



The National Trust
for Scotland

Balmacara Estate Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 15 – May 2004

Farewell to Sheena!

After more than ten years with the Trust as secretary at Balmacara Estate Office Sheena Finlayson is leaving. Sheena has provided an extremely valuable service over the years and her local knowledge and pride in doing a good job will be sorely missed. Sheena is moving to work for the Highland Council as Homeless Housing Officer for Skye & Lochalsh and we wish her all the best of luck in her new career.

Scotland's Garden Scheme Open Day

Lochalsh Woodland Garden's Open Day this year will be held on May 24th from 1pm-5pm. Admission is £2.00 (children £1.00) with 40% of takings going to the gardens fund of the National Trust for Scotland and 60% to Scotland Garden Scheme Charities. A selection of plants will be for sale.

Balmacara Country Day – 29th May 2004

Readers should note that following the great success with last year's Balmacara Country Day we are running the event again this year in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and the Balmacara community. A full advert for the event is on the reverse side of this newsletter. We hope you will come along and enjoy this family day out – FREE ADMISSION, PARKING and EVENTS!

Integrated Rural Skills Training Programme

The Trust has appointed the Skye & Lochalsh Learning Centre Network as consultants to carry out a feasibility study into the possible establishment of an Integrated Rural Skills Training Project to be based in Lochalsh. The contract will run over the summer and autumn and aims to determine the level of demand for training in a range of rural skills, including dyking, fencing, footpaths, power tools, etc. on an integrated basis. Dependent on the outcome of the study it is possible that the Trust may seek funding partners to take forward the development and delivery of this project over the coming three years, starting in 2005.

Balmacara Woodland Park

Progress on the move towards creation of the Balmacara Woodland Park is progressing slowly with a copy of a model Management Agreement having been circulated around the Lochalsh Community Council, the Balmacara Square Management Committee (BSMC) and other interested parties for comment. It is expected that there will be a meeting shortly to begin discussions on how to develop these plans in more detail. It is anticipated that a three-way partnership between Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), NTS and the local community is the best way forward. The community will be represented by members from the Lochalsh Community Council and the BSMC. Both Kyle and Plockton & District Community Councils have been invited as well. If anyone is interested in this project please contact the Balmacara Estate Office or call Bruce Taylor at the Forestry office at Achmore.

Plant Sales at Lochalsh Woodland Garden

Plants are now available for sale at Lochalsh Woodland Garden from 9am to 4.30pm (4pm Fridays) weekdays. We have a selection of Rhododendrons and Azaleas available at the moment and later in the year we hope to have Hydrangeas and Fuchsias. The plant sales area is located at the Coachhouse, behind Lochalsh House and the plants are very reasonably priced. We only have a limited number of plants this year but if this proves to be successful we will increase our stock and range next year.

Vandalism in Lochalsh Woodland Garden

It is with great disappointment that we have to report that over the past few months there has been a fairly significant amount of vandalism in Lochalsh Woodland Garden. There has been a great deal of damage to path edges, an interpretation panel has been burnt and our admissions machine was tampered with. This is distressing for the garden staff, as resources are already over-stretched and this only increases the workload. The Trust would like to ask visitors to the garden to keep their eyes open and report any behaviour they may think suspicious.

Removal of specimen Beech

Regular visitors to Lochalsh Woodland Garden will have noticed that sadly we had to remove one of our most impressive specimen beech trees this month. A large limb came down in a storm this winter and after careful inspection it was agreed that the tree was no longer safe. As you may well be aware the Trust carry out annual tree inspections in the garden and on the wider estate. For some years now this particular tree has been under closer monitoring due to its age and condition. The timber will not go to waste though, it is to be sold to a local furniture maker.

House Sites for Plockton?

At recent meetings with the Plockton crofters and the Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association the possibility of land being released for housing in and around Plockton was discussed again. The crofters have indicated that they are not against releasing land for housing so long as it is in the best location for such development and safeguards are in place to avoid these houses simply becoming holiday homes like so many others have. We are looking at three possible sites. We will continue to report back in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

Abandoned Caravans & Fly Tipping

Unfortunately the issue of fly tipping continues to be a problem on the estate, particularly recently with two caravans being abandoned in car park areas at Reraig and the Horse Park above Duirinish. BEAR Scotland dealt with the caravan at Reraig recently and we are in the process of arranging to have the Horse Park cleared up. This is a costly business and we may have to consider closing the Horse Park if this problem persists. As always comments and suggestion on how to deal effectively with this difficult issue are very welcome.