

## Speech by Douglas Wilson, Chair, at the Opening of the Octagonal Shelter

I want to thank you all for coming along today. I don't do many speeches, but my wife does, so I asked her if she had any advice. She said don't worry about the speech, no one will remember what you said. Somehow that feels quite liberating.

This is the part where I get to thank the people who made this possible. Lots of people helped, but I will try to keep the speech short.

Even with the volunteer help, a structure like this costs money to build and so we have to thank those who provided financial assistance: The Forestry Commission supported this as a training and skills project, and I think we can agree everyone who worked on it learned a great deal. Kiltearn Community council supported it as a community project providing a new amenity for the village. We also received valuable support from the Dingwall Windfarm cooperative, Global Energy and Deep.

Other businesses and organisations have supported us with gifts in kind, Macdonald Scaffolding helped keep the team safe working at heights, Pat Munro provided Heras fencing which kept adventurous weans safe. The coop has provided catering for this event and for the Horse logging day. Thanks also to Ronald and Roland of Novar Estate for the indispensable telehandler and to Stan Armstrong of Global for the steel footings which hold everything else up.

I can see that many of you were here in June last year when Simon Dakin and Tarzan moved the heavy logs to the build site, Most of the timber in the construction was windblow left by a storm. Since then, David Smith, Kennie McCusker and Paul Mooney have selected, felled and prepared a lot of timber. By now they are on first name terms with most of the trees in this area and the windblow area, which was nearly impassable is now a lovely glade with a path running through it.

With the timber felled, the rest of the build required Precision and Perspiration.

Precision was needed for the structural engineering calculations and this was done by ... The round wood design, joint measurements and precision woodworking were by Henry Fosbrooke who had previously led our cabin build. The care Henry takes in his work, his patience with the more handless among us and his calm, problem solving approach have been a joy to watch. And when after months of cutting joints, the structure was assembled and every joint fitted in depth, angle and line. It was a huge relief - it was also a testament to Henry's careful work. We also helped on site by the engineering expertise of Don Fraser. Before he volunteered with us, his last job was on the Queensferry Crossing, so he was a bit over qualified for this project and boy did we benefit from that. From surveying the site and building scale models, to tractor driving, diplomacy and identifying a suitable borrow pit for gravel, Don was always busy. Seeing Henry and Don working together and bringing their experience to bear on a problem was a real pleasure.

The perspiration was hauling the remaining logs from the felling sites, then barking, cleaning and preserving them You can get a sense of the work involved by looking at the person high bark pile behind the shelter. Lots of you will have been persuaded to take a turn at these tasks, but much of the work was done by school groups from Dingwall, Tain and Invergordon, led by our Education Officer, Simon Harry with the heavy lifting done by our tireless Volunteer Group led by Adrian Clark. Once we started work on the spiderweb of purlins which support the sarking of the roof, every log was measured, selected and cut by David Smith. Some of those logs were a very long way away. The story that we were taking the logs for a walk to keep them fit, was just a scurrilous rumour.

The community Payback team, led by Alastair Stewart were a huge help with the heavy work too, with Alastair leading by example. When Alastair first saw the shelter assembled he looked at it for a few seconds and said “Not bad for a bunch of Old Gits”.

And although a lot of people have contributed time and energy to the project, there was always a core group who could be found here, rain or shine pushing the stone up the hill. If you were out for a run or walking the dog or forest bathing, then you'll recognise them.

David Smith, Project Manager and our previous chair. From felling to turfing, he was working at every point of the project. (The irrepressible and irreplaceable Mr David Smith)

Alan Johnstone. Just like the shelter had to be built on a solid foundation, every team needs someone who never crumbles or grumbles. (The unflappable and unstoppable Mr Alan Johnstone).

I've spoken about Don Fraser's work as an Engineer on this project, but he was a hard grafter too. The man you want in your corner. (Master of Meticulosity, Mr Don Fraser)

Day after day Adrian Clark was prepping the timber, and anyone who was passing was likely to get some hands-on experience with the draw knives. All this while carrying on the day-to-day secretary's work. (The Ubiquitous Mr Adrian Clark)

Kenny McCusker was a one-man support team, keeping a warming fire going in winter, and preparing the team's lunch as well as providing counsel and counselling when things got tough. (The woodsman's woodsman, Mr Kenny McCusker)

So much time given to an obsession might be a difficulty for some partners, but Padmolka, Betty and Barbara solved that problem by rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck in. For some, this included heaving saturated 15 Kg turfs onto the roof, without a word of complaint.

So many people have helped make this possible, if I named them all it would take so long you'd be throwing sticks at me. So to the planners, designers, engineers, financiers, volunteers, tree fellers, log luggers, bark strippers, tractor drivers, surveyors, diggers and riggers, scaffolders and fencers, woodworkers caterers, roofers and turfens. Look what you made ... Give yourselves a round of applause.