



THE RADICAL ROWAN

The newsletter of Reforesting Scotland:
restoring the land and the people



Rural Alternatives - lessons learned

Reforesting Scotland's Rural Alternatives (RA) project started late in 2005 and finished at the end of May 2008. The RA project was a pilot, which identified opportunities for the revival of traditional knowledge about non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and, more importantly, explored their present-day potential for contributing to rural livelihoods. Working with four community woodland groups, we explored how these resources could present solutions to local problems, such as under-employment and access to local food and craft products. The project included training in traditional skills and knowledge of NTFPs, and encouraged participatory planning processes within the communities to enable continuing skills development and the transfer of knowledge to other members of community.

Structure

Managing a project spread across four remote locations in Scotland (Lochaber, Beaulieu, Sutherland and Dumfriesshire) had its challenges, especially with a small travel budget, which did not allow for much face-to-face contact between the staff. But although meetings between the Project Manager and the local coordinators were limited, the staff remained cohesive, motivated and positive – leading to a very successful series of outputs.

Having four locally-based coordinators and an Edinburgh-based project manager was more practical than the original idea of employing one 'roving' project worker to deliver training to local communities, as well as being in keeping with our ethos of creating local employment. While dividing the budget into five meant that funding became lean for the project manager, it was clear to all involved that the project would not have been anywhere near as successful had it retained its original staff structure of one person based in Edinburgh. The organisation of the project by the four partner communities was quite successful. This was largely because

the local coordinators were known to, and based in, each of the participating communities and two brought previous experience of organising rural projects with them.

Project outcomes

Without a doubt, the most important outcome from the RA project was the support given to local initiatives, enterprises and groups, which were formed, or were strengthened, through their involvement in the project. In particular, the strengthening of the wool-crafts group at Sunart, Lochaber, through the provision of workshops on natural dyeing using woodland plants, lichens and fungi, has been important to the local retention of those skills and to the adding of value to a hitherto underutilised resource - local wool.

In Assynt, the community was very keen to gain NTFP knowledge with a direct link to business skills and local enterprise, rather than merely as a hobby. The direct support for one micro-enterprise specialising in birch-sap syrup production was significant as it uses another locally abundant but underutilised resource, and will produce an interesting and sustainable product, more usually associated with North America, Russia and Scandinavia than Scotland. The Assynt community is also continuing to develop bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) as a sustainable energy supply and as an organic fertiliser, as it is both plentiful and its control is an important issue on community lands.

The NTFP survey training and subsequent survey work conducted at Upper Reelig Wood (Beaulieu) provided the best examples of all the survey work carried out under the project. It is hoped that the survey work will stimulate more

thorough surveys and identification of fungi, bryophytes and lichens. Most importantly, the surveys have helped to establish a baseline from which the community may be able to extend its knowledge of the woods and its biological recording skills.

The moss survey carried out at the Doon of May wood, in Dumfriesshire, has provided a much-needed baseline for this site, revealing rare species previously undocumented in the area. The community at the Doon feel it was really important for them to have facilitated the survey, as the moss species present clearly map out an environmental footprint that can be used to guide their restoration activities within the woodland site.

The RA project has certainly shown what community woodland groups can do with their local NTFPs and has helped small enterprises to set up and to demonstrate to other community groups how they too could develop NTFPs. Non-timber forest products in Scotland are under-used and have enormous potential to provide more cultural, environmental and economic benefits - provided they are harvested sustainably. Reforesting Scotland's work on NTFPs will now focus on sustainable harvesting and on support for NTFP businesses (see page 2).

For more information on the RA project, visit www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/rural_alternatives.php and reports and case studies for the project are at: www.reforestingscotland.org/pubs/RAP_reports.php

Jake Paul
Rural Alternatives Project Manager



Reforesting Scotland News

New projects in sustainable harvesting

Following the recommendations of participants at the *Wild Harvests in Scottish Woodlands* seminar in 2006 [1] and last year's NTFP Sector Research and Development project [2], Reforesting Scotland has begun two new projects.

Reforesting Scotland's **Sustainable Forest Harvest project** is developing guidelines for monitoring the impacts of harvests of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). The project focuses on three areas: fungi, sphagnum moss and lungwort (a lichen, *Lobaria pulmonaria*). There are very different reasons for monitoring each of these.

Fungi have become much more widely harvested in recent years but we know very little about *what* is harvested or how much. There is also great speculation, but little knowledge, about the potential impact of the harvesting practice of increased numbers of people from the more fungi-loving cultures of Eastern Europe. Sphagnum moss is listed in European legislation as

requiring monitoring and is therefore a controversial harvest. Lungwort is something that is not currently harvested in great quantities in Scotland, but as populations on mainland Europe decline and become protected, demand for homeopathic medicine has turned to other potential sources.

The project is developing discussion groups for each of these priorities, so if you would like to become involved, please contact **Alison Dyke** on E: alison@reforestingscotland.org (or T: 0131 557 1008 on Thursdays and Fridays only please).



Reforesting Scotland's new **Wild Harvests Sector Support project** aims to facilitate the development of Scotland's emerging Wild Harvests sector.

Two open meetings, one in the north and one in the south of the country, will bring together people from the diverse range of businesses involved: harvesters, buyers, makers of fine foods and wines, craftspeople, course providers, landowners, land managers

and more. This is the next step towards forming an ongoing network or trade association - all depending on what the businesses themselves decide is the most useful and relevant to them.

Emma Chapman took on the role of manager of this project at the beginning of June 2008, and will be contacting businesses over the coming months. If you would like to be involved, please email Emma on E: emma@reforestingscotland.org or phone the RS office on 0131 220 2500. Emma will be working two days a week, so please leave a message and she will get back to you.

See www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/sustainable_forest_harvest.php for more info on the Sustainable Forest Harvest project or see www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/wild_harvests_sector_support.php for Wild Harvest Sector support.

Further information

1. See www.forestharvest.org.uk/projects.htm#WildHarvests
2. See www.forestharvest.org.uk/projects.htm#SecRaD

Alison Dyke & Emma Chapman

News from the RS office

Welcome to the first Radical Rowan insert - a new way to bring news from Reforesting Scotland to all readers of the Journal.

Since settling in to our new office, we have had quite a few staff changes. **Kristin Olsen**, our Development Officer since 2005, is on maternity leave and has been replaced by **Amanda Calvert**, who some readers may know from her work with the Community Woodlands Association. Amanda will be focusing on fundraising for our new Communications project - watch this space!

After more than 7 years, we said farewell to **Wendy Hebard** at our Annual Gathering in Assynt last year. Our new Administrator, **Anna Alexander**, is now in place and in addition to book-keeping, Anna will also be dealing with membership administration and enquiries. E: anna@reforestingscotland.org.

A big thank you goes to **Mary Watson** and **Martin Sherring**, who provided invaluable assistance with finances in advance of Anna's recruitment. Thanks also to **Sally Macpherson**, who has been helping with various admin tasks.

Jake Paul left at the end of May, with the Rural Alternatives project drawing to a close (see article on page 1). **Alison Dyke** and **Emma Chapman** are now working on forest harvest work (see article above).

And **Mandy Meikle** will be leaving at the end of September to focus on her passion: energy. After 10 years with Reforesting Scotland, including 6 years as Editor, Mandy will be developing a consultancy to raise the awareness of small enterprises to rising oil prices and its potential impact on their business.

Other organisations

Life @ Dunbeag

January was stormy here in Argyll. Lots of wind, lots of rain and lots of trees blown down. My brother, Kob, and I cleared the windblow and felled an adjacent area of Sitka and noble fir, which was standing in wet soils and liable to succumb to future strong winds.

Our volunteer for the winter months was Dave Niven and we set the Lucas mill at the bottom of the felled slope and hand-hauled the logs down the slope, milled them *in situ* and built a great stack of sawn timber. We cut a lot of 6-inch by 6-inch beams, as I am hoping to build an experimental massive timber building later this year. The log chute was set up from the mill site, through the wood and the garden, and down to the track where we could load timber straight onto a trailer.



parents can wait to collect their children, to encourage walking to school. Then Millcroft Lavender, a local business which produces products from locally-grown lavender, wanted a summer house/bird hide. This was designed and built to fit an existing concrete slab in the shape of a quadrant, which served as a base. Next, the children at



Strachur Primary School wanted a castle as an addition to their playground, which we built to double as a wildlife hide. Then back to

Inveraray to build a compost shed and some raised beds, so that they can compost all their organic waste from the school and grow some lovely vegetables. Sam Ansell then came to work with us and, between jobs and milling, we have been cutting some serious rhododendron on steep slopes at Coille Beag, another woodland near Dunbeag, which I manage. It's hard work but we are getting there.



We had amazing spring weather and Michaela has kept on top of sowing and potting on, planting out and nurturing, so the garden and the polytunnels are looking fantastic and abundant. There was such a sunny and dry spell of weather that we had to water the entire garden on a daily basis and the hydro scheme had diminished to nothing, so we were relying on the sun for electricity. When it shone, the bread maker was on and the washing machine and the electric strimmer, though not all at once!

Michaela has just returned from harvesting, with the basket of the day containing some early potatoes, broad beans, green garlic, a basil- and rocket-rich salad and strawberries. Food from the forest indeed! There is nothing better to nourish mind, body and soul than home-grown food.

David Blair

There was a flurry of school jobs in the spring, which used up a fair amount of timber (see article on page ** of the Journal). We built a massive timber storytelling chair and seating arrangement at Colgrain Primary in Helensburgh, carved with a wonderful design – a compilation of the children's own MacKintosh designs. We then built a turf-roofed 'parent shelter' at Inveraray Primary School, where

Open space in the North East

Scottish Native Woods (SNW) started out in 1988 as the Scottish Community Woodland Campaign. In 1994, SCWC became Scottish Native Woods and with other groups and organisations concerned about our environment, including Reforesting Scotland, SNW continues to campaign to keep restoration and protection of native woods at the forefront of government environmental

policy. SNW's work now focuses on woodland management advice to land occupiers and community groups, whilst maintaining an emphasis on conservation education for all.

SNW are gathering together a group of people in the North East (Aberdeenshire, Moray, Speyside) who are interested in the role of open spaces in native woodlands. Many

creatures rely on the unique conditions created by glades and rides within woodlands. These small areas provide the ideal environment for butterflies, bryophytes and birds.

If you would like to join the discussion, or would like to learn more, please contact Carol Robertson on T: 01464 821 070 or E: carol.robertson@scottishnativewoods.org.uk

Dates for Your Diary

October

3-4: Highland Aspen Group Conference at Boat of Garten. The programme includes presentations and workshops on Friday and site visits on Saturday. Cost: £20 payable on booking. Contact Ernest Emmett on T: 01540 661 962 or E: ecubed@btinternet.com for more information, a booking form or details of how to join HAG.

4: Harvest Ceilidh for Refugee Survival Trust. Rudolf Steiner School, Spylaw Road, Edinburgh 7pm – 1am. See www.ceilidhcollective.org.uk/

4: Spinning With Irene Blair. You will learn how to prepare the natural coloured fleece and how to spin it into yarn using a drop spindle and a spinning wheel. Four Winds Inspiration Centre, Edinburgh. Cost: £45 + materials. All places must be pre-booked. Contact T: 0131 332 2229 or E: info@four-winds.org.uk. For more information and other craft classes see www.fourwindsedinburgh.org.uk/

10-17: Autumn Workings with the Anam Cara Community, near Inverness. We are looking for people to participate in tree seed collection, raspberry cane cutting and tree packing, offering food and accommodation in exchange for labour. Contact T: 01463 711 702 or E: welcome@anamcara.org. For other activities check the web site at www.anamcara.org

18-19: Permaculture at Monimail Gardens with Ed Tylor. A day in which the ideas of permaculture will be explored in relation to the landscape of Monimail. 10am - 4pm. Price to be confirmed. For more information contact Elly on T: 01337 810 420 or E: monimail@phonecoop.coop

25-26: Wild Wood Weekend with Chas Hath. You will learn the basics of turning green wood and rustic furniture making enabling you to design and complete your project e.g. small coffee table or garden seat over the 2-day course. Cost: £100 + materials. All places must be pre-booked. Contact T: 0131 332 2229 or E: info@four-winds.org.uk

November

1: SEAD's 30th Birthday Climate Ceilidh. Rudolf Steiner School, 7pm – 1am. See www.ceilidhcollective.org.uk/

1: Trees for Life Work Week at Achnashellach, upper Glen Carron. Accommodation will be at the Plockton Bunkhouse. Help to deliver TFL's programme of practical work on the ground. Cost: £100 Non-member (£60 Unwaged). Check the web site at www.treesforlife.org.uk/tfl.wv_booking.html for booking instructions and other dates.

1-2: Basket Making with Jane Wilkinson. All materials and tools supplied. 9.30am – 5.30pm, lunch provided. Cost: £65 for the weekend (£15 deposit). Only 8 places available. E: monimail@phonecoop.coop or T: 01337 810 420

5: Forest Research Update Meeting, Aviemore. An opportunity for Forest Research staff (and other researchers) to share information. Cost: £35. Contact Evelyn Hall at Forest Research on 0131 445 6916 or E: evelyn.hall@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. See www.charteredforesters.org/ for more events.

5-6: The Seed Sampler's Course and examination at Gogar Bank Farm, near Edinburgh Airport (date to be confirmed). Organised by Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services (SEARS). Cost: £150 half-day course or £400 2-day course. For further information contact Russell Thomson on E: Russell.Thomson@SASA.gsi.gov.uk or T: 0131 244 8885.

13-14: FEI and Forest School Networking Event 2008, near Dunkeld, Perthshire. Themes will be Woods, Forests and Climate Change (first day) and Arts and Storytelling (second day). Cost: £25 per day, £100 for two days and 2 nights, or £80 for two days and one night. Contact Julie Harrison E: julie.harrison@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or T: 0131 314 6469.

30: Climate Campers planting weekend (until 2 December). There's no slave-driving, you work at your own pace and ability, rest when you like (there's a

kettle on-site), and planting includes tasks requiring a variety of levels of exertion. Cost: £25, includes accommodation, all food, transport, everything except alcohol. Food will be vegan. Book your place on 01422 843222 or see www.treesresponsibility.com/

December

6: Winter Ceilidh for Venture Scotland. Rudolf Steiner School, 7pm – 1am. See www.ceilidhcollective.org.uk/

6: Wood & Stone Carving with Andy McFeters. Covering the fundamentals of carving, including choice of wood/stone, tools, safety procedures, design, finish. Guided carving will take place throughout the day. Four Winds Inspiration Centre, Edinburgh. Cost: £45 + materials. All places must be pre-booked. Contact T: 0131 332 2229 or E: info@four-winds.org.uk

February

7: Reforesting Scotland Imbolc Ceilidh with Hud Yer Wheesht, Rudolf Steiner School, 7pm – 1am. See www.ceilidhcollective.org.uk/

April

21-22: Scottish Aquaculture: A Sustainable Future. Organised by Scottish Aquaculture Research Forum (SARF), in conjunction with RSE and The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Venue: Edinburgh Conference Centre, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. To register interest, visit www.rse.org.uk/events/

Advanced Notice

28 June-2 July, 2010: 18th Commonwealth Forestry Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland. The conference will be hosted by the British Forestry Commission on behalf of the UK. The EICC can accommodate up to 1,500 participants. There are also opportunities for other organisations or companies to hold satellite symposia and meetings. See www.cfc2010.org/ for more information.



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**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



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