



Abriachan Summer 2024

**Forest Trust : Annual General Meeting
Abriachan Village Hall
Friday 16th August 2024 at 7.00pm**

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes AGM 2023
3. Chairman's Report ...with forestry, conservation, outdoor learning, facilities updates.
4. Finance report March 31st 2024
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner
6. Election Directors/Trustees to the Board
7. Looking to the Future & Setting Date of 2025 AGM

Short AGM will be followed at 7.20 by a strupach and the film *Why not Scotland?*

All are very welcome to attend.

Contact 01463 861278 or trustees@abriachan.org.uk for details regarding Trustee nomination or co-option.



Become a Member of the Abriachan Forest Trust!

www.abriachan.org.uk/membership



Abriachan Forest Trust Membership Renewal:

It has been a while since we have done a Membership renewal, so following this year's AGM we will be doing a Membership drive. Abriachan Forest has been in community ownership since 1998, which means that if you live in the local community, the forest *belongs to you!* If you live outwith the eligible postcodes (IV3 8LA, 8LB, 8LD and 8LE) but would like to support the work of the AFT, you can become an Associate Member and friend of the forest. Membership is now FREE, but we welcome annual or monthly donations if you are able. More than one membership per household significantly boosts our membership, and junior members are very welcome! Please spread the word with your family/friends. The form will be found via this QR code or on the Abriachan.org.uk website under **Get Involved...** and drop down tab **Membership**.

Members will:

- Receive a seasonal newsletter to stay up-to-date on news
- Be first to find out about events and volunteering options
- Take part in Members' events across the year
- Receive an invitation to our AGM (usually in the summer)
- Have a say in the care of the forest



Chairperson's Updates

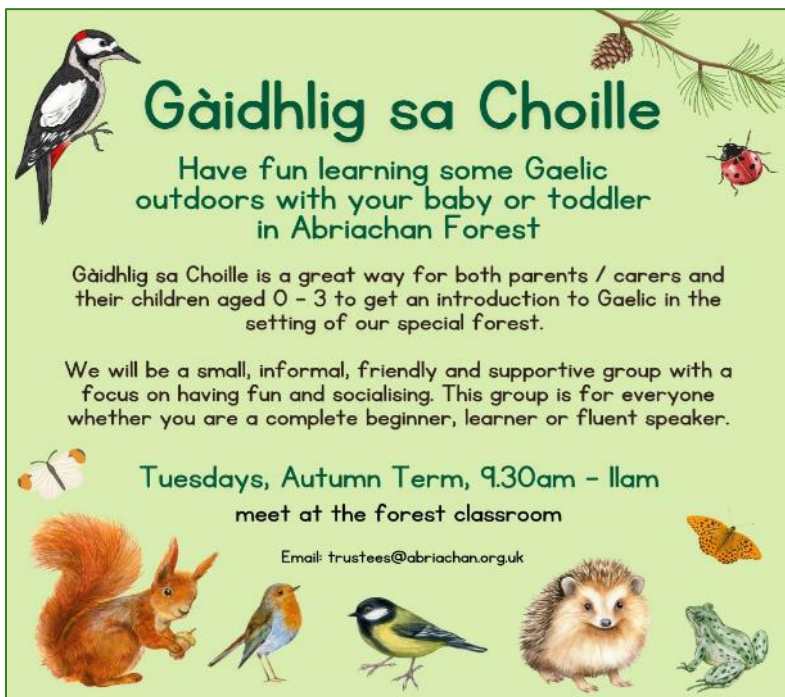
Beavers: We had hoped that following the really positive community discussions last year and early this year that we would be welcoming beavers back to Abriachan in 2024. Having submitted a licence application to the government regulator, Nature Scot, earlier this year, we were informed that there are a few barriers to a licence being granted at this stage. We are persevering and working through these barriers just now, and we have meetings lined up later in August where we hope to make headway. It's likely this won't be a speedy process, but we hope to be in a position where the project can go ahead either in 2025 or, at the latest we hope, early 2026!

An Treas Nàbaidh : Following an application to the Scottish Land Fund earlier this year for funds towards the community purchase of the land which is currently for sale, on the open market, between the Forest Trust and Glen Urquhart we were informed that our application was unsuccessful. We had been informed prior to submitting the application that the Scottish Land Fund has seen a reduction in funding, and that competition for available funds was high. We are considering options, and may explore different routes to raising the money required.

A very successful **Gaelic toddler** taster day was held before the end of June. Lots of babies and their carers came and coped well with the midgies whilst dancing, singing in Gaelic, sharing a snack and chatting.

Mairi is organising some autumnal sessions so here's the link to book up the few places left...

<https://forms.office.com/e/xUZ007sPWP>



Gàidhlig sa Choille
Have fun learning some Gaelic outdoors with your baby or toddler in Abriachan Forest

Gàidhlig sa Choille is a great way for both parents / carers and their children aged 0 - 3 to get an introduction to Gaelic in the setting of our special forest.

We will be a small, informal, friendly and supportive group with a focus on having fun and socialising. This group is for everyone whether you are a complete beginner, learner or fluent speaker.

Tuesdays, Autumn Term, 9.30am - 11am
meet at the forest classroom

Email: trustees@abriachan.org.uk

The poster features illustrations of a woodpecker, a ladybug, a squirrel, a robin, a blue tit, a hedgehog, a frog, and a butterfly, along with a pine branch and a pine cone.



The Bothy has been gifted a lovely 25 year celebratory blanket of 25 squares knitted and crocheted by the **last Friday of the month 2pm knitters** and finished off beautifully by two generations of Helsing. Thank you everybody involved.

Outdoor First Aid Course @ Abriachan 27th-28th September

Book via forest@abriachan.org.uk (£110 plus VAT)



Why's a first aid course juxtaposed here?!!!

Spot the cycling superstars in some of these photos...the improved facilities have met with approval from all abilities of bike user. We cannot really take credit for Olympians and world ranking riders but do enjoy boasting about them! Best AFT photos here are from Mark Goodwill. Longest wheelies are achieved via practising down the Cuillins; muddy faces, orange gloves and log jump skills are gained from skelping all over Europe!

Jonny Laing, nursery teacher, now offers mountain bike guiding - check him out on Ride.North.mtb after successful pilot days in July



We are fortunate to have Anne Turnbull, mum of Hamish, the Olympian, as a nursery teacher. The children just loved trying on the GB kit and, who knows how many more Olympians might be forthcoming! The variety of features around the forest have meant there are more users of the footpaths, shelters and mountain bike trails. Unfortunately, this results in a lot of pressure on the facilities and volunteers, most notably on the compost toilets. Watch this space for the next funding drive – flushing toilets, bike wash and pop-up craft activity area and potentially a play area. We will need to build lots of enthusiasm, support and funding to achieve this.....from all our stakeholders!

Forestry Update

People will have been aware of some ongoing harvesting in the area on alongside the path up to Carn na Leitir. This unfortunately meant some stretches of path and the start of the blue bike trails had to be closed for a couple of weeks to ensure walkers' safety but necessary to balance the challenges of managing recreation with a well-run economic forest. In the LISS (Less Intensive Silvicultural System, an alternative to clear felling) some 100 tonnes of wood were thinned and processed into firewood which was delivered to the local and surrounding communities. This provided a valuable service to the local communities at a low carbon cost. The citizen science recording of flora and fauna also evidences the increased diversity of species living in the LISS areas and the margins of the woodlands.

The estimated annual volume increment of the standing timber remains approximately at 2,400 cubic metres for 2023/24. This is equivalent to approximately 1,200 tonnes of additional carbon lock up. As part of the restructuring programme, 5,000 douglas fir trees were planted during the winter and spring. These are deemed to be more capable of coping with climate change and add further diversity to the commercial conifer crop. Native woodland continues to expand naturally throughout the forest, all very satisfying to observe.

The process of restocking the forest felled in previous years is continuing in accordance with the Forest Plan which carries a statutory obligation to replant. Our FSC compliance check was completed in January 2024. Deer management is ongoing with 87 deer being culled during the period, around 16 head / 100 hectares. As a result, replanted trees, including the Millennium Forest mosaic plantings on the south slopes of the Leitir are now growing well. Consultant [Dietrich Pannwitz](#) continues to advise wisely.

Great Glen Way Alternative High Route was eventually signposted this spring and walkers have been very positive about the views and variation it offers. *"Please extend thanks from all of us [at Loch Ness Hub](#) for everything that AFT have achieved. The new Abriachan high route saved the GGW's reputation in the early part of 2024, with the Fort Augustus to Invermoriston high route closed.*

Customer positive feedback of the new high route saw walking agencies send scouts out specifically to scope the new highest point on the trail.

Loch Ness Hub actively promote AFT in our shuttle transfers, giving walkers a real sense of community and authentic experience of the Highlands."

"Amazing views, our favourite section of the trail"

"Fabulous day, definitely worth the hike up the hill"

"Loved discovering a round house and even found a whisky still!"



In recent years, periods of dry weather from spring through to autumn and the increased incidence of damaging wildfires led AFT to undertake training with BrightSparks and to implement mitigation measures. To this end you will see some more obvious fire ponds and easier access to them being created. Of course, these are also providing improved wetland habitats, so the flora and fauna are colonising them as well.



Maintenance & volunteering updates



The maintenance team of Jude and Alan have completed excavator, tractor, brushcutter, first aid and crosscut training over the past few weeks. This was applied individually through Women in Agriculture/Next Generation LANTRA funding for Jude and Alan for working on their own crofts. Congratulations to Jude who has very recently had a beautiful baby daughter.



Firewood production has restarted after the extended processor repairs and servicing of the tractor and digger. A smaller Kubota tractor has been purchased to drive the processor, saving constant un-hitching and the old Scorpion has moved south to continue its useful life on a farm. It owed us nothing.

Firewood can be delivered locally in 4 cube trailer loads at £70 per cube plus £10 delivery. Smaller quantities, multiples of 5 bags for £30, ordered in advance, can be collected from the carpark. Prices will need to be reviewed annually.

Orders should be made via

finance@abriachan.org.uk

and will be invoiced once delivered

If you see something needing fixed us know by emailing forest@abriachan.org.uk

Welcome Floraidh!



The Volunteer Support Fund continued to provide funding for staffing to organise the volunteering opportunities in the forest over the past year. This has also helped with some of the costs involved in administering the FOLA accreditation. Volunteers have collected and sown tree and wild flower seeds, planted trees, made and decorated birds, bunting and birdboxes, fenced off exclosures, maintained paths and wooden structures, undertaken BrightSparks training and participated in assorted citizen science recording sessions. Corporate volunteering (CSR) days have been organised by Scottish Water, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Nature Scot and Scottish and Southern Energy. Thanks to everyone both local and from further away.



Early Years Outdoor Learning : Play is the way

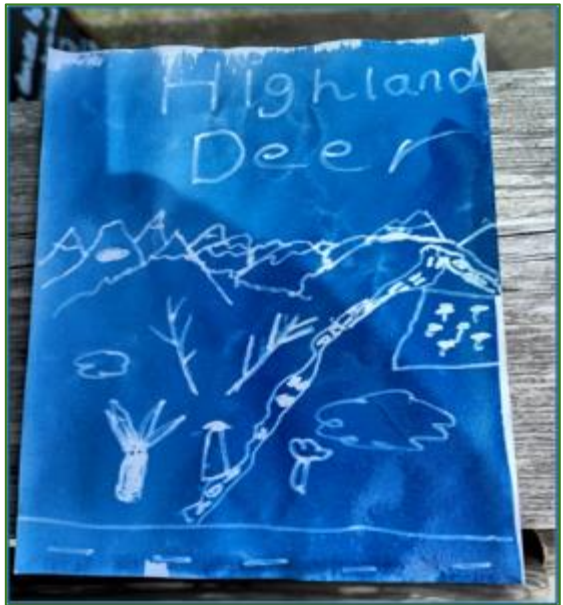
Early Years Practitioners don't usually stand still for very long but here they are all posing for Cairistiona at the end of term. Jonny Laing joined the team in February and, despite Lorna being a very hard act to follow, he has brought lots of diverse skills as a primary teacher and mountain bike leader to the early years' curriculum delivery. Anne and Roni's experience of supporting the logistics of the children's care and learning throughout the day means there's always a contented buzz around the outdoor nursery. Kerry and Lorna are continuing to do well in the second year of the BA Graduate Apprenticeships using their experience in early years' settings to help completion of second year modules, both with excellent results. Well done everyone.



The early years children continue to thrive in their different woodland settings. The beauty of having their own forest means they move around from season to season, playing, testing, problem solving, exploring and discovering in varied habitats. So sometimes they are over by the burn fishing and floating, other weeks they are based down in the Peace Trail site in the Sitka plantation where they set up camp, swing in hammocks, make obstacle courses, bounce on the slack line, slide under tunnels and gather in the tipi. Over the coldest periods they can be in the garden where there is shelter in a heated yurt and spend time in the polytunnel. Christine comes to sing and extend their Gaelic vocabulary around the campfire each week and occasionally parents and other experts come in to provide extra stimulation. The most recent visitors have been Safe Strong and Free and Kirsten from Scotland The Big Picture who led a hands-on session about beavers. All the children who are leaving to start primary 1 achieved their Scottish Junior Forester Awards – amazing to see 4 and 5 year olds being able to identify six tree species and explain why we plant lots of different tree types in our forest!



More Outdoor Learning



All the young people who attend have had a successful year, each gaining relevant life skills and producing work to be very proud of. Kerry and Richard supported the learning of the younger boys, ensuring they were inspired and engaged. Speed carving continued, a book on deer was published, a popular woodland workout gym with strict rules was designed, a headquarters built, many tracks and signs followed with a lot of sneaky numeracy, literacy and creativity hidden under the radar. At the end of term, they held an exhibition of the year's work. Some of the older learners achieved FOLA Level 4 and Level 5 Awards with 4 and 6 points on the SCQF scale and adding positive kudos to their schools' Insight status. This page and the next contains a few examples of the work carried out.

Test out the QR Code on the bottom of this page and listen carefully....is the rutting roar an Abriachan stag in November or Richard stubbing his toe or a perfected simulation by LG?





Peace Trail and Burn sites
 Citizen science, Pond dipping,
 Using identification keys for invertebrates
 Designing boats, problem solving,
 Floating and sinking, rate of flow
 Following instructions to build catapults
 Deciding group rules, discussing forces, using different
 materials to improve designs
 Walkers' O – orienteering around paths, map reading,
 points tallying and helping each other.



HWB 2-05a understand friendship, caring , fairness, equality and love are important in building positive relationships. Care and show respect for selves and others
 HWB 2-06a Understand importance of mental wellbeing through personal coping skills and positive relationships
 HWB 2-16a Learn to assess, manage risk and reduce potential for harm

Sciences : identify and plant trees in suitable habitats; play food chain games; citizen science pond/burn dipping recording
 SCN 2-01a Biodiversity and interdependence; identify examples of different living things and how they adapt to survive...or not
 SCN 2-02a/b Know about interactions/energy flow between plants & animals; food chains and webs; contribute to design of a conservation area
 Technologies : design and build bird boxes and bug hotels either to leave in Abriachan or erect in school grounds.
 TCH 2-09a Design and construct a product/model – use tools safely, estimate and measure accurately, create range of ideas, solve problems
 TCH 2-10a Explore the use of differing and select suitable materials for floating and firing!

Skills Development Scotland Metaskills and some curriculum experiences and outcomes for p5-7s who absolutely loved their ten Thursdays of forest school with Roni.



A justifiably proud Fyn pyrographing then oiling his Leopold bench



Night tracks in the snow are super springboards for morning tales!

Partnershiping with Moniack Mhor...

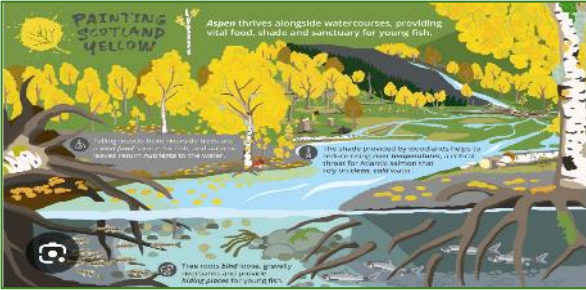


Shared sessions with the Creativity and Care team have continued to be varied and the partnership has also delivered Club Artysans for the young people involved. Thursday evenings have included whittling green wood, pyrography, making Xs and Os boards but also sharing dinner, music making, skills to create animation, music recording and poetry tattooing. More recently a group creative writers' children came to the forest for a week. During this they achieved all the Abriachan Challenges and everyone created beautiful concertina books filled with lots of mixed media. Huge thanks Katie & Fern.



Future Foresters ?

Encouraging all the woodland's stakeholders to feel involved in the stewardship and environmental improvements, no matter how young or old, or whether they live locally or further away, has always been important to Abriachan. More than 35 former AFT forest school participants now work in land based industries. The nursery children invited their families to a tree planting event; the FOLA students helped gather wych elm, Scots pine, hazel nuts, acorns and aspen seeds and have been chuffed to see germination. Hopefully the wych elm will survive Dutch elm disease and the aspen will help in Painting Scotland Yellow. All sharp images are James Shooter's!



2024 seems to have been an excellent mast year for tree seeds, presumably thanks to the conditions in 2023. These SP cones were collected on low, easy to reach branches around the old school.

Biodiversity

At the Trustees' meeting every month there's always a biodiversity item on the agenda. It would be great if we heard of others' good spots whilst walking in the woods or up the hill or even sitting looking out their kitchen window. Recently we hosted Pete Moore's Butterfly Conservation moth trapping event on a rather too cold July morning. Look at all the species found and admire the descriptive names, they might inspire some poetry?



- Antler moth**
- Argyresthia goedartella**
- Burnished brass**
- Common marbled carpet**
- Coxcomb prominent**
- Dark arches**
- Dotted carpet**
- Dotted clay**
- Ear moth agg.**
- Eudonia mercurella**
- Gold spangle**
- Gold swift**
- Ingrailed clay**
- July highflyer**
- Lesser broad-bordered yellow underwing**
- Lesser swallow prominent**
- Lesser yellow underwing**
- Minor shoulder-knot**
- Northern spinach**
- Scalloped oak**
- Scarce silver Y**
- Six-striped rustic**
- Smoky wainscot**
- Snout**
- Square-spot rustic**
- True lover's knot**

Riverfly surveying continues in 2024 Rebecca from **Buglife** came to give us an ID refresher session in early June so we have carried out a monthly survey with individuals and some of the groups we support. The Riverfly resources have been regularly used particularly the compartmented tray with keys. Allt Lon na Fiodhaige is a healthy burn.



Riparian planting continues to be an important aspect of our nature restoration. We have been collecting and sowing wild flower seeds along road and path verges. Where relevant, we've transplanted plantlets which were growing in the wrong place...like these cowslips and yellow rattle.



Butterwort : *Pinguicula vulgaris*

Walking up McLarty's Road during the early summer, you will notice rosettes of bright yellowish green fleshy leaves which lie close to the soil. These are the leaves of the butterwort which have emerged from the *hibernaculum*, a small, ovoid, rootless bud which was formed when the plant entered dormancy as the days grew shorter in Autumn. The leaves are anchored to the ground by a shallow root system consisting of tufts of fibrous roots.

If you look closely at the leaves, you can see that they are covered in mucilaginous droplets which give the characteristic greasy feel. The generic name, *Pinguicula* comes from the Latin *pinguis* which means fatty or greasy to the touch. It was Charles Darwin (1875) who showed that the leaves of both butterwort and sundew are adapted for carnivory.

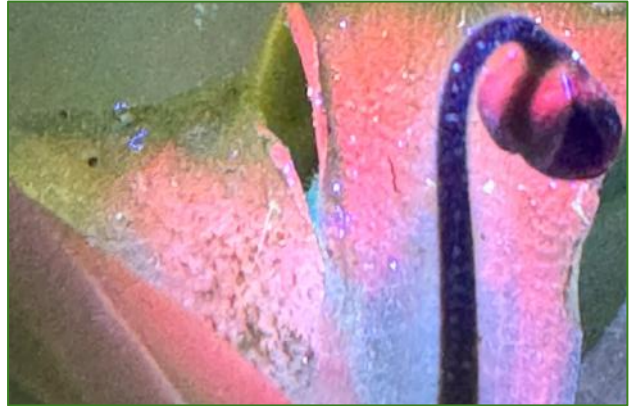
To catch and digest insects, the leaf of a butterwort uses two specialised glands which are scattered across the leaf surface. The peduncular glands produce a mucilaginous secretion which forms visible droplets across the leaf surface. This wet appearance probably helps lure prey in search of water (a similar phenomenon is observed in the sundews). The droplets secrete limited amounts of digestive enzymes and serve mainly to entrap insects. On contact with an insect, the peduncular glands release additional mucilage. The insect will begin to struggle, triggering more glands and encasing itself in mucilage. Additional glands are brought into contact with the prey by the inward rolling of the leaf margins.

The second type of gland found on butterwort leaves are sessile glands which lie flat on the leaf surface. Once the prey is entrapped by the peduncular glands and digestion begins, the initial flow of nitrogen triggers enzyme release by the sessile glands. These break down the soft tissue of the prey releasing nitrogen, phosphate and other micronutrients which supplements the meagre nutrient supply extracted by the roots from the nutrient deficient soil. The resulting fluids are then reabsorbed into the leaf surface through cuticular holes, leaving only the chitin exoskeleton of the larger insects on the leaf surface.

The struggles of insect prey trapped by cables of mucilage often damage or destroy some of the surrounding glands, and the leaf surface also becomes overlain by carcase remains, the larger ones rotting. The plant overcomes this loss by constantly producing new leaves throughout the growing season.

The holes in the cuticle which allow for this digestive mechanism also pose a challenge for the plant, since they serve as breaks in the cuticle that protects the plant from desiccation. This means that butterwort is restricted to environments with high humidity. In the Highlands, butterwort is widespread on bare, wet acid peat, on bogs, and in flushes in heaths and on upland moors. Less commonly, it grows on permanently wet rock ledges and in crevices on damp, dripping cliffs and occasionally also in limestone flushes.

The natural prey includes small flying Diptera such as midges and gnats, thrips and small spiders. Prey may be actively lured to the leaf surfaces of *Pinguicula* plants by the glistening appearance of the droplets held on the stalked glands, by UV patterns, visible in Christine's UV image above, and possibly by the scent of the leaf. Plants in flower trap more prey than purely vegetative ones.



More butterwort facts



In early summer, between 1 and 8 leafless stems are produced in succession. Typically for carnivorous plants, the stem is long to ensure that the insect pollinators do not become trapped on the leaves. Flowers are solitary, and bisexual. The petals are blue-violet with two upper lobes, and three lower lobes which extend backwards forming a long spur. Hairs guard the entrance to the corolla tube, and hairs also extend into the lower lip. The flower is adapted for pollination by bees, which are attracted by its colour, honey guide and scent and UV pattern. Nectar is secreted at the base of the thin, downwardly curving spur. Despite all this effort to attract pollinators the flower is not visited by insects and it habitually self-pollinates. The fruit capsule takes 2-3 weeks to ripen after the flower has been pollinated. During a dry spell, numerous tiny seeds are released which are easily dispersed by wind and water.

Seedling establishment is uncertain because the tiny seed size provides negligible food reserves, and suitable wet sites free from competition by other species are rare; seedlings have not been observed in the Highlands. Seeds dispersed by wind do however offer an opportunity to colonize a suitable site far from the parent plant. Butterwort can also reproduce vegetatively, and it does this by developing small buds called 'brood buds' (bulbils), towards the end of the growing season. They provide a more effective means of reproduction as opening bulbils are supplied with relatively large starch reserves stored in the bud scales. They usually establish daughter individuals around or near the parent plant which explains the concentrated clusters of plants frequently observed. Bulbils can be transported by water currents after autumn or winter rains, snow melt, or spring flooding.



Butterwort clones!

Butterwort was a highly regarded plant in the Highlands. The most widespread Gaelic name is **mòthan**. Butterwort was used as a rennet substitute to curdle and thicken milk and it has several alternative names linked to its use in making dairy products: *lus an ime* *the plant of the butter*, **lus a' bhainne** *the plant of the milk* and **uachdar** *cream*.

The leaves were rubbed on a cow's udder to protect the milk and butter from evil. It is interesting that in other parts of Britain and in Scandinavia, it was used therapeutically on chapped/infected udders.

Alexander Carmichael in *Carmina Gadelica* writes *that it was one of the most prized plants in the occult science of the people. It was used in the conserving and preserving of happiness of the people, in securing love, in ensuring life, in bringing good and in warding away evil.* There was a belief in the Highlands that cows that ate the **mòthan** would be protected from evil spells and that the protection would extend to those people who drank the milk from the cow. This is the origin of the expression— **dh'òl e bainne na bà baobh a dh'ith am mòthan** *'he drank the milk of the bewitched cow that ate the butterwort'* which is used when someone has made a miraculous escape.

The early Christians in the Highlands considered the **mòthan** a sacred plant. The best day to pick the **mòthan** was **Dìdomhnich**- (God's day) Sunday, when the following verse would be recited

Buainidh mis' am mòthan, an luibh a bheannaich an Dòmhnach. Fhad 's a ghleidheas mi am mòthan, chan eil beò air thalamh gin a bheir bainne mo bhò bhuam.

'I'll pull the butterwort, the herb blessed by the Church. As long as I preserve the butterwort, nobody lives on earth who will take my cows' milk from me'.

It is not surprising that the butterwort was so highly esteemed by the Highlanders. Their survival depended on their cows, and they relied on dairy products made in the summer months to sustain them throughout winter.