

“LIVE IT UP IN GLENLIVET”

50+ ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

27 – 31 AUGUST 2001

REPORT BY ROD LOVIE, REAP



**With thanks to:
Rural Environmental Action Project
The Crown Estate
Grampian 50+ Network**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to all the volunteers for making the week so special.

With special thanks to the volunteer organisers:

Marjory Darcy – Grampian 50+ Network
Allison Michie, Catherine Buchan and Flo McIntosh - the Volunteer Cooks
Andrew Wells and Geoff Charlton – The Crown Estate Rangers
Gillian Bailey – REAP Outreach Worker

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“LIVE IT UP IN GLENLIVET” 2001 – 50+ ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

27 – 31 AUGUST 2001

SUMMARY

After the success of a pilot project in 2000, a residential week of environmental volunteering was organised by REAP, Grampian 50+ Network and the Crown Estate. This years residential project involved volunteers who contributed to the creation of an all-ability path around the Glenlivet Estate Information Centre in Tomintoul. The week culminated in an official opening and an opportunity for local residents to be the first round the new trail.

BACKGROUND

In September 2000 a residential volunteering week was held at Glenlivet Estate. This was a collaboration between REAP, Grampian 50+ Network, The Crown Estate and Aberdeenshire Council. The week was designed to introduce volunteers from the Grampian 50+ Network to a wide range of environmental volunteering activities at locations throughout the Glenlivet Estate. This was in recognition of the fact that there are increasingly more people retiring earlier and looking for interesting and challenging outlets for their skills and talents. It is hoped that the experience will encourage participants to get more involved in environmental volunteering. This will in turn assist ranger services, many of whom are facing reduced staffing levels, to carry out their task of preserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The residential week was based in Tomintoul and the work consisted of waymarking, drystone dyking, building steps and benches at various locations throughout the estate. During the week the group was split into separate groups working on projects in different parts of the estate.

After an evaluation of the event it was agreed that the week had been a great success with all participants, agencies and organisers benefiting from the experience. It was decided to repeat the project in autumn 2001 with another volunteering week based on the estate. A number of possible ways to improve the week were identified during the evaluation process. These included running the week along a more structured programme to avoid wasting time; combining tasks into one large piece of work to avoid travelling to different sites; including a rest afternoon to allow volunteers to explore the area themselves; increasing ranger involvement on complex activities*.

* For further information on “Live it up in Glenlivet” 2000 see previous report prepared by REAP.



The Glenlivet Estate

“LIVE IT UP IN GLENLIVET” 2001

To complement the existing paths in the Glenlivet Estate, The Crown Estate were looking to create an all-ability trail around the Glenlivet Estate Information Centre in Tomintoul. As one of the suggested improvements to the project was to locate the work activities around a central project, this was seen as an exciting project for the volunteers to assist in. The Crown Estate Ranger, Andrew Wells was also keen to host another environmental volunteering week for members of the 50+ walking groups. While the main pathworks would be carried out by contractors, funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and The Crown Estate, there were a number of additional works which were required and would be suitable for volunteers.

This was seen as an excellent compromise as the tasks would be varied but would be in close proximity to each other and the shelter of the tool shed at the rear of the Glenlivet Estate Information Centre. This meant that the volunteers could be split into small groups while allowing the project the flexibility to move volunteers around to different tasks if they felt they did not wish to continue a particular task.

A programme of essential works and additional works were drawn up. In order to complete the path for an official opening at the end of the week it was necessary that all essential works were completed. These included such tasks as completing two bridges and an entranceway. Additional works were pieces of work which it would be useful to see completed. These included such tasks as creating an entrance rockery.

PREPARATORY WORK AND SELECTION PROCESS

The route of the path and a programme of volunteer involvement were agreed between The Crown Estate Ranger Service and REAP. This enabled The Crown Estate to employ contractors to carry out the path works while volunteer materials and invitations to the week were prepared by REAP. With the help of Marjory Darcy, these were sent to all the 50+ walking groups in the North East offering a 4-night stay in the St Michael's Centre in Tomintoul at the subsidised rate of £65 per person. There were 16 places for volunteers on offer and there were initially 18 applications from individuals around the North East. As the project was oversubscribed it was decided to give volunteers who had not been on the residential week the previous year priority.

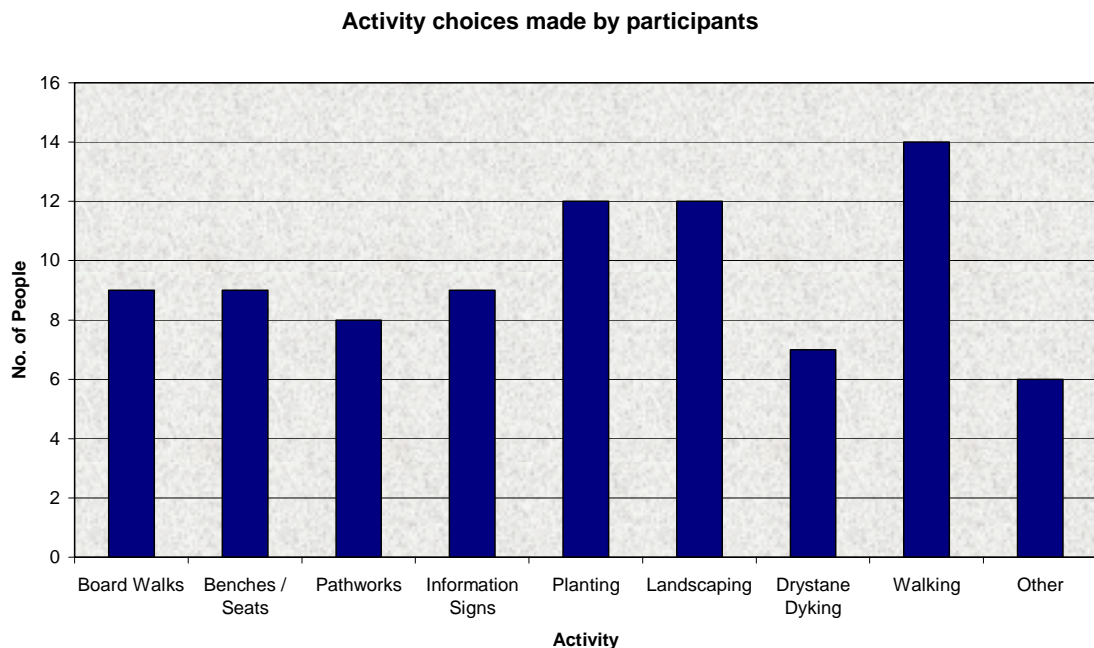
However 2 volunteers had to withdraw at the last minute and unfortunately it was too short notice for the people on the waiting list to take their place. An attempt to allocate these places to volunteers from 50+ walking groups outside the Grampian area was also unsuccessful.

Three volunteer cooks to prepare morning and evening meals and to assist in the preparation of packed lunches for volunteers were identified by Marjory Darcy. Volunteer cooks had to have undertaken the appropriate food hygiene training. All the preparatory information sent out is included in Appendix One.

It was hoped that the contractors would complete all the path works before the workweek. This would allow all the heavy machinery to be removed prior to the landscaping and finishing works to be done by the volunteers. However, due to a prolonged spell of bad weather, the works were unable to be completed in time and so the contractors had to work alongside the volunteers.

ACTIVITY CHOICES

The information sent to applicants included a list of activities that were likely to be on offer and applicants were asked to indicate which ones they thought they might like to try during the week. A graph showing these choices is included below.



As expected, given that all the participants are members of walking groups, walking was the top activity chosen. Other popular choices were planting and landscaping. These choices may reflect a feeling of uncertainty as to what the other activities might involve, as it is more likely that volunteers have some experience of gardening rather than path and dyke building.

Of the more physical activities, drystane dyking is the least popular but still was the choice of half of the participants. Other suggestions of activities included such

skills as basic first aid, map reading and photography. Although none of these could be included as part of the current programme it is possible that such classroom based skills could be included as part of a future programme.

The final division of volunteers among various activities was left until the group was all together in Tomintoul. This was to ensure flexibility could be built into the programme, as the exact tasks required to be undertaken each day could change depending on how the work had progressed the previous day. This enabled the choices for each day to be discussed the previous evening to allow people some flexibility to choose the task they wanted to perform. There were of course limitations in terms of logistical concerns and the necessity to ensure certain tasks were completed.



Volunteers hard at work on the entrance to the trail

STAFFING

There was a total of eight staff involved with the residential week. Involved with the organisation of the project were volunteer Marjory Darcy as well as Rod Lovie and Gillian Bailey from the Rural Environmental Action Project and Andrew Wells and Geoff Charlton from Glenlivet Estate. During the residential week all five organisers were present to co-ordinate the volunteer works. Expert tuition on drystone dyking was provided by Jim McDowal. This high level of staffing meant that as far as possible there was an organiser with each group every day. The organisational staff was complimented by three volunteer cooks – Flora McIntosh, Allison Michie and Catherine Buchan. The use of volunteer cooks were an essential part of the week as it ensured that tired volunteers were provided with healthy and plentiful meals without having to take part in the cooking – only the clearing up and washing the dishes.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Monday 27th August – Day One

The group of fourteen participants arrived at 11.45am at the Glenlivet Estate Information Centre in Tomintoul. While the participants were introduced to the organisers and received an introductory talk and slide show from Andrew Wells the cooks prepared lunch at the St Michael's Centre. After the introductory briefing, participants were shown to their rooms in the St Michael's Centre where

they were given time to unpack before being served lunch. In the afternoon participants were split into small groups to start on various tasks. These included building the first footbridge, removing a section of fencing, starting to edge the parts of the footpath which had been completed. After dinner there was a short recap on the days events and participants were asked to name their high and low points of the day. A list of possible activities for the next day was discussed and participants were asked to put their name down next to the activities they most wanted to try. This exercise was repeated each evening.

Tuesday 28th August – Day Two

Today the group split into four groups. One group finished the first bridge while another started building a bench at the side of the path. One group started planning a rockery at the start to the path while the fourth group was joined by Jim McDowall, a drystone dyker, to start making an entrance gateway to the path. In the afternoon participants were given the opportunity to try another task, but many chose to continue with the job they had been doing in the morning in order to see it finished.



Finishing off one of the bridges

Wednesday 29th August – Day three

After breakfast participants were divided among various tasks including planting the rockery, finishing the dyke, starting the second bridge and building another bench. Volunteers were joined by Mark Steven from Radio Scotland who wanted to include a piece about the work in his radio programme. In the afternoon participants were given the afternoon off in order to allow them the opportunity to explore some of the footpaths around the estate. However, many chose to continue working in order to finish the tasks which they had started in the morning.

Thursday 30th August – Day Four

In the morning three groups of volunteers were driven around the estate to locate and transplant specimen native trees and shrubs. These were planted around the path to create a native arboretum which would allow disabled visitors to come close to native trees. The afternoon allowed participants to plant the trees and

finish off various essential works including the construction of a dipping platform over a small pond.

Friday 31st August – Day Five

In the morning participants were given the freedom to explore more of the paths round the estate. The organisers and a few volunteers stayed and completed any last minute tasks to see the path finished. The volunteers gathered with local residents to see the official opening of the path. It was opened by local Councillor Bob Wilson and Kick Ruck Keene from the Crown Estate Commission. After a brief walk round the path a buffet lunch for everyone was arranged in the Glenlivet Estate Information Centre. Finally, after cleaning the St Michael’s Centre everyone went their separate ways home.



The opening ceremony

ACHIEVEMENTS

During the week the participants performed a number of different activities and tasks. Time prevented all the proposed tasks being attempted. However, all the activities attempted were completed before the deadline of the official opening. This gave a great sense of satisfaction and feeling of achievement to the participants. All the organisers were impressed by the amount of work achieved in a relatively short period of time. A table below shows the activities planned and the progress made during the week.

Planned Activities	Outcome
Design and construct two boardwalks on the all-ability trail	These were completed with a great sense of satisfaction
Construct furniture around the all-ability trail	Two benches were constructed. A picnic bench suitable for wheelchair use was relocated to be alongside the all-ability trail
Finish off and edge the all-ability trail	Path was edged with spare turfs. This was a long and laborious task but was completed and added greatly to the stability and look of the path

Design and construct a rockery at the entrance of the all-ability trail	This was completed in the time allocated
Construct a dyke entrance to the all-ability trail	This was completed
Tidy up area around the all-ability trail	Redundant fencing was removed, overhanging branches were trimmed back and effects of fly-tippers removed
Enlarge and tidy up pond	This was completed
Construct dipping platform at pond suitable for all-ability path	This was carried out by contractors with the assistance of volunteers
Create native arboretum around the all-ability trail	Native specimens were sourced and relocated to the side of the path. Information panels were located next to the trees
Move rain gauge away from all-ability trail	This was completed
Assist in signposting local community path network	Signposts were made and some were installed.
Design and construct bird hide alongside all-ability trail	Not attempted
Construct and install bird and bat boxes	Not attempted

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

VOLUNTEER FINANCES	£	£ Total
Expenditure		
Accommodation	£680.00	
Food and Misc. Expenses	£585.00	
Drystane Dyker	£260.00	
Travel Expenses	£165.00	
Est. Admin Cost	£100.00	
Total Expenditure		£1,790.00
Income		
Participants Contribution @ £65 each	£910.00	
REAP Contribution	£880.00	
Total Income		£1,790.00

Construction Finances	£ Net	£ VAT	£ Total
Costs			
Construction works	£5,870.00	£1,027.25	£6,897.25
(Hardcore - supplied by Estate)	£750.00	£131.25	£881.25
Shrubs/plants for rockery	£129.06	£22.59	£151.65
Opening plaque	£68.00	£11.90	£79.90
Timber for bridges/decking	£780.50	£136.59	£917.09
Sand/cement	£81.80	£14.32	£96.12
Tree labels	£90.00	£15.75	£105.75
Totals	£7,769.36	£1,359.64	£9,129.00
Less Grant contribution from SNH:	£2,935.00		
Net cost to the Estate	£4,834.36		

The volunteering expenses were covered by participants and REAP. These expenses came to £1,790. The cost to REAP in time for two staff members in organising and assisting on the residential week is not included.

EVALUATION

There were three attempts on gathering data to enable an evaluation of the residential week, namely:

1. Short evaluations were carried out each evening where participants were asked to give their positive and negative reactions to the days activities;
2. Questionnaires were sent out to the participants once the residential week was completed and;
3. Questionnaires were sent out to the organisers, volunteer organisers and cooks once the residential week was completed.

The results were as follows:

1. Evening evaluations.

	Highs	Lows
Monday 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food ● Dogs ● Weather ● Company ● Introduction / slideshow ● Job satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tools – unsuitable / not enough / lack of equipment / not enough wheelbarrows ● Digger in way / access problems ● Lack of preparation ● Transport of tools and equipment ● Joining up works ● Midgies / flies ● H & S – no tools talk
Tuesday 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jim – knowledge / hints ● Jock and Allan ● Teamwork ● Food ● Job satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digger noise ● Wheelbarrows heavy ● Midgies
Wednesday 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job satisfaction ● Visiting Christies Elite ● They turned off digger ● Jock and Allan ● Walk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No rough sandpaper
Thursday 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food ● Job satisfaction ● Sun ● Tree ID ● Seeing more of Glenlivet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rain ● Midgies ● Edging ● Cutting posts the wrong length ● P&J ● Cleaning

2. Participants questionnaires

Why did you apply to take part in the project?

- Because I thought I'd enjoy it
- Recommended by last year's participant
- Had always wanted to do a SCV project through Stirling Office but never got round to it! The combination of location, accommodation and catering plus description of activities attracted me. I like Tomintoul having pony trekked from there a no of times.
- A friend wanted someone to go with her
- Something different to do for a break. Had previously spent a day drystane dyking
- Enjoyed a residential project at Ballater a few years ago- wanted to learn to try dyking
- Love of the Scottish countryside/ being out of doors (2)
- Something new to try
- A follow up to last year (2)
- Encouraged by friends who took part last year
- To learn new walks. Learning new practical skills for use in own community projects

Was the week as you had expected?

- Yes (2)
- More or less (2)
- Not quite – expected more time for walks
- Even better!
- Not sure what to expect – except work of some type.
- No- thought we would be working then having a walk/explore Glenlivet/ranger led walk? (4)
- Was harder than I thought it would be, but didn't do me any harm./ very enjoyable (2)
- Didn't expect the work to be so physical and that I would be so tired at the end of the day.

What were the most positive aspects of the week for you?

- Organisation excellent
- Porridge
- Food brilliant (3)
- Company good/ new friendships (4)
- Learning about building a wall with stone/ practical tips/new skills (3)
- Seeing the sheltered housing tenants and others enjoying the final result.
- Satisfaction on our achievements / end product (6)
- Team spirit
- Being told what to do, why and being left to get on with it. Plenty of backup, explanation and encouragement plus teamwork and discussion
- Pleased with the seats and the bridge /Charlie Dimmock creation
- Finishing what we started
- Rising to the challenge
- Everything
- Being able to help and do work for the benefits of others

What were the least attractive aspects of the week for you?

- Too much standing about wondering what to do/time wasting (6)
- Divots for edging (2)
- Weather (2)
- Insufficient tools(4)
- Midgies/ flies (3)
- Cramped quarters/ lack of bedroom space/living out of a suitcase
- Having to empty a tractor load of top soil manually
- Would have liked to help with more aspects of the project eg dyking
- Lack of organisation of the practical work
- No time for walks.

What changes/improvements/ideas would you suggest for future similar projects ?

- Work not on the same site every day
- Wrong time of year for tree collection and planting

- Offer participants choice of work prior to the event so that they could bring some of their own tools
- More walks (3) + Ranger advice on plants, trees wildlife etc.
- More planning and preparation before we arrive (5)
- Less time wasting (2)
- Too many people doing the same job
- Not enough tools (3)
- Rota of tasks – each person attempting something different each day
- More barrows/less carrying
- Occupation of lower bunks only
- Hold project earlier in the year

Would you consider taking part in a similar project in the future ?

- Yes (11)
- Not such hard graft!
- Enjoy the work and the company
- Some reservations as too much time wasted

Would you be interested in a re-union next year?

If so, what would you like the programme to be, for how long etc

- No (1)
- Yes (10)
- Maybe (2) A new area/ new faces/need 5 days to accomplish something
- Not really (1)
- A weekend of walking and sightseeing – bring a friend to view our project
- At St Michael's with walkabout and picnic lunch
- Over a weekend/couple of days – see how flowers and trees had rooted plus time to do some repairs and walk (2)
- Include an evening ceilidh
- Walk followed by a meal
- Meet for lunch – at a central venue
- One working day and one walking day – 2 nights away

Any other comments?

- I enjoyed my 5 days
- Nice to meet people of my own age and enjoy a laugh
- Most enjoyable week
- More than 1 project a year please
- More tools for the workforce!
- Hope the elderly and disabled get pleasure from all our hard work.
- We appreciated the help given by the contractors and the estate staff enabling the project to be finished on time.
- Overall it was good. Nice to meet and hear other people's views. Don't think there were many moans only friendly banter. Cooks did a great job – ample food – never an empty belly! Enjoyed seeing the elderly enjoying themselves – they loved the buffet lunch which was beautifully prepared by Flo, Kathleen and Alison.

3. Organisers questionnaires

Did you find the week to be beneficial to you personally? If so how?

- Yes (6)
- Sense of achievement after the planning, preparation and implementation of the project
- It is very satisfying contributing to making the world a better place
- Gave me the chance to socialise with other people
- Group interaction, people mixing and learning new skills
- New experience of working exclusively with groups of 50+ people
- I made a lot of new friends and realised my capabilities were more than I thought

What other information could have been provided before, during and after the visit that would have improved the experience?

- None (2)
- I'm not sure any more info could / should have been given. I personally feel that allowing flexibility during the project adds to the success
- Some people had to be reassured that it was ok to help themselves to a snack at night. It was their home after all
- I was happy with information received
- H&S, planning of tasks, setting up before participants arrive for each day

What was the high point of the week for you?

- Completing the tasks for launch and having achieved the end of a successful week with participants having gelled and enjoyed the week
- Seeing the result of the volunteers efforts
- The opening of Glenlivet Estate for the disabled
- Finishing the rockery
- The opening ceremony – closure of project and gave target to work towards

What was the low point of the week for you?

- None (3)
- Goodbye not simultaneous
- Backache
- Facing the mound of breakfast dishes to be washed

How, if at all, could the week have been improved?

- None
- Although adequate, accommodation is not ideal for older adults. Perhaps our group work skills should have encouraged residents to vary the programme to include walks – something they all regretted at the end of the week
- More awareness of the fact that volunteers can also be capable
- I found standards very good
- Activities co-ordinated
- You could stop the rain from falling

Do you have any comments on the safety aspects of the week? If so what?

- No
- Perhaps an introductory short session on relevant H&S i.e. using / carrying tools
- Safety very good in kitchen
- Lack of instructions on safety
- On Friday one volunteer left to go walking without informing organisers – could have had safety implications
- I was sleeping on a top bunk which had no safety rail and no ladder. I didn't sleep very well being frightened I'd roll out. Also it was a pantomime getting out

Do you have any ideas or suggestions on how the week could be developed in the future?

- No (4)
- Varied programme perhaps – the best of last year and this year – working on different projects.
- Needs wider 50+ involvement – not just walking groups – maybe presentations to 50+ groups to encourage uptake

Do you have any general comments regarding the week?

- I believe the week is a good example of environmental volunteering with older adults and we really need to tell the world.
- Keep up the good work
- I thought it was a very good week – got on well with others in the kitchen 'cooking'
- The project is on-going development and will continue to evolve
- A great success
- It was a lovely week



The first chance to go round the all-ability trail

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- After Live it up in Glenlivet 2000 it was recommended that the introductory material should be more specific about the physical nature of the work to be undertaken. This was done but some volunteers did still comment on how demanding the work was. To ensure an awareness of this issue perhaps in future projects the application forms could request participants to sign a declaration on their fitness – it is not a holiday
- To create a wider involvement in the project and encourage others to apply the details could be sent out to 50+ groups other than walking clubs. Although it had been planned to have places for 16 volunteers, during the week it was agreed that 14 was a better number as the group gelled together easier.
- Concerns were expressed that not enough tools were available. This could have been considered when the itinerary was drawn up. However it would be impractical to have a selection of tools for each volunteer. Some waiting and sharing is inevitable. This point could have been made to the group in an introductory talk. A health and safety tools talk was given at the start of the week but some volunteers appear to have forgotten about it. This could be integrated into the introductory talk.
- Many participants found it unacceptable to be on the top bunk of a bunk bed. Alternatives may have to be considered in the future.
- One common thread of comments from both projects attempted so far is the feeling that time is wasted setting up the work parties and allocating tasks. Although it was thought that having all the work in a central location may alleviate this, it does not appear to have had this effect. The need for flexibility in any outdoor work programme is essential and this did not appear to be appreciated. How this issue can be resolved needs to be looked into.

- The opportunity to go walking round the footpaths in the estate was built into the 2001 programme. This was not taken up by everybody – a point which some later regretted. In future projects it may be better to stop all work for an afternoon and include a guided walk. This will force participants to have a relaxing break during the week.
- One participant expressed an interest in being given an opportunity to learn skills like map reading or first aid. Perhaps an educational element could be built into a similar project in the future. If this were possible it would have to be done in a manner not to detract from the more physical aspect of the week.
- The fact that the week ended with a deadline for the official opening of the path gave a real sense of urgency during the week and a feeling of achievement and closure to the week. Projects in the future would be enhanced if they were to include a similar tangible goal to work towards and an event to formally close the project.
- In order to gauge the effect the week has had on participants it would be interesting to ascertain how many participants have become involved in other environmental or volunteering projects since completing the residential week. Contacting participants after a reasonable time with a questionnaire or arranging a reunion could do this.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Preparatory Information

Appendix 2 – Press Release and Cuttings


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