



Portmoak Community Woodland Group

Review of the year, October 2021 - September 2022

Web-site

New design went live. Thanks to Louise for coercing her nephew Michael into doing the hard work.

Apple Day: 3 October 2021

We finally got back on events again and there was a good turn out. Lots of apples, lots of juice, a beautiful French tart in attendance and everybody pleased to do something that seemed like normal again.

Birch Pulling: November 2021

While everyone else was planting trees for COP 26 we were pulling them out. Members of Portmoak Community Woodland Group were joined by a dozen from the Lothians Conservation Volunteers, who specialise in jobs like restoring peat bogs and who've had a long association with our group. Michael McGinnes, the event organiser, said: "With so much help we achieved twice as much as we expected and considerably more than on previous events, so it was highly successful. A big thank you to the Lothians Conservation Volunteers."

Christmas Tree Day: 12 December 2021

About 160 people came and as well as finding their trees everyone enjoyed the social part too - eating cakes and talking about peat bogs and Moss restoration. One of our best bits of feedback was "Our tree is perfectly imperfect! "

Birch Pulling: 19 January 2022

Portmoak Community Woodland Group welcomed 'Wednesday volunteer team' and staff from government agency, NatureScot, on Wednesday, 19th January, to help with the bog restoration project in Portmoak Moss.

The 'Wednesday volunteers' normally work in the Loch Leven National Nature Reserve, carrying out jobs like path clearance and meadow management. Neil Mitchell, Reserve Manager, said: "We don't normally get to work on a bog and it's nice to do something to help one of our neighbours."

Michael McGinnes, who organised the event, said that the NatureScot volunteers had covered over 90% of the area we were trying to clear, that was nearly 3000 square metres of quite difficult terrain, with many larger birch trees. Over the past 4 years, with 'a little help from our friends' about a quarter of the central peat dome has now been cleared.

New rest points for weary legs

The Woodland Trust Scotland installed a lovely bench on the main path up towards the Bishop, near to the viewpoint indicator. The viewpoint indicator was also repaired by members of the PCWG.

A bench dedicated to the memory of our friend and long term group member Jim "Shep" Shepherd is now in place, looking across the peat dome.

Friends of Mandy Maxton provided a bench on the Moss in her memory.



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Portmoak Festival: May - June 2022

The Portmoak Festival was back in action this year and we were pleased to support it by hosting some events in our Community Orchard.

Sunday 29th May. Tunes in the Trees. Local folk musicians performed in the orchard.

Sunday 5th June. Marje Smith conducted a guided walk starting in the orchard. We've been delighted by the success of a booklet for children, called Bogtastic, and Marge launched a new, companion booklet, this time for Kilmagad Wood, called Treetastic, which is equally full of puzzles and fun activities.

Sunday 12th June. Jazz on a Summer Afternoon. Dave Batchelor, trombonist and member of Portmoak Community Woodland Group, was there with his band performing lots of toe-tapping music.

Captain Carbon flies again! June 2022

This is a companion to our popular 'Bogtastic' booklet, in which Captain Carbon takes youngsters on an adventure round Portmoak Moss. The new one is called 'Treetastic' and once again Captain Carbon - a climate change superhero - invites you to use your senses to see, smell and hear the different kinds of plants and birds that live in the wood.

In the centre of the booklet there's a map with points of interest to discover and by the end of your adventure you should be able to identify some of the different trees which grow there. The booklets are available in a dispenser just inside the main entrance gate, across the road from Portmoak Kirk car park.

We are the 'champignons': 28 September 2022

Perfect weather and good numbers of fungi - what more could you look for in a 'fungal foray'?

Perhaps an expert guide to open your eyes, not to mention your sense of taste and smell, to the wide variety of mushrooms and toadstools in Portmoak Moss.

We were lucky to have all those things on Sunday 28th August when Dr Tony Lyon, from Kishorn, led 36 members of the public on a guided walk in the Moss. The event was organised by Portmoak Community Woodland Group whose chair, Jeff Gunnell, promised exquisite knowledge and understanding from our guide and an exquisite experience for the rest of us. He wasn't wrong.

Birch Pulling: 18 September 2022

And one last big effort. 9 members of the Bog Squad, 6 from Lothian Volunteers, 10 members of the public and a large number of our group made a huge impact on birch regen. About 35% of the peat dome has now been cleared of birch and looking at the effectiveness of manual removal, we can easily see that it gives much better and longer lasting results than chemical treatment.

Himbal bashing

Another great success due to individual and team efforts. Greatly reduced intrusion by Himalayan balsam this year - we're getting the benefits from our efforts in previous years.



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Community Newsletter: all year

Louise kept our contribution up throughout the year. Even when there wasn't any actual news.

Chris's Place

Ongoing maintenance by Dave C. is keeping the grass in good nick and it's being used by many play groups, just like we wanted.

Burns event

We didn't hold an event in this period.

New faces at Woodland Trust Scotland

Our site manager for the last 12 years or so, Gary Bolton, has moved on to other activities in the Woodland Trust. Gary put a tremendous amount of effort and energy into The Moss and Kilmagad Wood and his contribution was recognised by presenting him with a book (about trees of course, as if he didn't already know everything that there is to know), having dinner in his honour and descending into drunken revelry.

Gary's successor is Tara Fraser and we're looking forward to collaborating with her in the same way. So far we're off to a good start.

Also new at WT is Alastair Seaman, the new Director for Scotland. We invited him for a tour of the Moss and Kilmagad early in his tenure and we discussed the big picture and our ideas for a long term vision.

Summary

- Continued communication with the community about what we're doing on their Moss and in their woodlands.
- Organising live events about our local nature and environment.
- Engagement with appropriate groups and community initiatives.
- Doing work to make things better.
- Working with the Woodland Trust to keep everything on track. And the WT have carried out some excellent projects.