

volunteer

THE NEWSLETTER FOR VOLUNTEERS WITH THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND • SPRING 2009

Celebrating Scotland and our International Links



**Inside: Homecoming,
Award - Winning Recipe
and Chief Executive News**



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

The Volunteer

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with the National Trust for
Scotland • Spring 2009

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landscape
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Margaret McRae, Alice Lister and
Megan Combe



Welcome to
the Spring
edition of the
Volunteer. As
2009 is the
Year of
Homecoming,

we thought an international
theme would be appropriate so
that we could explore how
widespread our volunteers are in
the world - whether coming from
a different country to volunteer
with us, or using their expertise
beyond Scotland.

Our volunteers make a huge
contribution to the work of the
Trust from building new fences on
our inspiring landscapes to telling
the stories of our many incredible
properties. It's interesting to note
that our volunteers come not only
from Scotland but also from the
four points of the globe, uniting
on Scottish soil to give back to a
country which means so much to
them.

In the last few months volunteers
and staff have visited interesting
and remarkable countries,
spreading the word about the
work of the National Trust for
Scotland and seeing beautiful

parts of the world. We're also
lucky to have many international
volunteers visit us every year from
Europe, North America and
sometimes even further afield.
Their contribution is much
appreciated in the Trust, as with
all our volunteers, and I look
forward to welcoming more in
2009.

Our newsletter team also reflects
the international nature of
volunteering in the Trust. Mary
Margaret, a Canadian of Scottish
descent, and Alice from Glasgow
have worked together to bring
you this issue with it's
international theme with great
success I think. I'd like to say
'thank you' to both of them for
their hard work.

2009 will undoubtedly be an
exciting and challenging year for
the Trust. At this time of financial
uncertainty we are lucky that we
have such fabulous volunteers,
from the UK and the wider world,
who help us make the National
Trust of Scotland what it is. We
couldn't do it without you.

Violet Dalton
Head of Volunteering

Who are you and what do you do?

Be the star of the next issue of the *Volunteer* and
tell us all about your volunteering. We'd love to
hear from any of our 3,000+ volunteers and find
out your stories of life in the National Trust for
Scotland.

To tell us more about why you do what you do,
where, and who with, please email
mcombe@nts.org.uk, or write to me at the address
on the left. I look forward to hearing from you.
Megan Combe, Volunteer Co-ordinator

2009: A Year of Celebrating Scotland

Scotland's Year of Homecoming marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns and celebrates Scotland's great contributions to the world. The National Trust for Scotland is hosting a variety of events and celebrations in 2009 to mark this occasion, which began with a Burns Supper at our newest property - the Burns National Heritage Park.

On Saturday 24 January *Europe's eye [was] fix'd on mighty things* and turned towards Alloway, where Burns was born on the 25th in 1759. There a Burns Supper was hosted by the First Minister Alex Salmond. On the Sunday there was a day of activities for children including a re-enactment of the hours following Burns's birth and a

birthday party for the Bard (with cake!).

Despite all these festivities it's worth noting that the Year of Homecoming isn't just about Scotland's most famous poet. There are in fact five themes of Homecoming - Burns, ancestry, whisky, golf and the Enlightenment. The Trust has planned events with connections to these themes, although it's not just about one-off celebrations; 2009 sees a year-long programme of events at our properties.

There are activities at Culloden, including a battlefield tour and special exhibitions; a 'Homecoming Cruise' focusing on the five themes; and costumed interpretation events taking place at a number of our properties across Scotland. With the whole country getting involved in Homecoming, the Trust is working with other organisations to encourage



Burns birthday celebrations
visitors from all over the world to come to Scotland. Look-out for more events and Homecoming themes at our properties throughout the year.

As Burns himself said:
*It's guid to be merry and wise,
It's guid to be honest and true,
It's guid to support Caledonia's
cause
And bide by the buff and the blue.*

(Burns: *Here's a health to them that's awa*)

To find out more about the Trust's Homecoming programme visit the website www.nts.org.uk/homecoming



Burns Cottage in Alloway



Volunteers keeping warm cutting gorse

On a cold November weekend, over 25 volunteers braved sub-zero conditions to chop, hack, cut and then burn the gorse invading the beautiful wild flower rich meadows at Kittochside. The volunteers included the Glasgow CVs as well as several Trust staff and their partners. Large areas of wildflower meadows are now gorse-free thanks to their efforts. To keep the busy workers warm a BBQ was laid on with lots of burgers and sausages!

Lindsay Mackinlay, NTS Nature Conservation Adviser, said 'The weekend has made a big impact

Festive Gorse Burning at Kittochside

upon the gorse and it is the start of renewed attempts to keep the gorse in check at Kittochside. I am delighted with the work that was carried out and I have to say it was one of the most beautiful weekends I have worked at Kittochside, with the sun and frost making the whole thing feel very festive.'

A big thank you to all the volunteers who gave up their time to remove the gorse and save some special wild flowers.

The NTS USA Foundation - Supporting Scotland From Far Away

Interviewing Curt DiCamillo and Carolyn Wahto was not like an interview at all, but more like chatting over a cup of tea with old friends. As Executive Director and Assistant Director of the National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA (NTSF), they were more than happy to chat to us about their enthusiasm for the National Trust for Scotland.

You may not have heard about the NTSF before now but their work is invaluable to the Trust, both financially and by promoting our work. The Foundation hosts balls and events throughout the year, including the infamous Highland Fling Ball at Palm Beach, Florida. And they have also helped to secure numerous private donations for the Trust.

Curt believes that many people overseas, with or without Scottish ancestry, can easily relate to

Scotland with its clear identity and distinctive national dress. In addition to this, the National Trust for Scotland embodies the welcoming attitude of the Scots, and truly has something for everyone to be interested in - from social history to battles, and countryside to castles.

For America, as a nation built upon immigration, stories about leaving home for other shores is particularly resonant. The NTSF finds its strengths are in relationship-building and uncovering specifically what it is about Scotland that pulls at a person's heart strings. Through this connection to Scotland, many supporters of the NTSF generously donate their time and money to support initiatives 3,000 miles away across the Atlantic.

Having been established in 2000, the Foundation is not yet a decade old, and while its popularity has grown, engaging younger generations with the cause of the Trust has been difficult. Carolyn believes the success of the Trust, and its overseas affiliates, lies in its ability to engage with young people. The efforts the Trust has already made in modern media outlets such as Facebook, podcasts and online development go a long way to helping all parts of the organisation achieve this goal.

Carolyn adds that for younger people the 'green' aspects of

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA, and to see what events they hold in support of the NTS, log onto www.ntsusa.org

Scotland and the Trust are a big pull and they can particularly connect to environmental and countryside issues, more so than the built heritage. In this way the Trust has a huge capacity to gain support from younger generations, because of its willingness to preserve the environment and wildlife of Scotland. It is with these aspirations in mind that the NTSF seeks to gain support from Americans, with whom Scotland resonates.

In many ways the small office that houses the NTSF in Boston, Massachusetts is similar to our Trust properties and offices in Scotland, particularly in the way it embraces the ideals of volunteering. Although they've only just got their first volunteer (an expat Scot from Greenock!), both Curt and Carolyn are sure that this will pave the way for more. 'It's amazing the difference she makes' Curt exclaims, 'we feel like a proper family now.'

In a year when Homecoming is taking centre stage, the NTSF is also reflecting on the extent of Scottish emigration to the USA, and how the new citizens contributed to the social fabric of the nation. Drawing on the experience and feelings of Scotland, the NTSF, its volunteers and benefactors, prove that for them Scotland, and home, is never too far away.

Photo by Deborah Feingold



Curt Di Camillo, Executive Director of the NTS USA Foundation

Far-Flung Volunteers: Iceland

Skálanes (pronounced Skala-ness) is a private nature reserve which has been established on a farm of that name in south-east Iceland. Veteran Conservation Volunteers (CV) Dave Leslie, Lorna McCartney, and Norma and Peter Coutts answered a call the Trust

received for CV help. They travelled to Iceland to carry out practical conservation work at this incredible reserve.

The work was broadly similar to that on Thistle Camps - removing redundant fencing, tree planting,

and even building a turf wall to screen a new smokehouse. On a day off the Reserve Ranger, Wren Franklin of Dorset, led a walk through the stunning scenery of the reserve, identifying a variety of wildflowers, plants, and some low-growing trees. The setting was idyllic and the week-long trip seemed to go all too quickly.

Apart from the travel fares, the main expense on this independent trip was sightseeing. Despite popular belief, it is easy to have an excellent holiday in Iceland without 'breaking the bank'. For the group who went, returning again to do some work on the reserve is something they look forward to greatly.

For more information about Skálanes, log on to www.skalanes.com.



David, Lorna, Peter and Norma enjoy a break after a long day of volunteering.

Corporate Challenge at Culloden

One wet and windy October day last year saw Lifescan, an international medical supply company, become the first company to undertake a Corporate Challenge at Culloden since the new visitor centre was opened.

The Trust's vision for the management of Culloden Battlefield is to maintain it as it was thought to look at the time of the famous battle - a task made extremely tricky by the constant invasion by scrub and trees from the surrounding land. Once the group had been given a tour of the centre and battlefield, they were then set the task of controlling the encroaching shrub. Though many of the larger areas can be cleared by machine, there are areas where that is not possible and this is where their help was invaluable.

It is often said that Culloden is at its best in grey stormy weather, and this was certainly true for Lifescan's challenge day. With a team of international employees visiting Scotland from all over the world, this was a good chance for their Scottish hosts to introduce them to 'traditional' Scottish weather, humour and hard work!

The international team had soon made great inroads into the scrub - even taking on more than was asked of them. 'Lifescan

were fantastic' said Gavin Kennerley, Outdoor Action Manager, 'the work they did will make a huge difference to Culloden Battlefield'.

After the hard graft, well deserved celebrations in the visitor centre were enjoyed by all!



Culloden Battlefield in the safe hands of Lifescan's international team



You Hold the Key to Our Success

The Volunteering Department has produced a new poster (left) highlighting the work done by the volunteers of the National Trust for Scotland. These posters will be on display in our properties and around your local area - look out for them from March onwards.

We're also always on the look-out for more volunteers to help us carry out the Trust's work. New guides, gardeners, retail assistants and conservation volunteers are always welcome. If you know of anyone who would be interested in volunteering with the National Trust for Scotland why not ask them to get in touch with us.

New Kid on the Eastern Block

Kim Safianoff, the Trust's Thistle Camp Co-ordinator, recently visited Slovakia on a Nature Exchange. This trip was arranged by the Arch Network, a Scottish non-government organisation which promotes learning and development in the heritage sector. Kim's trip allowed her to compare her experiences of the Slovakian heritage sector to our own Scottish system.

During the Cold War years heritage management in communist countries was very different than in the West. Travel between countries was difficult and tourism was not encouraged. Since then these countries have worked hard to promote their natural and cultural heritage sites and embrace tourists from all over the world.

Heritage sites in Slovakia are quite different from their Scottish counterparts. New signage has sprung up promoting the tourist spots, and interpretation is fresh and modern for this fledgling state. A lot of funding has been given from international organisations such as the EU and UNESCO.

Kim visited a fascinating place

called the Nograd Geopark, which straddles the Slovakian-Hungarian border. The fossils of *Ipolarnóc*, also known as 'prehistoric Pompeii', is the main attraction.

Visitors approach the site by walking backwards in time millions of years along a geological study trail. Fossilised shark teeth, petrified tress and footprints of long-extinct creatures are all presented *in situ* as visitors walk through the mixed woodland. At the end, visitors watch an exciting 3D film of the extinct animals, complete with sound effects and moving seats.

Kim's host organisation, Ipel' Union, also works closely with a traditional skills centre in Slovakia. During the Communist era traditional rural skills were not encouraged and there is now a real danger of them being lost forever. The centre encourages older people to practise these skills again and pass them on. Schools in Slovakia and Hungary send



Traditional Slovakian weaving skills

students to learn to weave willow, cook traditional foods and make rugs, jewellery, straw dolls, jams and much more. The centre also works with the Slovakian government to encourage the long-term unemployed back into work by teaching them new skills.

There is no equivalent to the National Trust for Scotland in Slovakia, and many heritage organisations are still poorly funded and lacking in experience in comparison. Slovakia does not have a volunteering culture - yet. However, as more tourists and local people become interested in Slovakia's rich heritage sites there is a possibility for growth in these sectors and a promising future.

News Flash

The National Trust for Scotland has

appointed a new Chief Executive, Kate Mavor, who will take up her post on 1 March 2009.

Kate said, 'It's fantastic to be given this opportunity. I am passionate about Scotland's history and heritage; I've visited its great buildings, walked its hills and coastline and know how much we all owe to the National Trust for Scotland. I feel very privileged to join such an amazing organisation.'



Kate Mavor outside Wemyss House

Kate is no stranger to the world of volunteering either - her previous role was the Chief Executive of ProjectScotland, a national charity that helps young people reach their potential through volunteering. The National Trust for Scotland has been one of ProjectScotland's partners since its inception in May 2005 and has had over 120 ProjectScotland volunteers in collaboration with the organisation.

Before her work with ProjectScotland Kate was the Chief Executive at Language Line, the UK community interpreting service for the public sector. She also has board-level experience in a range of sectors including publishing, educational tourism and market research.

A (Guest) Recipe For Success: Traditional Scots Porridge

This award-winning porridge recipe will warm up any Conservation Volunteer on a cold winter's day. It comes courtesy of Ian Bishop, winner of the prestigious Golden Spurtle award and host of our Culloden Thistle Camp accommodation. Learn more about the award at www.goldenspurtle.com

Ingredients: There are only three ingredients to traditional porridge. Water, porridge meal and salt. I use a medium oat meal in my porridge instead of porridge oats.

Method: The quantity is one smallish cup of porridge meal to three of water and as you start you must stir in a clockwise direction. When the ingredients start to cook, turn down the heat to low to avoid burning - and keep stirring! Then add the salt to taste, no more than a half teaspoon per person. Cook for 4 mins and serve.

To make a luxury version, Ian suggests a dusting of cinnamon and a little honey!

See your own recipe in print! Why not send in your favourite foodie features for other volunteers and staff to try?

In Brief . . .

Did you know?

Our website is being updated and is changing all the time. You can now download your own copy of the Volunteer Handbook from the site, as well as reading news stories and downloading past copies of the *Volunteer*.

Find us at
www.nts.org.uk/volunteering



WWF Earth Hour

At 8.30pm on Sat 28 March, people around the world will turn off their lights for one hour, as part of WWF's Earth Hour. You can join famous landmarks such as the Colosseum in Rome, the Eiffel Tower and Scotland's very own Forth Rail Bridge to show your support for global action on climate change.



Bags of help for pufflings!

Over 100 puffling bags were received by Susan Bain, St Kilda Property Manager, after a national call for help. Volunteers were asked to sew small bags to help rescue wayward puffin chicks this summer on the World Heritage Site. Thanks to everyone who volunteered their time and expertise.



Keep in touch with us

The *Volunteer* is not the only way we communicate with our 3,000+ volunteers. If you'd like to be added to an email list to receive updates, information and bulletins from the Trust please call 0844 493 2407 or email volunteering@nts.org.uk with 'add me' in the title.



The National Trust for Scotland appeals to people of all ages all over the UK, engaging them with the landscape and history of this incredible country. Perhaps less well known is that this same appeal extends over the Atlantic Ocean to people like Bob and Christy Carton, from upper-state New York, who attend Thistle Camps each year, giving something back to a country they love.

Initially, it was an opportunity for them both to get back to their roots, as Christy's mum comes from Scotland and Bob has Irish heritage. And as active volunteers in their own community, they wanted to visit Scotland and give back there too. So in 2003 the pair participated in the popular Fair Isle Thistle Camp. This trip, they say, set the tone for their involvement with the Trust and introduced them to new friends, some of whom they still visit whenever they return to Scotland.

The couple believe that their Thistle Camp experiences have been so incredible because of the

leaders involved who really care about the country, and the local people who come out to support the cause.

When asked what she would say to someone thinking about taking part in a Thistle Camp Christy happily responds: 'Do it! But check your physical abilities first, and persevere.' The Cartons can't find enough great things to say about Thistle Camps and how open and accepting everyone is. Some new skills they have learned are barn building, dry stane dyking and even bat-counting.

Bob and Christy have vivid memories from their Scottish adventures and hope to add more in the future, including the Pitmedden Apple Camp this year. They say of a typical Thistle Camper: 'they're the type of person who does heavy work all day, only to go out for a walk as soon as they've come back from that work!'. Other favourite recollections are watching the land just fall away from the runway when lifting off in an airplane to come back to Scotland and, of course, the sense of homecoming they get wherever they visit.

The thought of Thistle Camps are never far away from this intrepid pair, as the winter months are spent scrapbooking the previous year's camp, and planning the next. Committed and dedicated are words frequently attributed to National Trust for Scotland volunteers, whether from Scotland or beyond, and these terms certainly extend to people like Bob and Christy, who travel from far away to come 'home'.

2009 Thistle Camps have been as popular as ever and are currently full, but you can read more about them at www.nts.org.uk/thistlecamps

A PlaceBook for everyone

PlaceBook Scotland is an exciting new web-based project which aims to capture people's interest in Scotland's places. It hopes to encourage people to think about what gives their place its identity – or 'sense of place' – and get them to capture this in words, pictures and music.

This is your opportunity to create a record of the identity of your place - whether it's a sunny scene at Culzean or a misty vista of Iona! The project has been developed with the support of the National

Trust for Scotland and we even have a keen volunteer helping with the task. Find out more and sign up at www.placebookscotland.com



Photo by Jon Downie

Iona Sunset