

# Blarbuie Woodland Project

at Argyll and Bute Hospital, Lochgilphead, Argyll



## Second Progress Report Milling, Hedging and Dancing

April 2006

In February 2006 we held our Grand Ceilidh and Auction at Ardrishaig Hall, to raise funds and to raise awareness of our work. The Woodland Partnership was well represented by dedicated individuals from Reforesting Scotland, Argyll Green Woodworkers, Lochgilphead Community Council, the Scottish Association for Mental Health (the Garden Project), and the NHS/Argyll and Bute Hospital. Music was by a number of fine local musicians including the amazing fiddler Archie McAllister accompanied by Ron and Leonne. Leonne is a doctor at the Hospital as well as a wonderful ceilidh caller, and she was one of several hospital doctors and other health

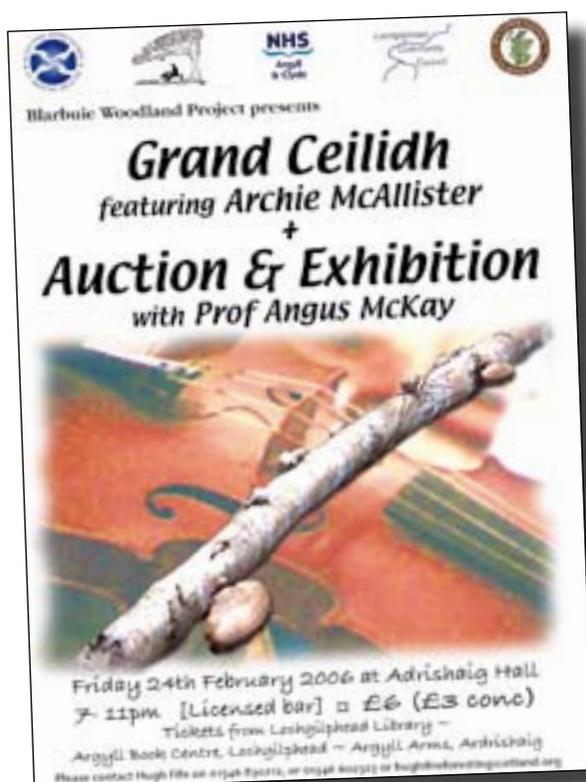
professionals who attended the event, and it was really uplifting to see doctors, patients and woodlanders whirling each other about on the dance floor.



Our own Professor Angus McKay conducted the Auction, ably assisted by Peter, Brenda and Colin. One of the reasons for needing a big auction squad was to lift heavy items up for the bidding – someone's former garden statue, a rustic sycamore seat made by David, one of the Woodland Project



Professor Angus, and Patrick after a successful bid





participants from our own sycamore branches, and a great lump of lime milled on site, which could be a seat or a coffee table. Whatever it becomes, this colourful piece of timber was hotly bid for, and along with many personal and business contributions made for an enjoyable and profitable auction.



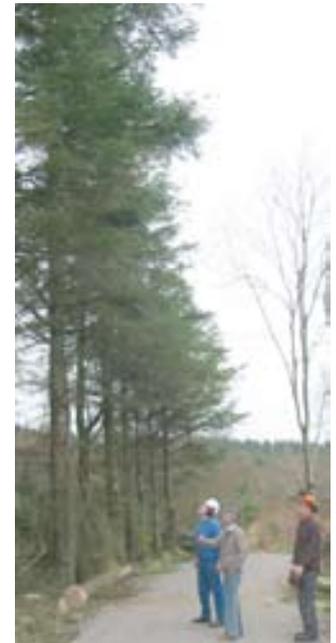
We also had a fine exhibition and display in the Hall, with photographs, and quotes from our various rounds of community consultation, and leaflets and publications, and branches and greenery and pieces of pine and elm and cherry.



**Great coverage in the Argyllshire Advertiser**

In the first six months of the Project we have taken down many trees – for reasons

of safety, access and biodiversity. Much of this wood has been processed on site, into various sizes of posts and planks for our own needs on site, with excess for sale. Holding events, selling wood, and selling our woodland cards, are all vital as part of our funding package, along with the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage, West Highland Leader, the Robertson Trust, Scottish Executive Wellbeing Programme, the Allen Lane Foundation and NHS contribution-in-kind.



The felling operations have been quite challenging, but ably handled by Sid and Sean and Eck. We have taken down some enormous sycamore, plus beech and ash and lime, and cypress and maple and cherry, and quite a large number of Scots Pine. Peter Quelch – recently-retired native woodland advisor with the Forestry – was also involved in some of the felling, but most particularly in moving huge trunks by means of a tractor-operated winch. This was an amazing spectacle – a little fifty year-old blue and red tractor pulling trunks weighing several tons through the forest.



How such an old beast could move such heavy trunks was truly amazing.....and the tractor was pretty impressive too !!



Most of the wood was brought together at what is now our wood yard, some was loaded onto a wood lorry and taken to the Green Woodworkers' sawmill at Ormsary, and some big twisty and pitted boles were moved deep into the woods where they will slowly rot, nourishing the woodland plants and creatures. Garden Project trainees and others worked hard following the chainsaws and tractor, stacking firewood and piling up branches.



material is being left in the woods and some is going through our shredding machine. As the trunks piled up at the wood yard we brought in Dino Wright with his mobile milling machine, and there – assisted by his son Liam – they sliced their way through masses of pine and other timber.



The mobile mill in action (above) and some help clearing up the saw dust (below)



Some of the pine is being used to construct raised beds in our tree nursery. The ground here, having been cleared as described in the First Report, was ploughed by Duncan Robb, a contractor digger and tractor operator who is and will continue to be an important part of the project.





The raised beds in the nursery take shape.

Also of pine are the big compost bins we are building, which will take shredded wood, leaves and general greenery. Other wood is currently in store seasoning – notably a large quantity of planks from the one large silver fir we took down – and some has gone off-site to carvers and turners.



Our sawn timber seasoning in storage

Several groups work in the woods on a fairly regular basis – the Garden Project and hospital patients, the Prince's Trust group from the High School and more recently the Duke of Edinburgh Awards youngsters, and ASET - the Argyll Supported Employment Team. Between them all they have been moving branches and timber, working on the path route, constructing the raised beds and the compost bins and benches, lifting young trees into the nursery and potting wild flower bulbs. These bulbs – wild hyacinth and wild garlic - were exposed when we started work on the path route,

and the tree seedlings are being removed from the path route and other construction areas and also to get some of them away from the deer.



Deer numbers here are generally about right – nice to have them passing through but good that there are few enough to allow significant regeneration. This Winter, however, the seedlings of silver fir and ash and hawthorn have been nibbled more than usual as it has been mostly cold and dry. Frosty mornings have been unusually frequent for the West coast, and there has been lots of sunshine and little rain - not ideal, perhaps, for the deer and the red squirrels, but good for the working woodlanders.

We keep a record of wildlife sightings, and red squirrels are seen frequently. We have also recorded hedgehogs, pine martin, frog spawn, woodpeckers and woodcock. Rabbits – not originally native - are also fairly numerous in some parts;

cute bunnies or a pest depending on your point of view. We have more work to do to secure the tree nursery against them, where already a few of our young trees have been nibbled. Here we have the trees transplanted from the woods, and also some oak and ash and birch donated by woodland people, and some cuttings of elder and willow. We have used some big bits of willow to weave a living bower in the woods, in which we will place a bench.

In March we undertook a fairly big tree-planting contract, to augment our funds. This was at nearby Lingerton Landfill Site, run by Shanks. Shanks staff have been extremely helpful in developing plans for removal of materials dumped in the High Wood. There is a requirement on them to plant trees to shield the landfill site, and we planted alder and willow of mixed ages in tree shelters, and we may do more for them next Winter. As part of this connection with them we were given a guided tour of the massive site, and it was fascinating to learn of all the processes involved in dealing with the vast quantities of domestic and other waste constantly pouring into the site. We have quite a challenge ourselves in the High Wood, but with the help we are getting from Shanks and the Local Authority and SEPA

– the Scottish Environmental Agency – we should clean it up satisfactorily.



Visit to Shanks landfill and recycling facility, and tree planting site (top)

We recently had Peter Holmes on site, running a hedge-laying and restoration course. On one side of the Hospital Woodland site there was a long-neglected hedge of privet and hawthorn, and over three days a long stretch was laid and renewed, incorporating hazel poles cut at Seafeld Farm on Loch Sween, and now our workers are equipped with the skills to complete the job next Winter.

Hugh Fife





Hugh with hazel stakes for the hedge



Peter training a participant on hedging tools (above) and well on with the job (left). The finished section looks fantastic - and is a well built testament to those that took part (below)



The Blarbuie Woodland Project is a partnership between the following organisations:



the team of happy hedgers

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**[www.reforestingscotland.org](http://www.reforestingscotland.org)**

Woods for All is an award winning Reforesting Scotland project that works towards access and inclusion. Reforesting Scotland is a Scottish charity dedicated to environmental and social regeneration through reforestation. Reforesting Scotland Journal is free to members, also available at many good bookshops.

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