

Donald Watson

As a boy, Donald drew birds before he could write. He was inspired by a visit to Archibald Thorburn, the great Victorian wildlife artist, who lived close to his childhood home in Surrey. Educated in Edinburgh, he became a member of the Midlothian Ornithologists Club where his bird art and ornithologist skills were developed. He was introduced to Rev. J.M. McWilliam and Arthur Duncan (later Sir Arthur and Chairman of the Nature Conservancy), both keen ornithologists and near neighbours in Tynron, Dumfriesshire. Arthur Duncan invited the young artist to stay with him and undertake an ambitious series of paintings of birds in their habitats. In 1950 he married Joan, and they settled in St John's Town of Dalry in Galloway, where they were to raise their four children. Donald was one of the most prolific bird artists of his generation in Britain, capturing the imagination of many through his paintings and writing. He illustrated over 30 books, including the Oxford Book of Birds, Derek Ratcliffe's seminal work on the Peregrine Falcon and his own masterpiece on the Hen Harrier. His paintings and sketches are much sought after.



What do you think?

What do you want to see happening?
Do you have any views you would like us to consider or ideas for projects in Dalry and The Glenkens?
Would you like to be involved in this project?
Do you have some spare time and if so could you be a volunteer?
Please come and chat to us about what's going on and how you can get involved.
We are also happy to come and talk to groups and meetings in the community.

Where are we?

The project has a temporary office in the Session House at Dalry Kirk. We will be focussing our activities in Dalry and the surrounding area.

Contact us

Sarah Keast or **David Whyte**

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The Watson Bird Centre & Celebration Project



This project is being part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community, Dumfries & Galloway Leader 2007-2013 Programme. Design/Artwork: Sue Grant 01848 200331

What is the project?

The Watson Bird Centre and Celebration Project aims to inspire, enthuse and engage local communities and visitors of all ages and abilities and to encourage economic development by linking birds, landscape, arts and community.

It is stimulated by the work of Donald and Jeff Watson. Donald spent most of his working life in Dalry and was a renowned bird artist, illustrator and writer. His son Jeff was a world expert on the golden eagle.

What will we be doing?

Developing the Watson Bird Centre and a series of events on the broad themes of birds, nature, arts and the community.

■ The Watson Bird Centre

We will seek funds for the purchase, refurbishment and operation of Barone, Main Street, Dalry for development of the Watson Bird Centre as the key facility in Dalry Bird Town. We are developing a business plan and exploring funding options for the centre. We envisage the centre housing offices, Donald's original studio and archive, as well as an exhibition space, cafe, shop and nature garden.

■ Donald Watson's legacy

We will seek funding to help conserve Donald's archive, library and other important documents and records from his work as an artist and ornithologist.

■ Making things happen in Dalry

We will source funding to help support more events and opportunities for Dalry. These will include activities to bring more visitors to Dalry to increase the turnover of local businesses and attract more people to spend time here:

■ We plan to hold an annual festival celebrating birds in arts and science. By bringing people to Dalry, we hope to support local businesses such as shops, hotels and guest houses.

■ Working with the RSPB and owners of land, we aim to produce guided walk leaflets developed for bird watching and enjoying the outdoors for locals and visitors alike.

■ We aim to develop a programme of activities in science, the arts, music and literature involving schools and local people.



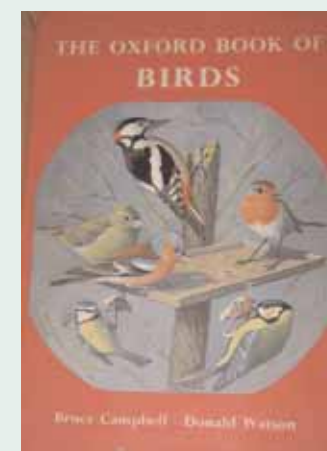
Who are we?

We are a component project of The Glenkens Community & Arts Trust (GCAT), a registered charity. The Project Director is Roger Crofts, email: roger@dodin.idps.co.uk, tel: 0131 661 785 or 07803 595267.

Project officers are Sarah Keast and David Whyte. Sarah and David joined the project in June 2011. David is taking the lead on the business plan and ideas for a Bird Centre and Sarah on organising events and engaging volunteers. A major element of their roles will be fund raising to enable things to happen.

Project Steering Group

The project is overseen by a Steering Group reporting to the GCAT Board. Its members represent the local community, the Watson family, bird expertise, funding and financial expertise.



Left: Vanessa, Pam and Louise of the Watson family with Prof. Roger Crofts, Cathy Agnew and Prof. Des Thompson at an event in Dalry to mark the posthumous publication of Donald and Jeff's last books.