lucky to see lovely parts of Edinburgh, the Lothians, and further afield, which I never would have even known about otherwise. I've also met a wide range of interesting and funny people, with the odd character among them!

The flipside has been the rainstorms, aching legs and shoulders, insect bites, and general exhaustion that are sometimes the result of tasks. But hey, what's that compared to the fabulous days I've had? I hope to have a lot more of them in the future.

Happy 40th Birthday LCV; here's to the next 40 years!

Ian Dickson

AN ABC OF LCV

A is for **anorak**—where would we be
Without sturdy old clothing to hang up on trees?
(and has anyone noticed the wrinkling of noses
On the six pm bus—what must they suppose?)

B is the **bowsaw** and also **Bawsinch**
Add one to the other and you soon need the winch
To pull prizewinning tree-trunks up slopes and from ditches
With ropes and a tug-o-war team against hitches

C is for **chick-pea**: that mightiest of pulses
Which fuels the resis and builds up our mu(l)scles (ahem)
And let's not forget ample **crumbles** and **curries**
So no-one can manage the stairs in a hurry

D is for **drizzle** when it seems we should can it
And it's hard to recall why we're saving the planet
It's also the **dyke** which we hope won't go shoogly
And the **downloaded** forthcoming task list from Google-y

E is the **Earth** which we're trying to 'save'
One **fence** at a time—spare a thought for the brave
Little monkeys who must be in terrible pain
Each time they are put under kilos of strain*

G is the **Gay Gordons** annually skipped
At our fundraising ceilidh where oft we have tripped
To the tunes of the fiddle with hands on our hips
And looked forward to raffles 'one pound for a strip*'

H is the **hogweed** we fear as it towers
Over **Himalayan** balsam with gaudy pink flowers
So we wildly slash at their stems, as their fate is
Decided the chant goes up 'Only the natives!'

I is the **icy** North wind which will form
Into perishing gusts during **January** storms
While the blades of our bowsaws whistle and sing
As we wrestle with lodgepole on Addiewell Bing

K for the **kit** of first aid which we hope
Will allow us with all types of damage to cope
Looking for plasters of particular size?
It's easy—they've all been re-organised!

L is a **lopper**—we all think it rum
To test out edge of the blades on our thumbs*
(and we promise we've never cut anything more
Than the opposable digit of mighty god Thor)

M is the **mud** which adds plenty of flavour
To the LCV **mug** so the tea breaks we savour
And also for **midgies** which some of us think
Deserve nothing more than to land in our drinks

N is the '**never again**' we proclaim
Each Monday when all of our joints are in pain

And the forecast for Sunday is heavier rain
But of course we enjoy it too much to refrain

O is **offsetting** the brash that we burn
At Spott-woode and Vogrie by all taking turns
Every week to reduce our chemical waste
By never washing our cups (better taste)

P are the **post-apocalyptic** scenes
Left by each of our tree-felling / gorse-clearing teams
It's also for **pitchfork** which is just the job
For ye-olde-worlde 'WHEN'S-THE-TEA-BREAK?' angry mob

The **queue** for the beverages round about noon
Is matched only by that for the chain-tethered spoon
But the biccies of bourbon and custard variety
Are eschewed by the 'We Love Digestives Society' (arch rivals of the Jaffa Mafia)

R is for **rhoddie** which keeps growing higher
But burns with a rage on our 'well controlled' fire*
It's also our ancient but pond-friendly **rutter**
which helps us to spend our days down in the gutter (more than usual)

S is a **spade**—just remember the rule
'Watch your back, heel and instep, IT'S A CUTTING TOOL!'
(not a lever, you see, even though it's quite tempting to
put all your weight where the boulder-edge went into)

T for the **trees** which we all love to hug
And also for **tools** which we patiently lug
Up hill and down dale, always down by our side
With business end first so we don't land astride

(And, whisper it, **T** is also for **Tony**
Who from time to time gets a teensie bit moaney
Round lunchtime you'll hear him—'What's happening? What's up?'
'Why've we stopped working? Where's my brown cup?')

U are our **undergarments**, mostly vests
Of the thermal variety and all of the rest
Of our wardrobe—if only our front doors were wider
We could wear all our clothes and stay warm on the inside—ha!

V's the **volcano**—a kettle which might
Be lit by one match if a secret firelight—
-er is added to pages of Guardian news
Ignited by Zippos we hide in our shoes

W for **wellies** and also for **waders**
The steely toe caps preventing first aiders
From descending upon us in well-meaning ways
And carting us off to the doc for **X-rays**
(once it's clear that the plasters and eyewash & twee-
zers won't fix where the pinch-bar went right through our knee*)

Y do we do it?... well let's pose the question...
'**Zzzzzz**'... we're all sleeping—why's that? A suggestion:

We've sawed and we've carried, we've hammered and chopped
We've felled and we've dragged then we've raked and we've lopped
We've weeded and melled, we've protected and dropped
Little saplings down holes then with stakes we have propped

It's been back-breaking graft for the past forty years
There's been sweat and some blood* and plenty of tears
(in our clothing, that is – those buckthorny jeers)

But best of all hill walks, occasional beers*
Laughter and barbecues, friendship—three cheers
We're **Lothians Conservation Volunteers!**

*Please note: no actual conservation volunteers or monkeys were harmed during the making of this poem

Sarah McConachie

Louisa, LCV Co-ordinator, would like to assure any prospective volunteers that all our cups are, in fact, washed regularly—Ed.

A Very Important Person

It doesn't take long for a new recruit to LCV to hear the name Colin McLean mentioned on task, and LCV quite literally would not be LCV without him. Colin was instrumental in setting up LCV as a 'conservation corps'—the terminology of the day—to carry out practical conservation work on reserves belonging to the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT).

LCV has developed and changed over the years, but Colin has remained a constant figure, and LCV has continued to benefit from his ongoing support, especially through the local SWT Members Centre, and also by providing practical help such as tree identification training to the group.

Now in his ninetieth year, Colin has only just 'retired' from being Convenor of two of LCV's work sites, Addiewell Bing and Bawsinch, but as we celebrate LCV's 40th anniversary we should raise a glass to Colin and his contribution to LCV... we all have a lot to thank him for! Cheers, Colin!

Christine Johnston

The Mists of Time

Many of my recollections of LCV—to borrow words from Seventies songstress Barbara Streisand—are 'misty watercoloured memories'. Not because they involve soft focus images of a youngish Robert Redford doing outdoor things in a chunky knit sweater—alas—but because they recall scenes originally viewed through a pair of rain-spattered and fogged-up spectacles.

Rain in Scotland comes in many guises, all of them wet. My personal favourite is the no-nonsense downpour. I enjoyed this al fresco version of the power shower on task at Addiewell Bing in summer 2008 whilst helping to plant a bank of primroses.

It's disconcerting how quickly familiar companions can be transformed into ghoulish versions of their former selves when subjected to foul weather conditions—damp hair flattened to skulls, group demeanour uncharacteristically grim and quiet. Fortunately LCVers are a hardy lot so all it takes to exorcise these spooky drookit look-alikes is a reviving cup of tea and, in extremis, a biscuit. Dried out, refuelled and hair—where applicable—fluffed up, it's not long before everyone's back to work and the banter returns to full volume. Thanks for the all weather memories LCV.

Nicola Murray

Mountain Assault

Target: a mountain in central Scotland (exact target classified). Time: 0935 hrs. Assault vehicles: Leyland DAF minibus (1), Land Rover 90 (1), Honda Power Barrow (1). Assault team: volunteers (10) and dog (1).

It might sound like a military operation, but it wasn't. Actually it was more of an assault by the mountain. I was leading the task: at several points I felt like calling

the whole thing off and going home.

It started with the boulder. It was quite a big boulder. In fact, it was a huge boulder. It was in a ditch, and we wanted it out of the ditch, up the track and in the stream on the other side. Our client—at the time relatively new to the business—suggested putting a strop round the boulder and then using the Land Rover to drag it up a ramp of pinch bars and along the track. This idea worked fine. It's a shame that in the process it bent one of our pinch bars and shredded the strop.

Then it started raining.

After lunch the cable got stuck in our Tirfor winch as it was completely bunged up with heather and peat. Our client suggested attaching the cable to the minibus, connecting the winch to the Land Rover, and using the weight of the Land Rover on the downhill slope to pull the winch off the cable. This idea worked fine. It's a shame that there was nobody inside the Land Rover to stop it when it pulled the winch off the end of the cable and trundled driverless down the track, narrowly missing Mo. Luckily the Land Rover stopped quite quickly by itself. It's a shame that it stopped because it hit the Power Barrow. The Land Rover was unscathed. The Power Barrow wasn't.

Eventually it was time to go. We boarded the bus and the driver turned the ignition key. It's a shame that nothing happened. The minibus had not coped well with an afternoon of horizontal rain blowing under its bonnet. The Land Rover—with its load of forlorn squashed Power Barrow—had to give us a tow to get the bus started.

We got home safely. The path we built that day is still there.

David Monaghan

A Song for LCV

I
When I was rising fifty years, I joined SWT.
And then a whillie later on, I thocht that I should see
What sort of wark was gaun on, like delving for a pond,
Or stickin' in the shrubs and trees of which I was sae fond.



2

I speired aboot a wee wee bit, and shortly was directed
Tae Waverley, tae find a van, and get masel elected
Tae Lothians Conservation Corps, who met there Sunday morning
Then worked awa wi spade and saw, the elements ignoring

3

The taskman on that fateful day said 'Aye – just come and join'
We'll gie ye blisters, aches and sweat, but not a single coin
For nature's good, we think we should jist dae it a' for free
But if ye wark wi' micht and main, ye'll get a cuppie o' tea

4

Noo forty years hae flipit' past, achievements have been great
Safe hames for flooers, birds and beasts, afore it's a' too late.
Some countryside remains alive, an I'm sure that you'll agree
It's due tae the fun o' wark well done of the fabulous LCV

5

So list all Lothian Volunteers when yer pushing up the daisies
Many Scots folk yet to come will stand to sing your praises
Up on cloud nine we'll quaff oor wine, and toast ye more and more
Good luck, long life and many thanks tae the Conservation Corps!

Colin McLean

Tune: Queer Folk i' the Shaws – a well known North East bothy ballad 'Nicky Tams', see below.



LCV at Currie High School

Many years ago I became the custodian of the woodland at the eastern edge of the grounds of the school, now known as Roley's Wood. What a responsibility! It soon became clear that the general state of the wood was 'down to us'. Okay, we could scoop up groups of willing and unwilling litterpickers by fair means or foul and deal with most of the work—but the large rubbish and brash from our woodland management was a little beyond us. In comes the cavalry! Year after year in the autumn—a metaphorical fanfare of trumpets heralds the arrival of LCV. True men and women all, they regularly fill huge skips with the inevitable accumulation that blocks our burn. They have scythed our meadow. They have demolished straying trees. They have layed hedges. They have worked for hours in pouring rain and laughed with us at barbeques. They are our friends!

As the years creep on and I now face my eighties, it is a comfort to know that our LCV friends will answer the call when things get too much for me and I cherish the memories of the fun and satisfaction of our annual autumn tryst! Thank you LCV for years of wonderful service.

Roley Walton

Views

Residential Report: Lochalsh Community Woodland



Volunteer photocall in the the sunshine at Lochalsh Community Woodland.

For this year's summer residential LCV worked at the Lochalsh Woodland Park, a community woodland situated in an old Forestry Commission campsite at Balmacara, just south-east of Kyle of Localsh. Run as a community park by local volunteers in partnership with the Commission, the wood is a pleasant mix of

open glades, riverside walks, mixed broad-leaved woodland and largely cleared conifer plantation. See: <http://www.spanglefish.com/LochalshWoodlandPark>.

Our accommodation for the week was a bunkhouse in Camas Luinie half an hour's drive eastwards in the remote and beautiful Glen Elchaig at the head of Loch Long. With a shower, real beds—or tents for the hardy—and a well-equipped kitchen, we lived in relative luxury, taking turns cooking vegetarian meals providing ample calories for the even the most energetic of us.

The first day on task was quite daunting—we were provided with a photocopied plan for a low, semi-circular dry stone wall to form seating round a fire/barbeque site and two huge piles of stones and rubble that were to be our raw materials. We measured out the location, which nicely bisected one of stone piles!



Moving rocks on day one in traditionally damp residential weather conditions.

And so the first day was lifting and rolling increasingly heavy boulders across an increasingly muddy site—the weather being traditionally abysmal.

The second day was tough going as we attempted to get on top of the problem and get the first course in place, but at least the weather had improved and we were getting a lot of encouragement from Jane, the Village Officer for the local community council who was on site each day to give moral support. We even had a wheelbarrow by now—albeit with a flat tyre. Although several of us had

done bits and bobs of walling with LCV, the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, none of us was overly confident in putting theory into practice. Nor did anyone believe Tony's helpful assertion that the second course would be far easier. Although Jane tried to convince us we had made good progress clearing the site, sorting the rocks and almost completing the first course, most of us felt pretty 'tired and emotional' by the end of day two.

Fortunately day three was a rest day, so we had an extra ten minutes in bed before heading across to Skye. The rain held off long enough for us to head off on a two hour amble through Armadale Castle Gardens near Sleat, but after that we resorted to teashops, museums and gift shops to keep dry.

Maybe it was the restorative power of our day off, or the fact that the stones were getting smaller as the wall rose, but on day four progress

improved and we realised that we were actually going to be able finish the task. The sudden appearance of a strange hot yellow object in the sky, which stayed there throughout the final two days, certainly elevated the mood and by teatime there was a sense 'end of term' elation. We even skipped off for mid afternoon refreshments in the Balmacara Square teashop, although they only had four scoops of ice cream left.

The final day was easy, just levelling off the wall to leave it for a final coping layer or wooden seating and then tidying up the site. We could have spent the whole day perfecting the top surface, but after lunch it seemed like a better idea to go and look at the rest of the park with a view to possible future path work projects. After taking copious final pictures of our handiwork we indulged in a leisurely stroll around the more formal NTS Woodland Garden over the main road along the side of Loch Alsh.



Rock on...

That final night we spruced ourselves up, put on our glad rags and headed across to Plockton to sample the night life. Or rather we had an early dinner at the Plockton Inn—Tony got his lamb at last—and admired the views until the midges eventually won their war of attrition.

And so back to Edinburgh. A successful trip all round, a good mix of weather, not too many midges, some new skills learnt and a picturesque new feature for



Job done. Tidying up the site on the final workday.

Balmacara woodlands. Thanks to our hosts at Balmacara and Willie at Whitefalls bunkhouse as well as to all the LCVers for their (very) hard work and endurance. Thanks to David Nutter for organizing the catering and the all the volunteer chefs. Thanks too to Willie McSporran and Sarah MacConachie for driving.

Trevor Paterson

And thanks Trevor for leading, driving, cooking and writing this report—Ed.



David N's Enriched Potage Parmentier

Thanks to David Nutter, LCV foodie, for this recipe and associated historical tidbits. You might be speaking franglais, or freccossais, by the time you have enjoyed a bowl or two of this hearty soup—think of it as souped up leek and tattie with a cheesy French accent—*Ed*.

Notes:

Antoine-Augustin Parmentier popularised the potato as a human food source in 18th-century France. Apocryphally a version of this soup was first distributed from soup kitchens during times of famine in northern France.

You will need a hand-blender for this soup or a sieve and a lot of elbow grease! Alternatively you can leave the soup whole and call it Potage Parisien.

Ingredients:

3 medium onions, peeled and finely chopped
5 medium untrimmed leeks
1 kg white ware potatoes—e.g. Kestrel or Marfona—peeled, diced and reserved under water.
2 heads broccoli
4 cloves garlic, minced
100g butter
1 tbs salt
250g strong blue cheese such as Stilton, in 1 cm cubes
2 tbs chives or parsley, finely chopped—optional
Black pepper to taste
Warm crusty bread to serve

Method:

1 Remove the roots and any excessively damaged green leaves from the leeks, split lengthways and slice into 1 cm sections. Wash thoroughly and set aside.

2 Trim any dirty bits from the broccoli heads and roughly chop them. Place in a steamer or saucepan of cold water.

3 Gently melt the butter in a large stockpot and sweat the onions until

they soften. Add the garlic and continue cooking for a minute or two.

4 Drain the potatoes and add them to the pan. Mix gently to coat them with butter and fry for a minute or two.

5 Add the leeks, mix, cover the pan and sweat for about four minutes until the leeks start to soften and pack down.

6 Add the salt and sufficient water to just cover the vegetables. Bring to a simmer, cover the pan and cook for twenty minutes until the potatoes are soft.



7 Meanwhile steam the broccoli until just tender but still retaining a fresh green colour.

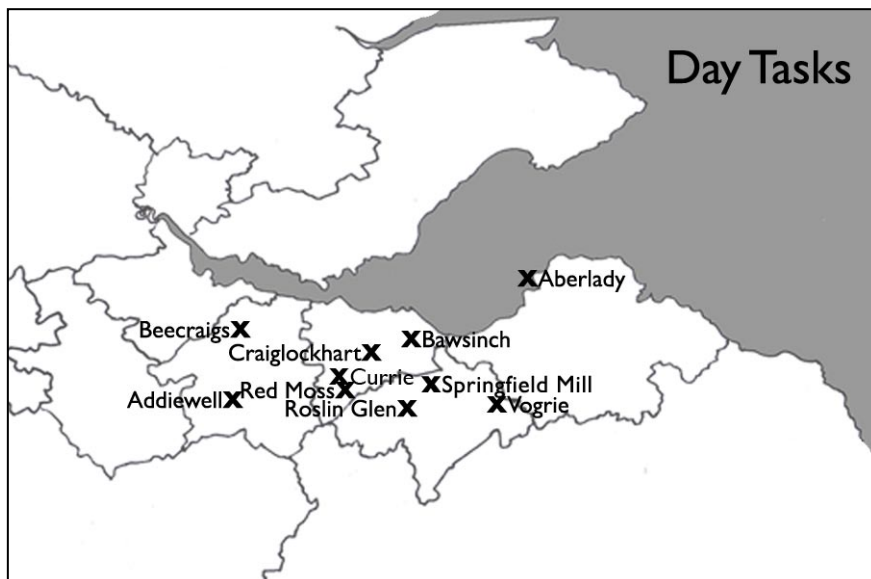
8 Turn off the heat and mix in the broccoli and cheese pieces, stirring vigorously until the latter melts.

9 Either blend the soup to a thick paste-like consistency (no need to get it perfectly smooth) or work through a sieve. If necessary adjust the consistency with a little water or milk. Ladle into bowls and garnish with the chives or parsley if used.

Serve with warm crusty bread.

If you are willing to share your vegetarian culinary secrets send a recipe—for ten—to me and we'll pull one out of the pot for the next Mucker—Ed.

Task locations



LCV People

You will find contact details in the *Contact Us* section of the LCV website for the following LCV people:

Louisa Martin

Co-ordinator

David Monaghan

Treasurer

Matt McCabe

Task Organiser

Debbie Tribak

Transport Secretary

Mark Herron

Membership Secretary

Simon Bonsall

Leader/Driver Organiser

Martin Brownjohn

Publicity

**Alexandra Costello
Emma Brown**

Social Organisers

Tony Irving

Tree Nursery

David Nutter

Fundraiser and Webmaster

William McSporran

Minibus Officer

Peter Gilbert

Training Organiser

Ken Humphreys

Toolshed

Nicola Murray

Newsletter Editor

Conservation Tasks

September	SAT 4	Vogrie Country Park	Meadow raking and brash thinning/ burning—40th anniversary tasks.
	Sun 12	Roslin Glen	Meadow raking/pathwork
	Sun 19	Red Moss	Birch pulling
	Sun 26	Aberlady Bay	Sea buckthorn clearance
October	1 – 3	Moine Mhor residential	Birch pulling
	SAT 9	Springfield Mill	Birch thinning/brashing
	Sun 10	Currie Woodland	Burn clearance
	SAT 16	Vogrie Country Park	Pond clearance
	Sun 17	Beecraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	SAT 23	Easter Craiglockhart	Meadow raking
	Sun 24	Beecraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 31	Bawsinch	Tree maintenance
November	Sun 7	Roslin Glen	Path/stepwork
	SAT 13	Beecraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 14	Beecraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 21	Addiewell Bing	Tree planting/preparation
	Sun 28	Springfield Mill	Birch/willow thinning
December	Sun 5	Bawsinch	Tree maintenance
	Sun 12	Roslin Glen	Tree maintenance/planting
	Sun 19	Addiewell Bing	Tree planting/preparation
January	TBC	Vogrie	New year residential or equivalent



Other Events

September	Fri 3 – Sat 5	various events	LCV 40th Anniversary Weekend
	Tues 14	7.30 p.m.	Monthly committee meeting
	Tues 28	7.00 p.m.	Cinema night
October	Tues 12	7.30 p.m.	Monthly committee meeting
	Sat 30	7.30 p.m.	Halloween Party
November	Tues 9	7.30 p.m.	Monthly committee meeting
	Sat 13	8.00 p.m.	LCV fundraising Ceilidh
	Mon 29	7.00 p.m.	Pub Quiz at Cumberland Bar
December	Tues 14	7.30 p.m.	Monthly committee meeting
	Tues 21	7.30 p.m.	German Christmas Market