

NORTH OF SCOTLAND LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER



www.ldwa.org.uk/NorthWestGrampian

No1 AUTUMN 2022

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WELCOME TO YOUR NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS, members of North of Scotland LDWA. This is your newsletter, designed to inform you – our group members – about what is happening in your group. As some of you may know, I stepped down as editor of Strider – the LDWA's magazine – when my five year term of office came to an end in March, at the national AGM held in Leamington Spa. I said at our group AGM in September last year that I would have a bit more time on my hands when I finished with Strider, so I would be happy to produce a newsletter for the group. Well here it is. And I would firstly like to thank Jenni Coelho for helping me to proofread it, and for spotting things I missed. I would also like to thank those colleagues on the NoS committee who have contributed ideas for articles, and for their photos.

As I say above, this is your newsletter, so please send in any articles and photos you would like featured – maybe a walk you have done, a lovely photo you have taken on a walk, or a letter about an issue you feel is of interest to group members. All contributions will be gratefully received. I want to try to make the newsletter as bright and newsy as I can. My email address is above, alongside those of all committee members. Believe me, without your input, there would not be a newsletter. Happy walking!

Graham Smith, Group Secretary and Newsletter Editor

NEW FACES ON YOUR COMMITTEE

NORTH of Scotland LDWA has a new Treasurer and a new committee member following our AGM, held at Edinkillie Village Hall, Dunphail, on Saturday September 24.

Rikky Beck stepped down as Treasurer following several years of very efficient service, and has been replaced by Lorna Sproates. And Dave Galloway stepped down from the committee after a similar period of fine service, during which he organised many highly enjoyable group trips to places throughout our region. The vacant position on the committee has been filled by Margo Forbes, a new member who joined during the summer. The entire group is very grateful for all the hard work put in by Rikky and Dave over so long. And we extend very warm welcomes to Lorna and Margo.

At the meeting, Andrew Thacker agreed to remain Chairman for another year, Graham Smith is happy to stay on as Secretary and John Henderson – described as ‘the engine room of a conscientious and hard-working committee’ by Andrew in his Chairman’s Report – remains as Walks Secretary. Jan Adamson, Bea Jefferson, Pete Mitchell all agreed to serve on the committee for another year, with our former chair Julie Cribb remaining as Speyside 100 Coordinator.

The AGM was preceded by a very pleasant 11 mile walk, led by Pete Mitchell (see photos below), which went along paths high above the rivers Findhorn and Divie, often with sheer drops below of a couple of hundred feet, and at one point we had to cross a bridge which was a little unsteady. Everyone enjoyed it, and we had a very nice coffee stop at Logie Steading. Minutes of the AGM are about to go on our website. It was agreed that next year’s AGM will return to the same venue – Edinkillie Village Hall - on Sunday September 24, with Pete again leading a walk before the meeting.



Taking a break above the river on the pre-AGM walk.



**FAR LEFT:
Iron Man
sculpture at
Dunphail.**

**LEFT: over
the river with
care.**

GROUP SOCIAL WALKS

OUR group website is regularly updated, so always check this for further details of the walks listed below, any last minute changes to walks and information about new walks listed after the newsletter has been emailed. Dogs are allowed on some walks at the discretion of the walk leader, so please always contact the walk leader in advance if you wish to bring a dog on the walk.

Sunday October 30 – Grantown Circular

14 miles, start time 9.30am from the museum car park in Grantown-on-Spey, behind the Grant Arms Hotel (NJ034280). The walk is on good paths and includes woods, river, farmland, views and a couple of short stretches on roads. Leader – Mary Atkinson. Please contact Mary to book - sandal.farm@btinternet.com

Sunday November 13 – Glen Brown Splash

18 miles, start time 9am from the car park on the right at the end of the main street in Tomintoul (NJ168187). Circular walk to Bridge of Avon, taking in Bridge of Brown (via Glen Brown), Dorback, Glen Brown, Bridge of Avon, and Tomintoul. Some of this walk is on part of the Speyside 100m route. Leader – Roger Boston. Please contact Roger to book on rogerboston0@gmail.com

Sunday November 27 – The Great Out Does

16 miles, start time 9am from the car park next to Does Parish Church (NJ601350). Circular route from Does on quiet tracks and minor roads including sections of the Trail of the 7 Lochs and the South Loch Ness Trail. The route can be shortened in poor weather. Leader – Jan Adamson. Please contact Jan to book on jan_adamson@hotmail.co.uk

Sunday December 11 – Christmas Walk and Meal

11 miles, start time 9.30am from the new pedestrian bridge in Lossiemouth (NJ236706). The Christmas lunch will be in one of the local restaurants after the walk. More details will be available nearer the time and will be posted on our website. Please contact the walk leader John Henderson to book - johnhenderson628@btinternet.com

PLEASE GO TO OUR WEBSITE TO CHECK WALK DETAILS –

www.ldwa.org.uk/NorthWestGrampian

MALT WHISKY CHALLENGE

GROUP members rose to the challenge to mark the 50th anniversary of the LDWA.

We asked members to enter our Malt Whisky Challenge: planning and taking part in walks visiting as many distilleries as possible, taking photos – preferably selfies – and posting them on the NoS Facebook page. The aim was to get photos of at least 50 distilleries over the weekend of September 17-18. John Henderson agreed to coordinate everything.



The target had not been reached by the end of that weekend, so the deadline was extended and a group walk was hastily arranged for Sunday September 25 – the day after the NoS AGM – in the Dufftown/Rothes area. This was very successful, and our challenge ended up with photos of 57 different distilleries posted on our Facebook page.

Well done to everyone who took part, and many thanks to John for organising.

A report, and more photos, will be in the December Strider.

ON PREVIOUS PAGE: Pete Mitchell by the Macallan distillery near Archiestown.

LAICH O'MORAY 50

THE LDWA's most northerly event – and the only one in Scotland this year - took place over the weekend of October 1-2.

Our Laich O'Moray 50 was based in Forres, and the 51 mile clockwise route took walkers out of the town to Findhorn, followed by some wonderful coastal walking to Lossiemouth, before turning inland to visit the historic town of Elgin and back to the start via the upland forested area of Heldon Hill and a section of the Dava Way.

We had 30 entrants, with five no-shows and seven retirements. All participants were given goody bags, including whisky miniatures, a postcard of the Moray coast, a ballpoint pen and some shortbread donated by Walkers, which has a factory at Elgin.

Eighteen marshals looked after the walkers, headed by group chairman and event organiser Andrew Thacker, who was based at HQ – the cricket pavilion in Forres' Grant Park – but also found time to visit the checkpoints at Burghead, Lossiemouth, Bishopmill and Rafford. The marshals included two sweepers, Bea Jefferson and Richard Burton.

There were plenty of very appreciative comments from people taking part, and the following remarks – to Andrew from Wendy Thurrell (who finished in the remarkable time of 12 hours 45 minutes) are typical of many we received:

'Just to say a huge thank you to you and all the team for putting on a splendid event on Saturday. I really enjoyed the route with so much to see and you all looked after us so well at the checkpoints. The breakfast was certainly worth walking 50 miles for. Even the weather was fantastic (especially considering the previous 24hrs!). It took me three years to finally get to the event and it was well worth the wait. And even a goody bag at the end - how good is that!

'Thank you again for all your efforts.'

This was the fourth time we had staged the event, and we are planning to put it on again next year. Further news about the LoM will appear on the group website and in the newsletter.

A report, with photos, of this year's LoM will be in the December Strider.

RIGHT: setting off across Grant Park.





LEFT: on their way.



RIGHT: an entrant by Nelson's Tower in Forres.

SPEYSIDE 100

PLANNING is well under way for the Speyside 100 –the LDWA's annual flagship event - which will take place on the weekend of May 25-27 2024, with the marshals' walk scheduled for the weekend of May 4-6.

Due to the lack of a Bank Holiday at the end of May in Scotland, and therefore the unavailability of a school to be used as a headquarters, we are fortunate to have secured the use of the Outdoor Centre at Badaguish (five miles from Aviemore).

The proposed 100 route, which is being planned and walked out, will visit many of the towns and villages in the Spey Valley including Kinraig, Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Nethy Bridge, Grantown-on-Spey and Cromdale, and then across to Glenlivet and Tomintoul.

The entire route falls within the Cairngorms National Park and is conveniently all on OS sheet 36, apart from a small section to the SW around Kinraig/Feshiebridge (OS sheet 35).

There will be some higher ground included in the route, notably at the start where the prominent hill of Meall a' Bhuachaille (810m) will get entrants' hearts pumping as they head up the summit footpath, and later up on to Carn Daimh (570m) on the Speyside Way spur at Glenlivet. The route also crosses the saddle of the Cromdale hills (583m).

We have a keen and committed team organising the Speyside 100, headed by former group chair and current national chair Julie Cribb. The team is meeting regularly, and will be meeting more frequently in the run-up to the event. National 100s Coordinator Sara Dyer is on the team and her advice has been a huge help, and John Henderson has done an immense amount of work on the route and on checkpoints. And we have an excellent logo (pictured left) designed by Rachel Mitchell, daughter of group member Pete. Rachel also designed the North of Scotland LDWA logo.



The event HQ at Badaguish.

WALKING FESTIVALS

GROUP members will be interested to learn that the Festival of Walking and Wheeling Inverness takes place between May 22-28 next year.

Inspired by the success of the annual Moray Walking and Outdoor Festival, – with which NoS committee member Bea Jefferson is involved - it will comprise a week of walks of various lengths. There will also be a drop-in session where members of the walking groups involved with the event can showcase their organisations and talk to potential members, as happened with the Moray festival in June this year, which was followed by an LDWA taster walk led by Bea, where we were able to recruit a couple of new members. Jan Adamson has kindly agreed to lead an LDWA taster walk for the Inverness festival, provisionally set for May 27. Further details about this will appear on our group website and in the NoS newsletter in due course.

Meanwhile, plans for the Moray Walking and Outdoor Festival, taking place between June 16-26, are well under way. For more information and to subscribe to the newsletter for updates, go to www.moraywalkoutdoorfest.co.uk

One of the events being held during the Moray festival will be the Dava Way Association's Ghost Train Walk, which involves walking the 24 miles between Grantown-on-Spey and Forres overnight. This is scheduled for June 24-25. More information will shortly be on the festival website and from the Dava Way Association - <https://davaway.org.uk/>

CAR SHARING ON OUR WALKS

IN view of the high price of fuel, the group's committee is encouraging car sharing on when going on our walks. If any members have ideas about how we can help do this, please contact Secretary Graham Smith (email address above) who will ensure they are discussed.

UPLOADING WALKS ONTO WEBSITE

GPX files of lots of previous NoS walks can now be accessed via our website. The LDWA's national IT team has arranged for Jan Adamson to upload our past walks. Jan has also added a GPX file map to show where some of our previous walks took place. Well done, Jan!

JOHN O'GROATS TRAIL

NORTH of Scotland LDWA members will be interested in the exciting developments with the John O'Groats Trail, a 147 mile long distance path going from Inverness to – you've guessed it! – John O'Groats.

The person behind the JoGT is Jay Wilson. Jay, who hails from Virginia in the US and has lived in Inverness for several years. Jay came to the UK in 2010 and started doing long walks. He started to think about walking from Land's End to John O'Groats, but he realised a lot of work was needed to make a



Part of the John O'Groats Trail at Embo.

proper route from Inverness. So, in his words, he started ‘sorting that out’ – and thus the John O’Groats Trail was born. The Friends of the John O’Groats Trail – a registered charity – was set up in 2016.

As a registered charity, the trail is eligible for various funds, and in the summer its first Trail Manager - Kenneth McElroy - was appointed to oversee its development. Alongside this, there are major plans to develop the trail to make it more walker-friendly and safer, and the entire route is in the process of being walked out by Ron McCraw, who helped develop the John Muir Way in southern Scotland which runs from Helensburgh to Dunbar. Some parts of the John O’Groats Trail run alongside stretches of the A9, and it is hoped these route developments will mean the stretches along this busy road are either avoided or made easier for walkers. For example, one of the ideas being suggested is a pedestrian walkway on the Dornoch Firth bridge to shield walkers from the effects of the traffic.

Various meetings have been held along the trail to consult with people about the plans, and on August 6, our Secretary Graham Smith represented the group at one of these consultations, held in Dornoch. He was very impressed with the developments and told Jay and Ron – who hosted the meetings, along with outdoor leisure consultants Alan Jones Associates – that we supported the plans.

Group members wishing to comment on the trail plans are asked to take part in a survey by going to <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/jogtrail>

WEEKEND IN HEART OF SCOTLAND

IN August, three NoS members – Dave Galloway, Bea Jefferson and Graham Smith – went to Blair Atholl for a most enjoyable joint weekend with members of Heart of Scotland Group. There was a low level walk on the Saturday and a high level one – which involved two Munros, Carn Liath and Braigh Coire Chruinn-bhagain (pronounced corrie kroon vaalakan) – on the Sunday, with a meal at a Blair Atholl hotel on the Saturday evening. Seven HoS members came for the walks, and the weekend was a great success.

We are planning to repeat a joint weekend with Heart of Scotland members next summer, at a date to be decided. The format would be the same – people make their own accommodation arrangements and there will be two days of walks, and a meal together on the Saturday evening. The walks would probably involve hills, but there would be lower level options for bad weather. At the moment we are looking at Ballater being the venue, and Dave Galloway has kindly offered to lead walks on both days. Further details will appear on the group

website and in the newsletter in due course.



Members of both groups descending from the Munro Coire Chruinn-bhagain.

SNAPSHOTS FROM SOCIAL WALKS



BEACH BASHING:
Bea Jefferson and
Jenni Coelho on the
sands at Embo
during the John
O’Groats Trail walk,
from Tain to Golspie,
on August 6.



BE CAREFUL:
Negotiating a little
burn on the group
walk from Nethy
Bridge on August 28.
The walk went on
part of the route of
our Speyside 100.



OVER THE RIVER THEN TIME FOR TEA:
Pictures from the Dunphail Tea and Cakes
Walk on October 9.