

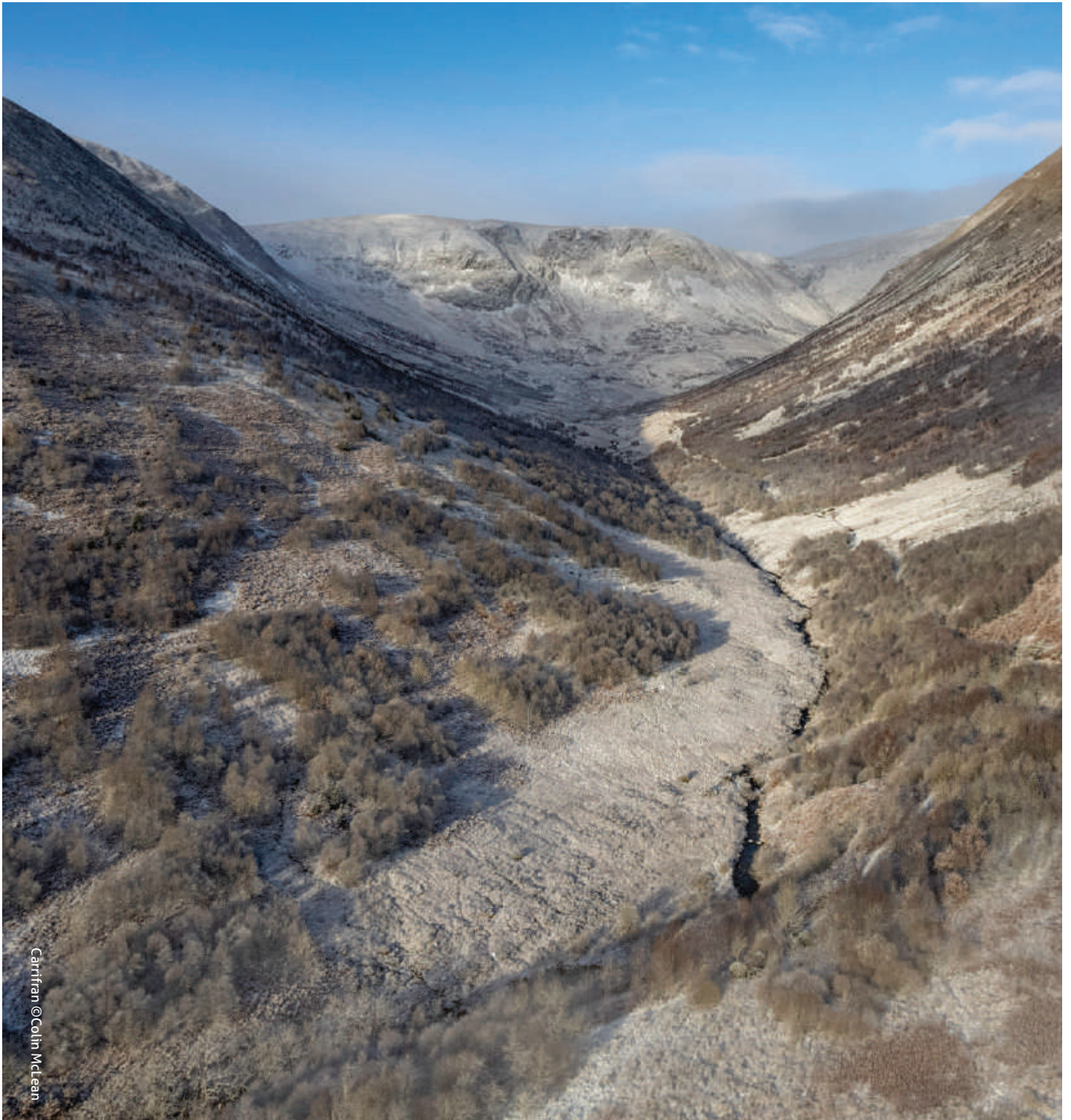
Greenshed

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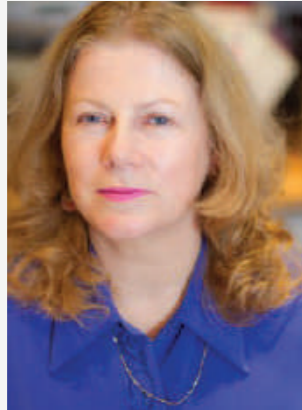
11 Plant a tree
with us



Note from the Chair

By Stephanie Young

In this Greenshed we are looking more closely at our recent land purchase at Ericstane, and at the land included in Purvishaugh legacy left to us by Miss Kathleen Brownlee. But first it is with deep sadness that I must report the sudden passing of our dear friend, Trustee and long term supporter, John Thomas. You will read more about his significant contribution to Borders Forest Trust below.



As I write this, I am pleased to report that we held a successful AGM on the 16th November. As you may recall we have moved our year end by 6 months to avoid burdening our team with end of year accounts during peak planting season. This a part of a series of actions, that will modernise our technology and systems to create an efficient and resilient organisation.

In the coming year we will return to the ongoing challenge of fundraising. We quickly raised just under £700,000 to buy Ericstane and we are now focused on raising the £300,000 we need for habitat restoration. Please spread the word far and wide. Thank you to all those have donated so far.

Finally may I wish you a happy festive season and a guid new year when it comes.

Stephanie Young

Volunteering at BFT

There are numerous options for volunteers at Borders Forest Trust.

BORDERS WOODLAND VOLUNTEERS

BFT Woodland Volunteer Group:

When we meet:
Tuesdays

Where we meet:
At different small woodland sites around the Borders.

What we do:
Our practical activities include caring for orchard trees, removing tree tubes, cutting back branches to open up existing woods, removing weeds and invasive species, helping establish meadow sites... and of course planting trees!

If you are interested in signing up or want more info on our Tuesday Woodland Volunteering Group, email Becky at: becky@bordersforesttrust.org

WILD HEART VOLUNTEERING

We run regular weekly and monthly volunteering days in the Wild Heart, along with special one-off events such as weekend high camps. We also have a boundary wardens group.

Weekday Volunteering
Wednesdays at Corehead
Thursdays at Talla & Gameshope

Weekend Volunteering
First Sunday of each month at Talla & Gameshope,
Second Sunday of each month at Corehead

To register as a volunteer or get in touch about volunteering opportunities please contact Adrian at: volunteer@bordersforesttrust.org

(Its also worth noting that if you register as a volunteer, you get first dibs on events with limited spacing, as you are emailed before they are publicised.)

Below: Ramblers tree planting at The Devil's Beef Tub.



HANNAH COCKETT Woodland Creation Adviser

This is Hannah's first role in the environmental sector, having studied at Liverpool John Moores and Bangor University. After visiting the Borders Forest Trust site, Carrifran, on a university field trip, she knew she would love to work for Borders Forest Trust. After moving from North Wales to Scotland she joined the BFT team in 2022.

Hannah works with private landowners to help them access suitable woodland creation grants, design new native woodlands, and protect our valuable ancient woodlands.

Some things she likes doing in her free time include foraging, hiking & dog walking, and reading books related to mushrooms, plants and trees. Her favourite tree is an Oak, and the older the better!



CATRIONA PATIENCE Wild Heart Project Officer

Catriona joined BFT in 2023 and has a background in heritage, wildlife, tourism, and conservation. She has worked for The Woodland Trust, Historic Environment Scotland and recently for the National Trust for Scotland as a ranger on the Isle of Canna.

Catriona's role at BFT is funded through Destination Tweed and she co-ordinates several projects focusing on rural skills, wildlife monitoring, ancient trees, woodland history and school visits. She will also work on access, inclusion, and interpretation in the Wild Heart sites.

In her free time Catriona enjoys spotting and painting birds, playing tunes and time out on long walks.



CAMERON NEWELL Community and Education Trainee and Communications Officer

Cameron joined BFT in June 2023 and works part time doing comms and assisting Anna Craigen in community and education projects throughout the borders.

Before BFT, Cameron worked at Camas outdoors centre on the Isle of Mull where he developed a passion for community based outdoor work with refugees, and young people.

When he isn't working for BFT, he works as a freelance musician and plays traditional folk music on the fiddle. His favourite tree is the Scots Pine, specifically some of the ancient gnarly Scots Pines found deep in Glen Feshie.

New recruits to Borders Forest Trust

It has been a bumper year for recruiting new staff to Borders Forest Trust, with seven fantastic additions to the team since our last Greenshed! Here is a little bit about each one of them, and what they will be bringing to the team.



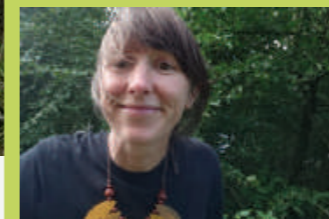
CHRIS BRANNIGAN Wild Heart Site Manager

In his role as Wild Heart Site Manager, Chris will be working with the Wild Heart team, volunteers, and external contractors to deliver on projects across the three Wild Heart sites.

Chris has a background working in wildlife management, native woodland restoration and conservation grazing on Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve and other conservation projects across Scotland.

In his spare time Chris enjoys reading, gardening and spending time close to nature!

His favourite tree is an Alder.



BECKY CHENERY Community and Education Officer

Becky has joined the growing community and education team this month, taking a side-step from horticulture into woodlands! Before BFT, her work has involved supporting people to engage in the practical, social and therapeutic aspects of growing. She has served a number of projects that promote recovery and wellbeing and advocates getting outdoors and getting your hands dirty. She draws on her enthusiasm for experiential learning and working alongside people of all ages and abilities in the outdoors.

In her free time she loves walks with her dog Ludo, and going for outdoor dips and swims.



ELLIE GEEN Finance Manager (maternity cover for Rebecca)

Ellie has joined the team as Finance Manager to cover Rebecca Jones' Maternity from Autumn 2023 to Autumn 2024. Ellie's background is in corporate financial management in a forestry service industry; and she is eager to learn more about charity accounting and governance. She has a wide range of experience ranging from office management, to financial reporting, to community education and arboriculture. Ellie hopes that all these touch points will put her in good stead for this multifaceted role in the office.

Outside of work Ellie enjoys gardening, walks in the forest, wild swimming, and baking cakes! She is also a Pin Badge volunteer with the RSPB.



McNABB LAURIE

Our newest staff member McNabb Laurie, recently joined to lead the new 'Dumfries & Galloway Woodlands' initiative – bringing the best of Borders Forest Trust into the wild west! McNabb is running the South of Scotland Tree Planting Grant Scheme across the D&G region, and has already been involved in some really exciting project ideas that aim to respond to the Biodiversity and Climate Crises. Before this role, McNabb did a degree in Environmental Management and then built up some varied experience in the corporate sector across the UK before moving back home to D&G.

In his free time he likes walking up hills, growing things in his garden, and obsessing over his two bee hives...although he is still not clear whether the bees value his input.

ERICSTANE

Expanding The Wild Heart

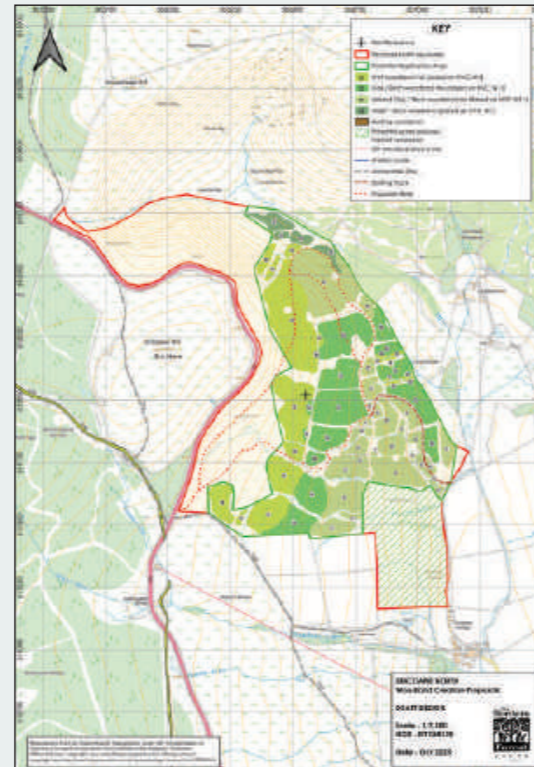
Borders Forest Trust have managed Corehead and the Devil's Beef Tub since 2009, and most people who have visited that site in person will have driven there on the road from Moffat, following the Annan Water and through the ford in the river at Ericstane Farm. So we have been very familiar with the grazing land of Ericstane for years now.

During the late Summer of 2022 Borders Forest Trust discovered that the family trust which owned Ericstane Farm had put it onto the open market for sale with a price tag of £1.65 million for all 565 acres. BFT's Trustees immediately started to investigate the possibility of purchasing it and expanding our Wild Heart area by adding to the existing land at Corehead. The lands at Ericstane even included the south-western part of the Devil's Beef Tub, and acquiring them would allow BFT to unite the Beef Tub under a single management plan and remove some fences which currently ran right into that important historic landscape feature.

Ericstane also includes, Dairy Wood, an ancient wood pasture site filled with charismatic veteran trees with rounded crowns, low heavy branching, fat tapered trunks, lots of hollows and larger than normal quantities of deadwood. You can read more about it in the article by Wild Heart Project Officer Catriona Patience on the next page.

We weren't the only ones interested in Ericstane though, and we quickly learned that a lot of commercial forestry companies were interested in the site, since the Southern half of Ericstane boasted fertile soils and strong vehicle access. This contrasted with the Northern half which was much steeper and rockier, and that was the part which adjoined Corehead and the Devil's Beef Tub.

It didn't take long for BFT's Trustees to realise that the most practical solution was for BFT to try to buy the Ericstane North half of the site and leave the lands at Ericstane South to be bought by one of the productive timber firms who were so interested in the site. Through a personal contact of one of our Trustees we were able to reach out to Gresham House plc, who we suspected were the most likely purchaser of the site and we were very quickly able to agree the mutually beneficial plan of each organisation purchasing one half of the site each.



Above: Woodland Creation Proposal;
Below: Winter cover at Ericstane.

THE ONE MILLION POUND APPEAL

Once the plan to purchase was agreed the fundraising had to start and in March 2023, Borders Forest Trust launched our biggest ever public appeal. £1,000,000, to buy, plant, and manage all 284 acres of Ericstane North, a brand new site right next-door to our existing Corehead location.

The response was better than we could have ever hoped for:

Anonymous Donors
24.0% £240,000

One incredibly generous individual donated a staggering £200,000 to our appeal. This long-term supporter has been similarly helpful to previous appeals, and without their significant contribution right at the start of the appeal BFT would not have been able to secure Ericstane in the way that we did. We

remain hugely indebted to this individual. Two other individuals have contributed £10,000 and £30,000 respectively. To have friends and supporters like this is more valuable than BFT could ever express. We hope that they fully understand our sincere gratitude for their support.

Individuals Donors
4.9% £49,000

Hundreds of members and supporters have given already, including 48 contributions from people who we didn't previously know as members or supporters donating nearly £8,000 between them. 66 new Gift Aid sign ups were acquired, which allows those donations to go even further as HMRC will add extra value to every donation. Thanks to a significant number of donations of around £500, some even as high as £5,000 the average donation from an individual stands at £720, but the sheer number of people giving £20 or £50 is truly humbling.

Baillie Gifford
4.9% £50,000

£50,000 was granted to BFT towards the acquisition of Ericstane by the Edinburgh-based investment management firm's philanthropy team as part of a package of sponsorship which also help funds BFT's education team, volunteering and vehicles. The staff from Baillie Gifford have also been out to volunteer on our sites too helping with tree planting and plastic removal. Their support has been invaluable to helping BFT be as successful as it has been.

Leadburn Community Woodland 0.3% £3,000

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland, near West Linton, raise money every Christmas from sales of Christmas trees from their woodland. Earlier this year they decided to donate the proceeds from 2022's sales to our Ericstane appeal. That boosted our total by £3,000.



Above: Heath bedstraw on South Ericstane. Female reed bunting at Dairy Wood.

NatureScot
33.8% £338,000

BFT were lucky enough to receive a grant of £337,500 from NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage – SNH) for the acquisition of the site. The money comes as part of the Scottish Government's Nature Recovery Fund, and since BFT's objective with Ericstane is to restore the landscape and help natural habitats to recover largely through the planting of new native woodland, the whole project fits well with the aims of the fund. We are very proud that BFT's reputation for carrying out quality work of this kind meant that the Scottish Government were so supportive of us doing more of it here.

Current fundraising total £679,914

Our appeal totaliser currently stands at £679,914 which means we are about 70% of the way towards our £1 million target after just 8 months of fundraising, but we don't want to give up yet. We have secured enough to make the purchase, and we are already starting the planning of the new planting, but we'll still need that extra fundraising to cover the costs of the high quality native woodland creation which we want to do, and then the years of management and care which we'll need to give the land and the new woodland.

STILL TO BE RAISED
32.0% £320,000

If you'd like to support our work at Ericstane and make a donation please visit our website :

www.bordersforesttrust.org/ericstane

Remember that UK taxpayers can claim gift aid against their donations too which makes them even more valuable to Borders Forest Trust.

Just a small donation makes a huge difference and takes us closer to being able to succeed in our habitat and species restoration.

It would be great if you could share our fundraiser and spread the word. The more people who know about it the better. Feel free to give us a call 01835 830750 or contact enquiries@bordersforesttrust.org if you'd like to discuss your donation.

If you would like to donate by cheque then please make it payable to "Borders Forest Trust" and post it to Borders Forest Trust, Monteviot Nurseries, Ancrum, Jedburgh, TD8 6TU.

We thank you in advance for your support and look forward to replicating the successes of sites like Carrifran and Corehead at Ericstane.

REVIVING THE WILD HEART: DAIRY WOOD



FOLLOW FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about Coralie Mills' work on dendrochronology across Scotland see her website:

www.dendrochronicle.co.uk/

Regular updates on the following channels:

www.facebook.com/Dendrochronicle

www.twitter.com/Dendrochronicle

www.instagram.com/dendrochronicle

www.mastodon.scot/@Dendrochronicle

Far left: Gathering around an ancient oak tree for lunch.
Left & below: Measuring tree girth.

Take your time on the track from Ericstane farm to the BFT car park at Corehead and you will see an ancient semi-natural wood pasture, known locally as Dairy Wood, along the brae to your left. This wood pasture includes ancient and veteran alder, birch, hawthorn, oak and ash and is still grazed by cattle belonging to local farmer Jane Jackson, who previously used the woodland for lambing ewes.

This type of land management creates an open woodland, allowing trees which would otherwise be outcompeted to reach mature ages and large girths. With this maturity we see the trees transform, adapt and retrench as they react to environmental stresses which force them to reorganise, recreating structure. This creates a dynamic, characterful habitat with a long history and associated biodiversity. The open spaces and light levels also allow for a wide range of flora, including ancient woodland indicator plants, and BFT are working with ecologists to survey this habitat, establishing a baseline picture for future management. In Summer 2023 Wild Heart Project Officer Catriona

Patience ran a series of Ancient Tree Survey days at Ericstane looking at Dairy Wood and Auldhousehill Wood. BFT volunteers recorded an amazing 187 trees across three volunteering days, with 124 subsequently added to the Ancient Tree Inventory. These surveys revealed some remarkable finds including ancient alders supporting huge cuckoo rowan trees, as well as a diverse array of wildlife from badgers to goldeneye and barn owls. With a girth of over 10m a sprawling coppiced oak is the woodland's largest tree. Of the trees surveyed, 26% were alder, 21% were hawthorn, birch accounted for 17% and hazel for 12%. The records are now being verified by Keith Knight and Clair MacFarlan from the Woodland Trust.

This is part of an exciting wider woodland history project BFT is working on with dendrochronologist Coralie Mills who will be exploring the history of Dairy Wood and land use at Ericstane in a wider context, weaving together strands of knowledge from dendrochronology, maps and placenames, ecological and archaeological surveys

and other historical sources. The possible Gaelic origins of the placenames 'Dairy Wood' and 'Ericstane' provide tantalising glimpses into the past and this project will give us a holistic understanding of the land at Ericstane and Corehead and the people who lived and worked in it.

Meanwhile, thanks to funding from the Woodland Trust, our Native Woodland Creation Advisor Hannah Cockett has arranged a trial of cactus guards to protect 20 regenerating saplings from grazing throughout Dairy Wood, ensuring the lifecycle of this habitat can continue. Our Wild Heart Team will be working to create a robust management plan to enhance and expand this habitat as part of the wider landscape scale recovery across the Wild Heart of southern Scotland.

Our work at Dairy Wood is part of BFT's component of Destination Tweed, which is a multi-partner source-to-sea river revitalisation project led by Tweed Forum, and part-funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



Inspecting ancient alder for epiphytes.



Measuring the girth of an old alder.



The heart of Dairy Wood.



Reviving the Wild Heart

Wetland restoration at Corehead

Reviving the Wild Heart is a Borders Forest Trust project under Destination Tweed; a multi-partner source-to-sea river revitalisation project led by Tweed Forum, and part-funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Wetlands are dynamic, abundant yet rare habitats, having suffered a loss of 75% over the last 300 years in the UK. Initial work in 2012 started the process of wetland restoration at Corehead with the creation of five wildlife scrapes. Now funding from Destination Tweed has enabled the completion of this exciting habitat restoration work. Following ecological assessments by Derek Robeson (Tweed Forum) and Claire Pumfrey and Charlotte Rankin (Buglife), previous BFT Wild Heart Site Manager Sam Guthrie worked with John Home of Falhills Fencing to create a further 21 wildlife scrapes as well as a seasonal pond.



Corehead Site and Engagement Officer Adrian Kershaw and the wonderful Wednesday volunteers planted 900 willow whips cut from Moffat Community Nature Reserve at Gallow Hill around the scrape edges, and scattered locally sourced pond edge seed mix from Scotia Seeds supplied by Buglife. BFT Project Officer Catriona Patience is now working with the local community group Birdbox to further improve the habitat by creating floating islands, which will provide safe habitat for nesting birds.



Meanwhile, working with Neil Stratton from the local British Trust for Ornithology recording group Catriona has registered the wetland for monthly WeBS (Wetland Bird Surveys) to track changes in the habitat. Mallards arrived within days, and a heron and oystercatchers have also been spotted. The first two WeBS also recorded a pair of curlew.

Estimates suggest curlew numbers, which are in freefall across the UK, have dropped by 80% in Dumfries and Galloway since the 1990s. Our largest wader, curlews are relatively long lived, with an average lifespan of 11 years. With high survival and low breeding output curlew populations can remain stable for years despite changes in land use and habitat, before a sudden and dramatic fall in numbers, which we are now witnessing. Against this backdrop the distinctive melancholy call of these charismatic birds is a welcome sound at Corehead where the restored wetland is coming back to life.

REFERENCES

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Laurie, P 2021 'The Curlews of Galloway', *The Paris Review*. www.theparisreview.org/blog/2021/09/30/the-curlews-of-galloway

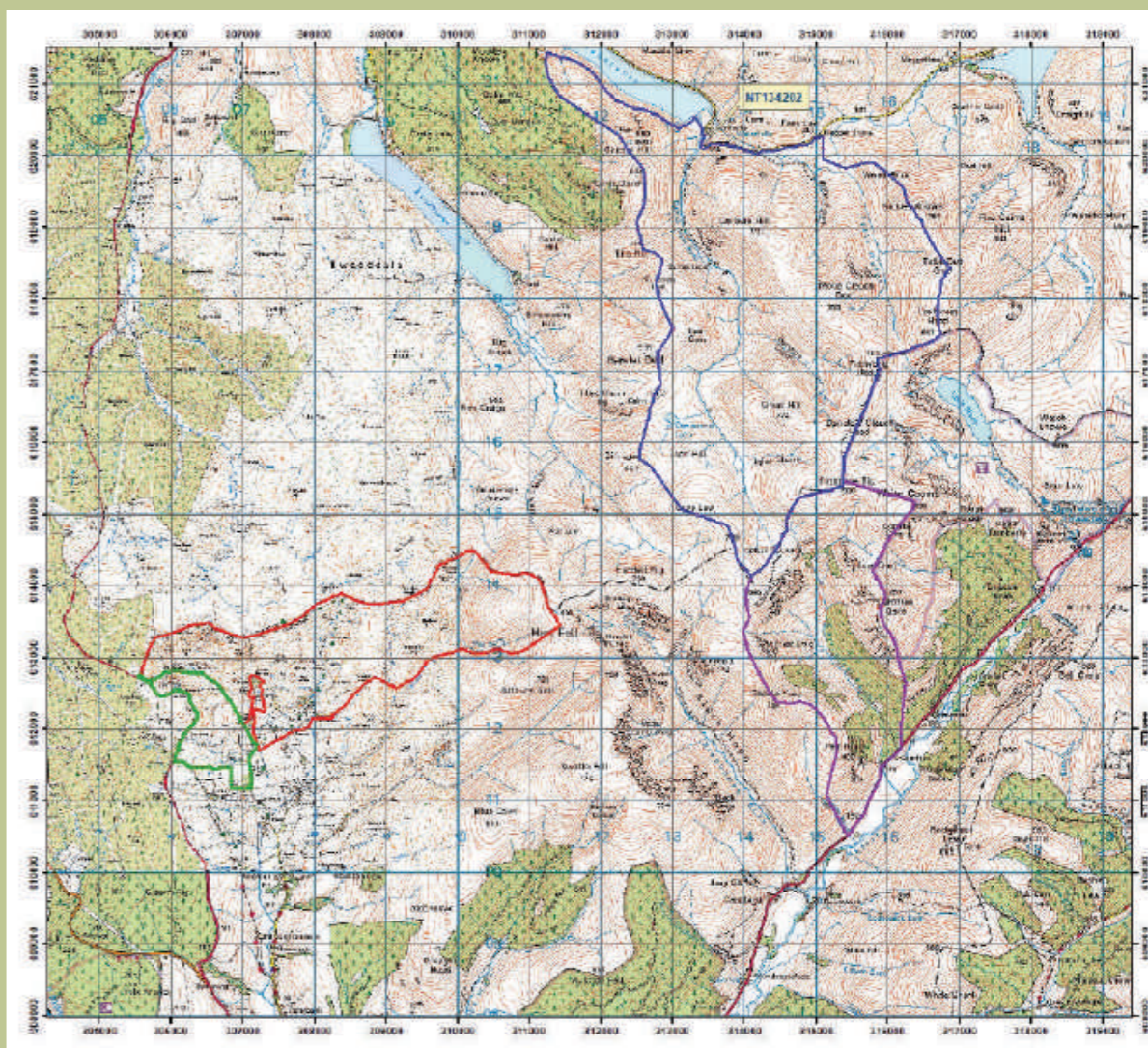
Weston, P 2023 'Half of wetlands lost in past 300 years researchers calculate' *The Guardian* www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/feb/08/world-wetlands-europe-lost-study-aoe



Reviving the Wild Heart of Southern Scotland



With the addition of Ericstane, Borders Forest Trust now manage four sites across the Southern Uplands covering over 8000 acres (3250 hectares) of land. At each the main objective is to enable an ecological restoration of the landscape, largely through the planting of native woodland, but also by improving the health of other habitats such as open grasslands and peatlands.



Ericstane & Dairy Wood (115 hectares)

Corehead & The Devil's Beef tub (640 hectares)

Talla & Gameshope (1832 hectares)

Carrifran Wildwood (660 hectares)

South of Scotland Tree Planting Grant

Do you want to plant trees on your land to help increase tree cover in the South of Scotland, or know someone who might?

In the 2022/2023 planting season we were able to help fund the planting of over 14,000 trees in the South of Scotland and this year we are looking to plant even more!

The South of Scotland Tree Planting Grant is available to both individuals and organisations who are looking to plant trees within an area of (normally) 0.25ha or less. We can help you access up to £1000 towards the material cost of tree planting, including trees, tree shelters, and stakes. This can be anything from individual Landscape trees, Hedgerow trees, Field margin trees, Parkland trees, Tree lines, small copses and Orchards.

This year we are especially keen to increase the amount of planting in riparian areas. Because of rising temperatures and a lack of shade along waterways, our rivers are becoming too warm to the detriment of aquatic inhabitants. Trees grown in riparian zones help to provide dappled shade to waterways, helping to cool the water and maintaining those temperature ideals. In addition to this, riparian trees can help intercept rainfall, which reduces the rate at which waters rise; their root systems can increase water infiltration, which also helps contain flood events; and of course, they provide additional habitat for our wildlife.

Please get in touch with Hannah, our native woodland creation advisor at hannah@bordersforesttrust.org to get more information on the SSTPG and other grants available to facilitate tree planting.



A welcome gift:

Purvishaugh & Haughhead



A well-known local figure from Earlston has left BFT our biggest ever bequest.

Several years ago Borders Forest Trust were informed by a very keen supporter, Miss Kay Brownlie of Earlston, that she intended to leave some land to the Trust in her will. Over the Summer of 2022 her solicitors contacted the Trust to explain that Miss Brownlie had passed away and it was only then that the true extent of her legacy became clear.

The legacy covers land over two separate sites. Purvishaugh, is on the road West out of Earlston towards Mellerstain, and includes 470 acres of farm land, 3 cottages, and a collection of steading buildings. Haughhead is around the grounds of Miss Brownlie's former home at Blinkbonny to the North East of Earlston, between the Leader Water and the A68 and includes a beautiful wildflower meadow and 3 cottages.

All the cottages have sitting tenants who we have now met with and introduced BFT as their new landlords. Part of Miss Brownlie's legacy was in part to provide BFT with a regular income from the rental of these homes, so there should be no change at all to the situation for these tenants as part of the move. BFT has even retained Miss Brownlie's factors, Davidson & Robertson to continue to manage the properties.

The farming land at Purvishaugh and the associated farm cottage have been tenanted since 1982 by a local farming family, the Morisons, who have always worked well with Miss Brownlie and supported her desire to keep some areas of the farmed land aside for nature.

Water feature

Part of the land at Purvishaugh has been reserved for wild flowers, ornamental trees, sculpture, and a very striking water feature planned by Miss Brownlie. BFT hope to be able to retain this feature and develop it further as a place where nature can be enjoyed by all.

Standing Stone

Within one of the North fields of Purvishaugh is an ancient standing stone – which lends its name to the nearby chicken farm Standing Stone Farm. It has a very distinctive shape with a small shelf or "seat" feature. Miss Brownlie was keen that it be signposted from the road as a significant local landmark. There's also apparently a short local rhyme which makes mention of it "When Stannin'-Stane hears the cock crow, It wheels about, and faces Gordon Law." Although we haven't been up at dawn yet to see if it really does move.

Haughhead Wood and Blinkbonny Wildflower Meadow

Over at Haughhead, BFT will soon take over the management of the beautiful mixed woodland and a spectacular flower meadow. Many of you will have heard the shocking statistic that the UK has lost 97% of its species-rich wildflower meadows to development and the intensification of agriculture, well the Blinkbonny Wildflower Meadow is exactly the type of meadow that they are talking about, so it's a very valuable habitat which BFT hope to be able to look after just as well as Miss Brownlie did.

Leave a lasting legacy with BFT

We all want to leave future generations something positive, and by donating to Borders Forest Trust you are investing in healthy, diverse habitats and landscapes which should last and benefit the environment for centuries to come.

Legacies, such as Miss Brownlie's, or many of the other gifts and donations we receive, are an important source of income for Borders Forest Trust. They have helped us to purchase land, plant new native woodlands and protect important natural habitats. Leaving a legacy, no matter what size, makes a lasting impact. You are adding value to the Trust and making a real difference to the work we do, bringing us closer to realising our vision: restoring, protecting and shaping the landscape for the benefit of all.

Remembering Borders Forest Trust in your will could help:

- ✿ securing the long-term future of the trees we have already planted;
- ✿ purchasing additional land for tree planting & habitat restoration;
- ✿ planting more trees;
- ✿ educating and inspiring young people about the natural world; and
- ✿ providing advice and guidance on tree planting to landowners.

To set up a legacy BFT strongly advise you to take legal advice from a professional lawyer on your will. There is no requirement to notify Borders Forest Trust of your intention to leave anything, however, we would like the opportunity to thank you and discuss which aspects of our work particularly interest you.

Please contact **Charles Dundas** for more information, on **01835 830750** or at **director@bordersforesttrust.org**

Kathleen Elizabeth Helen Brownlie MBE (1937-2022)

Since the 19th Century the Brownlie family have run sawmills around Earlston, and BSW Timber Ltd are today the largest sawmilling company in the whole UK.

Kay Bownlie was born the third child of Alec and Margaret Brownlie from Blinkbonny House out the outskirts of Earlston. She went to school at St Margaret's in Edinburgh, then choose to train as a dietician, but unfortunately her mother became extremely unwell and Kay stayed at home to care for and nurse her mother until her death in 1968.

Kay was devoted to the local community of Earlston. She was an active member of Earlston Parish church, and the local Horticultural Society. She was a member of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service which took her all over the Borders, supporting those in need at Peel Hospital, the Borders General Hospital, and at Drygrange Care Home.

A devoted animal lover, for many years she took care of countless rescue dogs, and was awarded an MBE for her service to The Guide Dogs Association.

Kay was a highly respected and much-loved member of the community. Everyone who knew her is filled with affectionate stories about her. Throughout all her life, she gave totally of herself whilst insisting that nothing should be given in return. Her support for nature and the countryside is highlighted in her generosity to Borders Forest Trust and our stewardship of the lands at Purvishaugh and Earlston will stand as a long-lasting tribute to her love of the area, and the land itself.

With thanks to Kay's brother John Brownlie for sharing John Simpson's eulogy from Kay's Memorial Service in 2022.



John Thomas with Philip Ashmole in a tree nursery

Remembering John Thomas (1948-2023)

It is with great sadness that we report the sudden, but peaceful, death of John.

John was a long-standing member and volunteer with Borders Forest Trust and an enthusiastic Trustee from 2014 to 2020, and then again from 2022 until his death.

His professional background was as a Manager in the NHS, but his free time was dedicated to voluntary organisations. John was a Director of the Southern Uplands Partnership 2012-2018; he was also a trustee of the John Muir Trust between 2009 and 2015; and was involved in bringing JMT into partnership with BFT during the first attempt to acquire Talla & Gameshope, a site with which he was very involved.

Always hugely active within BFT. He oversaw BFT's boundary wardens - the team who monitor, and repair the fences at Carrifran and Talla & Gameshope. He was also our most active seed collector, especially when gathering seed from high and remote sites.

He would also lead tours, and he was a hugely influential member of the Wildwood Steering Group. John brought a good grasp of policy and sound judgement to his role as a Trustee, and he'll be greatly missed by all the staff, members, volunteers and Trustees of BFT.

Dr Philip Ashmole of BFT remembers how John became involved: *"I will remember that when we heard that John Thomas (a Trustee of the John Muir Trust, with which we were closely associated) was living with his wife Sandra in St Boswells. We realised that he could be an asset to the Carrifran Wildwood project. We soon invited him to join our Steering Group, and he later became a Trustee of Borders Forest Trust. The rest is history!"*

HEALING OF THE TREES

Snow falls incessantly, blown by the bitter wind, Across slabs of hillside. A figure moves along the high fence, barrier to the invading deer, weighed down with snow. He gives a quick shake, lumps cascade to the bleached earth. Meticulously he checks each gaping hole. Blue with cold, fingers carefully twist wire, mending the offensive gap. Who is this? He cares naught for the darkening sky, diminishing light – but the young trees, alder, ash, willow, beech and hawthorn. Trees bringing new life, clothing the hillside: for the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the earth. Praise the work of the man, who abjures winter's rage for the sake of the young trees, branches reaching to the light.



With thanks to John's sister Sandra Thomas for sharing this poem at John's Memorial Service in 2023.

Rural Skills Training For BFT Volunteers

Borders Forest Trust Project Officer Catriona Patience created an exciting programme of rural skills training opportunities for volunteers, focusing on traditional land management and woodworking techniques.

The series of workshops kicked off in July with a basket making day led by professional weaver Penelope Wilson, who skilfully guided BFT volunteers through the wonderful world of willow and all its applications. Participants then went on to make some beautiful rustic frame baskets; creating the frame, learning to make God's eye knots, and finally weaving out.

In collaboration with Buglife BFT ran two days of scything at the Corehead hay meadow where instructor John Grundy introduced BFT volunteers to the anatomy of the scythe and showed them how to set it up. He demonstrated various mowing techniques, as well as focusing on the maintenance required in honing the blade with a whetstone and peening it using a jig. Volunteers then got into the swing of it, mowing a section of the hay meadow.

Following this BFT ran a drystone dyking day at Corehead with professional drystone dyking instructor Neil Moffat, under whose expert instruction eight volunteers repaired a 5m section of dyke running along a cleared shelter belt on one of the hottest days of the year! A phenomenal effort from all involved.

During the autumn Graeme Walker, an accredited contractor with The National Hedgelaying Society, guided BFT volunteers through the techniques, tools, and history of hedge laying. Volunteers then set about laying the first 15m of the Corehead orchard hedge. Laying the hedge using traditional methods helps to create a dense, diverse habitat for wildlife.

Last in the series of workshops this year, green woodworker Hamish Darrah ran a fantastic training day for volunteers at the Corehead cabin. He guided participants through the traditional woodworking tools and techniques involved in green woodworking. Participants learned a range of skills, using froes, axes, shave horses and carving knives to create a variety of beautiful wooden spoons.

Rural skills training for volunteers is delivered through BFT's programme Reviving the Wild Heart of Southern Scotland, with thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund under Destination Tweed, led by Tweed Forum. This programme of rural skills will continue in 2024, to hear about opportunities sign up to our volunteer mailing list by registering to: volunteer@bordersforesttrust.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

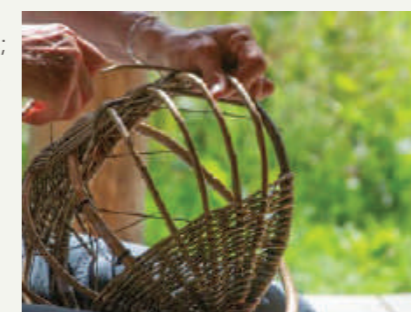
Penelope Wilson: www.basketmakersassociation.org.uk/makers/penelope-wilson

Neil Moffat: www.dry-stone-wall.co.uk

John Grundy: www.wildernesstamed.com

Graeme Walker: www.facebook.com/p/Graeme-Walker-Hedge-Laying-Instructor-Contractor-100082528971424

Hamish Darrah: www.facebook.com/hamishdarrahwoodworking



Clockwise from top left: Basket making; Scything at Corehead; Spoon workshop; Hedge laying workshop; Drystone dyking.

Scotland's Great Trails

A new way to the Wild Heart?

By William Young

The present moment is a good one in which to discuss long-distance paths. Scotland's official routes are grouped together under the **Scotland's Great Trails** brand; and since January 2023, Nature Scotland have been conducting a review of this brand and its purpose. Although the current network is extensive, it does nonetheless omit some of the most beautiful parts of the country; for example, neither the Cairngorms nor any region northwest of the Great Glen are served by any official trail.

The Wild Heart region – where key Borders Forest Trust properties lie – is another overlooked gem. This area encompasses some of the finest hillwalking in southern Scotland, and I have come to believe that a valuable addition to the recreational landscape could be created here.

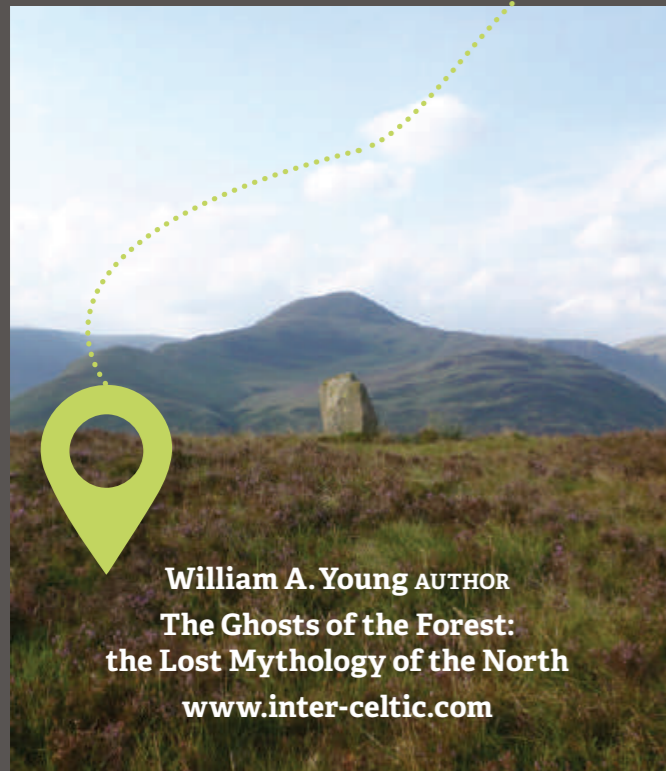
Start walking at Edinburgh. Hike south from the city limits through the Pentland regional park, then briefly along the Lyne valley. Reascend into the hills to the north of Upper Tweeddale – a National Scenic Area for good reason, with sweeping views and dramatic hillforts to be found everywhere.

Cross the Tweed at Drumelzier and ascend to the south; onto the high moors, and along the Thief's Road to the corbetts of Cramalt Crag and Broad Law. From there, drop down to the Talla valley and you reach the edge of the Wild Heart properties.

The journey thus outlined takes only three days of walking. A fourth could traverse the Wild Heart zone itself, taking in the summit of White Coomb, the rim of Carrifran glen and the ridge of Saddle Yoke. From there, a beautiful ascent across Moffatdale leads to the headwaters of the Ettrick and Phawhope bothy. A fifth day could lead over Ettrick Pen, then past the stone circles and hillforts of Eskdale; a sixth would bring you to Langholm. A seventh day, creating an excellent one-week walk, would lead through the new Tarras Valley Nature Reserve and over the fells to Newcastleton.

Such a route would take in the region's highest summits, its most inspiring rewilding projects, some beautiful settlements, and a remarkable variety of scenery. It would connect the nation's capital to its southern border – and create a hiking experience in the south of Scotland comparable in length, difficulty and scenic beauty to that provided further north by the West Highland Way. For the BFT's Wild Heart estates, it would boost visitor numbers, build engagement, and thus bring in funding too. The path might in fact very reasonably be named 'The Wild Heart Way'; this name would encapsulate very well the character of the route.

I posted a detailed account of this idea on my website at the end of spring. The feedback it received was very positive, and so I have been steadily making contact with stakeholders along the route to see if there is mileage in developing it further. If any readers would be interested in collaborating, I would be very pleased to hear from you – and I'm very grateful to the Borders Forest Trust team for making space available in their magazine to highlight the possibility. I hope the idea will prove to be of value.



William A. Young AUTHOR
The Ghosts of the Forest:
the Lost Mythology of the North
www.inter-celtic.com



Ancient Woodland Management Service

Borders Forest Trust is offering ancient woodland management advice free of charge, to improve the health of ancient woodlands across the Scottish Borders!

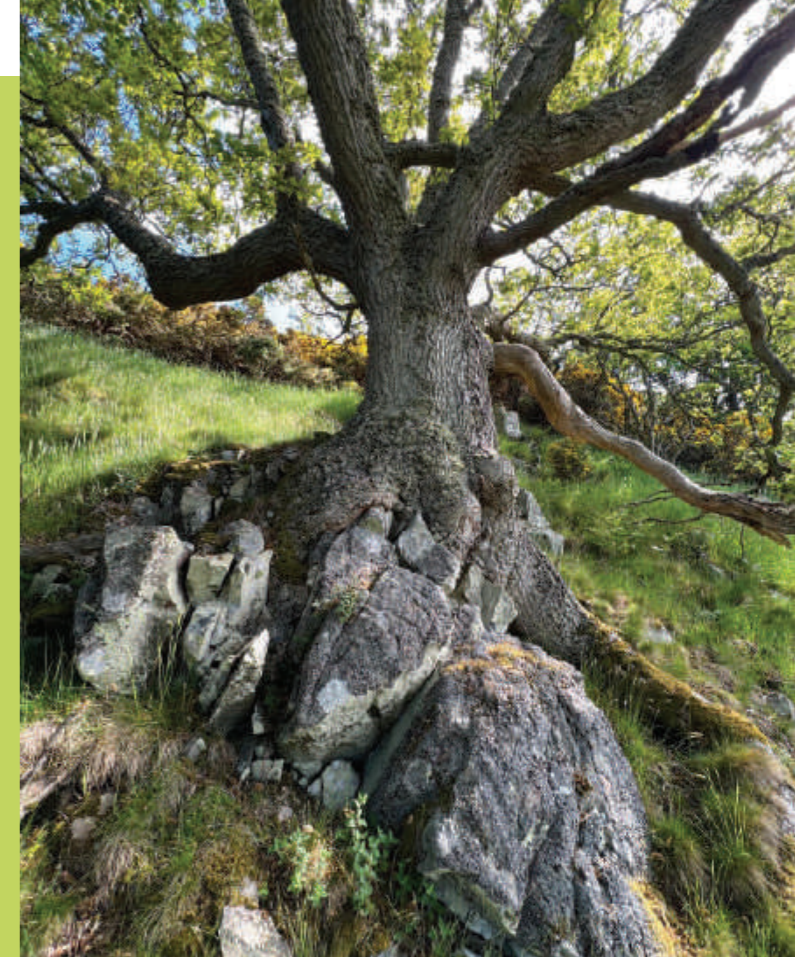
Why are ancient woodlands so important?

Healthy ancient woodlands have the capacity to support an immense biodiversity of species (more species than any other land-based habitat in the UK). Many of these include our most threatened species such as red squirrels, hedgehogs, goshawks, wood warbler, bats and rare woodland wildflowers. Scotland was once cloaked in native woodland but most of it has now been lost from our landscapes. Our remaining ancient woodlands are few in number, small in size and relatively isolated from each other so it is so important that we document and carefully manage these remnant woodlands we can help to safeguard their existence into the future.

So, how can Borders Forest Trust help?

The best approach to restoring an ancient woodland depends on its condition and the specific threats it faces. We can visit a site to assess its needs and prepare management plans free of charge. We may also be able to assist with sourcing funding for the recommended work.

If you know of an ancient woodland that needs our help or advice, get in touch with us at enquiries@bordersforesttrust.org



This project is run in partnership with the Woodland Trust who generously fund and support our work to plant and protect native woodland in the Scottish Borders.

Plant trees with us!

If you are interested in joining for any of these dates you can book your slot in a session by emailing volunteer@borderforesttrust.org.

Tues 23rd Jan

Volunteer Tree Planting Day at Carrifran

Sun 4th Feb

Volunteer Tree Planting Day at Talla & Gameshope

Sat 13th Jan

New Year Volunteer Tree Planting Day at Talla & Gameshope

Sun 11th Feb

Volunteer Day at Corehead

Sun 3rd March

Volunteer Tree Planting Day at Talla & Gameshope

Sun 10th March

Volunteer Day at Corehead

Sun 14th April

Volunteer Day at Corehead

Borders Forest Trust Membership Form

If you are not already a BFT member, why not sign up and make a lasting contribution to our work? If you are a member, please pass on to a friend!

Go online to <https://bordersforesttrust.org/support-us/membership>. Or you can complete this form and send it to the mailing address below.

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

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Type of Membership per annum (please tick)

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----|-----------|--------------------------|------|
| Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> | £25 | Family | <input type="checkbox"/> | £37 |
| Student/unwaged | <input type="checkbox"/> | £9 | Overseas | <input type="checkbox"/> | £30 |
| Community Group | <input type="checkbox"/> | £50 | Corporate | <input type="checkbox"/> | £280 |

Direct Debit

To set up a Direct Debit: <https://bordersforesttrust.org/support-us/membership>

GoCardless process the Direct Debits for Borders Forest Trust. Regular payments through GoCardless will read on bank statements as 'GoCardless' rather than 'Borders Forest Trust', and you will be notified by email before each payment is taken.

Standing Order

Name of account holder:

Sort code - - A/C No

Signature Date.....

Gift Aid

If you are a UK taxpayer, we can recover the tax you have paid on any donation from the Inland Revenue, greatly increasing its value, at no cost to you. We can currently reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that you donate.

I wish Borders Forest Trust to claim Gift Aid on my annual subscription and donations including any I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years. **yes** **no**

I confirm I have paid or will pay Income Tax and / or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount that all charities I donate to will reclaim in Gift Aid on my donations for that year.

Signature Date

Privacy Policy

Our privacy policy is available on our website <https://bordersforesttrust.org/publications/other-documents>. Please tick to indicate your consent to communications you would like to receive.

- I would like to receive The Greenshed members magazine by post
- I would like to receive The Greenshed members magazine by email
- I would like to receive regular email newsletters
- I would like to receive other information about BFT by post
- I would like to receive other information about BFT by email

Make a donation

Your support helps us with our aim of 'Reviving the Wild Heart of Southern Scotland'.

You can make a donation online: <https://bordersforesttrust.org/support-us/donate>

Or by sending a cheque made out to Borders Forest Trust to: Borders Forest Trust, Monteviot Nurseries, Ancrum, Jedburgh, TD8 6TU

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To make a donation to the Borders Forest Trust please visit our website or use this QR code. Thank you.



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Borders Forest Trust is a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered in Scotland No. SC162581.
Scottish Charity No. SC024358

Published by Borders Forest Trust Winter 2023
The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Borders Forest Trust.
Design: Vivid Design. Editor: Cameron Newell.
Proofreading: Fi Martynoga, Catriona Patience.