



DUNNET HEAD EDUCATIONAL TRUST

CAITHNESS & SUTHERLAND WALKING FESTIVAL

The weather was kind to us for the sixth Caithness & Sutherland Walking Festival which took place between 2-9 May. The first part of the walk at Dunnet Head, led by Jim Coll, was accompanied by live pipe music played by Leslie Campbell of the Wick RBLs Pipe Band and this will appear on the DVD about Dunnet Head due out shortly. There was a downpour just before the start of the walk, followed by beautiful sunshine, which goes to prove that if you don't like the weather in Caithness, wait a minute.....

Our Canadian visitors couldn't believe that they were "piped off" at the beginning of the walk, and were then invited to tea and cakes at the Dunnet Head tearooms. We really made their day! Our thanks to the Forestry Commission, RSPB (Forsinard), the Caithness Field Club, Step it up Highland, Billy Manson (Halkirk) and the Highland Council Ranger Service (Sutherland) for cooperating to make the festival a success.

DVD

The first part of the filming for the DVD took place over the weekend 2/3 May. A local person has agreed to do the voice over, and this, together with accompanying pipe music from the Wick RBLs Pipe Band, gives the DVD a real flavour of Caithness. The birds put on a good show for us, as did the seals in Brough bay and the Highland cows in Brough village. Many thanks to David Glass for his agreeing to be filmed fly fishing, and to the walkers on the walking festival. We got some really good footage of Dunnet Beach and Forest, as well as activities on the Beach – surfing and paragliding. Sadly our aerial photography had to be abandoned due to high winds. The DVD will be available from local outlets and on line from our new web site under construction. The trip by RIB from Wick to Brough Bay was also cancelled due to unfavourable wind and sea conditions. We did however manage a trip from Dwarwick Pier to Castletown Harbour thanks to North Coast Marine. Advance copies can now be ordered – cost £8.50 + £1 postage and packing - and includes a free guide book. Please make cheques payable to the Dunnet Head Educational Trust, and send to our administration office at Monlettie Croft, Street of Monteath, Methlick, Aberdeenshire, AB41 7JS.

Information Shelter – the facility is again proving very popular with local people and tourists alike, and is a valuable community resource for posters and information about the area. A new range of walks is available in the box on the shelter, together with maps and other information about the area.

Community groups in the Dunnet area are welcome to use the shelter for their notices, businesses are asked for a donation towards the upkeep of the shelter.

Seal viewing platform – the pathway to the seal viewing platform between Little Clett and Windhaven has been maintained by the owners of Windhaven, as two of the Trustees. The seal viewing plaque is now in situ, as is the seat near the bridge overlooking Brough Bay. The latter provides a great sheltered place for visitors and local people to view Brough Bay and a nice spot to sit and ponder the magnificent views across to Orkney. Many people use the path to the Bay, making a nice short circular walk of the village.

PROJECTS FOR 2009

. Working with a London based university to analyse the use of Google Earth for community benefit and implement online tours of Caithness which will be able to be viewed by the millions of people who use Google Earth. We will be able to integrate the work with the DVD through You Tube and Google maps. The Trust has been granted a one year Google Earth Pro license key, which offers the power of high resolution printing, moviemaking and data import. This will assist us in integrating all the information we have about walking, wildlife, history, archaeology and other aspects of the Head, as well as photos and movies.

. Launching exhibitions. Our first desktop exhibition was launched in Wick TIC just before Easter. Many thanks to John MacAllan of MacAllans Highland Wear, Wick, for working with us to provide this facility. The first exhibition displaying the WWII plans of Dunnet Head and Burifa Hill, as well as other photographs and paraphernalia from WWII will be launched in the Stromness Library for two weeks (17-31 July) which encompasses Stromness Shopping week (19-25 July), in Kirkwall Library as a poster campaign and at Caithness Horizons from 28 September to 12 October. The exhibition is the first "Hands across the Firth" project launched by the Trust in a campaign to forge links with Orkney and benefit from their very successful marketing. Information is entered on the Orkney Tourist Group web sites and the Trust is already benefitting from membership, having received a kind donation from the Stromness branch of the British Legion towards the costs of the exhibition.

. The Highland Council have kindly given their permission for the renovation of the bus stop at Brough, so we are planning an upgrade with plants and flowers to make an attractive point of entry to the most northerly point of the UK mainland! Volunteers are needed to help carry this project forward.

. Work has commenced on the development of a new web site which will be completed shortly.

OUTCOME OF LOCAL MEETING IN BROUGH ON 2ND APRIL

Some of the villagers attended a meeting at the Dunnet Head tearooms to discuss the Trust's projects. The outcome of this was that we found a volunteer to do the voice over for the DVD and a fly fishing demonstrator. Other village business was discussed, including the necessity for a village newsletter. It was suggested that the web site UK Villages was used for this purpose. Communications about the dates of the Grazings Committee meetings are not published, nor is information about the Dunnet Head Fishing Assn. The Brough Bay Association published a very nice brochure about their activities which was delivered to every household in Brough. It was suggested that the information shelter in Brough could be used more extensively for community group activities.

DUNNET & CANISBAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The community council meet once per month to discuss items of local interest. You can see their web site at <http://www.dunnetandcanisbaycc.org/> for further information.

DUNNET HEAD FIRE - Significant fire damage has been caused to Dunnet Head, a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its cliff habitat and nesting seabirds, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) can now confirm. Dunnet Head SSSI is a part of the North Caithness Cliffs Special Protection Area (SPA) which contains a part of one of the largest seabird colonies in the area. Species nesting there include kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills, puffins, fulmars, shags, cormorants and gulls. The effect on seabirds at the site is still being assessed. Cliff erosion due to the fire may in turn affect nesting birds.

SNH staff have visited the site and determined that the fire that took place at Dunnet Head in April has resulted in damage to more than a quarter of the Site of Special Scientific Interest. Maritime heath and cliff top habitats have been badly damaged. These are slow-growing habitats which are found in a limited area along the cliff tops. The habitats support unusual plants such as Spring Squill and Scottish Primrose.

A stretch of about five kilometres of the west coast of Dunnet Head from just south of The Neback in the north to Rowrash in the south was burned. The area of cliff top affected is reckoned to be 750 hectares.

It is uncertain how long the habitat will take to recover as it depends on the intensity and severity of the blaze. Substantial stretches have been completely burnt to the cliff edge. At an exposed coastal site like Dunnet Head, erosion as a result of the fire could result in the permanent loss of vegetation in some areas. Source: SNH (part of the recent press release reprinted here with their permission)

ORKNEY TOURISM GROUP

As members of OTG, we have been invited to the launch of the new “Gateway to Orkney” display at the Scrabster terminal and will no doubt make some good contacts promoting Caithness, in particular Dunnet Head, as a tourist destination.

PUBLICATIONS

A guide to Dunnet Head is available on our web site at <http://www.iberacal.com> under “Publications” – cost £4.50. The publication includes the plans of the WWII installations at Dunnet Head and Burifa Hill. If you would like a copy of the guide, or any of the other publications listed below, please send SAE to Windhaven, Brough, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 8YE. Cheques should be made payable to the Dunnet Head Educational Trust. Alternatively you can download them from the site.

There are a number of self guided walks in the area on <http://www.walkingworld.com> which take in Mary Ann’s Cottage, Dunnet Forest and other local attractions and they also include information about the geology, geography, archaeology and wildlife of the area. There is a whole Caithness section.

Another guide is 10 Tours of Caithness & Sutherland by Public Transport which can also be found at <http://www.iberacal.com/publications.shtml>.

SOME USEFUL LINKS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE DUNNET AREA

Geography - <http://www.geograph.org.uk/>

Archaeology - <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/>

Birdlife - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/d/dunnethead/index.asp>

Accommodation - <http://www.dunnethead.iberacal.com>

Coastal defences - http://www.subbrit.org.uk/sb-sites/sites/d/dunnet_head/index.shtml

Lighthouse - <http://www.nlb.org.uk/ourlights/history/dunnethead.htm>

SSSI - <http://www.snh.org.uk/scottish/nhighland/specialPlaces/places12.asp>

All of these are accessible through our blogspot at <http://dunnethead.blogspot.com/>

APPEAL

Thank you to those people who have recently donated funds to the Trust. The appeal in the last newsletter for funds to enable us to frame the plans of the WWII plans was a great success, and we are now seeking funds to frame the photographs and mount materials for our first major exhibition in July. We are currently raising funds for our guidebook to accompany the exhibitions with the WWII theme, as well as a poster campaign.

If you would like to support the Trust, please complete the form below and send it to us with your cheque.

Name:.....
(Please print)

Date:

Address:

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Send to: Dunnet Head Educational Trust, Monlettie Croft, Street of Monteach, Methlick, Aberdeen, AB41 7JS



Registered Scottish Charity No. SC035021

Registered office: Windhaven, Brough, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 8YE

Web site: <http://www.dunnethead.co.uk>