



Abriachan Spring 2023

It has been 25 years since Abriachan Forest Trust was formed so we have been organising an assortment of 25 school visits; 25 citizen science recording sessions; 25 km of upgraded paths and trails; 25 tree planting days; 25 new members; 25 skills-share workshops; 25 local produce recipe collection and, rumour has it, a 25 minute Orcadian Strip the Willow after t' AGM!

Dates for the Spring Diary :

- 1st May '23** : Planting picnic...plant & Cu label a family tree along the Corryfoyness track below the Whisky Still. We'll provide the trees, tools, drinks and cakes. Meet in layby on Balchraggan road at 2.00pm
- 23rd May** : Creeping Toad for primary pupils.
- 26th May** : BioBlitz1 Gaelic Tree Alphabet crafts 11.00 Lichen Safari 2.00 & dyeing in afternoon
- 27th May** : BioBlitz2 with Butterfly Recorders if sunny
- 28th May** : [Monster Bikes](#) Demo Day 11.00-4.00pm, test new ebikes on the new trails and pumptrack. [Wheel Adventure](#) books on sale.
- 1st June** : [Westward the Light 7.30pm in the village hall](#)
- 30th June**: Abriachan Highland Games - 6:30pm -Tore field

Look out for topical walks on fourth Friday of the month.

Craft afternoons occur at the classrooms on last Friday of each month from 2.00pm....all are welcome.

Volunteering usually happens on Fridays from 10.00am but do let us know if you are coming just in case we are away from the classroom area.

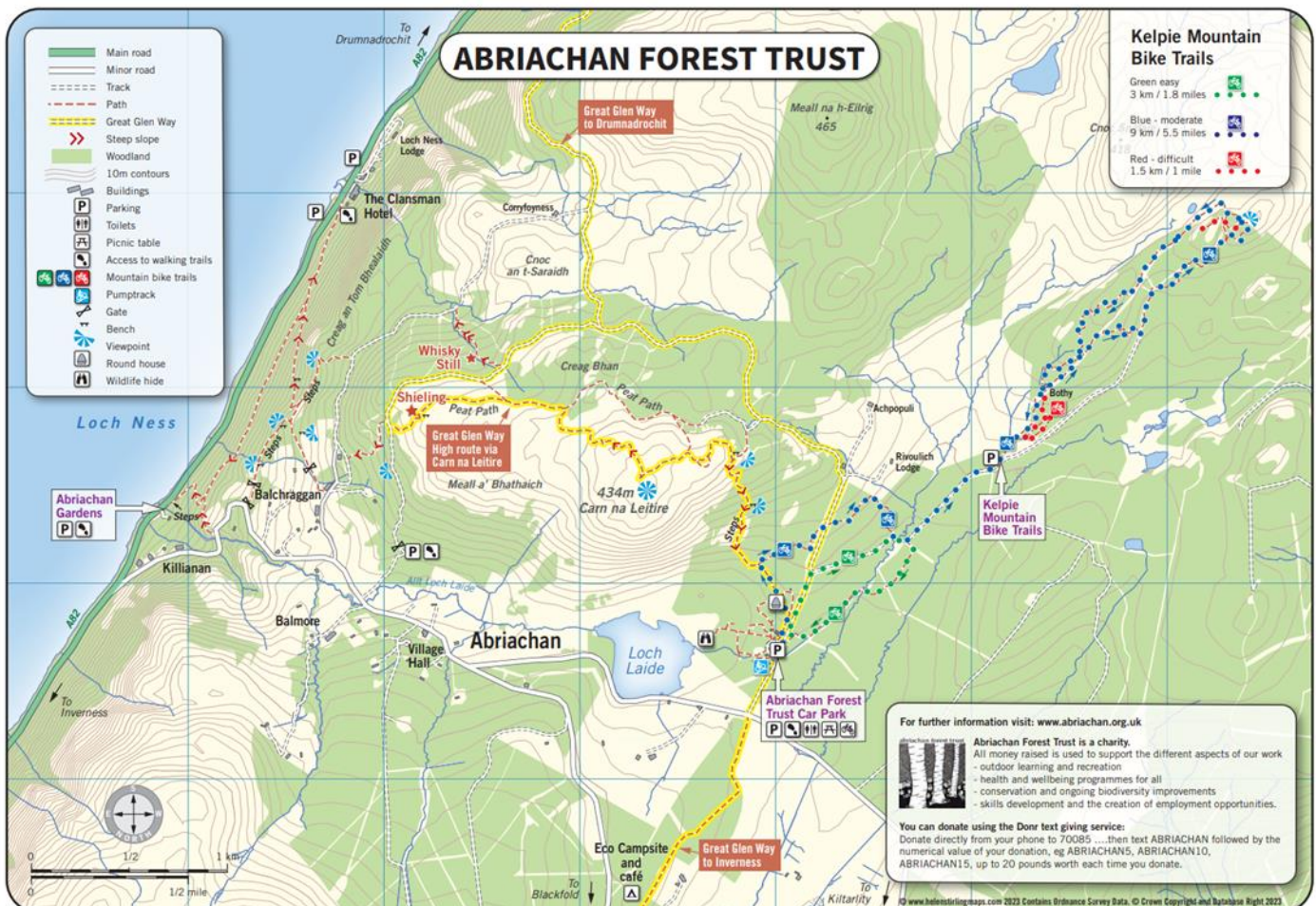


If you have an interest in the future of the community's woodland and support its aims, why not become a member of Abriachan Forest Trust ?

AFT £3 Annual Memberships are due to be paid in April. Some members have set up a direct debit & can claim back Gift Aid. You will find the on-line membership form on www.abriachan.org.uk under the Get Involved tab.

Other methods of contributing to Abriachan's nature recovery through reforestation, conservation and activities which benefit people and wildlife are Scan QR code above. Or www.justgiving.com/Abriachan-Forest Or directly from a mobile to 70085then text ABRIACHAN followed by the numerical value of your donation eg ABRIACHAN15 Thank you for your support.

AFT monthly meetings usually happen on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm. All welcome...hall summer/classroom winter.



Updated map by [Helen Stirling](#) showing the optional high route for Great Glen Way walkers and the grading tweaks to the Kelpie's Trails.

Biodiversity benefits of the beaver ? We have asked Dr Roisin Campbell Palmer to carry out a research visit on whether the habitat around Loch Laide is suitable for translocating beavers. She has been and recently compiled a report for Nature Scot to consider. There are beavers already breeding on the Beaully catchment so hopefully the result will be some beneficial hydrological engineering, boggy patches and wetland restoration.

We have been transplanting aspen in anticipation and some of us can tell tall tales about tail adaptation! Visit the forest any day this term and you will see lots of wee citizen scientists guddling and exploring.



Guardians of the Allt Lòn na Fiodhaige

undertook some Buglife Riverfly training with Rebecca Lewis recently so are primed to record the invertebrates in the burn over the year. As you can see it is a very healthy ecosystem.....no wonder the local underwater cameraman catches such a fine population of brown trout and their predators.



Biodiversity in Gaelic Place Names

To our Highland ancestors there was no lochan nor hillock, no matter how insignificant in our modern eyes, that, did not merit a name. Many features were named after birds, animals and plants and these names can inform us about the biodiversity in the past and also guide us when we are restoring habitats.

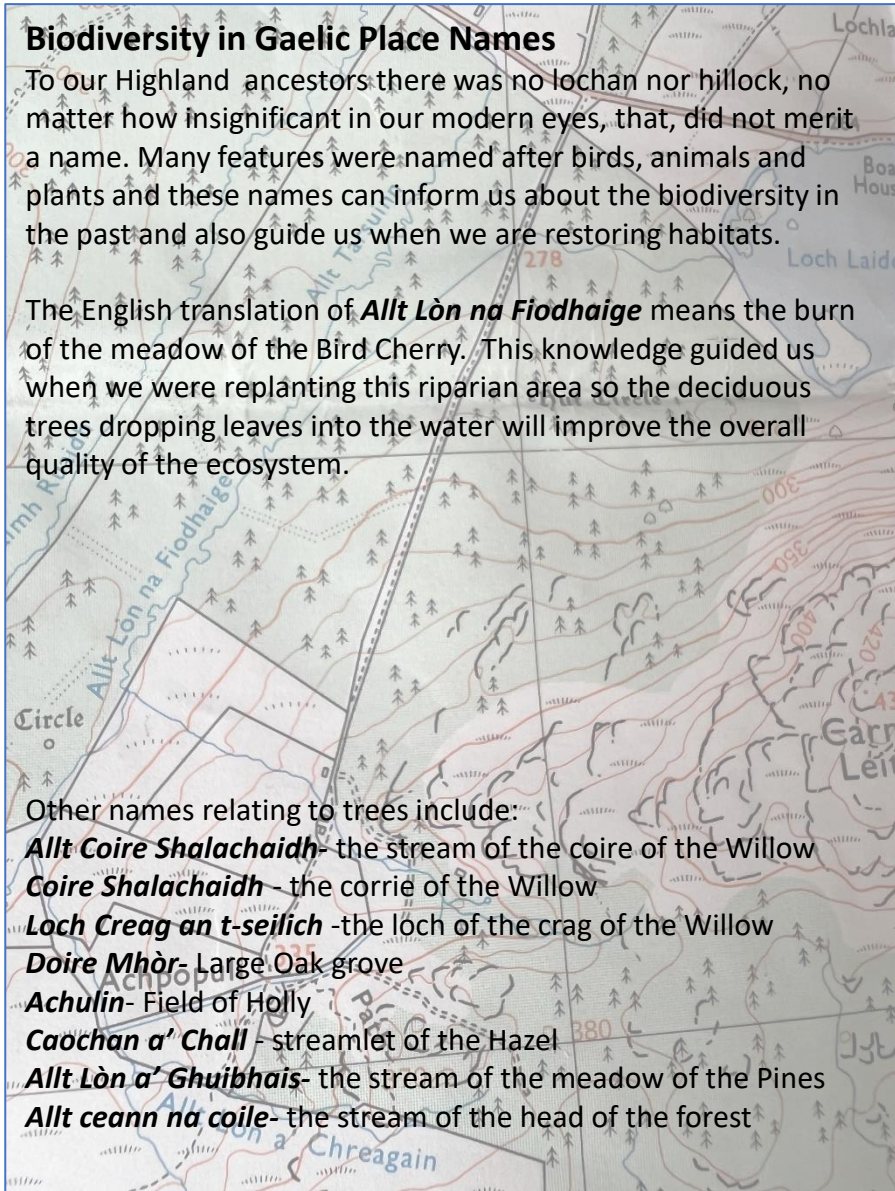
The English translation of **Allt Lòn na Fiodhaige** means the burn of the meadow of the Bird Cherry. This knowledge guided us when we were replanting this riparian area so the deciduous trees dropping leaves into the water will improve the overall quality of the ecosystem.

- Other names relating to trees include:
- Allt Coire Shalachaidh** - the stream of the coire of the Willow
- Coire Shalachaidh** - the corrie of the Willow
- Loch Creag an t-seilich** - the loch of the crag of the Willow
- Doire Mhòr** - Large Oak grove
- Achulin** - Field of Holly
- Caochan a' Chall** - streamlet of the Hazel
- Allt Lòn a' Ghuibhais** - the stream of the meadow of the Pines
- Allt ceann na coile** - the stream of the head of the forest

Who am I? (there's a clue on the first page)

Let light into the forest
and I'll put on my show
for you in spring,
laying a creeping carpet
between the trees.
Although the buttercup is my sister,
my flowers are white.
I shake them in the wind
and that gives me my name,
while my stem spreads
stealthily, underground.
I fear the dark, die in it,
so when you plant your trees,
space them widely.
Your reward will be
my thousand fluttering faces
rising to the sun.

Linda Cracknell
Inspired by, written for,
Abriachan Forest Trust May 2010





Spring Foraging in Abriachan :

The three most important rules of foraging are:

Only eat something if you are 100% sure you have identified it correctly.

Only forage from area that is free from contaminants, and not frequented by dog walkers.

Forage sustainably.

Nettles – *Deanntagan*. At the beginning of spring, it was the tradition for people in the Highlands to prepare a tonic to clean their blood and to boost the levels of vitamins and minerals in their bodies. The most highly esteemed tonic was made from the young shoots of nettles. These make a very nice tea and very tasty nettle soup. [Cooking de-activates the stings]. Nettles are rich in Iron and Calcium and Vitamins C and Beta carotene and are easy to digest. The time to stop gathering them is when the drooping flower heads appear. New shoots will appear again in autumn which provides a second harvest.

Wild Garlic (Ramsons) *Creamh*

The leaves of the wild garlic are appearing just now. It is a very versatile vegetable being a green leaf and tasting of garlic. It is easily recognised by its smell. The leaves can be used raw or made into a pesto. The white flowers will appear at the end of April. They are also garlic flavoured and can be used to garnish a salad or soup. After the flowers appear the leaves are not so tasty. Wild garlic is an indicator of ancient woodland and grows profusely in Abriachan.

Pignuts- *Cnò-thalmhainn*

Pignuts have sustained many hungry children when they have been out playing in the woods. Most children learn from other children about these tasty “nuts” which are nodules growing on the roots. There is a certain skill involved in digging them out but it is worth the effort.

Wood sorrel- *Feada Coille*

Another plant children would pick for a snack . The leaves have a somewhat sharp taste and are a good addition to salads they contain a lot of Vitamin C and Beta carotene. They also contain oxalic acid so should be eaten in moderation. The flowers are also edible and can be added to salads.

Dandelion- *Bèarnan Brìde*

The leaves have a bitterness to them but can be used to make a tea or beer. The leaves have high levels of Iron, Calcium and Vitamin A. The roots have been used to make a caffeine-free coffee substitute. The roots should be harvested in autumn. They are thensliced, dried and roasted and then ground down.

Hawthorn- *Sgitheach*

The young leaves and buds are edible

The flowers are also edible and both flowers and leaves are good for the heart. The berries which appear in Autumn are rich in Vitamin C.

Broom- *Bealaidh*

Broom buds can be used in salads or can be pickled like capers. The flowers can be used as a decoration in salads. Whin flowers can be used in the same way and both will make an interesting addition to bread dough. Whin buds however are to be avoided as the sepals are very hairy and very unpleasant to swallow.





https://www.istockphoto.com/portfolio/CreativeNature_nl?mediatype=photography

Guth an Smeòraich : Song Thrush

'Iain 'Ic Ille Mhòire
Thig, thig dhachaigh, thig dhachaigh, thig dhachaigh!
'Cìod thuige, cìod thuige?'
'Gu d' dhinnear, Gu d' dhinnear!'
'Dè 'n dinnear, dè 'n dinnear?'
'Aran cruaidh coirce agus miùg leis
Miùg leis, miùg leis!'

'Iain son of the servant of Mary
Come, come home, come home!
"What for, what for?"
'To your dinner, to your dinner!
"What's for dinner, what's for dinner?"
'Hard oat bread and whey with it, whey with it!'

The dawn chorus has certainly been worth getting up for this month but you'll be hearing the song thrush singing it's repetitive song from the tree tops at the other end of the day too. Here's an onomatopoeic Gaelic rhyme from Annie Johnson of Barra, recorded on wax cylinder by John Lorne Campbell mimicking thrush cadence..... it's best sung at speed but, if you want a slower beginner's version, we have a copy.

Cainnt nan Eun : Tobar an Dualchais

Thrush, lark seagull and crow rhymes can be heard on the link above. Thanks to Ceit Langhorne for the inspiration.

Biodiversity Recording :

One of the original objectives of AFT was to enhance the biodiversity of the area. This is an on-going process and our records would indicate that 25 years on we have been very successful. We are always interested in your sightings of plants, animals and birds and if you see or hear anything unusual please send in a report/photograph with the date, time and location to abriachanforest@gmail.com We always include these sightings as an agenda item in the AFT monthly meetings and record them on the WTS Phenology map as well as include them in the Forest Stewardship Certification process.

Firewood processing update :

Unfortunately the processor parts are still proving elusive but it is hoped Doug Beattie will solve the issue soon. Alan has a waiting list of orders but it is important to note the old adage " A wise person gets their fuel in summer." so, if you want to order a load, please let us know in good time. Prices are currently £45 a cube inclusive of VAT so a 4 cube trailer costs £185 including delivery within Abriachan.

Forestry Update :

After the successful harvesting in 2021 the Rivoullich blocks have been replanted and the weevilled areas beside the Great Glen Way beaten up. As AFT is a not for profit organisation some of the timber income and a generous grant from Great Glen Energy Cooperative has been used to offset the considerable costs of improving the paths and bike trails. Other forestry tasks have been clearing regeneration from fire road verges and attempting to regrade the Achpopuli road in the hopes that the potholes are filled. However, as soon as it rains and vehicles drive too fast, they reappear – so the walking paths and cycle trails have smoother surfaces than the Achpopuli road currently.



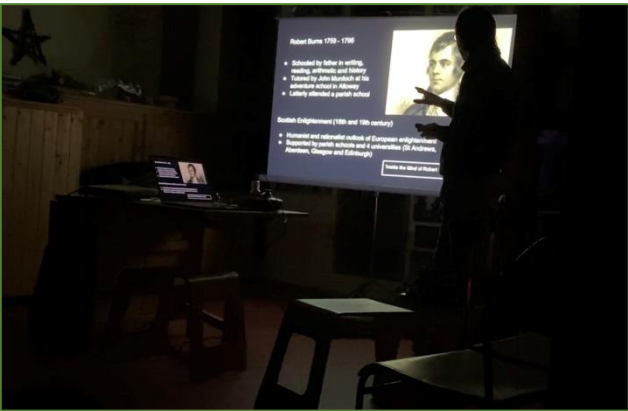
Feedback from all the path and cycle trail users has been extremely positive so grateful thanks are due to Mark Hedderwick and the HiTrak team and Ronan's squad in Raylor's Trail Design.

MonsterBikes are organising a try it and test it day on the 28th May 11-4pm.

They will have a variety of demonstration e-bikes for you to ride out on the trails. Details to follow.

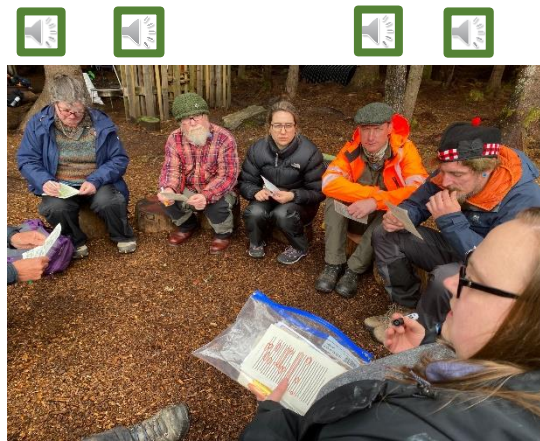
Thanks to funding from Year of Stories 2022 Community Stories Fund, delivered in partnership between VisitScotland and Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) with support from National Lottery Heritage Fund thanks to National Lottery players we organised...

Abriachan's Stories : Seanchaidh and some Stars and held twelve outdoor events at Abriachan over the year starting in January with Haggis handwarmers and Tales from the Dark Side and finishing in December on the midwinter solstice. Some, during the darker months of the year, were fully booked Stars and Stories' sessions working in collaboration with [Stephen Mackintosh](#) our regular astronomer, other guest speakers and storytellers. The events throughout the summer travelled beyond the classrooms and easy access paths and offered a mixture of hands on creative story telling and writing activities, guided walks and sharing of tales about our cultural and natural history with Fiona MacDonald and Trish Matthews. The images on this page show some of the dark skies' events in action...telescopes focussed on the moon linked up to an outdoor projection, messy moon cratering using marbles, flour and cocoa demonstrations, a fantastic moonbow followed by nights of aurora displays, songs and stories in the yurt and around the campfire, Fox and Fire games using LED lanterns...lots of fun, very active learning experiences for all ages. Next year we will continue the stars and stories events and hope to produce an interactive map of Abriachan as a lasting legacy.





The links between our natural and cultural history were always present in the story sessions. Chris Holland's interpretation of "How the Dragonfly came to be." delighted family groups and, with Judith Bullivant telling the tale, inspired a group of Branching Out leaders to become more confident at storytelling for their participants. Fiona MacDonald and Christine Matheson led mysterious forays to the Whisky Still and the Shieling during the summer months. Heather ale, pine needle, juniper berry tea brewed and bere bannocks shared. Fiona's stilling and shieling recordings can be found in the links below...





[Stephen Mackintosh, astronomer](#), usually performs in the dark but we persuaded him to come and tell us tales from the Celtic Calendar and solstices in midsummer. Unfortunately a sudden thunderstorm meant we had to take shelter and needed to listen intently as the rain battered on the shed roof. Richard guided a walk around the paths with participants choosing a favourite stick.... was it the **grafter's**, **conserver's** or **the player's**? Katharine [Achpopuli Farm](#) told tales of her fleecy flock and Trish demonstrated activities from the Lost Museum of Trees ...lots of stories, fact cards for creative inspiration and the first lanterns were on display.



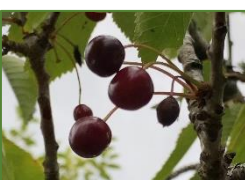


Together for Our Planet : Copses for COP

Over the past year we have continued to plant thousands of trees as well as collect and sow the seeds from existing native tree species.

These photos are of some of the groups planting the Copses for COP over the past year. Tree species included downy birch, willows, holly, cherries, aspen, Scots pine, rowan, blaeberry, hawthorn, sessile oak, alder. They were planted in suitable habitats around Abriachan – from loch side, shady riparian to boggy or dry hill top.

Those involved learned where best to plant, how to weed and prepare the area for the trees, and once they were firmly in the ground, how to protect them from deer, hare or vole damage. Encouraging shared stewardship of the planet amongst children and adults is an important element of what we do in Abriachan Forest. Seeing adults coming to check on the tree they planted as young people twenty years ago makes it all very worthwhile. This work will continue.





As well as improving biodiversity by planting trees the project also resulted in lots of creativity. Trish worked with young people who wrote stories, produced books, felted creatures, dyed wool, batiked hangings, made cards and created models for use in the story animation and Lost Museum of Trees lanterns. Some can be seen in the images on the next pages. Jays, those raucous, bright-backed, blue-winged, forest makers, have become resident in Abriachan Woods recently. One jay can hoard more than 5,000 acorns each autumn with those they forget growing into new oaks...mostly sessile in Abriachan.



There are lots of the crafts and cards made by Rosie and Phoebe for sale in the bothy beside the classroom...do have a look & buy.





The Sutherland groups were extremely productive creating all the models for the stop motion animation process. Inspired by the stories, they made hundreds of acorns, assorted native wild animals, found jay feathers, painted backgrounds and trees in the environment. All materials used were collected and returned to the places they were found. Those involved included intergenerational groups, people who have been socially isolated due to their ill health or remote location and refugees including those from Ukraine. Participating helped them develop new skills and provided regular opportunities to gain confidence and improved wellbeing by getting together indoors and outdoors in Big Burn, Golspie, Brora, Ferrycroft, Camore as well as in Abriachan. Here is a link to the final animation of Eve's story [The Oak Tree](#)

