

FOSSnews

The Newsletter of the Friends of Strathaven Scouts

Twenty Years of FOSS and Our Legacy



Explorers cycling back from a sunrise climb of Loudoun Hill.

Take a look top and left. You know, one of those bits of the newsletter you never look at. It's the 20th edition.

Hard to believe isn't it? I have a distant memory of a meeting, years ago, where we were discussing what FOSS was going to be called. Since that time the committee has raised tens of thousands of pounds for the Group, initiated the Round Strathaven 50, now a huge local event, and helped former Scouts connect at annual reunions.

I suppose that FOSS has become something of an institution now. Many of you members don't do more than have a standing order to contribute funds and receive this newsletter every year. I often thank leaders and helpers

in this editorial, but on our 20th anniversary I want to thank you.

You support the Group in a genuine significant way. The annual £15 subscription goes directly to the Scout Executive Committee to help it to support the various Sections of the Group and to assist with the maintenance of the Scout Hall. This, in turn, helps to allow the current youth of Strathaven to enjoy the absolute best of what Scouting can offer.

Thus I'd like to appeal to the non FOSS members reading this newsletter to consider joining. I'd also like to take this opportunity of thanking those present members who generously pay more than the £15 annual subscription. A Bankers Order and Gift Aid can be downloaded from the FOSS Website and

e-mailed to Iain Park if you wish to join or donate more (e-mail P16).

While most of you aren't leaders, indeed I haven't been for over a decade myself, you contribute to an important part of the development of the youth of Strathaven. You only need to read the article by Craig Thomson and those other youth contributors to see this.

There is no shadow of a doubt that my experiences in Scouting form a significant part of who I am. I'm sure, if you consider it, that the same is true for you. This, for me, is why it's so important that FOSS exists. While many of you will never attend a reunion weekend (although I would encourage you to do so!) or run a marathon with FOSSAS you are enabling today's youngsters to enjoy incredible experiences that will challenge and develop them and that they'll look back on fondly for the rest of their lives.

By way of bragging, you will see in the newsletter an article about my Munro completion. I wouldn't have ever done that without Scouting. More to the point, some of the Ventures I led have, as adults, excelled at climbing and were willing to help me to make it an incredible day; dragging me up a climbing route I simply couldn't have managed without them.

The impact that Scouting has passed down the generations. Some of my compatriots and former Ventures already have, and will have, their own children. No doubt they will encourage them to enjoy Scouting whether in Strathaven or elsewhere. That's the legacy of what we do and long may that legacy continue.

Matthew McVeigh

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Thursday Cubs Fun Filled Year

Cillia McCleary reviews camping, Cub Commonwealth Games and an underwater sleepover!

Thursday cubs have had another eventful year. We have worked on quite a few badges, taken part in the Biggest Coffee Morning in the World (although we did it on a Thursday night though, just to be different), went on a night hike or two and slept in the hall. All this and normal Thursday activities as well!

Probably the hardest badge that we did was the D.I.Y. badge during which the cubs made a key rack and a book shelf. The boys learned about tools, how to use them and look after them properly. They sawed, sanded, painted and screwed together bits of wood and produced fantastic shelves which would take centre stage in B&Q! While the cubs enjoyed this experience the leaders envisaged trips to Hairmyres Hospital which thankfully never materialised.

Our McMillan support night involved a camp fire in the hall to which we invited parents and friends to join us to be entertained, join in the fun and of course to have hot chocolate and cakes. The cubs had a great time and some of the parents remembered the songs and sketches from their time in Scouts; the old songs



Ben learning to foot draw as part of the disability awareness badge at Cub Camp..

are still the best.

This year we went to the Sea Life Centre in Balloch but with a difference. We spent the evening learning about the fish and animals, saw Shark Tale in the cinema and then slept in the tunnel with the sharks, fish, turtles etc. swim-

ming above us all night. Max got a really special medal for being best cub by always asking good questions and being really interested. It was an exciting night and even the leaders were impressed. Definitely a trip to remember.

However, the highlight of the year is always the camp. This year we were a bit taken aback – it didn't rain! The weather over the whole weekend was glorious. The theme this year was the Commonwealth Games. We did invent a game or two, for example volleyball with water balloons (personally I think the Olympics would benefit from this sport).

The boys earned quite a few badges including their backwoods cooking, athlete, camper etc. Perhaps the one they learned the most from was the disability awareness badge where they learned how to draw with their feet and also how to sign a song. I have to say that the boys learned the signs faster than Calum and Jamie, our young leaders.

I am delighted to say that, as he did last year, one of the dads volunteered to come along and do the cooking for us. Brendan tells us that he enjoys camp and can come back to help again next year, thank you so much Brendan, you're a star!

Lastly can I thank the people who come down every week to help – Eleanor, Roger, Jamie (our new Scout helper) and of course all of the parents who bring the cubs down every Thursday. We couldn't do this without your help.



Hardly crown green, but enjoyable bowling nonetheless at the Cub Camp Commonwealth Games!

Beaver Colony

Fiona Campbell ('Mrs C') reports on Beavers bouncing, biking and gaining green fingers.

Last year was another good one for the Thursday Beaver Colony. We had several teenagers along to help as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award, this is a good way to allow the Beavers to get an idea of how Scouting is for life not just for a couple of years!

Adam Stephenson, Abbie Miller, Craig Thomson and Maria Spidaro along came along and helped the boys to work towards several badges including Healthy Eating and Keep Fit. They also took part with great enthusiasm in the various party nights held over the year and had a young leaders race on the space hoppers at our Family BBQ in the summer.

This year we decided to give something back to the community and, with the financial assistance of the Executive Committee, the Beavers went along to the Avondale Nursing Home a couple of weeks before the start of the summer and planted various tubs and borders for the residents to enjoy and look after.

This year promises to be another full and packed session, we have a whole stack of new badges to try out that have been added by the Scout Organisation. The first of which we are currently working on the cyclist badge. Mrs C brought an old bicycle along and showed the Beavers how to remove a tyre to check for a puncture, explained a little about bicycle maintenance and in the next couple of weeks we are going to have a night of scooters, bikes and ripsticks. Watch our RS50 2015!

Here's to another year of fun and games.



Executive Committee Report

As always, the Scout Executive Committee has had a busy year fundraising to help support the whole Strathaven Scout Group. Our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Sections have all benefited from our fundraising efforts and we hope that with their continued support and that of their families and friends we will have another successful year of activities ahead.

Our most successful event was the Scout Auction which raised the roof with over £4,000 in profit! The committee could not run this event without the support of everyone who generously donates items for auction and the helpers who donate their time by coming along before, during and after the event to sort out auction lots, baking cakes, making soup, selling raffle tickets and cleaning up. The Scouts, Explorers and their leaders deserve thanks as they moved a mountain of furniture and other items before the auction and helped deliver the larger goods afterwards. Of course we couldn't do it without everyone who comes on auction day to spend their hard earned cash to support our Scout Group. A huge thank you to all!

The Committee were delighted to receive a cheque for £2,500 from the money raised at the FOSS 2014 Round Strathaven 50. In December the nine members of the committee donned our Santa hats and tried to sell some festive spirit, mulled wine, soup or our wonderful home baking to the families at a rather damp but fun Reindeer Day. We hope to be back again this December so please come along and see us.

In addition to working hard on the Christmas Post, our Scouts and Explorers were key to helping us sell raffle tickets for our delectable Christmas Hamper which was won by Liz Wilkie.

Our Group Scout Leader, Trevor Boyes, successfully secured additional funding through grant applications, the main one for the sum of £3,500 from the Scouting Scottish Headquarters to which the Scout Executive added the sum of £1,400. This enabled new tents to be purchased which are already being used by the whole Strathaven Scout Group.

We are thrilled that we have been able to help financially to support the Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers within our Group. Support ranged from a scary overnight for Cubs in Deep Sea World, Scout ski lessons, Christmas pantomime trips, plants and seeds for the community, the Explorer trip to Germany, Leader training and of course repairing and replacing equipment in our stores to ensure that our Group can be prepared and make the most of every opportunity.

We are a small committee who could not function without the support of everyone who helps us. Thank you! We are always looking for new members so please do come along and find out more.



LEFT: Beavers planting tubs at Avondale Home and a campfire in the hall. RIGHT: Handover of cheques from the Round Strathaven 50.

Scout Troop Camp at Corehouse

Scout Scott MacMillan gives a superb report on his Scout Camp & the assault course highlight!



There will be some overworked washing machines after this! Scouts having enjoyed the Corehouse Camp assault course.

On Friday 29th August we all met at the Scout and Guide hall at 6pm to get packed up and set off for Corehouse. Unfortunately it was pouring with rain and we got pretty wet carrying the stuff from the stores out to the trailer that would be taken to camp.

When we arrived at the camp site (after getting lost twice on the way) I had to help to put our Icelandic tent up. This was a huge learning experience for me as I had never put up a tent with time against me. After doing this I had to help put up our dining shelter which was a lot easier and it went up pretty quickly.

Once we had finished all of this, we all grabbed our bags and Rory (my patrol leader) told us all where we would be sleeping. By now it was late and we just had time for a Wide Game called Hunt the Terrorist before heading to our tents for the night.

On Saturday we had to be up by 7am. We were made breakfast of cereal then either a roll and bacon or sausage. After this those who were building the bivouacs went off to start to do this.

While they were away we got into our patrols and unloaded the logs off the trailer which we would use to build an altar fire. Once the fire was built we had lunch and we went up to see how the bivis were progressing. Only the boys who had achieved their Outdoor Challenge were spending the night in a bivi and it is something I'm looking forward to next time.

Everyone was on dinner duty so we lit the fire and got to work heating up water and starting to cook our tomato soup. For our main course we made chicken pasta with onion and pepper. By the time we cleared up and gave the bivi builders a hand to finish off it was nine o'clock and we had a campfire where we sang songs. I don't think you will see us on X Factor any time soon; our singing was terrible!

On Sunday we got up at 8am and lit our altar fires again to cook breakfast. We started by cooking ourselves some egg bread and then bacon with the leftovers from Saturday. After this we did a small run around the old ruins twice and we completed a rope climb as

part of our Fitness Challenge.

While we had been doing this the older boys were setting up an assault course. For this course we had to run through a river and dunk our heads under the water. We then ran further and got buckets of water thrown over our head as we army-crawled up a muddy hill, then back into the river for the final bit of the river trek. Once we were out of the river we ran to the old ruins and had to roll in the leaves. It was great fun - so much that I did it again!

Finally, I also got to witness three Scouts getting their Chief Scout Gold Award which I really hope I can get during my time in Scouts.

Once we had all cleaned up we struck our dining shelter and tent which took a lot less time than putting them up. I have never really taken down such a big tent so it was a great experience and I'm sure I could do it quicker next time. Then the parent car drivers came to collect us and we headed for home and a long hot shower!

Overall it was a great weekend and a huge learning experience for me.

Opportunities From Scouting

Craig Thomson is a 13 year old Scout, about to move up to Explorers. To complete his Chief Scout's Award he has written this thoughtful article on how Scouting has developed and challenged him. We wish Craig further success in Explorers!



Article by Craig Thomson.

I have been involved with Scouting since I was in primary school and since then I have learnt many skills and have challenged myself in developing these skills. From my experience I believe that Scouting is a great movement to be part of because not only can you enjoy yourself with friends and learn and develop as a person, it also opens lots of great opportunities. This can be helpful in the future.

I speak from experience by saying it is fantastic to be part of Beavers, Cubs, Scouts or Explorers. It is a great place to socialise but you can also challenge

yourself. By challenging yourself you can learn and develop. Challenges could include gaining a badge in which you must work as a team or do individual research or go outside and learn some campcraft skills. With the wide variety of badges there can be a new set of skills to learn to earn each badge. Another challenge could simply be building up enough courage to go on a camp or even just to turn up on the night. Whichever way you learn these skills, whatever they are, they will be extremely useful to you and remain with you in the future.

A huge opportunity you can gain from scouting is being able to go camping, hiking, exploring and just being able to go out and do something. While camping you can learn all about campcraft including tent pitching, fire building, wild cooking, navigation and nature identification. I was also fortunate in 2013 to go with the Scouts to Switzerland to an international scout camp. As well as learning more campcraft skills we hiked around and up stunning mountains, went canyoning and on a high wire course, swam and stayed in a mountain hut to name but a few.

However, not only did we do all this,

we talked to and engaged with Scouts from all around the world. Being able to do this from Scouts and Guides from Italy to America was amazing. Prior to going to this camp there was the need to fund-raise which involved working in the community which I believe is a good to learn for the future.

When you eventually leave Scouts, the opportunities don't end. If you work hard you could gain your Chief Scout's Award, the highest award available in the Scout Section. I'm sure that having this would look great on your CV. Beavers or Cubs offers a good place to do some volunteer work, which is something you must do to complete your Duke of Edinburgh. Being able to connect with other people through your time in Scouting whether they come from East Kilbride or New Zealand is great and you have immediate common ground with them. All the skills that you have learnt, like teamwork, will be helpful in jobs.

I'm just leaving Scouts and moving on to Explorers. I have written this article so that I can finish and gain my Chief Scout's Award. I have learnt lots and hope to learn more and get many more opportunities in Scouting.



Friday Scouts Jamie Boyes, Niamh McCall, Ruridh McCall and Ben Wilson enjoying some back country hiking in foggy condition - compasses at the ready!

A Packed Year for the Explorers

Iain Park reports on a busy year for the Explorers with plenty of cycling and climbing as core activities.



Explorers on top of Loudoun Hill at sunset following their climb.

The Unit was back up to strength in the past year with regular attendances of about ten of the members taking part in a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities. These included many well tried items and a number of new ones.

Among the more energetic events were visits to the artificial ski slope at Newmilns and the Ibrox Climbing Wall where former leader Tim Geraghy and Mountain Assessor Robert Manby helped provide instruction. There was also a reunion with former Strathaven Scout, Venture and world class

mountaineer Mark Garthwaite. Another away visit, of a less physical nature (but quite mentally challenging as leader Iain discovered), was to go-karting at Cambuslang.

The indoor programme included the fancy dress halloween party and cooking challenges including the Mexican night and a Pancake Night with master baker and former Venture Scout Barrie Taylor who came along to give expert advice. The Krypton Factor challenge, first tried out by the Venture Unit of the 1980s, was revived and we also hosted our own annual Eggheads

Quiz.

In connection with the promotion of the Scout Centenary Book a team of Explorers constructed the bridge over the Powmillon on Reindeer Day, a replica of the one built by the Scouts in 1911.

Outdoor away activities included a successful two night camp in the Ben Alder area when two Munros were climbed. The Unit also enjoyed a visit to the dramatically situated Steall Cottage in upper Glen Nevis in January where, despite the help of Robert Manby, the weather conditions prevented any tops being reached.

We also had an enjoyable sunrise camp to the top of Loudoun Hill. Unfortunately the sun was hidden by early morning cloud but the panorama of low lying mist in all the hollows of the surrounding countryside making almost for inversion conditions. This was quite spectacular as were the views on the cycle run back to Strathaven at 4am

The cycling out to Loudoun Hill and back provided some training for what was to be the highlight of the year for the Unit; the cycling visit to Germany, reported on separately.

Unfortunately the Unit has lost one or two members, now too old at 18, but there has been the welcome addition of four new members from the Troop. The existing Board, led by Chairman Iain Wright, is now setting out its plans and programme for the coming year's activities with the possibility of another trip abroad being considered for 2015.

*LEFT: Early morning inversion conditions on Loudoun Hill.
RIGHT: On the summit of Beinn an Dhotaidh*



PROFILE Alistair Ogilvie



Alistair is one of these rare people nowadays, someone in a voluntary organisation who actually volunteered to take on an office bearer role. He agreed at last year's AGM to become the Treasurer of FOSS, possibly not fully realising just what was involved. However he has now fully wrested control of the two FOSS accounts from Iain Park and will present the end of year accounts at this year's AGM. Between them the RS50 account and the Strathaven Friends of Health Help International account have shared a turnover of about £27,000 in the last year.

Alistair is a staunch member of both the FOSS and the RS50 committees and contributes to the work of FOSS and the Strathaven Scouts generally with great enthusiasm and energy. He first became involved as a Scout parent but was somehow persuaded to join his son Colin in taking part in the Explorer trip to Zambia in 2011.

Alistair's computer and presentation skills were invaluable in helping the many fundraising activities which were held in connection with the trip. We soon found his practical skills no less valuable when it came to undertaking the construction of the Hammer Mill building.

Alistair somehow manages to fit in his support for FOSS and the RS50 within his busy family life and work which involves frequent travel to various parts of the world. He is also a very keen and accomplished hockey player, playing for the Scottish Veterans over 60's.

A Busy Year for Friday Cubs

Fundraising, firefighters and adopting a panda? Ali Moon reports..



Cubs enjoying some curling in the hall.

With the Team GB Wheelchair Curling team out in Russia we thought we'd try out our own seated curling in the warmth of the Scout Hall. The Cubs had great fun and we sent this photo to the team skipper (and local resident), Aileen Neilson with a good luck message.

We were delighted when Team GB won bronze and a real treat was when Aileen came in with partner Michael (also an Olympic medallist) and talked to the pack, passed around her medal and played some fun team building games.

As part of our home safety and emergency aid badge work we visited Strathaven Fire Station. The Cubs were bursting with questions after an interesting talk by the Firefighters. After being shown around the tender and the fire-fighting equipment the Cubs had the opportunity to try on the firefighters suits. Of course the highlight of the Cubs' evening was the blue lights and sirens going off (I'm not sure the neighbours were so keen!)

The Cubs were involved in a number of fundraising projects throughout the year, raising funds for Poppy Scotland and the Scout Executive. As part of our Global Challenge, the Cubs took part in a Helping Hands project and raised £55. They voted to donate the money to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and adopt a panda for a year. Fortunately the WWF didn't send the real thing however we do

have a cute soft toy which the Cubs are taking turns to look after.

The Cubs continue to benefit from the input of our Duke of Edinburgh volunteers who have organised many games and activities for the Cubs throughout the year and always bring along their sense of humour! As always I am fortunate to have great support from the Cub parents who take it in turns to help out on a weekly basis. I couldn't run the pack without their help.



"Do you have this in a smaller size please?"

Explorer Germany

Explorers Iain Wright and Adam Brown report on the

After an extremely successful year, the 1st Strathaven Explorer Scouts rounded off the 2013/2014 session with an eventful and thoroughly enjoyable expedition to Bavaria, Germany. Throughout the eight days the group experienced much of what Germany has to offer including classic German cuisine, stunning hiking, sight-seeing and above all else an inspiring cycle along the Danube. The trip was a remarkable and memorable experience for the entire party.

Upon landing in Munich and spending the first night in a local youth hostel, the party made its way to Regensburg and prepared for the highly anticipated three day cycle that would commence the following morning. Easily the main event of the entire expedition, this epic journey would take us through 150km of beautiful German countryside. Stopping at various towns and quaint villages the group really got a feel for the local culture as we enjoyed the benefits of the excellent food, outstanding weather and welcoming atmosphere of the area.

Between days the Explorers seized the opportunity to relax, recover and most importantly clean off the day's hard work at various camp sites along the route. However the highlight of the evenings was not the opportunity to relax or shower, rather it was the exquisite food offered by many local eating places. Despite this the group often felt constrained to select few dishes due to the limited knowledge of the German language within the party (although Iain did try his best).

As much as the party enjoyed and appreciated the cycling experience, some were undoubtedly relieved when the city of Passau came into sight on the third day, marking

the end of the route. After dropping the bikes off in Regensburg, we took to the road and headed for Fussen. Thanks to Iain Park's meticulous planning, his car arrived in Fussen without hassle or delay. However, due to a mishap with their satnav, the Stevenson family managed to arrive in Fussen three hours late.

From Fussen the Unit headed south to summit the Breitenberg, a mountain standing at 1838m. The climb was tough but the reward was worth it as at the top we were welcomed by a steaming bowl of German Goulash soup and spectacular views of the surrounding mountains.

As the end of our expedition approached and only two days remained, we packed our clothes and equipment and made our way to Dachau, the infamous concentration camp. As if to mark the change in atmosphere, the group said goodbye to thirty degree heat and constant sunshine to welcome conditions more familiar to us, torrents of rain and a dramatic plummet in temperature. The tour of the museum and grounds was both haunting and thought provoking and an experience that will stay with us for many years.

Following the rather dark atmosphere of the previous day, the party ended the expedition on a high, with a trip to BMW World. We witnessed the latest in engineering innovation and the some of the most iconic German machinery of the last century.

The 2014 expedition to Germany was a great success and an awesome experience for all those involved.



Iain and the Explorers enjoy pleasant cycling along the Danube.

any Expedition

e action packed Explorer Unit cycling trip to Bavaria.

Explorer Leader Iain Park provides his expedition review

Mindful of the two successful cycling trips undertaken by Explorers along the Moselle in 2004 and following the Rhine in 2005, plans were made earlier in the year for something similar. After consideration of various rivers in France and Germany a cycle ride along the Danube was decided on.

In the end due to other members' family holiday commitments only four of the Unit were able to take part in this.

The expedition might well not have taken place at all but for the agreement of Rob Stevenson, leader in the Friday Troop and father of one of the four Explorers, to attend as second leader, a firm requirement for any such Scout activity. He was joined also by his wife Helen, Treasurer of the Scout Executive Committee, and their daughter Ruth.

As described by Iain Wright and Adam Brown in their report of the trip it turned out to be highly successful and enjoyed by all the members of the eight strong party.

The preparations for it were not without their difficulties, not least that I had been unable, despite many e-mails and phone-calls to the Bike Hire shop in Regensburg, to secure the hire of bicycles and we set off on a cycling holiday still unsure if we actually would have bikes.

In the end we did get them. The bikes we received proved very satisfactory and the cycling path along the Danube, with few hills and a tarmac surface for most of the way was a treat to cycle along.

One problem we encountered was a failure to be able to purchase gas containers for our stoves; these obviously not able to be taken aboard the planes. The good result of this, though not so good for our budget, was that we had to eat out most of the time.

Top to bottom:

The team - Rob Stevenson, Adam Brown, Gary Wilson, Iain Wright, Adam Stevenson and Iain Park

On the way to the summit of the Breitenberg.

A sobering end to the expedition at former concentration camp Dachau.



Successful Reunion Weekend

John Miller reports on the ever successful FOSS Reunion Weekend, once again visiting Pitlochry with plenty of activity, fine food and camaraderie as always!

On Friday 16th May a number of members of Friends of Strathaven Scouting met for the second year running at John Addy's house in Pitlochry for the start of the FOSS weekend.

Members of FOSS come from "awe 'airts" including the USA, who again this year were represented by a very good friend of Strathaven Scouts and FOSS, Robert 'Doc' Podboy. Doc is always keen to meet members of the troop both past and present since he has hosted a number of visits to the USA and has taken part in visits to Scotland, Wales and England with his own troop from Waynesburgh, Pennsylvania. The remainder of the group consisted of Iain Park, John Addy with Retrievers Morna and Blue, Graham Stewart, Donald and Jess Macleod and their two grandchildren, Bibby Miller and I with Murphy our black Labradour, Ian Gow, Miles Hutchison and first timers Alistair and Ann Ogilvie.

After everyone had exchanged the usual greetings with one another and had enjoyed something to relax with, Bibby provided dinner for all which got the evening and weekend off to a very good start. With the usual excitement and anticipation plans were made for the following day led by Iain Park with contributions from all those who were there.

One group decided to use the local area to walk whilst another group were keen to bag as many Munros as they could, although two at the very most were expected. The second group of baggers would head for Newtonmore - Iain, Miles, John Addy, Ian, Alistair and Ann, John and Donald along with the three dogs. After much discussion and laughter FOSS retired to bed for a good night's sleep, ready for the next day.

I wondered if Graham Naismith had been left outside since things were just a tad quieter than usual, but later I found out that Graham could not make it, unfortunately.

"The day is dawning and the bacon is frying", the cooks were singing from the Addy kitchen and, oh, what a breakfast was served up to the group. Plenty and good was the verdict with everyone enjoying it before they entered into the activity of the day. The bagger's group set off for their destination and headed

off with the dogs with the intent of securing one Munro and possibly a second.

The climb was made in poor conditions getting worse as the first summit was reached, and the first Munro was in the bag, A'Chailleach. Lunch was taken with the usual photograph but still with everyone intact.

A quick decision was made by Iain and John Addy, with faithful companions Morna and Blue, to set off and bag another Munro, Carn Sgulain. The others opted to return to base camp after a cold lunch taken behind a rock cairn for shelter. Some "chittery" conversation and then off back to base heading down in miserable weather.

Murphy, the black Labrador, decided to have a bit of a chase, no one was sure where, but he travelled quite a long distance away from the group before deciding to come back after a wide search by the party returning downhill.

Everyone arrived back safely and Miles and I decided to wait for Iain and John Addy who returned feeling the effects of the longer walk. This group complete we made their way to back to

base to join up with others in anticipation of another good meal, this time at the Moulin Hotel.

No disappointments were had in the day or the meal with plenty to talk about during and after dinner back at the ranch. Longer nights have been experienced but since this was an experienced group, the night was as long as a good night should be.

Early morning brought some stiffness, another fine breakfast and more subtle chat about the previous day's experience, which set everyone up for the day. There was plenty chat about the previous day and how it had been greatly appreciated by all including the veteran Munro bagger, Miles Hutchison, who is still in great shape and who said afterwards he was looking forward to next year.

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end and so the group broke up to find their way home having enjoyed the FOSS reunion weekend once again. See you all next year. Oh, by the way, if you haven't tried it yet, think about it for next year!



The Munroist party of both two and four legged members at the summit of A'Chailleach

FOSSAS Helsinki Marathon

Iain Masterman helps us to relive the pain, suffering and eventual triumph of the FOSSAS Adventure Section's second marathon attempt, this time in all too sunny Finland.



Chris Baird, Fraser Inch, Donald Inch, Matt McVeigh and Iain Masterman nervously anticipating the start.

This would be the second FOSSAS marathon after Budapest in 2010. It was to be my first though and, given the pain suffered during and after, I swore it would be my last.

The decision to run in the event was made some 12 months or so beforehand. This gave us plenty of time to embark upon a strict training schedule, gradually increasing the distances we ran closer to the golden number of 26 miles each week as marathon day approached. Sadly this turned out not to be the case for the majority of the five strong party. Matt McVeigh enjoyed the summer far too much, Chris Baird signed up only a month prior to the event without training and numerous weddings ensured my training regime peaked months too early. Donald and Fraser Inch, however, were keeping quiet about their training, which we suspected meant that they had put in the miles we all ought have done.

We met in Helsinki the day before the marathon giving us time for a good session of carb loading at a nearby Italian restaurant. Meeting up our minds all turned to the run that would follow the next day.

Over dinner we debated in detail the best form of prevention for the dreaded cheese grater effect that a t-shirt incurs on many a marathon runner. Matt, whose white t-shirt had the addition of two red go-faster stripes down his chest during his previous marathon in Budapest, was a warning to us all. However, despite the certain pain and our lack of preparation, we were all looking forward to testing ourselves over the distance.

The next day we arrived at the start line and positioned ourselves at various points within the crowd of runners who were grouped according to the times they were aiming to set. Chris and I lined up optimistically with the 4hr pace setters, Fraser and Donald picked a wiser spot with the 4hr30min runners while Matt started a kilometre or so back, finding a group of elderly participants who he felt he would be able to out-sprint at the finish.

The marathon route initially took us from the centre of the city around a bay of the Gulf of Finland via a number of islands. It re-entered the city centre for the halfway point where we doubled back on ourselves (and where I lost the ability to smile). It then took us around the bay once more and to the finish in the Olympic Stadium.

The numerous refuelling stops which provided energy drinks, bananas and particularly tasty gherkins were a god-send. Our supporters gave us plenty of encouragement from the roadside keeping us going; thanks go to Donald and Fraser's girlfriends Jennie and Minna (and Minna's parents!)

Having never ran further than 25km a large proportion of the 42km was new territory for me as a runner; I wish it had remained so. The week prior to the marathon I had picked up a bit of an injury which came back to haunt me.

The first 10km went without a hitch, 20km in the knee began to niggle and at 30km the pain was unbearable. I wore a knee strap and thought it may have been inducing the pain, so I decided to stop

and try taking it off. It was then I realised that the knee strap was the only thing holding my knee together! A single step in its absence almost reduced me to tears. Immediately the strap was whipped back on and I forced myself gently from a walk into a jog.

At this point I realised that if I stopped or slowed I wouldn't be able to continue, so the final 12km were spent losing my sanity with the pain. I found myself repeating, "It's all in your head, Iain. It's all in your head" whilst occasionally tapping my head with my finger to help drive home the point. My sincere apologies go to all the Finns who witnessed me in this state of distress.

Nevertheless we all managed to battle our way along the forever undulating route, passing up and over bridge after bridge after bridge, to achieve our own goals. These included Donald getting his target time (coming home in 4:40:10), Matt finishing before he was swept up by the broom wagon (5:43:27) and Fraser persisting through his own personal battle with his knee (5:38:10). Chris and I finished just over and under the four hour mark respectively (4:08:42 and 3:54:05). All round a good, although perhaps not fun, experience was had by all!

The next day we hobbled around the city reflecting on how sore each of our bodies were, consumed several kebabs at a food market and a fair few rums at a nearby navy themed bar. We were all extremely satisfied with our efforts and each insisted we'll never run a marathon ever again; well, lets see!

Editor's note – Iain underplays his achievement somewhat. This was the first sub four hour time at a FOSSAS marathon and a genuinely superb showing. In doing so he beat Duncan Campbell's impressive Budapest effort of 4hrs 4 mins. Challenge on Duncan!



Matt's Last Munner

Duncan Campbell provides an excellent report on Matt McVeigh's ascent of his final Munro.



Matt on the third pitch of Agag's Groove on the Rannoch Wall of Buachaille Etive Mor on the way to summit his final Munro.

The image was so funny it was hard not to laugh. Matt had got himself into a position of impossibility. His left hand pushing down on a ledge, taking all his weight, his right hand scrabbling above for something to grip and his legs twisted and contorted onto the side walls. He was, what rescue teams would call, cragfast - he couldn't move.

Matt had been approaching his final Munro for a long time and had made it known that, when the time came, his last was to be the mighty Buachaille Etive Mor in Glen Coe. This is one of the most beautiful of Scotland's peaks. He had asked some of us if we could drag him up the classic rock climb Agag's Groove for this final hurrah, we all happily agreed.

The date was set, 6th September 2014, and living near to Matt he and I set about rock climbing regularly in the six months prior, as training to prepare him for the climb. This cragfast incident highlights just one of these excursions. We were on an eight metre long route graded Difficult at a local roadside crag. This was a million miles from the classic 100m long Agag's Groove, graded Very Difficult, on an exposed and remote cliff.

When he reached the top that day, cursing heavily and professing that he hated climbing, I became a little wor-

ried about his ambitions. However, after several of these trips it became apparent that Matt is a hater, the sadomasochist epitome, and that's just how it is. I know he does enjoy things, but he hides it well.

Matt began mountaineering when he was in the Scouts mentored by Iain Park. He quickly 'bagged' numerous Munros and even managed to climb a number of peaks in the Alps.

As a Venture Scout leader he can take credit for mentoring us younger guys and inspiring us to get into rock climbing and mountaineering. True to form, the amount of walking Matt has done has got less and less over the years and a question mark appeared as to whether or not he would ever complete the 282 Munros.

The day drew nearer and the weather forecast was questionable, with a chance of rain. I was kind of hoping for rain so Matt would call it off and just walk. This would mean that we wouldn't find ourselves halfway up the cliff when the heavens inevitably did open. However, when we arrived at the car park, the sun was shining and everyone was up for it.

Matt laboured on the approach to the cliff but, given he still had blisters from completing a marathon a few weeks earlier, we didn't give him too hard a time. In

any case we managed to keep to schedule.

Matt, Neal Poad and myself would be climbing together with Mike Shorter and his wife Erika (who were climbing alongside for moral support). I led the first pitch which was steep and unrelenting from the start, it was excellent climbing but I was worried Matt might struggle. I called for Matt to start and within minutes he arrived at the belay with a smile on his face, he even said he enjoyed the pitch. Who was this guy and what had he done with Matt?

To add to my confusion he sat at the belay all relaxed and making jokes, he even took a phone call from Autoglass. Obviously the previous months of training had paid off, it was great, we were all enjoying ourselves in this amazing situation with jaw dropping views over Rannoch Moor.

The next pitch, lead excellently by Neal, went equally smoothly and Matt even took another phone call from the next belay. The third pitch is the crux of the route, the climbing is never too hard but is plumb vertical with eye watering exposure, fantastic. Matt put in a sterling effort despite a bit of grunting and the odd curse or two and arrived at the belay safe and sound.

Matt McVeigh reviews the long road to his Munro completion.

This was when he began to crumble and his meltdown to fear and misery was rapid. The previous two belays had been on large ledges where one can stand and move about in reasonable safety. This belay required us to lean back on the ropes above the 150ft of air between us and the ground with our feet on a small kerb sized ledge.

Matt began to freak out and was unable to be consoled, he cowered in a much less comfortable position, but in which he seemed to feel safer, while Neal followed with style. This was more like the Matt I knew and, being the sadomasochistic hater that he is, he was probably loving it.

Neal wasn't allowed to take breath before proceeding through the fourth and final pitch. This went without too much drama and we were all safely atop Rannoch Wall, not quite at the summit but a good way towards it. Despite Matt's wobble on the third belay the climb had gone largely without incident and we all relished the beauty of such an amazing climb on an amazing cliff on an amazing mountain. The fact that we were on the journey to the top of our friend's 282nd Munro made it even sweeter. Pork pies for lunch.

An exposed and downright dangerous scramble up and behind Crowberry Tower led to the summit slopes where Matt was greeted by whoops and cheers and more whoops, we all joined in with gusto. There were lots of friends there to celebrate Matt's amazing achievement, many of whom are ex Strathaven Scouts and FOSS members. Several of those there had completed the Munros including Matt's old mentor Iain who is at three rounds and counting. Some of the others are at different stages along the way to the same success.

A quick summit photo and the obligatory whisky bottle was passed round. The views varied between sky splitting beauty and grim greyness. Despite Matt's indifference we are all so happy for him and in awe of the incredible journey that has led to this marvellous achievement.

After a quick but brutally unpleasant decent, and showers all round back at our accommodation, we celebrated heartily with beer and whisky in the Clachaig Inn until the wee hours. By the end of the evening it started to sink in with Matt that he had achieved something rather special and he declared to never do anything ever again.

It had been an excellent day.

As a supplement to Duncan's superb article I wanted to add something, perhaps more thoughtful than the speech I was, frankly, bullied into making after the meal we all had following the summit!

My first Munro was Ben Nevis, done as a sunrise climb when I was a 'small boy' in the Scouts. Completing the whole lot wasn't even a thought then, but 27 years later and all 282 are done.

In 1990 Iain Park was one of the instigators of a Troop trip to the USA. He and the other leaders began a training regime which included climbing mountains. I wasn't immediately smitten, but in the years afterwards I climbed dozens of Munros with him. Without Iain there is absolutely no way I would ever have done this.

Following in his footsteps as a leader myself climbing mountains became something the Venture Unit and Scout Troop just did. During this time Ventures Duncan Campbell and Mike Shorter were getting keen and joined Neal Poad and I on Skye in 2002 and in 2003, in appalling weather, on Beinn Eighe. Little did I know back then how over a decade later they would all genuinely impact my last.

The years rolled by and my bagging count dropped, but every year I got at least one done. Announcing my last made me focus and get through the final few. Over the years Duncan and Mike had become seriously good rock climbers, doing incredible climbs in the UK and abroad. I've always dabbled, Neal has lead me up a fair few trembly legged and swearsy climbs on FOSSAS trips. While I often didn't much like the climbing (which scared the hell out of me) I always liked the idea of it, as is my want.

I'd been saving Buachaille Etive Mor in Glencoe for over a decade, it was perfect. An iconic mountain and the massive face of Rannoch Wall in case I could force myself up a route. I'd always fan-

ciated Agag's Groove, a super classic 105m V Diff climb, but never really thought it possible.

However, the planets aligned. Duncan moved not far from me and, over about six months of training, was able to drag me from being pathetic at the bouldering wall through swearing hideously on rock to actually controlling my breathing, thinking about my feet and having a tiny bit of confidence. To this day I'm not sure how he put up with me during it all!

Thus I found myself at the foot of Agag's Groove, the route I'd dreamed about finishing on, in September. Duncan took all my kit, Neal took my share of the gear and Mike climbed an adjacent route with his wife then abseiled off to take stunning photos of me on Rannoch Wall. All I had to do was get a grip, not look down and climb.

I made it, lead by Duncan and Neal, with only about 30 minutes of freak out on the third belay. A good bit of hyperventilating up exposed paths and scrambles took me to the summit where 20 folk met me, plenty of bubbly and whisky was consumed, and I could finally breathe again. My parents and more friends met us for a meal and the after party at the Clachaig Inn and I could, what, relax?

"What are you going to do next?," was the question I was most often asked. Well, not another round and not another list is the answer, but a lot of fun and challenging things I'm sure. My sincere thanks go to Iain for starting me on the journey properly and climbing so many mountains with me, all those others who have wandered up Munros with me over the years and everyone who came along to celebrate my last. In particular I want to thank Neal, Mike and especially Duncan for helping me to summit via Agag's and take staggering shots - it was the fantasy finish and, quite seriously, an experience I couldn't have paid for. It was a truly memorable day.



Summit shot with a few still to arrive.

Tea & Cakes From Strathaven to the World

Keith Roberts provides this year's roundup of the ever popular Round Strathaven 50 cycling event. In addition nine year old Thursday Night Cub Sixer, Finlay Taylor, gives an excellent report of his own ride with (and, it seems, mainly ahead of) his family!

Once again those good folk from Friends of Strathaven Scouts have cajoled and coerced cycling enthusiasts from near and far to raise more than £10,000 for good causes, including the upkeep of the local Scout & Guide Centre, and the future of the various associated Colonies, Packs, Troops and Units of local youngsters.

The annual Round Strathaven 50 cycle run attracted more than 500 cyclists this year, most covering the full 50 mile circuit but with the family friendly 15 mile run also busy. The 2014 event evoked the spirit of Glasgow's Commonwealth Games. To add to the occasion more than 200 runners joined in the fun with some seriously hard-core ultra runners tackling the full course together with numerous teams in relay.

On the day the weather was cruel, but not as unkind as feared. Strong winds kept the times down and made marshalling difficult in the logistics of being in the right place at the right time. However, the rain largely kept a distance, the darkening clouds rolling round the surrounding hills as the wheels rolled the local roads.

Despite the weather the organisers were delighted to welcome to the finish young Daisy Taylor, at only seven years old the youngest to complete the full 50 mile challenge. With her brother, Finlay, she urged on her parents, local bakers, Barry and Claire, to ensure a family finish after a long day in the saddle.

The feedback from participants is very heartening, with many promises of a return next year as cyclists headed back to the car park, or as some did, to warm down with another lengthy cycle home. Cakes are a recurring theme in the comments we receive after the event. The quality and extent of the home baking available provided plenty of fuel, and too much temptation, at the feeding stations, with cakes at Sandford and hot tea in china cups at Glassford amongst the plaudits.

The event takes much planning, with signage improving each year and teams of marshalls enjoying the day out just as much as the participants, combining to create a very special atmosphere. Planning has already begun for 2015.

This year I took part in the Round Strathaven Round 50 with my little sister Daisy, my Mum, Dad and some of the East Kilbride Road club. Daisy is 8 now, but she was only 7 when she did the 50.

I really enjoyed the whole thing, apart from the wind, and I had great fun with my friends in the club. The weather was horrible but I still did it. I'm proud that I finished it for the first time. Mum and Dad thought it was a silly idea but said they would stay with us. We left mum for dead and she finished way after me.

We did a 30 then a 40 mile training run before the day. On the day we had

done 40 miles when we met Graeme Obree on a country road in the middle of nowhere. He said it was great to see kids on their bikes. It made me feel excited that we'd met a famous cyclist and that he'd stopped to talk to us.

We had the best snacks of tea and cakes at Sandford Hall and Glassford Hall and they kept us going the whole way.

I first did the 15 miles when I was six months old, in a bike trailer, then again with Daisy when she was one and I was two and a half. Later we cycled on tag-alongs, and eventually on our own bikes. I want to thank everyone who helps with this amazing event (and who gives us snacks!)



**TOP: The start of the 50 mile event.
BOTTOM: The Taylor family getting ready for the off!**



FOSS ADVENTURE SECTION

With so much other activity either specifically or indirectly related to FOSSAS it's hard to squeeze yet more in - we need our own supplement! Separate reports detail the success of the Helsinki marathon and while Matt McVeigh's final Munro wasn't a FOSSAS activity, it might as well have been. We outnumbered everybody else!

However, we did manage our usual annual long weekend away, returning to the Lake District for a mixture of activities. Arriving on Thursday evening the mood was somewhat pensive. Several attendees were running the marathon the following weekend and some swore they were off alcohol altogether in preparation.

The next morning we split up and most went for a bit of climbing. Duncan Campbell and Mike Shorter, as ever, went for hard and impressive routes. Neal Poad lead Craig Thomson, Donald Inch and I up easier climbs. We all met up later in the day, returned to our bunkhouse and then went for a spot of bouldering at St. Bee's, a mere walk away.

We went out for a meal that evening and talk inevitably turned to the marathon. Four of the fools that had signed up were there and training seemed to have been a mixed bag. Nerves were setting in.

The next day saw more climbing and, almost inevitably, some last minute training runs.

Duncan had planned this weekend and had enthused about holding a cocktail night. Not drinking proceeded to get up and leave the room as we all prepared our concoctions. These ranged from the vile (Neal and Matt's) to the sublime (Mike and Donald's). Votes were awarded after each cocktail - note to self, serve later on in the evening to get better scores next time!

We went our separate ways on Sunday after another excellent trip with plenty of activity and a good load of catching up.

Stay tuned for the latest activities online - the first Team FOSSAS RS50 entry is already planned for 2015!

www.facebook.com/groups/fossas/

Health Help International

Iain Park reviews the activities of the second sub-committee of FOSS which raises funds for HHI.

The second sub-committee of FOSS, the Strathaven Friends of Health Help International (SFHHI) has had another successful year in support of this very deserving charity founded by FOSS member Ron Prosser. The committee, comprising Helen Baird, Kath Russell, Iain Gow and Iain Park meets regularly and has built up a list of nearly seventy supporters of HHI within the Strathaven community.

Our third annual Bridge Drive in May this year raised £1000 and we have passed on a further £930 to HHI from donations or sales of craft items and a cheque for £2,250 from the Strathaven Rotary Club. In addition the committee arranged the collection of a large

number of medical and educational items for the 40ft container which HHI sends to Zambia each year together with nearly two hundred woollen items knitted by Strathaven supporters. Our other ongoing activity is the organisation of the Ragbag scheme which raises about £1000 annually for HHI activities.

In February Iain Park paid his fifth visit to Southern India along with other Trustees of HHI to visit the various medical and educational establishments and activities being supported by the charity. Consideration is being given to a third visit to Zambia next year by a combined team of Explorers and FOSS members. We are delighted to be able to support this worthy charity.



**TOP: A bridge drive to raise funds.
BOTTOM: Committee member Iain Gow with container boxes to be shipped overseas.**

News and Events Round Up

FOSS AGM

The FOSS AGM will be held on Wednesday 3rd December 2014 in the Scout and Guide Centre starting at 7.30 pm. The business part of the evening will be brief and will be followed by a short slide presentation on Scout and FOSS activities in 2014. Refreshments will be served.

Please come along and support your committee and take the opportunity of meeting up with your fellow members of FOSS and our other supporters.

Reunion Weekend 2015

Next year's FOSS Reunion will be held over the weekend Friday 15th to Sunday 17th May 2015. The destination has still to be agreed. Any suggestions will be welcomed. Come along for the social gathering even if you don't wish to join in the hill climb or walk on the Saturday. Final details will be published on the Web Site.

The Centenary Book - 100 Years of Scouting in

The publication of this history of the Strathaven Scout Group has proved to be a great success. The book has been well received by past and present members of the Group, as it charts the entire history of the Group, from inception to the Centenary celebrations.

More importantly, thanks to the generous grant we received towards its publication, it has generated some funds. The FOSS committee is looking at how best these can be used for some charitable or environmental project.

There are a number of the books still available; buy one now before it is too late if you have not or give one as a present to a Scout friend or family member. They will become collector's items!

RS50 2015

The date for next year's RS50, the 13th running of the event, is to be Sunday 16th August 2015. This well established sportive road event is now a major feature on the cycling calendar and attracts cyclists from around Scotland.

The event comprises both the 50 mile route and a 15 mile route which is ideal for families. As well as keen cyclists we also welcome many residents of the local community who enjoy the event on an annual basis. Sandwiches, cakes and refreshments are provided at 'fuel stops' on the 50 mile route and the event is an enjoyable challenge!

Entry can be made online, details are available on the FOSS website.

Keep the date free, if you don't wish to cycle please come along and help us to raise even more money for the Strathaven Scouts and Guides and our selected charity. Between them they received £10,000 this year.

FOSS Website

The FOSS website is the place to find all of our latest news and announcements. The site also gives details of our membership and the history of the Group.

We are grateful for the support of Angus Miller who acts as our webmaster and provides hosting for the site. It is the intention of the FOSS Committee to revamp the site in 2015, hopefully with the help of David and some tech savvy Explorers!

Find us online at:
www.friendsofstrathavenscouts.org.uk

E-mail Addresses

If you are online and we don't have your e-mail address, or you have changed it, please send it to us. It would help with future communications. Please send a note to iain_park@btinternet.com

OBITUARIES

BERTHA JONES

Many FOSS members and former Venture Scouts and Scouts will have happy memories of their visits to Bertha's cottage in Roybridge at Christmas or New Year. The first of these visits was in 1982 and they continued every year without a break until the last one in 2013.

Although few of the many Scouts who stayed at 'Berthas' had actually met her they enjoyed her generosity through the use of her home and in consuming the large quantities of soup she left for us in her freezer every year. She always had a great interest in 'the boys' as she called us and in the activities of the Strathaven Group which she read about with great interest in FOSS News.

Sadly Bertha died earlier this year after a brave fight over many months against cancer. She will be sadly missed by those of us who knew her and it's sad for everyone that the annual visits to Berthas are at an end.

JOHN WALES

John was a leading figure in the Strathaven Scout Movement in the early 1950's as Rover Scout and Leader. He became an Assistant Scout Master of the 2nd Strathaven Troop when he returned from his period of National Service and shortly afterwards took over as Scout Master.

John oversaw the amalgamation of the two Strathaven Troops in 1956 and was for a brief spell the SM of the re-formed 1st Strathaven Troop. He was also for a short time an Assistant District Commissioner before his work took him away from the area. He continued his Scouting in other parts of Scotland.

He was a Scout Leader of great energy and enthusiasm and Iain Park acknowledged in the Centenary Book the encouragement and inspiration which he received from him. John sadly died earlier in the year after a few years of declining mobility.

FOSSnews is the official newsletter of the Friends of Strathaven Scouts, who exist to support Scouting in Strathaven. It is published by them at the Strathaven Scout and Guide Centre. Copy editing and desk top publishing by Matthew McVeigh, to whom comments can be forwarded. Printing by Bill Sturrock, Print Matters, 16 - 18 Swan Street, Brechin, DD96EF whose price represents a very generous contribution to FOSS.