



October 2022

10th Anniversary

NEWSLETTER

- **Events: Concerts & Year of Stories**
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Events

We held 5 **concerts** over the summer months with support from Kiltarn Community Council's Windfarm grants. First off was the Fyrish String Quartet, a founder member of which is from the Dingwall area. This was held at the cabin area, the 4 others at the Mag's Wood shelter where good use was made of the covered space (with the relaxation of Covid rules). Evanton Coop provided refreshments at each of the events. Proceeds from this concert (£180) went to the British Red Cross Ukraine Appeal. The North Atlantic Project, 2 of whose members have recently moved to Evanton, attracted a large crowd for the second concert. The Fèis Rois Cèilidh Trail returned this year for their 4th visit with fresh faces and amazing talent. Moteh Parrot, from Inverness, has 2 members of his band who live in Evanton; the foursome performed to a very appreciative crowd with support slots by local artistes. The final concert celebrated the 10th Anniversary of community ownership of the wood. Siannie Moodie, on clarsach, was accompanied by 2 local musicians and by Lizzie MacDougall telling traditional tales and followed in fine style by the Blackrock Ceilidh. This event, which included pancakes and games, raised £420 for makeaseondscount a charity giving hope to women and men living with secondary breast cancer.

Year of Stories

A grant from Scotland's Year of Stories allowed us to bring Creeping Toad to the wood for storytelling sessions with nearly the whole of Kiltearn Primary. Also to put on a range of open events including with Bob Pegg (midsummer stories) and Sitakumari (stories from The Heartstone Odyssey), plus one pond-dipping event to replace a session with one Covid affected storyteller. These attracted modest but appreciative audiences. The local Highland Council Ranger has also run a nearly monthly stories by the fire session in the Dell area.

YEAR OF
STORIES
— 2022 —

Our 2 remaining storytelling events are:

- Halloween Stories & Music with Christina Stewart at 6.30pm on Sat 29th October (bring your own neep lantern)
- Winter stories with Bob Pegg as part of the Winter Woodland Torchlit Family event on Wed 21st December from 5.30pm.

The **Inverness Bat Group** ran an introductory session for all-comers in September and we were fortunate to be able to see and monitor (on the handsets) pipistrelle bats on the main path and at the pond. We intend to place some additional bat boxes in the wood.

Friday Futures

The weekly sessions for people living with dementia has continued without a break since the start of the year. 7 people on average attend each Friday session to engage in practical and creative activities, led by artists, musicians, storytellers, makers, and assisted by our own volunteers. The participants are often able to take away their own creations such as memory cushions, mallets, paintings and portraits and to be part of projects with outside links. Hot food is normally cooked on site with the active involvement of the group. The participants have also helped to make sets of wooden skittles which get frequent outings and encourage out a friendly, sometimes hilarious, competitive atmosphere.



The funding from Life Changes Trust came to an end at the start of the year. The outstanding balance was, with permission, put towards 1st Aid training for 7 volunteers and the purchase of a defibrillator which is planned for the Diamond Jubilee Hall or The Chapel. Since then, the Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund has allowed the project to thrive. We are always open to new participants, both those with dementia and carers. Information [here](#).

Schools

Dingwall Academy continue to come the woods each week to undertake practical and creative outdoor tasks as part of the John Muir Trust bronze award. These sessions are led by ourselves but the staff are increasingly in a position to take a lead.

Kiltearn Primary have made many trips to the woods in recent weeks. P3/4 have been doing a project 'What lives in the woods' and both 3/4 and 4/5 have been part of a Scotland's Year of Stories project run by ourselves. Storyteller and artist Lizzie MacDougall has been sharing stories with them in the woods (sometimes round a fire – fortunately the weather has stayed mainly dry) and encouraging the children to tell their own stories and create drawings, which are to be compiled into a storybook that each of the pupils will receive.

Other Groups

Branching Out, an innovative outdoor activity programme available to adults who use mental health services in the Highlands, have been making good use of the woods - particularly at the Mag's Wood shelter, over the past 2 months and we look forward to welcoming them back for future programmes. We have led a green woodworking session and started them off on weeding of western hemlock saplings.

We had a busy summer with visits by Milton Holiday project, Alness Active Schools, Woodland Adventures, Evanton Community Trust, and led activities for Homestart Highland and for Creative Hands (Ullapool). More recent groups have included Care & Learning Alliance, Tarbat Old Nursery, North Highland OWL and some private bookings. It was also good to see a gathering of several Syrian families making good use of the river bend area, having been introduced to the woods several years ago. Various walking groups have also made visits and the Rangers and Scouts make regular visits.

Play Area

The net swing, an idea proposed by the nursery group, was opened at the end of April, (the project having been overseen by Don Fraser), with attendance by Evanton Nursery, Kiltearn Primary and the Friday Futures group. It has since proved a great hit with all ages.

Some items of play equipment have come to the end of their natural lives and are now due to be replaced, a current project for the volunteers.



Volunteers

A small team of volunteers continue to meet on Fridays and occasional other days to undertake projects and carry out maintenance etc. 2 have recently put themselves through the 5-day certificate course in the use of chainsaws, with the support of the wood (our policy is to allow chainsaw use in the wood only by those who have this certificate). A

current project is the levelling and re-seeding of an area at Mag's Wood to enable easier dancing.

Responsible Use

The wood suffered minor episodes of vandalism in the early summer but has since been largely free from such acts. It is dispiriting when people leave cans and bottles (some broken), burn a good wooden chair, break into the 'secure' toilet holder, take toilet rolls etc., particularly given the amount of volunteer time that goes into making the wood an accessible and friendly place for all. It is good to note that teenage drinking groups appear to have become more responsible in recent months.

The board has recently adopted a policy of requiring dogs to be kept on a lead at events and in and around the play area.

Acknowledgements & Thanks

Dee for ongoing care of the toilets

Practical volunteers: Logan, Bryan, Alan J, Don, Alan C, Andrew, DW, AC.

Events Support Group: Penny, Trish, Dee, Blandine, Celina; plus Tom, DW & Esther

Friday Futures: Blandine, AC, plus Jo and Barbara and Willie Fraser

Friends of Evanton Wood for their regular donations.

Want to Help?

[Become a Member](#) (Annual £10; Lifetime £30; £50 for couples)

Join the [Friends of Evanton Community Wood](#)

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AGM

The annual general meeting is to be held on **Mon. 7th November at 7.30pm** in **Cornerstone**. All are welcome to attend and enjoy a special cake and drink to celebrate our 10th Anniversary. The agenda and nomination papers are available [online](#) and from 7 Camden St.

Current Directors: Douglas Wilson (Chair), Penny Gray (Treas.), Deirdre James (V. Chair), Adrian Clark (Sec.), Blandine Lynch (Membership Sec), Celina Peoples, Tom Mathieson, Tricia Snow. 2 directors stand down before each AGM and may be eligible for renomination or co-option depending on length of service. Paid up members may be nominated as directors.