

TREES 4 ALL

The tree planting days took place during the week ending 24th November 2006 and saw a variety of folk rolling their sleeves up and getting their hands dirty. 400 native trees were planted by 50 volunteers on the hill above Loch Ness. These included rowan, hazel, alder, birch, Scots pine and some very special aspen propagated from local trees. Thanks to CWA and the Woodland Trust's Trees for All for a £100 grant for this project. Groups involved were the Rural Skills class from Glenurquhart High School who planted the aspen with the guidance of Dan from Trees for Life. The Inverness High School Forest School group who collected hazel nuts and rowan berries to sow among the areas of clear felled plantation. On the last day a mixed group of volunteers of all ages helped plant birch and Scots pine with Dietrich and Kai alongside the AFT path network. All this hard work will help improve the biodiversity of the area by creating a mixed native woodland. Because all this area is in the stewardship of the community, these new plantings will be cared for along with the rest of the woodland..



SPRING EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

17th March- Squirrel walk- 2.00 - 4.30pm

23rd March - Quiz night in hall @ 7.30

31st March- Skills not Spills

Booking: 861259 or jbarrAbr@aol.com



Simon Harry, our new Forest School Leader was interviewed by Ishbel, one of our younger members

1. Why did you move from Wales? I was working in New Zealand but moved to Scotland as it was the place to be and now am closer to home here.

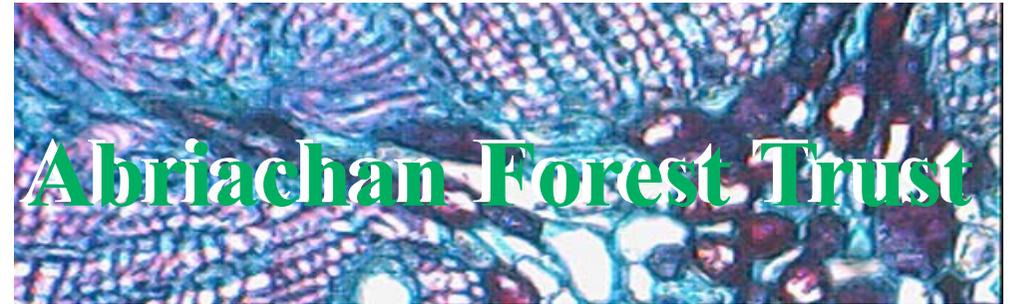
2. What do you do in Abriachan? I run Forest School and lots of

fun education sessions quite often involving some mountain biking. I am hoping to run mountain bike skills courses to help improve everyone's confidence on our new bikes. I am also helping to develop a play area for team building games. I often go into schools to help involve children in their environment and, in the long term, want to run Forest School Leader training courses in Abriachan. I really enjoy working in the forest, meeting new people and being in the beautiful scenery.

3. What do you do in your spare time? Mountain biking - my favourite sport. I am a trained mountain bike leader so need to keep my own skills up! I am always busy - just now I am building a new nursery for our first baby due in April.

4. Can you give us a good game idea for playing in the forest? Insect bingo - normal bingo with insects instead of numbers and shout BUG BINGO when you get a full card.

Or ... split into teams one of the teams is given an animal to act out. In this team each person demonstrates a different part of the animal's body and the other team tries to guess what the animal is. Imagine it with a tick slurping a blood feast.



Healthy Highland Week



Kilchuimen P7s visited on a snowy day in the middle of January and, as you can see from the glowing faces, had a really healthy time.

They arrived from the green lowlands to 10cms of snow and set to in the village hall deciding on low air mile ingredients and chopping local winter vegetables for their lunchtime soup. Once the broths were bubbling they took off on their next mission – a Healthy Planet Challenge up in the forest.



In teams they had to star orienteer round the paths to find topic cards with environmental messages on them. Even the adults involved had to have a run around but of course teams could only run as fast as the slowest members so there were a few frustrated children. After the hour on the snow they arrived back in the hall, set the tables and sat down to their split pea broth and leek and potato potage – mmmmm delicious with healthy Highland oatcakes and cheese. After an hour on the snow they arrived back in the hall, set the tables and sat down to their split pea broth and leek and potato potage – mmmmm delicious with healthy Highland oatcakes and cheese. To finish each team entertained us all by creating a short film using their topic cards and film strips – each with different slants on *the let's live lightly on the planet* message.



Play area

A Highland Council grant will enable AFT to clear the windblown trees beside the car park and create a flat area for visiting groups to play in. This will reduce the risk of children playing close to the traffic coming in and out of the car park. Work has begun and a digger has levelled the plough furrows, buried the brush and now begun to spread the chips gleaned from the sides of the A82. Apologies to those who have been inconvenienced by this demonstration of recycling in action. Andrew has been taken off the forwarding for a week or two, the area will be fenced off and some innovative pieces of team building play equipment will be incorporated on the west side. This will enable Forest School groups to improve their gross motor skills, increase their confidence and have a safe patch to run around in.

Winter visitor

Did you see the goldeneye on Loch Laide?



The goldeneye is a winter visitor that breeds in northern Scandinavia and northern Asia. Goldeneye in flight have the fast wing-beats typical of diving ducks, but they take off more easily than most, and the wings produce a pronounced whistling sound which is quite unmistakable.

Thank you Mike

AFT would like to thank Mike for covering for Hamish while he was on holiday. Severe gales meant there was a lot of windblown trees to deal with and thanks also to Jim and John who helped in the clearing up.

Inverness High School

Inverness High School have been coming out to the forest and the forest has been going in to the school. Different groups of S3 pupils have signed up for Forest School sessions and have created a site in the school grounds from materials provided by the forest. This has resulted in a sheltered area round a fire pit and has been a space that the young people can call their own. Feedback from the school and the pupils has been very positive with the groups not wanting to stop after their 6-8 week programme. Activities have included making benches, fences, planting trees, cooking, designing art work from wood, carving whistles and sticks. Careers Scotland have been closely involved in this project as they have seen the benefits of raising self esteem, improving practical skills and creating a responsible attitude in the young people involved.



Funeral walk

In the dark days at the end of the passing year we held a joint event with the Great Glen Way team. This involved a morose minister and old Morag Macphail's last journey from Balchraggan to the boat awaiting her on Loch Ness. The small but sombre band were led down the old funeral track and on the way were regaled by many Highland traditions and superstitions from the old crones keeping up the rear. Morag's plaid covered pauper's coffin was carried by the men folk in turn and laid on the cairn stones at resting points. They party passed the bee skeps tied in black ribbon and took note of the hen crowing her sad news....

Did you know that the elder tree often called the boun tree in Scotland was second only to the rowan for protection against witchcraft and evil spells. It was often planted at the back of the house, with rowan at the front, and milk and freshly baked bannocks were left to cool beneath the boun-tree for safe keeping. A cross made of the boun-tree was hung on byres to protect the animals inside. In the 19th century the driver of the hearse had his whip handle made of elder to avert evil. It was believed that the cross Jesus died on was made of elder wood and it was considered unlucky to cut.

Boun-tree, Boun-tree, crookit rung,
Never straight and never strong,
Ever bush and never tree

Since our Lord was nailed t'ye

Thanks are due to Freda Rapson for driving the congregation up the hill at the start of the funeral in her 21st Century minibus.



Rural Skills Glenurquhart High School

Congratulations to Maxine Garson the GUHS teacher who has been piloting the Scottish Progression Award with S3 and S4, who has moved to a secondment which will facilitate the delivery of the land based curriculum within Highland secondary schools. This means that she will still be closely involved with Abriachan Forest but also be using us a partner with other schools. The existing classes are working their way through the tree planting and winter twig identification topics at present. They were also trialling the new SNH Access Code education materials recently and showed exceptional awareness of the impact of the new access legislation on the countryside around their local area.

