

WATSON BIRDS REPORT JANUARY 2022

Work on **the trails** has progressed. All landowners/farmers have given their formal permission for the placement of interpretation boards for the 9 stop Watson Art Trail and for the Watson Walking Trail around Dalry. The art work commissioned from Lauren Wood has been successfully completed with a very high quality product delivered to us. Contracts have been let for the construction and installation of the boards and waymark signs, but there have been delays due to shortage of the wood for the stanchions. It is hoped that they will be installed week beginning 17 January. The starting point is in the garden of Dalry Town Hall, where an explanatory board explaining the whole Watson Birds project, plus the trails and exhibition space at The Smiddy Balmaclellan is described. New brochures reflecting some adjustments to the trails as well as the current sponsors have been printed and are being made available at all relevant local outlets in The Glenkens. A commentary on the trails to be available to all users is in preparation with Chris Rollie giving his expert views and insights into Donald's paintings. It will be available as a downloadable App. This work is fully funded by the Black Craig wind farm community fund and the HLF Galloway Glens landscape programme.

A new **exhibition** has been mounted in The Smiddy to illustrate the trails, based on photographic reproductions of Donald's paintings and drawings. Small Print in Castle Douglas made an excellent job. The original exhibition, which was in The Smiddy since its opening, is displayed at The CatStrand for 6 weeks from 6 January. A small launch reception to mark the formal opening of the trails is being held on 14th January. Later talks by Chris and Roger will be arranged.

Publicity for our work was given recently on Borders TV news and can be viewed on <https://www.itv.com/news/border/2021-11-26/border-life-sorting-the-fleeces-in-scotlands-biggest-wool-grading-station> go to 15 minutes 30 seconds and view to the end of the programme.

Effective cooperation has been established with the Ken Words poetry project. It is using parts of the trails to stimulate interest in nature and to translate this into participants own words. We plan to have an exhibition and event of the outcome in summer 2022.

A **book** illustrated with Donald Watson's sketches is in preparation by the bird musician Peter Cowdrey and Andrew Threipland owner of Fingask Castle near Perth. We will receive complimentary copies to sell. Peter and his group of musicians are planning a one day event of bird song music on 25th June in Dalry and repeated the following day at Fingask.

We are progressing reviewing the **archive material** stored free of charge at the Dumfries and Galloway Council archive: 57 boxes! I have already removed and reviewed all 21 boxes of books which were originally in Donald's studio. We had kept them as the basis for a re-creation of Donald's studio in Barone. As this will not happen now, I have made the following arrangements. I have agreed with the Librarians at the Scottish Ornithologists Club in Aberlady that they will review the contents of 11 boxes to determine whether they would like to retain some for their collection, to sell some as part of their second hand book sales at Waterston House (on a shared income basis with Watson Birds). I have donated 6 boxes of books that are of no interest to the project or our partners to the Amnesty International book shop in Edinburgh. All of the butterfly books have been donated to Butterfly Conservation Scottish branch for sale at their member events. Local history and interest books have been donated to Dalry Library. The journals are next on the list for review, and Chris Rollie and I will review all of the key archive material.

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