

NSA VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2012

NEXT EVENTS

Friday 14th September

10am – 3pm South West Scotland Landscape Perspectives

Cally Palace Hotel, Gatehouse of Fleet DG7 2DL

(NB Free event but booking is essential - see p.4 of this newsletter for details)

FLEET VALLEY NSA

Thursday 6th September - Port Macadam

Meet **10 am** at Port Macadam

Clearing culvert and vegetation control

Task supervised by Ross Gemmell, Council Ranger

Please advise Ross if you intend to come on 07834 567893 so that he can bring tools and equipment.

Sunday 16th September – Carrick Shore Beachwatch Beach Clean

Meet at **2pm** at Knockbren Viewpoint car park, (Isle Mouth), Carrick

Task supervised by Nic Coombey, Coastal Ranger

Please advise Nic if you intend to come on 01387 251991 so that he can organise equipment

Ron Forster (tel 07711 362645) will advise of any other tasks arranged during September.

EAST STEWARTRY COAST AND NITH ESTUARY NSAS

Every Tuesday– Mersehead Reserve

Meet **10am** at the Wildlife Garden, Sulwath Centre.

Supervised by RSPB

Saturday 15th September - Rockcliffe Beach Watch Beach Clean

Meet at **2pm** at Rockcliffe Beach car park.

Event organised by National Trust for Scotland. Turn up on day and NTS staff will direct you.

Thursday 20th September – Criffel path

Meet at **10am** at Ardwall car park.

Continuing clearing gravel from path drains and catchers.

Supervised by Council Ranger, Ross Gemmell. Please advise Ross if you intend to come on 07834 567893 so that he can bring tools and equipment.

Come and join us!

Cabinet Minister Sees Volunteers at Work by the River



As part of his tour of South West Scotland, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead MSP (*photo, far right*) visited the River Fleet on Friday 3 August to see the Fleet Valley NSA volunteers at work with the Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT). The Trust is part funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and SNH chose the NSA project to show the Minister good practice at work.

The GFT team had brought along electric fishing equipment and, before the Minister arrived they showed us how it worked and caught a good number of juvenile salmon to demonstrate to the Minister the success of the programme to improve the Fleet. The Minister was told of the importance of liming the head waters of the river to reduce the acidity and improve the water quality for young salmon. He also saw a display of images showing the volunteers clearing the river banks to let more light into the water and improve opportunities for fishermen. He heard, too, of the work which is being done to control invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. The afternoon concluded with a question and answer session with Mr Lochhead.

Text by David Steel, Photo by GFT

Volunteers Needed to Turn the Tide on Marine Litter.

'Making the Most of the Coast' project is looking for volunteers to ensure local beaches remain clean and safe for all. Beaches on the Solway Coast will be receiving a thorough clean on Saturday 15th September at Rockcliffe at 2.00pm with NTS and on Sunday 16th September at Knockbren Viewpoint Car Park at 2.00pm as part of Beachwatch, the Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) beach clean and litter survey, which aims to highlight the issues of beach litter around the UK's coastline.

Please contact Nic Coombey for more information: nic@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk or phone 01387 251991.

Looks What's in the Water Supply...

It was not till 1883 that Gatehouse of Fleet had a proper, piped supply of water. Residents had been largely dependent on private wells in gardens and the mill lade until 1877 when a well was sunk in Garries Park together with a storage tank. These were reached from the High Street by the Well Entry. Apparently water was piped from here to the High Street but the scheme could only supply the ground floors of houses in the lower part of the town. The upper part still had to use contaminated wells. Complaints about the poor state of the water continued and in 1882 work began on a supply of water from Loch Whinyeon.



In August the Fleet Valley Volunteers' task with Ross Gemmell was to construct a path down to the well / storage tank. The above photograph shows that it was a solidly built structure. Another task will be to clear out the well and to fit a new grille to keep it free of rubbish.



Text by David Steel,
Photos by Jim Logan and Ron Forster

News from the East Stewartry, August 2012

This month's task found us on the Waterloo Monument Hill above New Abbey, clearing the path to the summit.

Like Criffel last month, this path has benefitted from work by contractors, who have laid various areas of stone step work.



Getting Started



Halfway There

However, as usual, these have become covered by vegetation over the years, necessitating the removal of a turf overlay, as well as cutting back bracken, brambles and birch saplings along the sides of the path.

For such a relatively small hill (574 feet), there is still an extremely good view from the top, especially if you make it to the top of the 65 foot tower



Final Photo Call

Text and photos by Doug Walker

South West Scotland Landscape Perspectives 14th September 2012 Cally Palace Hotel, Gatehouse of Fleet DG7 2DL



This event will showcase the opportunities for communities to be involved in research, practical restoration and reuse to conserve designed landscapes in south-west Scotland.

The work achieved by NSA volunteers at Cally and the surveys undertaken by the local Landscape and Designed Gardens Group will be shared, and we will hear about a different approach at Craigengillan Estate in South Ayrshire and Dumfries House.

Designed landscapes are a physical record of the social, political, economic, environmental and technical changes that have occurred to our surroundings and are an important way of reading our cultural heritage.

Programme

14th September

10.00 – 10.20	Registration – tea / coffee and shortbread
10.20 – 10.30	Welcome
10.30 – 11.00	Introduction to the designed landscapes of south-west Scotland. <i>Christopher Dingwall</i>
11.00 – 11.30	Review of the work undertaken by the local Designed Landscape and Gardens Group which has been researching and surveying non inventory designed gardens and landscapes in Dumfries and Galloway. <i>Members of the DLGG.</i>
11.30 – 12.00	Presentation on bringing back life to the policies of Craigengillan. <i>Mark Gibson.</i>
12.00 – 12.30	Presentation on involving local community at Dumfries House. <i>Alex MacDonald.</i>
12.30 – 1.30	Soup & sandwiches / networking / exhibition of projects.
1.30 - 2.00	Presentation of the achievements of community action to restore elements of the policies at Cally. <i>Gatehouse Development Initiative.</i>
2.00 – 2.30	Question and answer with all speakers – summing up
3.00	Tours of Cally grounds / Gatehouse of Fleet

15th September

Visit to Craigengillan, Dalmellington , KA6 7PZ *Details to be confirmed.*

The event is free but booking is essential

For further information email: ed@sup.org.uk or phone 0771 776 7936

Himalayan Balsam



Himalayan Balsam was originally introduced to Britain as a garden plant in 1839 and soon spread out into the countryside particularly along water courses. Its rapid spread was partly due to the ability of its pointed, segmented seed pods (see photo below left) to burst and fire seeds several feet away. The black seeds remain viable for about two years and can even germinate under water - a single plant can produce several hundred seedlings.

Himalayan Balsam's spread was also helped by misguided individuals who collected the seeds and spread them along roads and riverbanks often into areas far from where it had existed before. The plants, which can grow up to two metres tall, have flowers which vary from pale pink to purple and appear from June to October. Dense clumps of Himalayan Balsam suffocate other plants and the copious nectar produced by the flowers is thought to attract pollinating insects to the detriment of native insect-pollinated species. The best way to control this weed is to uproot it before flowering or at least before its seed pods ripen. This needs to be repeated for 2-3 years until all of the seeds in the soil have germinated.

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Davy gets down to the root of the problem

On the 15th August a team of 11 volunteers and two rangers from the Galloway Fisheries Trust cleared two areas of Himalayan Balsam from the road verges near Gatehouse. Unfortunately we were just a little late and some of the ripe seed pods dispersed their seed as the plants were ripped up. Still a lot less seed than if we had just left the plants. Next year there should be many fewer plants.



Volunteers with the Himalayan Balsam all bagged up

According to *Flora Britannica* “the pods and ripe or unripe seeds have a pleasant nutty taste”. Unfortunately I only read this after we had cleared it all so I cannot confirm whether this is so. They are obviously rich in vitamin C because the only member of an expedition to the Himalayas who went down with scurvy was a woman who did not eat the balsam pods and only ate tinned food.

Text and photos by Jim Logan

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If you have volunteering news or photos please contact Alison Steel,
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If you would like more information about anything in this newsletter contact Anna Johnson, NSA Officer, Anna.Johnson@dumgal.gov.uk 01387 260242