

Coalpit Burn Community Woodland Takes Root!

Coalpit Burn Community Woodland is a recently planted native woodland on the slopes above the Coalpit and Maspie Burns. Created for people who love the countryside, wildlife and great views, the restored historic footpath network is well worth exploring.

Volunteers from Falkland and beyond are already helping out by clearing the ground for a story-telling area and other tasks.



The Place

A deep cleft in the Lomond Hills drops from the airy bealach between the twin paps of the Lomonds and into the heart of the meticulously crafted landscape of Falkland Estate. Beginning with a broad descent from conifer-studded open moorland, then passing through places where quarry men and miners once laboured to provide Falkland with whinstone, freestone and coal, the cleft steadily closes in and at the Yad waterfall, plunges into the rugged gorge of Maspie Den.

Wealthy Victorian landowners partly tamed and subtly enhanced this wild place by creating pleasure walks, with bridges and balustrades and rustic seating to encourage rest and contemplation.

Thousands of trees were planted, a carefully chosen mix of native hardwoods and conifers in patterns that enhanced the views up and down the burn, or over the Howe or up to the Lomonds.

Most of this designer woodland was cleared in the middle of the last century and replaced with a commercial forest. Recently though, this has in its turn been felled, and the first steps taken to re-clothe the cleft with a unique patchwork jacket of trees that will meld the character of the nineteenth century landscaped woodland with the rich biodiversity of Fife's wooded dens. Quite frankly, it looks a bit of a mess at the moment but the potential for enhancing the

wildlife of this exciting landscape is enormous.

The Programme

All of the recent forestry work, plus the extensive renewal of paths, bridges and other historic landscape features, has been carried out as part of an historic landscape restoration programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Forestry Commission, Fife Council and many others. This is a non-revenue generating project for public use and enjoyment, with all of the maintenance falling onto the shoulders of a charitable trust, the Falkland Centre for Stewardship.



Volunteering at Coalpit Burn Community Woodland and Maspie Den

The People

The Centre's small team of staff are heavily reliant on volunteers for much of this work, including the Falkland Conservation Group (FCG) who meet regularly to carry out practical outdoor conservation and access management tasks including rhododendron control, tidying up after forestry operations, light path repairs and tree and wild flower planting and aftercare.

FCG aim to provide volunteers with healthy outdoor work in the company of friendly leaders who are knowledgeable about landscape, wildlife and land management issues. We cater for the widest range of ages and abilities and workdays are focussed on individual volunteer's needs, rather than accomplishing a set amount of work.



Task days are usually the second Sunday each month - contact Michael for details.

The Projects

In addition to task days, a Biodiversity Management Plan* has identified a wide range of interesting and useful projects that could be carried out by volunteers, including:



- wildlife monitoring
- managing a wildlife records database
- mapping
- fixed point photography
- drawing or painting
- helping visitors
- leading guided walks
- newsletter and web page editing

Please let us know if you're interested in any of these and we'll fix up some guidance and / or training.

We are also on the lookout for expertise! If you have specialist skills that would help with this programme, we'd love to hear from you. At present we're in need of people with herbicide application certification, knowledge of the National Vegetation Classification and plant, small mammal and invertebrate taxonomic skills.

Thanks for reading this - please contact me if you want to know more.

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