

## SUMMER ISLES



THE COATS  
FARTHING

CETACEAN  
UPDATE



THE



WOOD  
SPEEDWELL

KIST 88

# EDITORIAL

Welcome to this issue of Kist, which opens with a fascinating article by Lady Byatt on the subject of coinage. During the 18th Century tradesmen and dukes had coins minted for them by the Scottish Mint even though it should have been closed down as a result of the Union between Scotland and England. Her narrative makes particularly interesting reading in the context of the Scottish referendum.

We also welcome John Dyment to our roll call of contributors. John gives a detailed account of this year's islands trip to the Summer Isles and other sites in the Ullapool area.

I have included an account of one of our summer walks (Old Poltalloch). These are excellent opportunities to get out in the field - often with several experts who are only too happy to share their knowledge. If anyone would like to write up one of next year's walks I would be happy to publish it, along with accounts of our winter talks. Don't be anxious if you haven't submitted anything before; I am happy to edit it for you if required.

The Society exists for you, its members, and we urge you to come along to our AGM at the Community Centre, Manse Brae, on Thursday October 23rd at 7.00pm and join the committee. We hope to see you there.

## THE COATS FARTHING: THE STORY OF A COIN

FIONA CAMPBELL BYATT, F.S.A. SCOT.

This is a story of an eighteenth-century coin which was used in Paisley, near Glasgow, but there are also records of similar coins and tokens in Inveraray and Greenock.

A family of weavers named Coats lived in a cottage in Paisley, with the loom on the ground floor and the family room above. A weaver's work required winding the linen thread onto pirns or reels by hand before the loom could be set up for use. This was easy work usually done by the weaver's wife or one of the children. In this family one of the sons called Jervis (1772–1838) had poor eyesight and found it difficult to manage the thread. His father soon realised he could never become a weaver, so at the age of twelve Jervis was apprenticed as a butcher's boy. At this time, about 1720, counterfeit coins were being made in many parts of Scotland and passed off as legal currency. This was due to the lack of small change and the fact that copper was in short supply as it was mainly used to sheath the hulls of sailing boats. In the butcher's shop Jervis served behind the counter and a farthing would buy a farthing candle, or a farthing poke of sugar among other things. It was soon whispered abroad that the new butcher's boy would take the money without looking at it and as a result a number of counterfeit coins were found when the till was counted at the end of each day. So many were found that a bag was filled and they were taken to the Scottish Mint in Edinburgh. There they were melted down and re-issued with the tradesman's name, trade and address, but they were also classed as legal currency. They were made of copper in low values. The farthing coin that came to be used in the butcher's shop eventually set up by Jervis was marked:

*'J Coats & Son, 38 Broomlands'*

...on one side, and on the obverse:

*'Ham curers & Grocer Paisley'.*

These Coats farthings were minted for about ten years (Fig.1). They were undated and are now collectors' pieces.



**Figure 1**

The first copper farthing in Scotland was minted in the reign of James VI. One of these is marked 'I serve and am worn by use'. Copper was mined in Jura, we are told by Thomas Pennant in his book written in 1772, so the raw material

could have come from there as well as other Scottish sources. Further away, there were the well-known Cornish mines. The copper sheets were rolled out like pastry, cut into rounds, weighed, placed into a screw-press and made into coins. The screw-press was an early invention following ideas produced by the Italian goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571). Cellini wrote a treatise on minting coins using an upper and lower die hit by a hammer. This was followed by a mechanical screw-press in 1553, which he and others worked on and introduced to the Royal Mint in Paris. Although judged a success, it was soon removed by the irate Guild of Moneyers who saw their livelihood being threatened. These craftsmen were highly trained in the art of engraving the dies which had to be hand-made for the screw-press, but the actual

stamping of the coin was very much quicker with the new machine.

Counterfeit farthings and pennies made of copper could be rolled out much thinner than the official weight laid down by the Royal Mint in Edinburgh. After the Union of Scotland and England the mint was supposedly closed in 1709 by order of the King, and all silver coins had to be impressed in London. However, the Scottish Mint continued for another hundred years and copper coins were allowed to be minted. The new Coats farthings conformed to the official weight and so were classed as legal currency.



**Figure 2**

There are other coins which were minted at this time and two interesting one-penny tokens were produced in 1797, ordered by the Duke of Argyll. The first one (Fig.2) has a

building on one side marked Argyle House, which could be a picture of the old castle in Inveraray pulled down in 1737, and on the obverse an initial, T.G., the name of the man in London who minted it. Printed round the edge are the words: 'I promise to pay on demand the bearer one penny.'

The engraving on the second coin is of the new castle in Inveraray built in 1744. This copper token was minted in London by T. Gordon and the designer was an artist called Jacobs, but it was for

use in Scotland. I have not been able to trace anything more about this token although the die-caster and artist were both well-known at that time. The obverse side is the same on both coins. The heavy edge on these tokens is unusual.

Another coin was minted in Edinburgh in 1795. It reads **Campbell's Snuff Shop**, on one side, with a jewelled head of a turbaned Turk. On the other there is a splendid Highland figure and the wording: 'The gallant garb of Scotland'.

From the same period we have a copper farthing from Greenock inscribed **Kelley's Teashop** and one from Loch Leven with a washerwoman standing in a tub of water (Fig. 3). The Guild of Moneyers was one of the many tradesmen's guilds set up in Edinburgh who had control of the mints in Scotland and were responsible for issuing legal currency and for destroying counterfeit coins. Jervis Coats and his poor eyesight perhaps helped to get rid of some of the counterfeit farthings in circulation.



**Figure 3**

The Coats Grocers firm prospered and became well-known for their hams. The

firm continued long after the minting of farthing tokens was forbidden by Act of Parliament in 1817, although the tokens continued to be used as Coin of the Realm for many years after.

References: Richard Dalton and Samuel Henry Hamer, *The Provincial Token Coinage of the 18th century*, London 1910-18. 3 vols.

#### Figures

1. Coats Farthing
2. Argyle House. Penny token, 1797
3. Loch Leven. Penny token, 1797. A girl treading linen in a tub (reverse)

## CETACEAN UPDATE

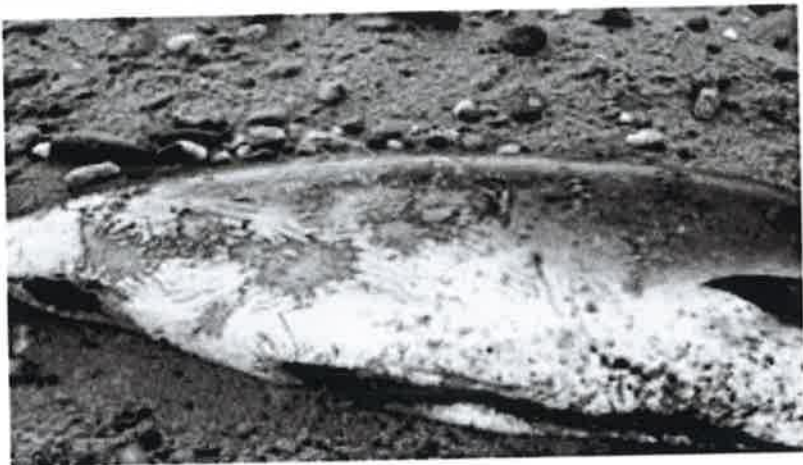
ED TYLER

It has been a busy year in Kintyre. In February my son's friend alerted us to a stranding on our local beach at Cleit north of Muasdale. A dog walker had already reported it as a baby dolphin, prompting the Scottish Stranding scientists to drive a long way (from Dundee I think) to take a look at it. I phoned them up afterwards and what they told me was fascinating.

The animal (actually an adult male porpoise) had been attacked by a pod of male bottlenose dolphins, repeatedly hit and bitten to the extent that the animal died. They knew this because of the rake marks on its skin which were 14mm apart: the width between a dolphin's teeth.

I told this to friends and family and they were shocked by this forensic analysis. Could dolphins be so cruel? ....and then they realised they were being anthropomorphic about it. Nobody knows for sure why they do this, but the behaviour has actually been observed in the Moray Firth where a pod was seen tossing a





**Porpoise stranded on Cleit beach,  
showing rake marks from dolphin**

porpoise in the air like a ball, literally kicking it about as they attacked it.

The stranding expert thought the most likely explanation was that it had been mistaken for a younger dolphin trying to "muscle in" on the pod's territory. It has been observed that males will have a go at other dolphins - hence this theory.

On reflection, I think of this incident as a sign that we have a pretty healthy sea out there, with enough fish to support a pod of dolphins and porpoises. Our neighbour had, in fact, been watching the selfsame dolphins over the previous couple of weeks.

In May a dead minke whale was towed into Campbeltown harbour by a creel boat. The fishermen had been pulling up their ropes off Peninver in the Kilbrannan Sound when they were shocked to see



its massive tail fin, which had become entangled in the said ropes. Apparently this was not the first time it had happened, as 12 years before the same boat caught another one.

It was not clear whether the whale, which was 26 feet long, was dead or alive at the time of its entanglement. Derek Brough from Marine Scotland said that it was also not clear why the whale was



Crew posing for picture  
beside the minke whale -  
Campbeltown Harbour  
Quay. James Paterson

on the seabed, as they do not normally behave like that.

I spoke to a wildlife safari operator who does tours off the Kintyre coast, and he told me that the whales do not appear until the beginning of August.

*Thanks to the Campbeltown Courier, from whose article (issue 23 May) the information about the minke whale was taken.*

## THE "WOLF STONE" FROM PERSONAL MEMORIES

DUNCAN BEATON

I was very interested to read the article 'The Wolf Stone' in Kist 87, but probably of most interest to me was how traditional stories handed down over generations can be so radically altered over just one generation.

When I was born and brought up in Furnace during the period from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s this story told in 'The Wolf Stone' encompassed two separate events.

My granny, who was born in Furnace in 1884, and her brothers & sisters knew 'The Wolf Stone' as Clach a bhatain, which more properly translates as 'Stone of the foxes'. In their day it stood out on the open hillside, by the side of the old road from Furnace to Inveraray, via Auchindrain, now part of the Millennium Walk. Before the trees grew to hide it the stone was an easily seen landmark visible from the new (A83) road.

My granny, Annie McInnes, walked that old road many times. She told me that, on leaving Furnace school in the 1890s, she worked for Eddie MacCallum II in Auchindrain for 'a sovereign (pay) the half-year'. She knew Clach a bhatain, but her tales of the place were of tinkers' camps there, and rumours of the graves of their infant children. She also spoke of a school that had been there at some time.

One day in the 1960s, when it was still open hillside and I was walking along the old road near Clach a bhatain, I met Willie Drew, another resident of Furnace and near contemporary of my granny. He pointed out a pile of stones beside a hawthorn tree above the road; all that remained of the Clach a bhatain school. Willie said

that the school had drystone walls that the pupils used to stop up with moss to prevent the winds whistling through. Sadly, I now cannot remember if he said he had been a pupil himself.

Returning to the MacCallums in Auchindrain and the story of the wolf, I remember the late Eddie MacCallum III, the last tenant in Auchindrain and the third of that name to farm there in an unbroken line between 1829 and 1963. He told me the wolf incident had taken place at Braleckan, when an old woman came out of her cottage in the morning to be confronted by the probably starving animal. She had the presence of mind to stab it with the spinning spindles she was carrying. I also remember discussing the story with Miss Marion Campbell of Kilberry during one of our many NHASMA outings in the 1980s.

In more recent times Clach a bhatain was not so much known for its foxes as it was for adders. My mother was born in 1920 and told me of one incident when she was out walking near there with her father. They were startled by a hissing adder, which my grandfather killed with his walking stick.

Even more recently, in the 1980s after the Sitka had been planted, I was walking with my dog over the then very overgrown path. On hearing a hissing sound I looked down to see the largest adder I'd seen before, or since. I concentrated on ushering the dog away: the adder was left in peace this time.

## NHASMA 2014 - THE SUMMER ISLES

JOHN DYMENT

This year the group gathered in the grounds of Portbeag Chalets in Altandu - about 3 miles north of Achiltibuie on the Wester Ross coast.

The programme highlights were:

- A wildlife cruise around the Summer Isles
- Knockan Crag Geopark
- Inchnadamph Bone Caves
- Leckmelm Gardens
- Handa Island Bird Sanctuary
- Smoo Cave at Durness
- A brief exploration of round houses in the Achiltibuie area

We boarded the Summer Queen at Ullapool for a 4 hour cruise, landing on the main island, Tanera More, for lunch and a visit to the Summer Isles Post Office. The smaller adjacent island, Tanera Beg, sports a sea cave large enough for the boat to enter almost completely. A



Minke whale revealed itself some half dozen times on the journey, before finally vanishing into the depths. Also seen were Atlantic Grey Seals, Harbour or Common Seals, Porpoises and a good variety of sea birds including Arctic Terns. The remaining islands appear uninhabited, although we saw what appeared to be constructional materials for a building being airlifted to another of the islands, Eilean Mullagrach. A bid by some members to cross

on foot to the nearest island, Isle Ristol, failed, possibly due to the neap tides prevailing on the day, (ie - tide didn't recede far enough).



**Limestone**



The excellent visitor centre at Knockan Crag proved to be of great geological interest, providing visible evidence of the 'Moine Thrust'. Knockan Crag itself is an insignificant outcrop on a hillside bordering on the A 835, facing Cul Mor. Its importance lies in the geologic contact exposure which has been cut back to show the ancient basement rocks

overlying relatively young limestone. This discovery was made by an amateur geologist, Charles Lapworth, in 1882. The dubious geological establishment sent two peer reviewers, (Peach and Horne) the following year and they eventually confirmed

Lapworth's findings. At Inchnadamph, some 10 miles further north, is a monument to the work of Peach and Horne, but not apparently to that of Lapworth, the original discoverer, whose observations and interpretations had prompted their work.



Decades later this work became part of the jigsaw of evidence for Wegener's theory of continental drift, now accepted as fact. The exhibition in the centre also shows inter alia the position of 'Scotland' as it wandered about the globe throughout geologic history.

Also near Inchnadamph a number of the members formed a sortie on foot to locate the 'Bone Caves' marked on some maps as 'Prehistoric Caves' along a long uphill track. Conditions were warm and sultry and after an hour or so a diminishing number reached a river system, mostly underground, which appeared to have multiple entry points along a limestone escarpment. In 1889, geologists Peach and Horne excavated the bones of bears, wolves, reindeer and lynx from the floors of these caves; more recently, the bones of four human beings, dating back to 4500 years ago, have been discovered.

A walk to the north of our accommodation took us to the tiny village of Rieff, the end of the single track road, and passed a morning of indifferent weather. Sandpipers and whimbrels were observed on the sandstone beach, where the pebbles were noted

for their roundness. This was followed by a short walk to a small beach at Achnahaird.

Leckmelm gardens, about 3 miles south of Ullapool on the shore of Loch Broome was laid out in the 1880s, and it is from those days that many of the finest rhododendron species and trees date - wellingtonias, cedars, monkey puzzles and a huge weeping beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula'). Some of the trees are record-breakers, including an *Abies amabilis* 40m high, a good *Chamaecyparis*



**Many thousands of seabirds nesting on the  
stacks and cliff crevices of  
Handa Island Bird Reserve**



lawsoniana 'Wissel', a *Thujopsis dolabrata* and a *Kalopanax pictus*, whose presence at such a northerly point may be explained by the mild climate.

The day at Handa Island was especially interesting for the birdwatchers. The immense sandstone cliffs on the west (seaward) side of the island is home to many thousands of seabirds, especially kittiwakes, fulmars, guillemots, razorbills and puffins. Inland were seen a number of great skuas and arctic skuas nesting, together with a variety of smaller birds. A family of red grouse with chicks provided some entertainment. A particularly unusual sighting was a snow bunting, confirmed by the board in the Trust reception hut. Some 3 - 4 hours were spent circumnavigating the



2 of our party exiting from the  
spectacular waterfall area.

island, before the exhilarating 5 minute ride back to the mainland in a 20 seat high speed rib. The island is owned by Scourie Estates and administered by The Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Smoo Cave, near Durness was visited on the same day. Structurally it consists of a partially collapsed sea cave connected with an adjoining cave system hollowed out by an underground river. At the point of connection is a spectacular underground waterfall, which given suitable conditions can be viewed by visitors taking a short underground boat trip. The Cave is formed within Early Ordovician dolostones of the Durness Group (also known as the Durness Limestone). The cave has formed along the boundary between the light grey Sangomore Formation and the dark grey, mottled Sailmhor Formation (sometimes called Leopard Rock), both of which form part the Durness Group succession. Historically and probably prehistorically, the caves have been used by generations of seafarers for various purposes, such as boat construction and repair, storage etc.

After consultations earlier in the week with local expert Cathie McNeilage, who has been present at recent digs of hut circles in the area, arrangements were agreed for her to escort the group around some of the local hut circles and relevant features. The circles viewed were near Achiltibuie and had not yet been subject to 'digs'. We were led around the immediate area and saw a number of circles in somewhat inclement underfoot conditions. Cathie's descriptions did much to help us visualise the prehistoric landscape. These 'already dug' roundhouses are some 3 - 4 miles from where we were and were not readily accessible to us. The locations and outcomes of recent 2012 digs in the area are described in a 38 page booklet entitled 'Prehistoric roundhouses of Wester Ross and parts of Skye' by Jeremy Fenton, acknowledging the inputs from Anna Welti and Martin Wildgoose. RCAHMS broadsheet 3 (Achiltibuie) gives additional information on location and subsequent landscape history.

## SUMMER ISLES I-CUMEN IN

Rebecca Pine

Summer Isles I-cumen in  
Loud sing cuckoo  
Groweth sed and goeth Fred  
And all the Antiquarians to Altandhu.

I-belteth up the greateth Glen  
Nae monsters there the noo  
But thank the Lord at Muir of Ord  
We turned across to Ullapool, and Altandhu.

When we had all I-settled in  
And little else to do  
Among the tribe a one-armed scribe  
Was taking note! Here's what she wrote at Altandhu.

For "Summer Queen" I-headin oot  
Sun shone the whiles  
On ancient rocks and Mo's odd socks  
And seals and whales ad fishy tales among the Summer Isles.

Tanera Mor I-landin on  
Lunch, stamps and loo;  
Then Ullapool, we played it cool  
Before the dash for some stramash along from Altandhu.

To Knocken Crag I-ventured we  
Old rocks to mark;  
A billion years of bog and lochan  
Round where Knocken rose to start a Geopark.

At Inchnadamph I-parketh then  
'Meadow of the Stag'  
Some looked for bones, some viewed the stones  
In honour of yon Peach and Horne of Knocken Crag.

On Monday all I-wandered off  
About the bay and brae  
Till each to Beach meandereth –  
Yet some to Ristol scrambleth, but couldn't find the way!

The all put on their Monty Dons –  
Compost, plant and tool  
The Leckmelm Gardens I-to view  
Along the bonny banks of Broom I-down from Ullapool.

The winding Road I-hurried back  
For in the evening due  
To hear the best from Budapest  
And all the Café Orchestra could do.

Handa Isle I-cumen up  
Loud hoot the owl  
At crack of dawn before the morn  
Was wide awake, for goodness sake, or cheek had found its jowl!

But Handa Isle I-shining was  
From rib to sand and land  
I-beaten track to cliff and back  
Saw razorbills and tormentils and picnics on the sand.

So northward then I-shooting went  
To see the caves of Smoo.  
The sun was hot, the caves were not,  
But still too wet, and so we set our sails for Atlandhu.

The last day at I-proper hour  
(I like that! And you too??)  
We went and found round houses round  
And round about the bog and lochan goo.

And now we meet with cheese and chips  
And eyes a little dewy  
To carry oot another year  
And say farewell to Altandhu, Achiltibuie.

Summer Isles I-goen out  
Soft sing cuckoo  
Timeth fled and so must Fred  
And so must all of us from Atlandhu.

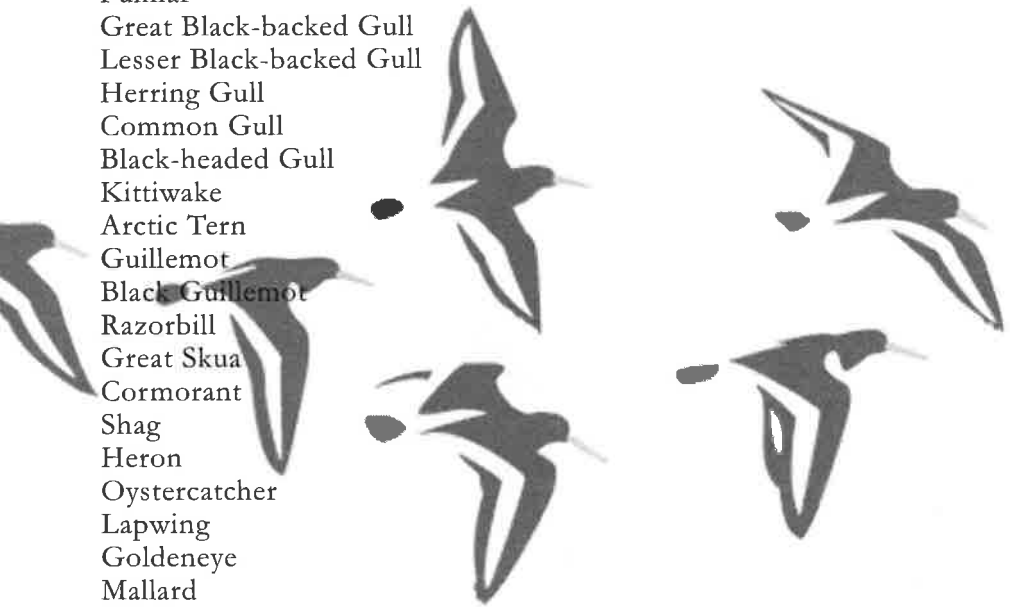


## ALTANDHU BIRD LIST

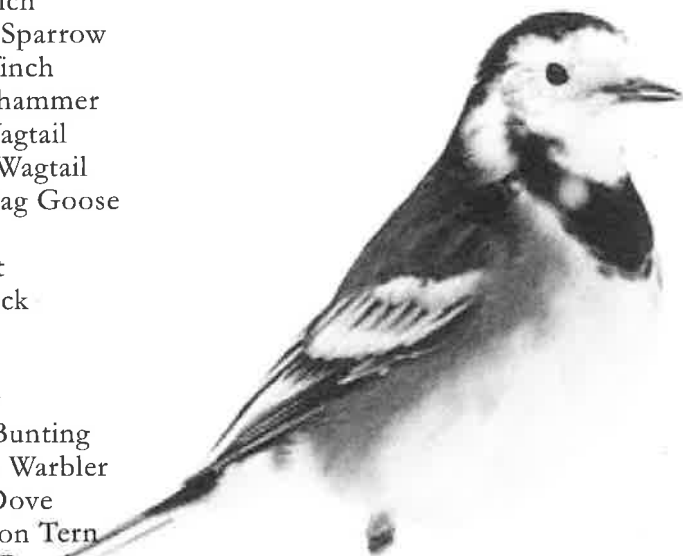
(30 MAY – 6 JUNE 2014)

Morag Rae and Valerie Barker

Red-throated Diver  
Black-throated Diver  
Great Northern Diver  
Fulmar  
Great Black-backed Gull  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Common Gull  
Black-headed Gull  
Kittiwake  
Arctic Tern  
Guillemot  
Black Guillemot  
Razorbill  
Great Skua  
Cormorant  
Shag  
Heron  
Oystercatcher  
Lapwing  
Goldeneye  
Mallard  
Ringed Plover  
Common Sandpiper  
Whimbrel  
Golden Eagle  
Red Grouse  
Buzzard



Kestrel  
Raven  
Hoodie  
Jackdaw  
Swallow  
House Martin  
Skylark  
Wheatear  
Blackbird  
Tree creeper  
Sedge Warbler  
Robin  
Blue Tit  
Great Tit  
Chaffinch  
House Sparrow  
Greenfinch  
Yellowhammer  
Pied Wagtail  
White Wagtail  
Grey Lag Goose  
Wren  
Gannet  
Duncock  
Eider  
Puffin  
Curlew  
Snow Bunting  
Willow Warbler  
Rock Dove  
Common Tern  
Storm Petrel  
Manx Shearwater  
Cuckoo  
Woodpigeon  
Collared Dove  
Starling





Pheasant  
Song Thrush  
Great Spotted Woodpecker  
Meadow Pipit  
Rock Pipit  
Stonechat



## WALKING THROUGH OLD POLTALLOCH

ED TYLER

As ever the summer programme was an interesting one. The June 2014 event took us to the hidden world of Old Poltalloch on the south side of Loch Craignish: a 'first' in that it was a joint event between NHASMA and Lorn Natural History Society.

Gordon Gray Stephens was our host on an excursion that took in the old coach rides for the estate, meadows, burnsides, coast and the ruins of Old Poltalloch House.

We started and ended at the Home Farm, a ruin when Gordon and his family took it on. They went on to construct a beautiful oak cruck frame house.

Gordon was our guide, leading us through a wide variety of habitats which proved fruitful for local biological recorder Carl Farmer. Carl wrote an article in the last issue of Kist encouraging

us to get recording, so it was fascinating to see him at work, pausing every few yards to examine a beetle, use his binoculars to check out a plant in the distance or check out something that someone couldn't identify. The result of all these activities was invariably the making of a shorthand note. Here is a brief summary of what he found...



Gordon leading us among the  
Phoenix trees

"The first bit of woodland we walked through had a very acid flora for a long way and then it changed to a more neutral one with species like Wood Speedwell and Wood Millet.

From there we followed a burn down to the sea and when we were fairly near the coast we saw a couple of Forester Moths, which are a speciality of the Kilmartin-Carnasserie area. The shore where we had lunch was very sheltered and the saltmarsh was dominated by Sea Milkwort. Long-bracted Sedge (*Carex extensa*) was of interest here, and the tall vegetation above the shoreline included stands of Hemp Agrimony.

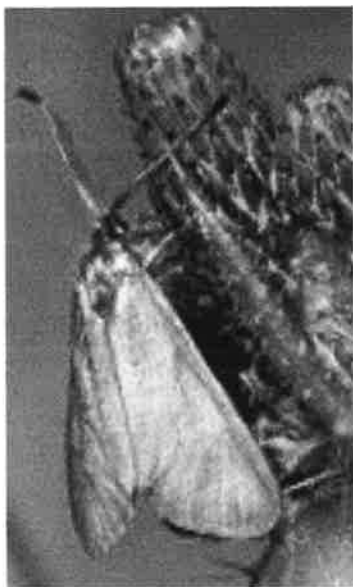
I recorded 155 plant species growing in the wild altogether (did not count planted things like hops and hornbeam), all within the 1 km square NM8000, which is a pretty good total. Obviously having several pairs of eyes present helped with this and that is the value of these walks. We also recorded a few insects, fungi, etc, and noted the potential for recording lichens on a future visit."

Later we came out into an open bracken area interspersed with mature limes which Gordon described as 'Phoenix' trees. Some had fallen over in a gale many decades ago, only to regenerate by sending up several new trunks from what were originally side shoots. Others had layered themselves from old stock which had rotted away.

We then came across the ruins of the old house, which Gordon told us was never actually completed, unlike the estate's infrastructure which had been built first. There was



**Wood Speedwell**



**Forester Moth**

still evidence of the old brewery, sawmill, farm and dovecots.

Another structure to survive is the old walled garden. Most of this has turned to grass, which Gordon manages using his Austrian scythe, lighter than the British version. He also carries out woodland and grassland management to improve biodiversity. Two examples we visited were a flower-rich meadow which he had rescued from bracken, and which that warm sunny midday was full of day-flying moths, and a carriage 'ride' he'd also cleared of bracken. A more varied vegetation was present as a result, including Hay-scented Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris*

*aemula*) which was quite plentiful along one stretch of the track.

Regarding birdlife, some of us think we saw a merlin on the higher ground as we came in. When we stopped for lunch on the coast we saw lots of Canada goose droppings. Gordon explained that their presence now made it difficult for him to quietly approach other wildlife: they honked loudly as soon as they spotted him.

On the way back we paused at the Upper Largie gravel quarry beside Kilmartin: home to one of several sand martin colonies in Argyll. We were able to watch a number of juveniles who had ventured out from their holes and clung on to the loose gravelly cliff face, waiting for their parents to feed them.

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EDWARD TYLER  
DAVE BATTY

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