

The Voice

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Autumn Colours in the Park

**ALSO INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

Park News, Friends Updates, Climate Change Challenge, Nature of the Park *and more*



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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS AUTUMN EDITION OF VOICE, which features interesting articles about different aspects of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park with news on recent activities of the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.



As the only independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park, we continue to strive to make a difference through campaigning, fundraising and volunteering activities, working closely with partners such as the Park Authority, local communities, businesses and tourism groups. The issue of climate change has been in the news regularly in recent months after record temperatures and the desecration of large tracts of the Amazon as a result of thousands of forest fires. There were examples of climate change impacts here in the National Park in early August with a series of spectacular landslides at the north end of Loch Katrine and in nearby Strathfillan. This resulted in the emergency evacuation of 17 people from Glengyle and the closure of the West Highland Railway Line near Crianlarich with the railway being undermined by heavy rainfall. In this edition of Voice John Urquhart, Vice-Chairman of the Friends, shares his thoughts on the scale of climate change challenges and some of the impacts in the National Park. A recent social media post issued by the US National Parks Foundation boldly claimed, "A love of the outdoors is one of the greatest things you can give your kids"

and this served as a reminder that we collectively need to do more to introduce young people to the natural wonders of the National Park in a variety of engaging ways. Here in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, the National Park Authority, with sponsorship from partners such as Forest Holidays, is making some strides forward in connecting youngsters with the great outdoors through initiatives such as youth volunteer and junior ranger programmes. At the Friends we are pleased to be playing our part by stepping up our funding support for youth outdoor recreational activities, for example, through Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre and Callander Youth Project. We also have plans to work with youth groups in West Dunbartonshire to introduce more youngsters to outdoor recreational activities in the National Park if our bid for funds from the Council's Year of Young People Legacy Fund is successful. Some match funding will come from the successful Friends of OUR park voluntary visitor giving scheme we operate with tourism businesses throughout the National Park. We are delighted to be working with partners on a range of projects including refreshing the award winning

Trossachs Trail which was the first scenic touring route in Scotland to secure special signing as part of a comprehensive tourism management programme prior to the establishment of the National Park. Some of our talented trustees spent part of the summer writing text and sourcing photos for an attractively designed 'Explore Loch Lomond' exhibition we have co-sponsored with Loch Lomond Shores. We recently installed this exhibition in a prominent location in Loch Lomond Shores shopping mall at Balloch to showcase the special qualities of Loch Lomond and to encourage more visitors and local residents to venture out and explore the wider Loch Lomond area. Please enjoy reading this edition of Voice and hopefully the contents will inspire you to get out and about in the National Park to enjoy what promises to be a very colourful Autumn. If you are not already a member of the Friends, please consider joining and supporting our efforts to protect, provide and promote Scotland's first National Park (see page 20 for membership details).

All the very best.
JAMES FRASER
Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



Articles published in The Voice do not necessarily represent the views of The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. Charity No. SC015389

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Telephone: **01389 727761** Email: info@lochlomondrossachs.org.uk
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Cover photo – Loch Achray and Ben A'an in the Trossachs
Cover image by Paul Saunders www.paulsaunders.co.uk

Duck Bay Despair

Campaign to break deadlock to secure improvements at National Park gateway site stepped up.

The future of the popular Duck Bay picnic site and the associated car parking, at the main southern entrance point to the National Park where visitors travelling along the busy A82 tourist route get their first glimpse of Loch Lomond, is currently being hotly contested with Argyll & Bute Council who are the site owners and managers. In an effort to try and secure improvements, including toilets, and to get controversial parking charge proposals ditched, the Friends have joined forces with the Cawley family, who have owned and operated the successful Duck Bay Hotel and Restaurant for 35 years, to mount a high profile lobbying and PR campaign.

The site, which is managed by Argyll & Bute Council, is generally in a very poor condition with public toilets that have lain closed and derelict for 20 years, old and poorly maintained picnic tables and insufficient litter bins to cope with the estimated 300,000 visitors who use the site each year. Meanwhile, the Council has decided to introduce parking charges in the existing car park that was built and fully funded by the Cawley family many years ago with the agreement of the former Dumbarton District Council and on the understanding this would allow Duck Bay patrons and visitors using the picnic area free use of the parking spaces.

PARKING CHARGE PROPOSALS

The Council also plans to introduce parking fees along the entire length of the old loop road between the picnic area and the lochside which could prove to be counterproductive leading to traffic displacement and chaos at busy times. It is also feared, as has happened at other sites where metered parking has been introduced, that any funds raised will simply go back into the Council's central coffers with no investment in much need public toilets and other upgraded facilities at what should be a showcase site at the entrance to Scotland's first National Park.

To try and break the deadlock, and to encourage the Council not to continue with their blinkered approach to managing this site in a wholly unsatisfactory way while trying to generate as much income from parking, the Cawley family, have repeated and confirmed in writing to the Council their very generous offer to take on, entirely at their expense, responsibility for maintaining and improving the picnic area, removing the unsightly and derelict toilets and replacing them with state of the art modern public toilets with disabled and baby changing facilities which they would manage on a daily basis. These much need improvements, and ongoing maintenance of the entire site, would be at no cost whatsoever to the public purse and in return all that the Cawleys are asking is that the Council abandons their proposals to introduce parking charges and the general public are still allowed to park free of charge.

MAJOR HYGIENE ISSUES

Commenting on the current situation and his offer, Alan Cawley, Managing Director of Cawley Hotels said: "The current situation is wholly unsatisfactory with the picnic area in an appalling state and major hygiene issues with distressed families with young children and other visitors in desperation having to go to the toilets in the bushes around the site due to lack of toilet provision" He added: "To compound matters the Council wants to charge for parking without any concrete plans to re-invest the funds generated in much needed toilets and site improvements. My proposals to address matters and invest heavily in toilet provision and site improvements,



linked to a higher standard of ongoing site maintenance, have met with a very lukewarm response from the Council which is very disappointing." James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends said: "The situation at Duck Bay, which has been ongoing for many years now, is a disgrace with no provision of public toilets at what is one of the busiest sites on the lochside and where visitors get their first opportunity to stop and enjoy the views of Loch Lomond. This also reflects badly on people's first impressions of the National Park and those public agencies responsible for providing amenities to for the public to enjoy Loch Lomond.

PRAGMATIC OFFER OF SUPPORT

We very much welcome and strongly support the generous and pragmatic offer made by the Cawley family, who have operated at Duck Bay for 35 years, to improve and maintain this popular beauty spot to the high standard it deserves at the busiest entry point to the National Park."

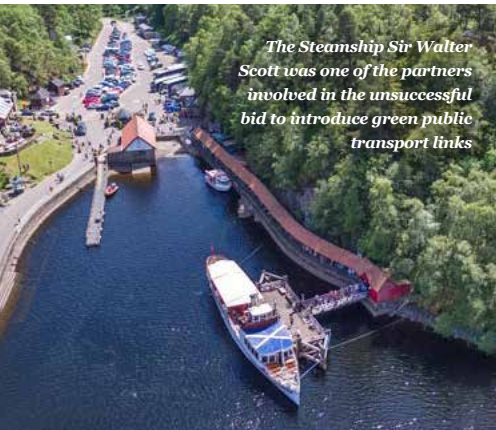
The Friends previously objected to the Council's plans to introduce car parking charges at Duck Bay on the grounds they breach previous agreements and fail to address traffic management implications properly with the inevitable displacement of traffic elsewhere on the lochside. Also the Friends have no confidence the Council will upgrade the picnic site and provide much needed public toilets as previous attempts over many years to persuade them to do this have failed.

The Friends are stepping up their campaign to secure improvements at Duck Bay and to try and persuade the Council to give serious consideration to the proposals submitted by the Cawleys which would potentially save the Council a substantial sum annually while securing a better maintained site with high quality public toilets at no cost to the public purse.

PILOT ECO TRANSPORT BID FALTERS

As reported in the last edition of Voice, the Friends submitted a funding bid to the SPEN Green Economy Fund to support two local partners with the delivery of a £300,000 project to introduce two innovative eco bus and boat transport services in the Trossachs and East Loch Lomond, two of the busiest areas in the National Park. Despite a strong case being put forward and coming through a very competitive stage 1 assessment process, the project was turned down and one of the main reasons cited by the judging panel was that they were unconvinced there would be a demand for the services planned.

The Steamship Sir Walter Scott was one of the partners involved in the unsuccessful bid to introduce green public transport links



Litter Management on AGM Agenda

Members enjoyed a buffet meal in the splendid surroundings of Ross Priory overlooking Loch Lomond at a well attended AGM in late May. Following a pleasant annual awards ceremony, with certificates and gifts being handed over by Willie Nisbet, Vice-Convenor of the National Park, the Friends Chairman, James Fraser gave a presentation on the past year's activities and current issues.

After dealing with the formal AGM business Nik Turner, the National Park's recently appointed Litter Prevention Manager, gave an inspiring talk. Nik really knows her subject and demonstrated she meant business with a series of practical initiatives, either planned or underway, to tackle the unacceptable litter situation in the National Park, which the Friends have campaigned long and hard on for a number of years. This was followed by a lively question and answer session against the backdrop of a stunning sunset over Loch Lomond.



At the AGM, two new Trustees were appointed. We were pleased to welcome Fergus Wood from Ledard Farm and former National Park Authority Board member along with Duncan MacLachlan from Tarbet who is Chair of the Arrochar and Tarbet Development Trust. Philip Norris from Dunoon stepped down after a number of years of sterling service to focus on his busy schedule of musical commitments.

New trustees Duncan MacLachlan (above) and Fergus Wood (below)

On Sunday 24th November, 2019
2.00pm to 4.30pm
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the music will be provided by
the West of Scotland Military Wives Choir

To avoid disappointment book early as this event is normally a sell out.

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By email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk
or call 01389 727761)
Tuesdays-Thursdays



New Support Officer

We're pleased to welcome Carol Lloyd as our new Support Officer. Carol joins us from Police Scotland at an important time, as we strive to step up our activities to help make a real difference for the benefit of people and nature in the National Park. Here Carol introduces herself and touches on some of her early priorities. We are also grateful to Marie Harvey who stepped into a caretaker role one day a week during the past year and made a great contribution to supporting the work of the Friends. Carol will be working for us three days a week and normally on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

I am delighted to join the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs team as their new Support Officer. Having a real passion for protecting our countryside and nature, this was an opportunity not to be missed!

After many years visiting a variety of beauty spots within the National Park, my husband and I moved to Croftamie just over three years ago. It's fair to say we both absolutely love living here and now spend most of our weekends walking, camping and exploring various beauty spots around Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

As Support Officer, I'm really looking forward to working with local businesses and members to continue the good work already being undertaken by Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park's only independent conservation charity, who for over 40 years have been working to protect the area's environmental quality and heritage, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects.

Aside from supporting all aspects of the running of the charity, I'll also be involved in the 'OUR park' scheme, a project aimed at enhancing and conserving the natural and recreational assets by creating opportunities for people and businesses to get actively involved in caring for, learning about and making financial and practical contributions to a range of the environmental and recreational projects in the National Park for the benefit of all.

For more information on how you can get involved, you can contact Carol on 01389 727761, or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Welcome Aboard

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| A & V. MACKENZIE from Fittleworth | Life Members |
| C. MCLEOD from Dundee | Life Member |
| E. MCILROY-HARGROVE from Oklahoma | Family Membership |
| C. DARLSTON from Glasgow | Individual Member |
| C. DESMOND from Birmingham | Individual Member |
| J. SHAW from Bearsden | Individual Member |
| G. STEELE from Bearsden | Individual Member |
| G. FERGUSON from Bearsden | Individual Member |
| J. CRAWFORD from Helensburgh | Individual Member |
| C. LLOYD from Croftamie | Individual Member |

If you are interested in becoming a member please contact Carol Lloyd on 01389 727761, or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Members' Birthday Celebrations on Sunset Cruise



The popular annual members' cruise organised jointly with the Lennox Literary Society had an added twist this year with three of our members celebrating birthdays with a collective age of 272.

All enjoyed a summer food hamper and birthday cake as well as the excellent music provided by local folk group Hell for Leather who lived up to their name by providing continuous music during the two-hour cruise up to the Luss narrows and Balmaha Bay. The wet weather didn't dampen the spirits and the birthday group were presented with a bottle of the appropriately named Lomond wine by Friends Chairman, James Fraser.



THE OAK TREE INN BALMAHA LOCH LOMOND

Muddy Boots Welcome



The Oak Tree Inn is an award winning pub and restaurant, on the West Highland Way in the beautiful loch side village of Balmaha. Great Scottish food and drink, plus accommodation.

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Autumn Colours in the Park

Autumn is a special time of year in the National Park with the contrasts between Highland and Lowland landscapes being shown off at their best in a riot of colour. Here local photographer Paul Saunders captures the special magic of Autumn in the National Park with a selection of his stunning images.

Loch Achray



Luss Parish Church



Kilmaronock Church near Gartocharn



Balloch Castle Country Park

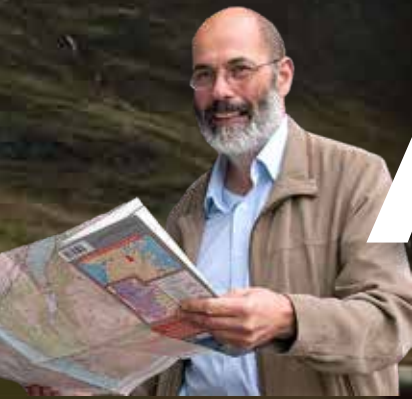


Balmaha Bay



Milton of Buchanan Church

More stunning images of the National Park can be seen on Paul's website www.seelochlomond.co.uk



A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Friends Vice Chair, John Urquhart, a retired geography teacher sets out the stark realities of the current global climate challenge and the growing impacts on the National Park.

I am sitting writing this article in Helensburgh at 4pm on the 25th August having been driven inside by the heat. The shade temperature outside is 28°C. Last week, during a thunderstorm, the town experienced localised freak winds probably caused by a small tornado or micro burst. Two weeks ago I was being driven inside by torrential rain. You might say, "Well, nothing remarkable in all of that - just normal Scottish summer weather!"

Maybe, but with carbon dioxide levels continuing what seems to be an inexorable rise, the world has just experienced its warmest July ever and, just as climatologists predicted, it is the northern hemisphere which is seeing the greatest warming (there is less ocean to mop up and redistribute heat and warming feedback mechanisms are more prevalent where sea ice cover is already fairly thin and there are large land surfaces to transfer heat to the atmosphere).

The record breaking temperatures are not only causing the rapid disappearance of both land and sea ice, but the weakened temperature gradient on either side of the Polar front makes for sluggishness in the normal oscillations of the circumpolar jets stream with huge 'meanders' becoming fixed in 'blocking patterns' which allow substantial movements of warm air northwards and cold air south. Both effects can promote a greater incidence of wild fires as we have again seen in Greece, Spain and Portugal this summer and perhaps even more worrying, in the Tundra and Taiga

lands of Siberia, Alaska and Canada, where major fires have been burning completely out of control, and in a classic case of double feedback, delivering huge additional volumes of carbon dioxide to the already polluted atmosphere while at the same time blackening the land so that it absorbs still more heat!

Amazonia Fires

Also, as I write, the news is of 75,000 fires in Amazonia and this is just the start of the dry season there. Having encouraged farmers to clear more forest, Brazil's far right populist President Bolsonaro is now back pedalling, bizarrely blaming NGOs for causing the fires and saying he will send in the army to put them out! At least one good straw in the wind is that president Macron of France has put the issue firmly on the agenda for the Biarritz G7 summit which started on Saturday, although I am not holding my breath that much will come of it.

But what of the National Park? Blocking patterns have repeatedly affected our own weather recently, but perhaps because of the relatively moist maritime situation, this summer the Park hasn't been badly affected by fire, although there have been a number of fairly alarming mainly moorland fires recently elsewhere in the UK. The park did experience a prolonged dry spell earlier this spring and summer which led to near record low water levels in Loch Lomond.



A83-Landslide

Floodwater from the same event seriously damaged the West Highland railway track in Strathfillan



Mudslide sweeps a car off road

High Intensity Rainfall

The other side of the climatic coin is that warm air is also able to hold much more water vapour (itself a greenhouse gas even more potent than carbon dioxide!) and this is what has been one of the factors behind the increased number of high intensity rainfall events the Park has seen over recent years. The most obvious effects are seen along the A83 Glen Croe road where engineers have just this month completed major works designed to limit damage to the road from repeated debris flows.



At Glengyle, debris reached to eaves level on buildings and it was lucky there was no loss of life

This year has seen blocked jet streams repeatedly deliver plumes of very warm and moist tropical air with resultant slow moving thunderstorms causing torrential downpours from Winchester to Wick. On the 12th August, it was the turn of Loch Katrine when extreme rainfall led to a number of damaging debris flows in the Strathgartney area along the north shore of the loch. The hamlet of Glengyle, famous as the birthplace of Rob Roy, was particularly badly affected.

Climate Emergency

The UK and Scottish Governments are now talking of a Climate Emergency, although a lot of the measures being proposed by the Scottish Government seem to be more geared towards acceptance and adaptation rather than addressing causes. You can see their proposals at www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/climate-change-adaptation/. On November 12th the National Park will host an event reviewing progress on its Partnership Plan which has encouraged a range of climate change mitigation actions, including conserving blanket bog peatlands and planting more trees. The Park Authority is to be praised for promoting measures like these because as well as helping to 'fix' CO₂ they are also good for wildlife and biodiversity. However, while the Partnership Plan will undoubtedly help promote better awareness of climate change, the sobering reality is that the scale is too small to have much impact at global level. Climatologists are united in saying that feedback mechanisms are now beginning to accelerate the warming effect. Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough are right - without international effort to quickly cut greenhouse gas build up we are facing an existential crisis. But the trouble is that all the necessary remedies are so unpalatable that, so far, there has been precious little sign of any major government being prepared to take the undoubtedly unpopular legislative steps which will be necessary.



LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

Tackling litter in the National Park



While we may not have had the remarkable weather of last year, it's been another busy summer season with people from all over the UK and the rest of the world coming to experience our wonderful National Park.

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

Sadly during the summer months when visitor numbers are higher we see a notable increase in the volume of litter in the National Park. This is not a new issue and is one experienced at popular visitor destinations all over Scotland.

Over the last six months we have stepped up our activities to tackle litter in the National Park, following the appointment of our new Litter Prevention Manager, Nik Turner.

A key focus is bringing together all of those who have a role to play in tackling litter to work together so we can have a greater impact.

During April and May, we ran a series of events to remove litter from key sites across the National Park as part of Keep Scotland Beautiful's 'Spring Clean 2019' campaign.



We joined forces with Argyll and Bute Council to collect 124 bags of roadside litter over two days from just a seven mile stretch of the A82, one of the most scenic routes in Scotland.

A series of volunteer events were supported carrying out clean ups on the islands of Loch Lomond and at Arrochar.



We also mobilised all National Park Authority staff to take part in a full day of action focused on litter picks all around the National Park and discussing ideas for tackling specific elements of this complex issue.

All the ideas gathered from the day are being considered alongside conversations with our partner organisations and communities and used to inform our Litter Strategy.

Over the peak summer months our focus shifted onto one particularly sticky subject relating to litter - irresponsible toileting.

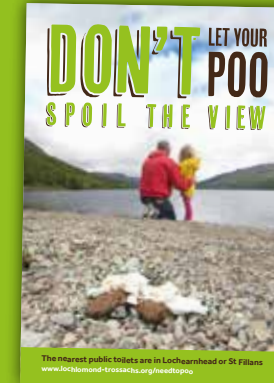


WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU NEED TO POO

The National Park is a great place to escape the hustle and bustle but when nature calls, many people are unsure how to 'do their business' when there are no facilities nearby.

Our 'What to do when you need to poo' campaign saw a series of trials running at popular camping permit areas at Loch Earn, the Trossachs and West Loch Lomond.

This was supported by a bold communications campaign to take the embarrassment out of something everyone does and share information on how to do things responsibly.



Eye catching, awareness raising posters were displayed at Loch Earn, using the nudge effect to encourage people to do the right thing.

CAN YOU DIG IT? YES YOU CAN!

At the Three Lochs Forest Drive in the Trossachs, trowels were provided for campers to borrow with advice on how to bury their poo in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Suie Field on West Loch Lomond saw the most radical approach with campers being asked to "bag it and bin it" as they would with dog poo.



Campers were provided with a pack including biodegradable poo bags as well as an outer 'modesty' bag with information on how to pack out their waste. A hygienic 'poo bin' was installed on site for campers to drop their used bags into.

The response has been positive not only getting people talking and sharing information online but campers using the tools we provided and giving us useful feedback.

The trials have provided us with valuable insight into how well different methods of tackling irresponsible toileting work. We'll be using this to inform our approach to this issue across the National Park in future.

We'll also be continuing to work with our partners to inform a longer term, joined up approach to littering in the National Park.

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/needtopoo



More affordable housing on the way in the National Park

Two new developments will be bringing more affordable housing to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park - one of the most expensive areas to buy a home in Scotland.

Plans were approved by the National Park Authority's Planning and Access Committee in August for 50 affordable homes to be built on land at Clais Farm, Callander. These homes will be managed and owned by Rural Stirling Housing Association.

This is a significant development for Callander, the National Park's largest town, as it is the single biggest affordable housing scheme for a number of years. It also represents the first phase within the Callander South area, which is identified for further growth in future.

Plans for the creation of 88 new homes in Drymen, including provision for 44 affordable homes, were also approved in July.

The development will bring a number of key benefits to the area including increased public car parking space, improvements to the local path network and open space and a contribution from the developer to sustainable and active transport initiatives.

Ellen Morton, Chair of the National Park's Planning and Access Committee said:

"Creating more affordable housing within the National Park is a key issue as the area is one of the most expensive places in Scotland to buy a home.

"Many local people, particularly younger, working age people and families, are finding it increasingly difficult to afford to live and work in the National Park and the need for more affordable housing has been identified by the community and through consultation on the Local Development Plan."

Creating more affordable housing options for young people and families is one of the priorities in the National Park Partnership Plan 2018-2023 and is a key target within the Local Development Plan.

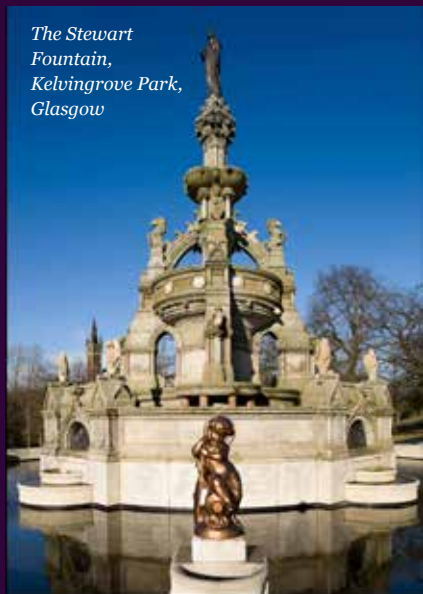
These new developments follow a number of other affordable housing developments being delivered around the National Park including at Balmaha, Arrochar and Succoth (pictured above) and Luss.

Local historian and literary expert Louis Stott describes one of Scotland's engineering wonders and the grand opening by Queen Victoria 160 years ago.

A Right Royal Occasion

THE GLASGOW WATERWORKS AND THE ROYAL OPENING

The Stewart Fountain, Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow



ONE OF THE MOST striking monuments in Glasgow is the French gothic fountain in Kelvingrove Park dedicated to Robert Stewart (1810-66), Lord Provost from 1851 to 1855. It commemorates the completion of the first part of the Glasgow Corporation Water Works Scheme, which supplied the city with fresh drinking water from Loch Katrine. The fountain was erected in 1871 to acknowledge Stewart as the driving force behind it. The imagery on the fountain relates to the Trossachs, particularly to Scott's poem, *The Lady of the Lake*. For example, the topmost figure represents the heroine of the poem, Ellen Douglas.



Shafts marking the tunnel between Loch Katrine and Loch Chon [Image: Ronnie Leask]

Glasgow's water was drawn from wells and streams until 1807, when Thomas Telford and James Watt built a new works at Dalmarnock. However, the river became progressively more unsuitable as a source of potable water, as cholera became rife in densely populated areas of the city. The idea of bringing water by gravity from Loch Katrine, 55km away from the city was suggested as early as 1846 by Lewis Gordon (1815-76), the UK's first professor of engineering. The project was further developed by others, including John F. Bateman, the renowned nineteenth century water engineer, whose views were supported by both Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The scheme was approved by the Glasgow Corporation Water Works Act in 1855; thereafter John F. Bateman (1810-1889) designed and constructed the works. James M. Gale assisted him and was responsible for the rearrangement and redistribution of the pipework within the city. Gale later became Chief Engineer to the Glasgow Corporation Waterworks and was to play a part in the supply of water to Glasgow for 45 years. Though the scheme has been augmented and improved over the years, the original structures remain in continual use. When John Bateman



visited the site during the construction of the aqueduct, he stayed at Tigh na Traigh, on the shore of Loch Ard. James Gale rented, but must have then bought, Daldrishaig, at the foot of Loch Ard where he died in 1903. The first aqueduct is in two parts, the first 41.5 kilometres (25.7 miles) long, between Loch Katrine and Mugdock Reservoir, on the outskirts of Milngavie. The second part is a 13km (8 miles) aqueduct of twin cast iron pipes from the reservoir into Glasgow. The 2.4m diameter subterranean tunnels are unlined and have been constructed to a flat gradient of 158mm per km (about 10 inches per mile). All the boring had to be done by hand as there were then no pneumatic tools. The second longest of the 70 tunnels, next to Loch Katrine, lies 183 m (600 ft) below the summit of a hill. It was worked from 12 shafts. The rock is gneiss and mica slate. About 60 drills were constantly in use at each face and on average a fresh drill was required for every 25mm gained in depth. There are 25 substantial iron and masonry aqueduct bridges, up to 24m in height and 27.4m in span, crossing the deep valleys of the Duchray, the Endrick and the Blane. A typical example is the bridge over the Duchray. This three-span aqueduct bridge consists of a rectangular cast iron tube about 2.5m high and 2m wide. The tube contains two cast iron pipes, one above the other. Of the other bridges, the five principal ones consist of cast and wrought iron



Couligartan Aqueduct Bridge No. 2 [Author's Collection]



Royal Cottage, Loch Katrine (Author's Collection)

troughs on masonry piers with masonry embankments at each end. The longest is the 304m (nearly 1,000 ft.) long aqueduct bridge at Corrie (NS485957), with one 134.4m long on Castle Burn (NS470988) and three at Couligartan (NN450002) of 113.4m, 140.8m and 194m in length. Of these, the aqueduct bridges overlooking Loch Ard are the easiest to see. One of the principal objections to the entire scheme was that flow in the River Teith would be reduced, so compensation water was provided by building a masonry dam at the western end of Loch Venachar. Construction was begun with a ceremony on the ridge between Loch Katrine and Loch Chon in May 1856, and, remarkably enough, finished in three years and six months. Between 3,000 and 5,000 people were employed on the project and there were two large camps, one at the head of Loch Chon and the other on Drymen Muir. At the camps were provision stores, reading-rooms, a school-house and a church; a resident medical man and school-master were provided. Medical provision was available at Frenich, between Loch Chon and Loch Katrine, where a Dr Blackwood was based, while at Drymen Alexander Clarke, a young minister, was employed to run a school and provide religious services.



"The Teapot" [Author's Collection]

At the camp at the head of Loch Chon, nicknamed Sebastopol because of the incessant blasting, reminiscent of the Crimean War, Alexander Blair provided a beer hut. Early on he was chided for selling spirit. He claimed that he was innocent, but that several illicit distilleries existed. The most famous shebeen was in a cottage on the road to Loch Chon, known as the Teapot. It was so named as every time the Excise raided, it was said that they found the occupants quietly drinking tea. Regrettably the cottage was unrecognisably rebuilt in recent years.

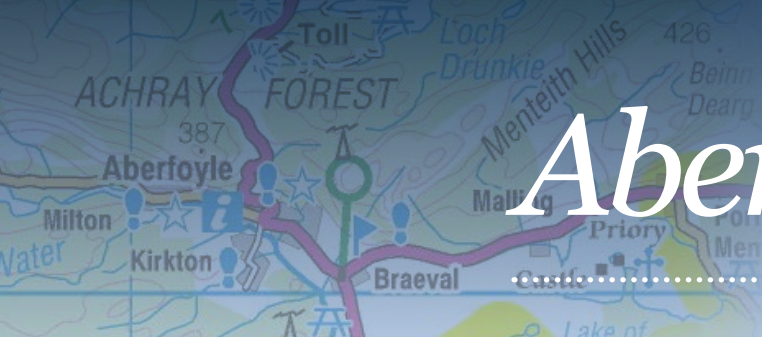
Louis Stott was born in Brighton in 1934 and now lives in Aberfoyle. He is the author of a number of books on Scottish history and literature, including *Smollett's Scotland*, two volumes on Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Enchantment of the Trossachs*, *Literary Loch Lomond* and *The Waterfalls of Scotland*.



Queen Victoria, accompanied by the Prince Consort, Princess Alice, and Princess Helena, inaugurated the Loch Katrine scheme on 14th October 1859, by opening a sluice near the centre of the south bank of the loch at Royal Cottage to allow water from the loch to flow into the aqueduct. Water began flowing into Glasgow on the 28th of December 1859. The weather was highly unfavourable. Fortunately, conditions improved during the time of the ceremony and the Queen's inspection, but, after she departed, the storm came on again. The plight of thousands of spectators was pitiable; the coaches and carriages available could not carry even a tenth of those present, and most of the onlookers had to trudge for miles over hilly and almost impassable roads before they reached a point where transport could be secured. However, not even the appalling weather conditions could dampen the enthusiasm with which they hailed this memorable occasion. Details were given in the local papers of the various routes by which dignitaries would arrive at the remote spot chosen for the opening. One of these routes was, of course, from Stirling via Aberfoyle and Loch Ard. 'Royal Cottage', then called the Commissioners' Cottage, was refurbished for the occasion, and to look at it, one might suppose that the party were to stay at the house for at least a week. In fact, they had lunch there. The weather was appalling with thick mist and heavy rain. There was an address from the bailies of Glasgow, and the Queen responded, saying, in effect, that she was pleased to be associated with any scheme to reduce the number of her subjects who were unwashed. The proceedings concluded with, as the Stirling Journal put it, 'a long prayer' from a Glasgow minister. It was not until 1869 that Queen Victoria saw Loch Katrine under favourable conditions.



Aberfoyle's "New" Main Street Attractions



By the time you read this Aberfoyle may have been crowned 2019 Rising Star in the Great British High Street awards. It may be a cliché, but just being nominated is a prize to celebrate for the Trossachs village. There's a new look to Main Street, which is proving to be popular with visitors. The positive changes haven't gone unnoticed by the media, with a double page feature in the Herald Newspaper in June and more recently a visit by BBC Radio Scotland, all helping to promote the latest resurgence of Aberfoyle.

So, what's changed? Well not the iconic view of Ben Lomond or the Victorian slate buildings. It's the arrival of a number of new shops to its Main Street, and as soon as you meet their owners you can tell that they mean business. Many of the buildings that they are in have been empty and neglected for years, needing extensive building works to get them back open. Walking along Main Street you can now imagine many of Scotland's towns and villages being envious of the quality of the shops. There's the recent addition of Aberfoyle Bike Hire, a brightly coloured gift shop called Walter & Betty, The Station Coffee Shop, Intrepid and Maggie's Aberfoyle Kitchen. Whilst celebrating these new arrivals, it's also worth paying tribute to the hard-working other proprietors and landlords. Liz MacGregor's Coffee Shop, The Forth Inn, Faerie Tree Inn, Aberfoyle Inn, The Wee Tablet Shop, Aberfoyle Delicatessen & Trossachs Butcher, Post Office, Scottish Wool Centre, Aberfoyle Visitor Centre and Co-op have all traded in extremely challenging times, including periods of flooding in the village.

Paul Saunders, a trustee of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs writes about the resurgence of the Main Street in this Trossachs gateway village.



WHERE NEW MEETS OLD

The collection of new and old shops provides a colourful look to Main Street, a welcome replacement to 'for sale' signs on empty buildings. It's good to see that the community are working positively together, an example of this is the decision for many to use the same artist to produce hand-painted signs. There is quality, continuity, but individuality. Surely what we all love about village centre shops?

This was an interesting time to visit the new shops. I wanted to see how successful their first summer of trading has been. Although, some had taken the opportunity to test their products with 'pop-up' shops during the previous summer. First stop, Walter & Betty a shop that you can't miss thanks its bright yellow walls. Jane Fifield runs her gift shop with incredible energy and enthusiasm. Walter, an Aberfoyle resident of the past, apparently appeared in the Rob Roy film and with kilt and long grey beard is now the pin-up icon of the shop. You can buy postcards and posters of the dashing gentleman that inspired the shop name.



Jane Fifield welcomes you to Walter & Betty



The aroma of success

THE STATION

The Station is a St Mocha Coffee Shop, built and run by brothers Stuart and David Fraser. They have taken their popular coffee brand in Balmaha and introduced a unique version for Aberfoyle. Their Loch Lomond Coffee Co is the first and only coffee roasting facility in Loch Lomond. Its symbol is a red squirrel, and true to the generous nature of the family they are supporting conservation of these beautiful animals through donations to the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs.

Their coffee shop is in the old Station buildings, with the Frasers blending a contemporary feel with a nod to the heritage of Aberfoyle, thanks to memorabilia and classic old photographs on the walls. It was of course the arrival of the railway that had led to a previous heyday of the village.

Speciality coffee, homemade ice cream, vegan and gluten free cakes can be enjoyed whilst playing a classic Space Invaders game of the 1980's. For a donation to the Friends they'll give you some old 10 pence pieces to play the games of many of our childhoods.

MAGGIE'S KITCHEN

Next door you will find Maggie, hard at work in her kitchen making jams and shortbread. If you want evidence of the popularity of her shop have a look through the guest book. People from all over the world leaving positive comments. One mother and daughter visiting from Pennsylvania were even inspired to start up a similar shop when they returned home!



Homemade delights

The sign at the entrance of the village welcomes you to the Gateway of the Trossachs. Some argue that an even better title would be 'Scotland's Fairy Capital'. An Aberfoyle minister in the 1600's Robert Kirk claimed that Doon Hill was gateway to a world of fairies. Today Angela Ballard has a workshop in Maggie's where she creates and sells beautiful hand crafted faerie gifts.

This is just one chapter in the Aberfoyle regeneration story. Throughout the village, and Strathard as a whole, the community is pulling together.

We look forward to writing more about their success stories in future editions.



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Eco Tourism in the National Park

Jared Bowers, who has led the Friends eco-tourism project aimed at encouraging tourism businesses to make more of special natural qualities of the National Park, reflects on the progress made.



The beauty and sheer diversity of landscapes are at the heart of the tourist appeal of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the Clyde Sea Lochs. During the past two years, the ecotourism project, which was funded through Scottish Enterprise, aimed to raise awareness of this and work with businesses on how to sustainably capitalise on these outstanding resources and the ecotourism potential on their doorstep.

One of the methods this was accomplished was through a series of successful seminars. The first in 2017 was developed in partnership with Dr Kathy Velandar, Director of the Centre for Ecotourism and Wildlife Management at Edinburgh Napier University. They were held in different locations around the National Park and were themed around the general concept of ecotourism and the benefits it can have on a business. Open to anyone interested in the subject, the seminars provided practical tips on how to promote local ecotourism experiences to visitors to enhance and extend their stay and how to capitalise on the ecotourism potential in the area.

Glamping Potential

The next series of seminars were held in 2018 and were aimed at any individual or organisation interested in setting up a small to medium sized glamping business. Created in response to the rapidly growing popularity of the industry and the stunning potential within the National Park, the workshops were the first of their kind to be held in the area, which was evident in the shortage of similar types of accommodation. Led by renowned glamping expert Kate Morel, an industry specialist who is also an author, speaker and business advisor in the sector, the popular seminars provided very practical insights into the glamping industry and subsequently a great number of new glamping businesses have emerged locally. Guides were produced and distributed to seminar participants and were also made available online.

Last year we organised and ran a National Park Tourism Conference based at the National Park HQ offices in Balloch. The theme was 'The Next 5 Years – Growing Sustainable Tourism Businesses', which focused on a mixture of relevant topics including the National Park Authority's Partnership Plan and tourism priorities, growth opportunities within the visitor experience and using sustainability as a driver for progress and visitor satisfaction. Guest speakers included representatives from the Friends, the National Park Authority, VisitScotland, Cumbria Tourism and case studies from local businesses. The event was very well attended and brought multiple stakeholders together to discuss the importance of sustainability and how we can work individually and together to sustainably grow tourism in the next five years.

Ecotourism Project Delivery

Other activities included direct development work with local businesses, such as creating an educational booklet for Cruise Loch Lomond, and working with community groups like the Loch Long Jetty Association where we provided support in their successful work to acquire a new pontoon. Another major project that was successfully completed under the ecotourism umbrella was the restoration of the Lauder Memorial in Cowal. Grants were secured through the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund and saw the creation of a new car park and path leading up the



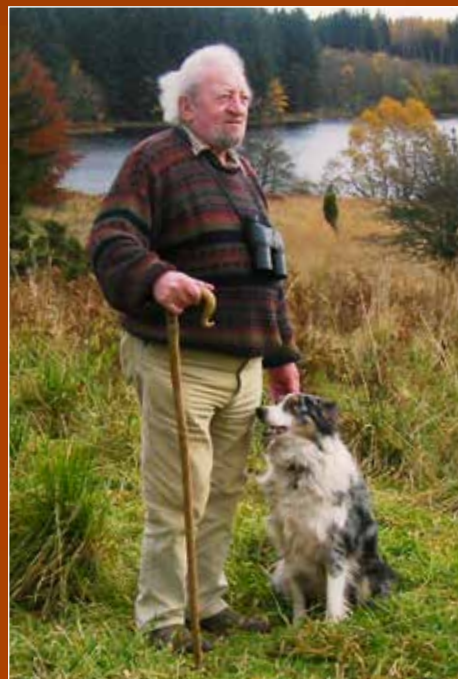
memorial, the cleaning of the memorial and painting of perimeter fence and the installation of new storyboards and signage.

Lastly, several 'Make a Difference Day' volunteer events were organised and held across the National Park which involved litter picks, cleaning scenic viewpoints and allowed the Friends to work with partners from the private and public sector.

The ecotourism project was very successful at raising awareness of its potential in the National Park and encouraging businesses to create and promote outdoor activities amongst the stunning landscapes of the area. However, the project also emphasised the collective responsibility we all have in looking after our special destination and the fundamental importance that sustainability will play in the future of the National Park and Scotland in general.



Summer's End Brings Autumn's Colours



Keith Graham writes about the rich variety of wildlife in the National Park and how different species adjust to the changing seasons.

After what has been a remarkably warm, damp and productive summer, one in which I have seen more young fledglings than for many a year together with a plethora of butterflies, not to mention bees, we approach autumn and winter with a heightened degree of optimism. The butterflies and bees, as vital pollinators, have been especially welcome. The productivity we have seen seems to fly in the face of all the doom and gloom connected with global warming. The seasons pass as they always have done and as nature prepares herself for the shorter days that lie ahead, we can look forward to that final burst of golden colour that characterises autumn in the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park. Thus comes the final flourish, the grand finale of the year with rich, vibrant colours enriching these stunning landscapes before our deciduous trees finally shed all their clothes, their skeletal shapes an intriguing mixture of amazing, natural designs.

It is of course, a time of great transition, a time when our bird populations change. Some – the summer migrants – leave whilst others arrive from the north and east. There were those that departed almost with indecent haste. The cuckoos, which only arrived last May, were mostly gone before July was out leaving the rearing of the next generation of cuckoos to the hard-working foster parents. Also gone halfway through August were the 'devil screamers', the swifts which bombard village rooftops with their hurtling flight and wild screaming. Already they will be in Africa.

Some summer visitors of course, stay with us until October. House martins often produce three broods of young in a year and so must remain until the last brood is fully-fledged and ready to take off on that epic flight back to the Dark Continent. Swallows too may sometimes linger if conditions are such that there remain plenty of flying insects to feed on. Most of the migrants rely on insects for food and as autumn then winter descend, insect life retreats and to all intents and purposes disappears, leaving insect eating birds with no choice but to move southward, again to Africa's insect ridden shores.

The stags roar and my, how they roar!



Cackling of Geese

If, therefore, there appears to be an absence of bird-song, soon our skies will echo to the wild cackling of incoming geese, also migrating but not away from these shores but instead preparing to spend autumn and winter here. The first of these migrating geese generally arrive in mid-September in the shape of Pink-footed geese flying in from the far north, Iceland, Greenland and some from further east in the Arctic. The early arrivals are usually those that have not bred this year, however, they are merely the vanguard for the main body of Pink-feet, which arrive in October. These are the families of adult geese and their goslings and they certainly announce their presence noisily. Indeed, the clamour of geese somehow makes our wild landscape seem even wilder, perhaps reminiscent of those far away Arctic breeding grounds.

Also among the autumnal arrivals in the Park are Greenland White-fronted geese, grey like the Pink-feet but identified by the prominent white blaze on the forehead. It is to the southern reaches of Loch Lomond in particular that these White-fronted geese come, whereas the Pink-feet are more widely distributed. These inwardly migrating birds animate the skies very vocally, whereas the stately Whooper swans, which usually begin to arrive at various locations during October, bring a rather softer tone with their fluted vocalisation and less garrulous moods. Swans and geese are among the real high flyers, having been recorded on their migratory flights from Iceland at altitudes of 30,000 feet by airline pilots!

Whilst many might believe that as autumn merges with winter, nature is shutting down, in fact this ending is also a beginning. The red and golden leaves may be dying but they are the raw materials from which new life will emerge next spring. The clouds of floating, breeze-driven seeds of the likes of thistles, rosebay willow-herb and dandelions will also randomly seek pastures new to colonise, settling in late summer and early autumn in new sites and then bedding down to spring into new life quite early in the New Year.

Red Deer Rut


There is certainly new life created during October and November. Red deer, our largest land mammals, begin to get quite edgy as September gives way to October. Throughout the summer months, the stags and hinds have lived apart, forming their own single-sex herds.

But as colourful October dawns, there is a coming together. However, all is not sweetness and light, for soon the hinds will be coming into season and the stags are now beginning to vie with each other for the possession of harems of hinds. There are few events in the yearly cycle of life in the Park to surpass the sheer majesty of the master stags and the drama of the red deer rut. The stags roar and my, how they roar! It is a sonorous, deep-bellied roar that clearly challenges. In an effort to make themselves even more imposing, stags will cover themselves with peat and mud and the roars increase in volume. The rivalry also intensifies until you could almost cut the air with a knife! Some of the areas where these events occur may have been used for many long years. They are called 'stances' and the field of rivalry will contain only those animals which have reached 'master stag' rank. Younger stags are soon sent packing and must content themselves with roles on the periphery. Sometimes, whilst the master stags are so pre-occupied by their hot blooded rivalries, you may see young stags combining as pairs to cut out a hind or two from a master's harem. By and large however, the really intense rivalry is between those master stags. They roar and rivals respond. You may see two well-matched masters first marching side by side, sizing each other up, before suddenly they turn and come together with a mighty, very audible clash of antlers. Each pushes, striving to gain an advantage and in many cases, the contact is relatively brief. Usually one will acknowledge the superiority of its rival, accept defeat and turn away, often given a rake across its flank as it flees. Another battle is won! But two well-matched stags may battle on for hours. Meanwhile, the hinds, which have been gathered by each master stag - his harem - graze on apparently unconcerned. There is much huffing and puffing, much bellowing, much posturing, much angst. But eventually rivalries are resolved and the status - the place in the pecking order - of each master stag established. Usually these epic events occur on hillsides in the glens but increasingly these days red deer are re-colonising lowland woods so that such conflict and bravado is being played out in both Highland and lowland parts of the Park. Red deer stags greet the declining year with displays, which can sound dramatic in the extreme and look like very raw conflict of the most basic nature - which it is!

Scandinavian Thrushes

Geese and swans are not the only immigrants seeking to spend their winters here in Scotland. Shortening days and encroaching winter forces many Scandinavian and eastern European birds to translocate. In October, mixed flocks of fieldfares and redwings cross the North Sea, rampaging across our landscape, seeking out berries. This year's crop is better than ever and these Scandinavian thrushes will show their avarice by stripping trees bare of their berries


in an inkling. Then they may resort to visiting farmers' fields to seek out a plethora of invertebrates. It may come as a surprise to some, that also joining this aerial trek across the North Sea are woodcock, short-eared owls and tiny goldcrests, to name but a few, coming from Scandinavia and Easter Europe. All of them make the journey as a means of escaping the keen frosts that seize up their food supplies at home. Thus, they seek solace in our temperate climate, warmed as we are by the Gulf Stream. Of course, it is impossible to discern between our native woodcocks, short-eared owls and goldcrests and the in-comers but populations of these and many other species of birds are swollen by these 'Viking Raiders'. Starlings from Eastern Europe also arrive here in large flocks which sometimes come together to form even larger flocks and pattern our skies dramatically with their fantastic murmurations. Meanwhile, many of our sedentary animals are going about their business as usual. Squirrels don't hibernate, as some perhaps believe, and as the leaves fall are perhaps marginally easier to see. Of course, autumn is the time for their harvest with the establishment of stores of nuts and seeds gathered to see them through the winter. Once upon a time, much of the southern half of the park was dominated by grey squirrels but an influx of pine marten, now widely distributed across the Park, has seen grey squirrel numbers swiftly decline. This in turn has led to a resurgence in red squirrel numbers. Many folk also think that badgers hibernate. They don't either, albeit that badgers feed up during autumn, laying down reserves of body fat. If there are bad spells of weather, Brock may well remain tucked up in his underground sett for days on end relying on those fat reserves. The only hibernating mammals are hedgehogs and bats although of course reptiles, such as our adders and lizards, will also sleep through the winter. In no time at all we will have reached another year's end, but with the start of a fresh year there is a new beginning. There will have been some bird-song maintained by redbreast and his alleged mate, jenny wren but now as we pass the winter solstice, days start imperceptibly to get longer rather than shorter. Before long, the robin and the wren are joined by other new songsters and so in early January, is often heard the first Great Tit hymn to the New Year and the lengthening days. 'Tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-cher ...' echoes far across the landscape. Although it may not always seem so, a message that winter is slowly in retreat. Soon the mellow fluting of blackbirds will be heard and perhaps the repetitive song of the thrush. Nature is waking and galvanising itself. If as yet unseen, new life is striving to burst forth. At last after winter's lethargy, new life in all its many varied forms, is already stirring. Spring is on the way!



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A WALK IN THE PARK PUCK'S GLEN

In this the fourth of a series of articles covering some of the best short walks in the National Park, Friends Vice Chair, John Urquhart, revisits Puck's Glen at the south-west corner of the National Park.



Located in Stratheck just inside the National Park boundary in Cowal, I never tire of this walk and find myself drawn to its green and shady recesses at least once a year. It is a well known route made still more popular by websites like Walk Highlands, which accurately describes it as:

" D deservedly the most popular short walk in the region, a dark and atmospheric defile. A tumbling burn, criss-crossed by bridges, is enclosed by rocky walls heavily hung with mosses and overshadowed by trees."



Massive Trunks

And the trees are magnificent - massive trunks of Douglas fir, Japanese larch and Lawson cypress rise from writhing roots which grip and penetrate the fissures in the wet rock. They were planted around the 1870s when the Benmore estate was bought by the wealthy sugar refiner and philanthropist, James Duncan.

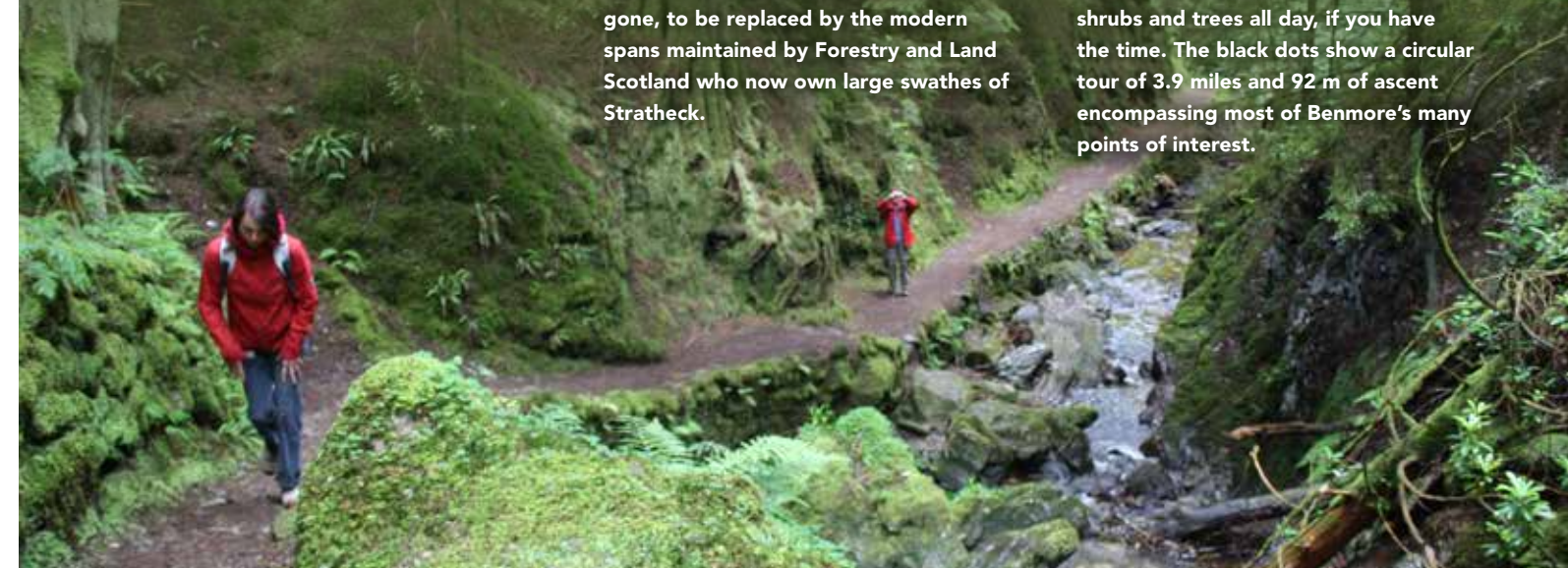
With late Victorian romanticism and fern frenzy in full swing, Duncan was clearly captivated by the place and it was he who had the six bridges built criss-crossing the Eas Mor (big waterfall) burn to link sections of trail cut and blasted into the shiny 'schistose' rock on either side of the canyon. On steeper parts, engineered steps rise beside the plunging waterfalls - and all about a yard and a half wide - enough apparently for strolling crinoline clad ladies! The original bridges have long gone, to be replaced by the modern spans maintained by Forestry and Land Scotland who now own large swathes of Stratheck.



Primordial

And yet despite all the bridges and the engineering, the place has a primordial feel, especially in the dull light of a rainy winter day when water tumbles, gushes, streams and drips and interlocking spurs of grey rock merge in a misty tracery of branches above.

Set on a warming coffee or rewarding lunch at their excellent tearoom, we usually park at the entrance to Benmore Botanic Garden, but there is also a Forestry and Land Scotland car park where the old road joins the A815, 500 metres south of Puck's Glen. I have shown a basic round of the trails which gives a 4.5k walk with only 174m of ascent easily completed in an hour or so. But then, just next door, there is the extensive network of paths in the magnificent Benmore Botanic Garden, where you can walk and admire the shrubs and trees all day, if you have the time. The black dots show a circular tour of 3.9 miles and 92 m of ascent encompassing most of Benmore's many points of interest.



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www.venachar-lochside.co.uk

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