

Donald Watson trails around The Glenkens launched

At long last, we have formally sign posted the two trails around The Glenkens to celebrate the art and conservation writing of Donald Watson and to stimulate public interest in and reaction to the changing landscape.

Both trails have their starting point at Dalry Town Hall garden where there is a sign explaining the Watson Birds project overall, and sign posting the Walking Trail and the Art Trail. The Walking Trail around Dalry takes around 2 hours and follows the core path along the river bank, and after crossing the main road by Boat Knowe, ascends over The Mullach and back to the village. The Art Trail can be done by cycle or other vehicle: users should allow half a day. It is shorter in the winter as the section through the Raider's Road is closed.

The trails will be accompanied by a commentary on an app by Chris Rollie, providing an insight into Donald's art and observation skills, and pointing out what has changed and what you might expect to see at different times of the year. I hope that all participating will be stimulated to react in poem or prose, in music or song, in drawing or painting, or with photographs. We can gather reactions and display them in the Watson Room at The Smiddy on Balmaclellan and use them as part of an event in Dalry Town Hall in the summer

Brochures for the trails can be downloaded from the web site www.watsonbirds.org and are available at the two shops and The Clachan in Dalry, in the community shop and at The CatStrand in New Galloway, and at the Balmaclellan shop and at the Smiddy.

Also please view the exhibition about the trials in the Watson room at The Smiddy and visit the exhibition at The CatStrand to view Donald's skill as a bird artist.

DONALD WATSON BIRDS, NATURE & ART TRAILS & DISPLAYS

Watson Birds celebrates the work of bird artist & nature writer Donald Watson and seeks to instil public interest and enthusiasm for birds, nature and the arts. The logo captures 3 birds. The Golden Eagle is the iconic bird of Scotland studied by Donald's ornithologist son Jeff. The Hen Harrier was the main focus of Donald's scientific studies, writings and paintings. The Swift nests in the village of Dalry and is an evocation of the Watson's long connection with the village.

DONALD WATSON

Donald Watson lived with his wife Joan at Barone 54 Main Street St John's Town of Dalry from the early 1950s until his death. He was the most prolific bird artist of his generation in Britain. His paintings and sketches number many thousands and are still found on the walls of many houses in The Glenkens. Donald was a careful observer of birds in the field and in the garden. He was a campaigner for nature conservation and an insightful critic of bad practice, especially in commercial forests. He captured the imagination of many through his paintings and prose. His writings are an evocative combination of inspiring art, acute observation and a kindly spirit. His *crie de Coeur* was "I am always happiest in relating birds to their environment".

WATSON GALLERY THE SMIDDY BALMACLELLAN

We hold periodic exhibitions of Donald's paintings in the Watson Room at The Smiddy, along with a permanent show of his easel, painting table and other artefacts.

A WALK

Enjoy one of Donald's favourite walks, providing a good selection of birds and great views of the countryside around the village. The entire route is easily walked in two hours by the able-bodied, and in just over an hour at a brisk pace.

A RIDE

The trail is arranged as a loop beginning and ending in Dalry with nine stops at Donald's outdoor painting sites. It is approximately 47 miles long. However, the Raiders Road is closed from October to March and then the trail is reduced to eight points and to about 38 miles. Visitors can, of course, undertake the trail by any route they choose and visit whichever sites they wish.

For more information go to www.watsonbirds.org

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