

# A G E n d a

Grampian 50+ Network News for

Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire & Moray



Issue 81  
Summer 2020



**Tranquillity! The River Don as it flows through Dyce on its way to the sea.**

*From the Editors .....*

*We hope you enjoy this rather different issue of the AGENDA. The call went out and your response has been amazing! What emerges so clearly from your articles is how upbeat and positive you have all been throughout the lockdown, and creative in so many ways — writing poetry, taking photographs, making things, finding novel ways to keep in touch with your groups, etc. Thank you so much for your contributions, which have made it possible to produce this AGENDA even although we have not been able to walk as normal with our groups.*

*Chris & Joan*

**S**adly, we are losing three members of the Network Committee: Alison Emslie, Nora Radcliffe and Muriel Knox, who have resigned after many years of dedicated service.



Alison has been our extremely efficient Treasurer and, in addition, has been in charge of arranging the catering at Network events, making sure that we were all satisfactorily fed and watered. Cast your minds back to lovely coffee and cake, stovies, quiche and salad, etc! Nora is the person who planned all the transport for Network events, making sure that buses were in the right place at the right time. All of us who have attended these events are aware of how invaluable this service has been – it always went like clockwork! As well as this, Nora was a member of the walks sub-committee, as was Muriel, trekking many miles to ensure that walks were suitable and safe for us. Muriel had also taken on the responsibility for looking after the Network website, which seems close to being a magician for those of us who are not quite so comfortable with technology.

On behalf of all the members, many, many thanks to all three of you for the wonderful service you have given us over the years. Be happy to know that your hard work has given us enormous enjoyment at Spring Flings, the Rendezvous and Autumn and Spring Walks. We are very sad to lose you but look forward to seeing you, relaxed and carefree, at future Network events.



# Grampian50+ Committee 2019/2020



**Chair**

**Marjory D'Arcy**



**Secretary  
Membership Secy  
Sue Wright**



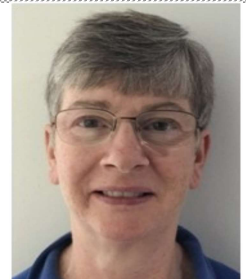
**Minute Secretary**

**Catherine Mason**



**Treasurer**

**Graeme Rae**



**100 Club**

**Lorna Rae**



**Sheila  
Erridge**



**Jo  
Jones**



**Judy  
Middleton**



**Diana  
Miller**



**Alan  
Melrose  
Age Scotland**

## NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS.....

We are delighted to welcome Graeme and Lorna Rae from Oldmeldrum Ramblers who have agreed to take on the Treasurer and 100 Club roles (pictured above.)

- **AGM** - we will not be holding our Annual General Meeting this year. We have, however, had our Accounts approved by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). Hopefully, we will be able to hold our Spring event and AGM during the Easter holidays next year.
- **Network Programme** - because of the current situation, we have decided that it will not be possible to hold any activities or events this year. We will update you when appropriate.
- **Guidance to Groups** - it is very clear from your articles in the AGenda, and from talking to members, that we are all missing the regular walks with our groups, not only for the exercise but also for the company, the chats with various people, the fun and, of course, the cuppas! Before restarting your walking groups please follow Government guidelines.
- **100 Club Special Prizes** - each year we give two £50 prizes drawn from the 100 Club Fund. This year the winners are:

**No 115                      A Gray                      £50**

**No 6                              J Allan                      £50**

## **MORE NETWORK NEWS:**

### **Aberdeen University Research Project**

Hello from the University of Aberdeen! We have been busy working with the Grampian 50+ Network on a research project from our home offices. When we first started planning the project in early 2020, our aim was to learn more about the Grampian 50+ Network. We wanted to discover the factors contributing to the Network's 20-year success. We also wanted to hear your thoughts about the benefits of belonging to a walking group. Then the Covid-19 pandemic hit and offered us a unique opportunity to go deeper. We could examine how lockdown restricted group physical activity and social interaction, and how this could impact on the health and well-being of active older adults in the near and long term.

We had 218 members take part in the April survey and Master of Public Health Student, Emily Johnston spoke to 33 members for her research thesis – which she has just submitted! We are grateful and very impressed with the level of engagement and continued participation in the Covid-19 surveys (June, July and August) and interviews with Dr. Kevin Stelfox. The research team is currently analysing data. We will generate reports to share in due course with the Network and Scotland's Chief Scientist Office (who funded the Covid-19 work). They are very interested in using insights gathered from the work to inform policy and future interventions. We are planning to host an event in autumn where you can share your experiences of walking during Covid-19 and we will share our research findings to the wider group. We hope to gather in person if government guidelines allow, but are exploring possibilities of using "virtual" venues too! Stay tuned for more information... Finally, my team and I thank you again for your support and participation in this important research. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should have any questions –

***Kathryn R. Martin, PhD MPH FHEA***

***Lecturer (Epidemiology), Academic Primary Care,***

***Institute of Applied Health Sciences, University of Aberdeen***



### **Cyclists & Walkers**

There have been some complaints from walkers about cyclists on pavements overtaking without warning, or cycling at speed on walkways, hills, country and coastal paths and in parks. This could cause injury to walkers, especially the elderly, some of whom may have hearing difficulties. The Network will be sending a letter on this subject to various organisations and officials. This letter will also be sent out to Group Contacts to distribute to members.

## The Rescuing of Mormond Hill Stag

It's a funny old world, folks, and you are never sure what is around the corner. I never really chose to save the Stag. I sometimes think the Stag chose me. Anyway, it just happened and here's how.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2017, I set off with Mintlaw Ramblers on our fortnightly walk. Our destination that day was the Great White Stag on Mormond Hill.

Our leader was confident he knew his way to the Stag but did admit that he had not been there since he was a boy. Parking in a lay-by in view of the Stag and having asked the farmer at Whiteside, Allan Moore, for his permission, we set off through the fields for the Stag.



Beyond the fields we entered an area of scrubland and forest. The Stag was in sight around 200 yards ahead and up a steep hill. Our leader set off with attitude but in a very short time we realised this area was not passable as brambles, gorse, nettles and fallen trees had made it into an assault course, and it was decided that we should turn back.

I was very disappointed that we couldn't reach the Stag and set about looking for a different route. I found ancient maps online that showed a road passing just below the Stag but had no idea how to access it. Later in July I put a post on Facebook appealing for directions to get on the road and was amazed by the amount of interest it generated. One of the people who replied was Allan from Whiteside Farm, who told me he had a Facebook page called Mormondhill Stag. He had been brought up on the farm, had loved to visit the Stag as a boy and was very keen to see it cleaned up and returned to its former glory. A sizeable group of volunteers would be needed, but where were they going to come from?

Allan invited me to take over as editor of the Facebook page and I started to get really interested in the project. However, I had still not made it to the Stag. Another person who had replied to my post on Facebook was Sheila, who actually lived on Mormond Hill and kindly offered to get me access to the forest road. She put me in touch with a company called LAM Forestry, which owns the trees on the hill. Next day I emailed Neil Dyson, the Forestry Manager, who said that the company was very pleased that someone was interested in cleaning up the Stag and would give me its full support. I had no idea at the time just how extensive and how excellent this support would be. First of all, Neil approached the landowners and got clearance for us to be on the hill, and then sent me a detailed map with areas to park and the route of the forest road.

The next step was to actually visit the Stag and try to form a plan of action. A few weeks later I was lucky enough to get in touch with a member of the Fraserburgh volunteer and keep-fit group who had a lot of experience of walking on Mormond Hill. On 13<sup>th</sup> September we met for the first time and set off for the Stag. I drove along the forest road as far as I could, but we still had nearly a mile to go. We continued on foot but found the road almost completely overgrown, still identifiable but full of fallen trees and gorse bushes. There had been heavy rain in the past few days and water was coming down the hill in torrents. Luckily Des, my companion, had a global positioning app on his phone and pinpointed the Stag. Otherwise we would have been wandering among trees for ever. Finally, after a hard climb, we reached the Stag and what a sight met our eyes! He was completely overgrown with

tough heather and gorse 10ft high in places, bracken, grasses and young spruce trees. I almost despaired there and then.

After a day or two recovering, I started to form a plan of attack and realised that vehicular access to the Stag was an absolute must. I was delighted to be told that LAM Forestry would employ a contractor to upgrade the road and, with high hopes of getting the work on the Stag started before winter 2017, I set about appealing for volunteers on the Facebook page. There was a lot of enthusiasm generated and I quickly had a list of names of people willing to help. To my frustration, work on the new road was delayed again and again and it was mid- November by the time it was completed. It was agreed that LAM would weed-kill the entire Stag in the spring, Allan would supply a portaloo for use on the hill and I would continue to promote interest and gather volunteers. Well, the winter of 2017/2018 just went on and on with the result that the spraying could not be done till late June.



Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July was a very busy day. My friend, John Shields, arrived on the hill to help and Allan arrived with the portaloo. After this was set up, John and I made the first assault on the Stag. We decided we would try to establish the outline of the figure and after 4 hours we had cleared about 20 ft down the Stag's chest. Next day, Lynne, a Youth Co-ordinator, her colleague, Alison and 12 teenagers from Mintlaw Academy arrived on the hill as agreed previously. They were brilliant and got stuck into the work with real energy. I asked them to expose the legs by removing all the bracken – no mean feat. We were joined by young Craig from LAM and a photographer from the P&J. The youngsters loved working on the Stag and couldn't wait to come back. I was amazed by how much they had accomplished in one day.

From then on the work was open to all volunteers, including a group from Polfit, a Boys' Brigade group who walked over the hill from Strichen, along with Mums, Dads and kids, full of enthusiasm. We were blessed with beautiful summer weather. Eventually a hard core of volunteers was established. I nicknamed them "The Strichen Stagers" and they were the people who truly rescued the Stag. One gentleman could not face the tedium of the stones but cut down masses of gorse bushes, young spruce trees and huge masses of bracken and heather, which really opened up the view we see today. I posted progress on our Facebook page and the Stag's fame spread as far as Canada, the USA and Australia. Indeed, an Australian lady, over on holiday, spent a day working on the Stag. Work continued throughout July, August and September, by which time we were able to stand back and say he was 99% finished.

It has been a very worthwhile undertaking and, as an assurance for the future, I am delighted to say that "The Strichen Stagers" will continue as a group and we will visit the Stag annually to ensure he is kept in great condition. All being well, this should see him sorted for the next 20+ years and, hopefully, a group of young 'Stagers' will appear to see him into the next century and beyond.

**Doug Simpson, Mintlaw Ramblers**



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*This little pansy up a tree,  
was once a seed, like you and me.  
'Twas blown to this landing spot,  
by westerly breeze, more likely than not.  
Survived the snow and bore the rain,  
to bring us joy with its bloom again.*

*It tells of hope, this little flower,  
bereft of friends and dark the hour.  
It will bear the snow, survive the rain,  
and return with Spring and live again!*

Morgan Fisher



If there are walkers out there interested in birds, here is a picture from our camera bird box of a family of blue tits shortly to fledge. They were eggs on May 2nd, and they hatched the weekend of the 16th. From a clutch of nine eggs only the one did not hatch, which the parents disposed of.

It has been fascinating watching the nest building, the rapid development of the chicks and the dedication of both parents. On many evenings this has made better television!



Morgan Fisher - Aboyne Over 50's

**SPOTLIGHT ON....**The Culter 50 + walking Group was, I believe, established over 35 years ago by a small group of retired folk who met to walk for exercise, friendship and social gatherings.

Having returned to Culter in 2001, I decided to join the group in 2003 and very quickly realised that I had come upon a very special group of people who offered the opportunity to walk in company and were very friendly and supportive to all in the group.

Two years later I was asked if I would consider becoming group secretary and this I was happy to do and saw it as a way of giving back to the group a little of the support and friendship that all the members gave each other. At that time, the group had about 15 members and, like today, we enjoyed fortnightly walks and social gatherings all over north east Scotland.

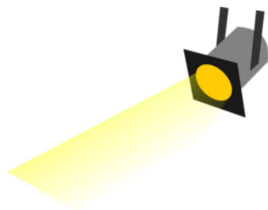
Of course, over the years, there have been changes in the group, some people having left for numerous reasons but, despite this, our membership has grown considerably and at the start of 2020 we have 38 members. These are not all Culter people, and we now have members from Aberdeen, Culter and Banchory, Drumoak, Durriss and Westhill as well as Stonehaven, Blairs, Midmar and Maryculter.

The group is very much a happy, friendly and supportive club, each person providing any skills they have to the benefit of the group as a whole. Some lead and check out really interesting walks and others drive the minibus so we can travel to walks in a wider area. In recent years one of our members has used her organising skills to give the group some special days out and events and even some group holidays.

We were able to have 4 walks at the beginning of 2020 before, of course, "lockdown" in March. At the outset it was evident that the entire group had the desire to remain united and keep in touch. With the use of Email and phone, etc. we have shared messages containing walk descriptions and photos, amusing video clips and reports of all the activities taken up to help pass the time. Such talents as writing poetry, drawing and painting, photography and arts & crafts have emerged in the group.

It is clear that it will be some while yet before we can gather as a group, but it is good to know that many of our group have taken advantage of the recent good weather and have been walking nearly every day near their own homes. All are agreed that we are indeed blessed to live in such a beautiful area and have been able to enjoy the wonders of nature recently. Looking out for wild flowers and new growth on the trees, listening to the profusion of birdsong and spotting such wildlife as deer and otters have been so enjoyable.

It is to be hoped that we may be able to meet again, perhaps in the autumn, but meanwhile, as restrictions begin to ease just a little, some of our group might feel able to meet up with just one other walking friend and spend some time together whilst still observing social distancing. As most people seem to be walking every day, it would be possible to meet one different friend on several days per week. **Sheila Jones, Secretary**



## Some Recommended Cafes



Our Walking Group loves to walk, talk and go to cafes afterwards. Here are a few we have frequented – and, believe me, we have been to a few!

**Fine Peace:** in Sheddocksly Baptist Church near Woodend Hospital – open Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. They did an excellent afternoon tea for 30 of us in celebration of three couples' 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries, a photo of which appeared in a previous AGEnda . The tables were set out just like a wedding - they couldn't do enough for us!

**Tillydrone Community Centre:** We stumbled upon this after our walk along the Don. They were shutting but they knew Marjory so we all got in and had a tour round as it was very new. All their food was finished but we got hot drinks and someone had nipped out to buy a box of biscuits and shortbread and we got those on the house. Thanks, Marjory, for knowing so many people!

**The Loaves and Fishes at Kemnay:** You have to pre-warn them as the café is small but they have other rooms. If you are fortunate enough to get a seat in the café, I think they have the bonniest views of Bennachie in Aberdeenshire. They also do soup & sandwich lunches and can set you up in the hall.

**Fly Cup in Inverurie** is excellent, with plenty of parking and lovely baking.

**Green Pastures in Westhill:** been here quite often and they can cater for a big number.

**Platform 10 in Torphins** is lovely. They sell pottery and are very accommodating.

There are many others but these are just a few that come to mind. Please phone to give them warning.

We look forward to returning to walking, talking - and finishing off with our fly!

**Morag Gunn, Dyce TFG**





# Lockdown Musings from .....

I hate to admit it, but yes, I'm actually missing all my fellow ramblers in these unprecedented, troubling times and, in some cases, their quirky ways! I'd better not mention any Names, but they may well recognise themselves!



There is **A**, who, on more than one occasion, has forgotten his walking boots, and **B**, who rarely buys new walking gear. He always seems to manage to source it from someone or somewhere else!

Then there is **C**, who insists on not lacing up the walking boots to the top hooks but has then, unfortunately, come a cropper when the bow on one boot snagged on the top hook of the other boot and said person fell forward on a rocky path and sustained a few nasty cuts and bruises to face, elbows and knees. I hope the lesson has been learnt!

Now there is **D**, who used to think that using walking poles was a sign one was getting on a bit but then realised that it gave the arms a good workout and helped take the pressure off feet, knees and hip joints, which were showing early signs of arthritis (although she didn't really want to admit this to herself). I wonder who she might be?



**E**, who after years of rambling over 'a' the airts and pairs o' the NE' always has an interesting tale to tell. Then we have **F**, who takes lovely photos on all our walks, and has taken it upon herself to keep us entertained and wistful on a Monday morning by producing a very imaginative and whimsical slide show, accompanied by music, of lots of the places where we have had the pleasure of walking. And last, but by no means least, there is **G** who, not far into the walk, wants to know when the coffee break is!

I will really miss the Spring Walks, Rendezvous and Autumn Walks as it is always so nice to meet up with old acquaintances from Network Holidays at home and abroad, and previous events so professionally organised by the committee over the years.

Love to you all. Stay safe and sane.

*Fiona Robertson, Alford/Ballater Ramblers*

**A**boyne 50+ Walking Group has been having a weekly zoom meeting throughout the lockdown just to keep in touch. At the last one it was suggested that I send you a picture of the last walk we did, on 20<sup>th</sup> March, when social distancing was in place but before the actual lockdown. Eight of us walked to the Dess Waterfall and round the Millennium Walk, between Kincardine O'Neil and Lumphanan, keeping 2m distant from one another throughout. With only 8 of us the distancing wasn't too difficult, but I don't think it would work so well with a larger group.



**Margaret Cordiner - Aboyne 50+ Walking Group**

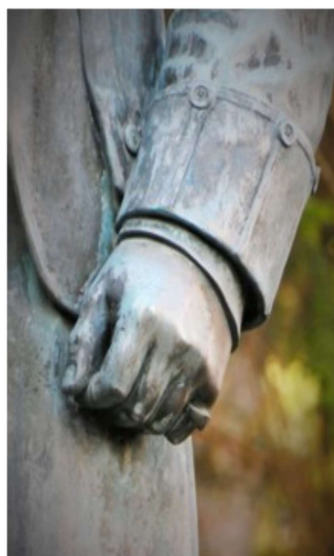
## Where Were We?

This is not a story of the Ballater Group getting lost on a walk, but a question I asked members to see how observant they had been on our outings.

Anyone who has walked with me knows I enjoy taking photographs, lots of photographs. I like to record what I see, trying to capture unusual objects, angles or views of well-known landscapes and landmarks. During lockdown I wanted to keep in touch with my walking friends and decided to share photographs taken on our walks. With plenty of time on my hands, I started making up slideshows, sending them out on the days we would normally be walking. The title of the first was, **'Where were we?'** containing photographs for them to try to identify the location where they were taken. How observant had group members been? Not very!

Here is a small selection of things to look out for the next time you visit Crathie and Balmoral.

### **Susan Lawson - Ballater 50+ Group**



**I** have quite enjoyed having the time, and taking the time, to relax, look and listen!

*One day, while sitting by the River Dee at Banchory, listening to the birds and marvelling at the beautiful view of shimmering water with the wildly different greens of the trees bordering the river, I became aware of movement upstream on top of a big boulder. As I focussed, I realised I was watching two otters playing, one with a fish in its mouth.*

*! They played and gambolled for some time before sliding into the water. They continued to play, bobbing out of the water from time to time as they slowly drifted down stream. I watched till they were out of sight! Apparently there are two families - all because of no human intervention! It was a sheer delight and privilege!*

*During this period I have written letters most of which were condolence, but none of them due to the virus. We have been phoning each other, playing on-line games like quizzes, bingo, musical bingo and Mr& Mrs, not to mention bridge. My daughter and I played Scrabble on Facebook, which was great. I also unearthed my bike from the back of the shed, not having ridden it in the last three years, but really enjoyed cycling to Crathes Bridge, over the bridge and returning by the south road. I may extend this as my confidence grows! The one drawback is – the hair! If I wear my helmet it flattens my hair, which is so long it takes me a good half hour to tame it, and putting on the hat just ruins my efforts. If there is one job I have never enjoyed it is doing my hair!*

*Our walking leader, Sheila Jones, has been in constant touch either by email or ringing us to make sure we are all well and as happy as can be. She is also keeping a scrap book of stories we have shared, poems written and any bits of news. I look forward to reading her collection.*

### **Sybil Wilkie - Culter 50+ Walking Group**

## FREEDOM

Life, it's not like it was before.  
Time the virus was out the door.  
We've been in lockdown for a good few weeks  
Going about behaving like freaks.

Passing everyone at a social distance  
Laws laid down by Government insistence  
Lads and lasses, old and young  
Everyone, so far flung.

We've got so used to forming a queue  
Altogether, me and you  
It takes forever to do the shopping,  
Whizzing round and never stopping.

We've had so many different reports  
It's like a bag of liquorice allsorts  
Who, at the end, do you believe?  
To tell us would be a great relief.

They tell us all it will be sometime  
When at last we can step out of line  
Back to things how they used to be  
The FREEDOM to at last feel free!

*The Drumoak Poet, Culter Walking Group*

## ODE TO CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus ye're a pest - g'wa back tae Wuhan  
I canna dae the things I eesed tae dee, naebody  
can  
eesed tae enjoy a game o' Scrabble in the legion  
On a Friday efterneen. Noo I canna - an' Ah'm  
seedgin'!!

I hid a voluntary job at daycare on a Monday - noo  
nae mair

Oor ramblin' on a Tuesday is also stopped, we're a'  
noo stiff an' sair

I canna even hae ma fly in the lounge wi' the rest  
I miss ma tea an' scandal on a Wednesday - (the  
scandal wis best)

I could catch up wi' a' the gossip then, an' hae a  
jest

Bit Ah've caught up wi' a' ma projects,- Ah'm nae  
jist sittin'

I've finished ma paintin', lace, an' cards - an' teen  
tae knittin'

Ah've deen socks for ARI, an' squares for a  
neighbour

She maks kneerugs for the homes wi' them,  
they're aye in favour

Ah'm gyaun tae dee shrugs for ARI, bedjackets tee,  
So ye see Coronavirus, I hinna given up, Ah'm  
fightin' ye!

*Frances Jaffray – Ellon Ramblers*

***Our country it is in a mess  
The virus isn't getting less  
We can't meet up or go for coffee  
Or even buy a bag of toffee***

***When it will end no one knows  
Oh my god! Stone the crows!  
Social distancing it has to be  
Not together you and me***

***No shops to go and spend our money  
It really isn't very funny  
Hair and teeth are a disgrace  
I'm scared to even show my face***

***Walking the streets is not allowed  
No one gathering in a crowd  
Getting bored, not much to do  
Only waiting in a queue***

***Someone please, lift all restrictions  
It's causing all sort of frictions  
Life would be so awful nice  
Please don't let us pay the price***

***We'll meet again, believe you me  
Just be patient, wait and see  
Time will pass, that will happen  
Then everything will be forgotten***

***Not to worry, everyone.  
Can we do it? Yes we can.  
We'll not give up, oh not we won't!  
Togetherness is what we want***

***The waiting hasn't been in vain  
Can't wait to see you all again  
Our walks, the coffee, and the chatter  
Are the things that really matter.***

**Amen**

**The Drumoak Poet  
Culter Walking Group**

Frances has been knitting for ARI

'I have said that I will be doing more bed jackets and bed socks when I get more wool, as I don't like sitting at night watching TV (something I don't much care for anyway) and doing nothing.'

Frances Jaffray - Ellon Ramblers



## The Walkie Talkies

We're the walkie talkies and we're on our way,  
 Leaving the chores for another day.  
 Up this hill and along that glen,  
 Follow my leader and back again.  
 In all kinds of weather, be it wind or hail  
 We're happy to trek down any trail.  
 We're all equipped, we'll be quite safe.  
 We've a whistle, a compass and a map in a case,  
 (Though truth to tell, if put to the test  
 Few of us know our east from our west!)  
 Gore-Tex shares must have gone through the roof.  
 When we all went shopping for a waterproof.  
 Now we have the gear and won't be caught out,  
 We've our gaiters on and our boots are stout.  
 So it's over the hills and far away  
 We're the walkie talkies and we're out for the day.  
 A short while on there's a cry from the back –  
 "Isn't it time to stop for a snack?"  
 An ideal time we all agree.  
 We may not be hungry but we all need a pee  
 We do not linger – it may come on to rain,  
 And if we sit too long we can't get up again.  
 We're all over 60 but we're feeling spry  
 With rosy cheeks and a gleam in the eye.  
 As befits our age, our pace is sedate  
 (Though our tongues run on at a cracking rate).  
 We love the exercise, the scene, the air –  
 We'll leave it to others to sit at home in a chair.  
 So it's cross that burn and climb that brae,  
 We're the walkie talkies and we're on our way.  
 For the last mile or so the pace hots up,  
 Lured on by the thought of a brimming cup,  
 A plate of cake, a scone or a bun  
 For sale at a local Emporium  
 After all that effort we deserve a treat  
 To take our minds off our aching feet!  
 When, tired and full, we wend our homeward way,  
 We're the walkie talkies and we've been out for the day.

Gill McCormick, Elgin 50+ Group

And Marjory's been sewing.....

Below - some of the beautiful masks she's produced - Dyce TFG



### Rules for Social Distancing (Rex Giles, Elgin 50+)

1. Lessons in sign
2. Provide everyone with throat lozenges to counteract sore throats due to shouting
3. Invest in loudhailers for everyone
4. Purchase cord or cordage with waist loops every 6 - 7 ft

Assuring you of my best intentions, I remain,  
Worried of Burghead!

**S**ome photos from a walk we did on the Garvock Hill near Laurencekirk. When the turbines were built a circular path was made near them with info boards. Not a long walk.

**Dave & Kathy Shaw -  
Mearns 50+ Group**



## Lucky To Be Locked-Down in Stonehaven

When we had our last Group Walk 2<sup>nd</sup> March, we had no idea what lay ahead. Two weeks later we made a clear decision only to do a local walk and not use our mini bus as a Coronavirus safety measure. Little did we think we would experience so many restrictions. We are so lucky in Stonehaven to have many short walks and stunning scenery on our doorsteps. People have been kind and considerate and very supportive of each other and our wider community. We are fortunate to have a fish shop, bakers and butchers all open for business and online delivery orders.



The gardens are pampered, cars shiny, windows gleaming, cupboards tidied within an inch of their lives. Sewing machines and knitting needles rattling away with varied projects. Artists and crafters being very creative. Astonishing Rainbows to make us all smile.

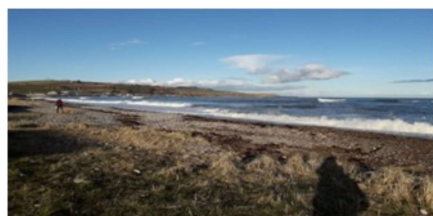
Members of our group have been inventive and adapted to a new way of life. Daily walks, social distancing in mind, such a treat to meet other group members 'out and about'. Doorstep chats, wee treats exchanged. We may be the older generation but goodness we have adopted technology, with online Church Services, Bananagrams, quizzes, Sudoku, Hangman, Pub nights to name a few. 'Whats App' and Zoom part of our every day conversations. And of course the 50+ Network Survey.

An Alphabet challenge has engaged many minds. Make a story with 26 first letters using each only once, although X can be used with another letter e.g. exercise. See below some samples of our efforts.

***“Stonehaven has proved quite excellent for local rambles. You can access outdoors with joy, knowing great views zoom up every moment. To bide nearby is delightful! “***

***“Keen Walkers observed; Snowdrops quietly flowering, yellow Primroses then Bluebells under hedges, violets appearing. Long grasses, clover’s nectar exciting zooming insects. July, wild roses, massed Daisies. “***

***“Beachfront viewing: Horizon’s Wave Garden, new Art. Unique, metal dolphin, plane, trawler, lighthouse. Zealous exercisers. Joyful children rocks or sandy fun. Keen Quoiters. Yummy Ice-cream.”***



**Betty Luurtseema,  
Stonehaven 50+  
Walking Group**

**W**e are very lucky here in DYCE as there are many beautiful walks within a 5 mile radius of our village community so we have had no

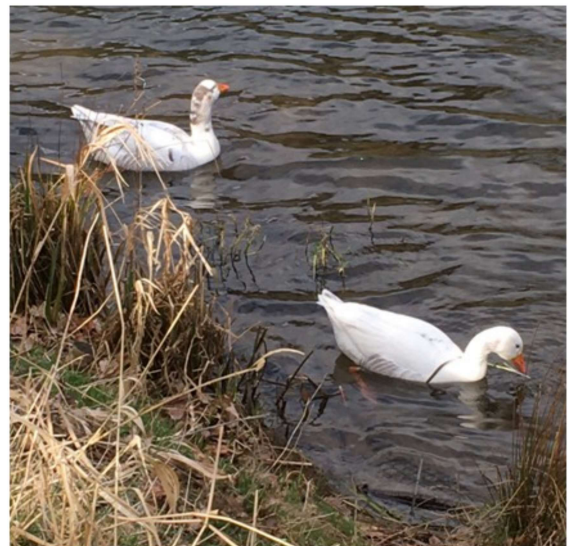
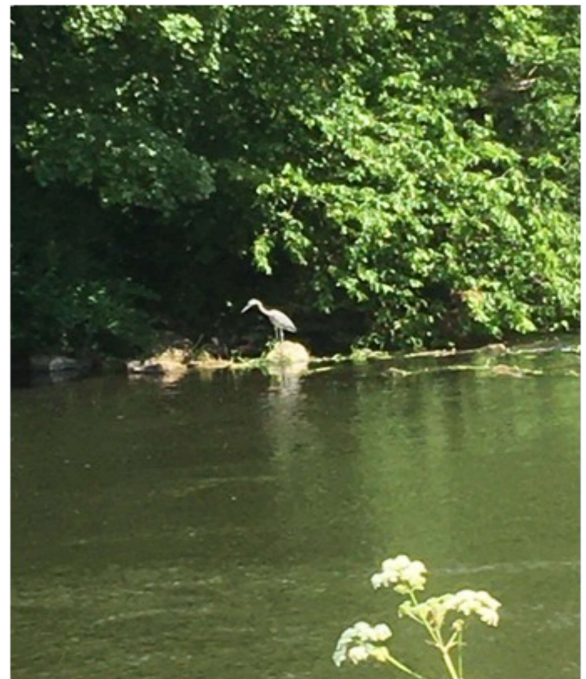
excuses not to go walking during this pandemic!

My favourite walk is along the river Don as this is only 2minutes from my home. I live on my own and I have been there several times each week and have enjoyed the beautiful scenery, the tranquillity (when it wasn't too busy!), the wildlife and seeing friends while socially distancing. There are plenty different paths to take, thereby varying my walk each day. I've walked to Stoneywood in one direction and towards Newmachar in the opposite direction, passing our own Community Orchard and on to the Bridge over the Don where you can join the old Formartine railway line at Dyce and your options are limitless. **(see picture on page 1)**

There is also a 3 mile circular walk round Dyce or an even longer walk round the airport perimeter. Some folks have been walking through the grounds of the new P&J Live arena where there are lovely accessible paths. There is also a walkway round the Central Park at the back of Asda and our beautiful Community Garden in Victoria Street to visit. Dyce also has a warren of roads throughout the 'village' which are linked by short lanes or paths, which makes it an ideal place to explore and adds to the choice for shorter walks.

My spirit has been lifted watching the changing of the countryside from spring to summer and delighted listening to the bird song and watching the Herons, Geese, Ducks and Swans nesting and the new babies emerging from the nests. Hopefully I have also managed to keep active, fit and sane even if I haven't managed to lose weight! This has been a horrible time but we should consider ourselves fortunate that we can still get out and about and appreciate the wonders of the natural world around us and perhaps get to know and value our own communities better.

**Anne Marjoribanks**  
**Dyce TFG**





# LOCKDOWN BLUES .....

By Roddy McLean

*Wake up early in the morning  
Got the lockdown blues  
Just sitting watching  
My old walking shoes.*



Aboyne Over 50's

Actually, that's not true at all. I'm writing this in Torphins and we are very fortunate as we have some great walks almost on our doorstep and, if anything, my wife and I have probably been walking more than we did BC (before Corona). But, and it's a big but, we do miss our Friday outings with the Aboyne Walking Group. You come to realise that it's not just about the walking, the exercise, the scenery and being close to nature; all these are important but what we miss most is the company, the chat and the laughter. I think that we have all found that it is the lack of contact with family and with friends that has made this time difficult.

Let's be more positive. We have been keeping in touch with a series of fun emails; some are Zooming, but personally I'd rather be zooming, or strolling, along a forest trail! On our walks my wife and I have seen and been close to much more wildlife. I put this down to how sociable our Group is; there's so much blethering and laughter that any birds or deer are gone before we get there! I'm no birdwatcher but I have managed to record forty two different species of birds in the garden and on our walks.



A new family on a pond near Torphins. New life, new hope

Well, let's hope we get back to walking soon. A weed-free garden and a super-clean house are fine, but wouldn't you rather be striding out with your friends? I know I would!



The virus caused so much upheaval  
No one thought it could be this evil  
It came from a country far away  
You wonder if it is here to stay

Is there no end to this prediction  
Always finding another restriction  
They'll have us all tied up in knots  
Never caring a blooming jot

We'll all be donning a fancy mask  
Someone sure will take us to task  
They'll come in lots of different colours  
Even better than the neighbours

Children denied their education  
They are on a long vacation  
Some think this is very cool  
Others just want back to school

Parents patience wearing thin  
Never seeing kith and kin  
No work to go and earn money  
Non of this is very funny

B&Q opened their doors  
Please, can Boris open some more  
A restaurant would be very handy  
That I think would be fine and dandy

We're told all measures have seen results  
So long as we behave like adults  
We've done our bit for Queen and country  
At the end of the day it's elementary

**The Drumoak Poet**

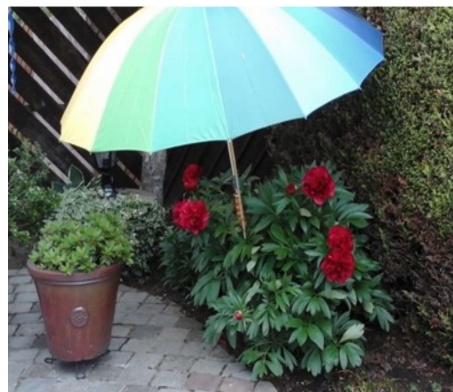
We're the Culter 50 plus  
Got around in our blue bus  
Sybil driving at the wheel  
Always on an even keel

Coffee shop was our first stop  
The Corner House is cream of the crop  
Always had a special scone  
They are in a class of their own

Up and down Royal Deeside  
Everyone walking side by side  
Laughed and smiled along the way  
We always had a lovely day

As of now, we are grounded  
The reason is we are impounded  
When we can meet up again  
Will all depend on the lawmen

**The Drumoak Poet**



My pride and joy - my beautiful peony rose being sheltered from the elements by a unused golf umbrella!

**Lorraine Gerrard**

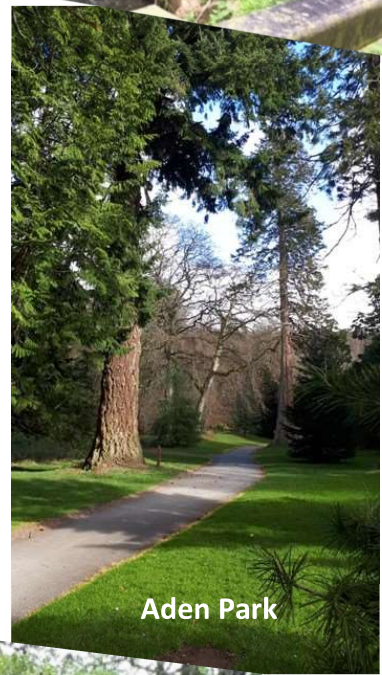
**WALKING PICTURE MEMORIES ..... MINTLAW WALKERS**



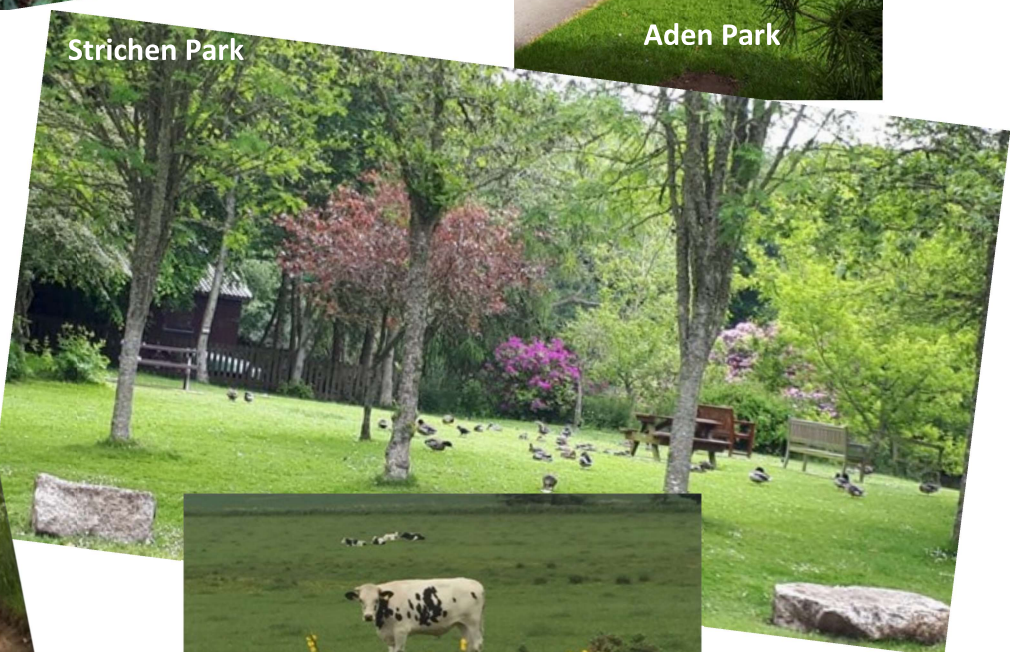
Railway line near Maud



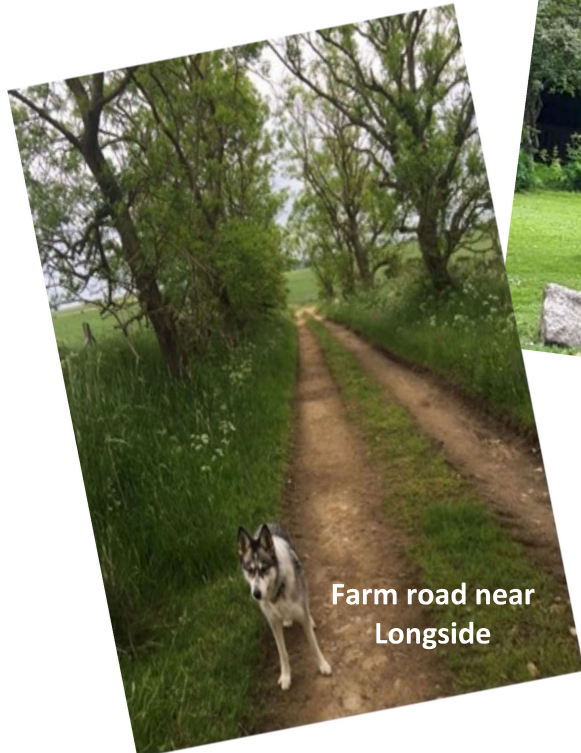
Lake at Aden Country Park



Aden Park



Strichen Park



Farm road near Longside



Cows in a field at Longside

*Forbes Sandison*



## News from Garioch Men's Walking Group.....

**R**ecently, we've introduced a fortnightly ZOOM call which has been enjoyable and successful in keeping us in contact. Twice, we've included a photo quiz on some of our walks that's been enjoyed by all. We've had lots of discussions, including food recipes, delivering and sharing baking, etc. YES, we gents **can** multi-task! Some have opted for supermarket deliveries, thus relieving reliance on neighbours, friends and family, who have lent tremendous support.

As restrictions are reducing, we are looking to the future and hoping to re-commence soon. To this end, we are starting to look at some suitable walks with criteria to consider:

1. Initially travel separately. As we are a small group, this shouldn't be a problem as long as sufficient parking is available.
2. Use paths wide enough to keep required social distancing to comply with government requirements.

### Some other ideas:

1. Check laces for wear and carry a spare pair (I always save from old boots), which is handy if one has a 'floppy sole day.'

YES, it has happened - 3 times with us. The last time, an Aberdeenshire Council gent saved the day with wide adhesive tape. We're not trying to be an R Mears or B Grylls, although these could have other uses in extremity.

2. Check first-aid kit contents' dates and replenish as necessary.

**Russ Jacobs**



## Covid 66

I'm still living in the Burghead Seagull Colony, despite attempts to force me out.

Normal conversations are often impossible unless we adapt and shout.

The car still seems to be a target and the roof is streaky white

Thankfully that's still an unconscious habit when in flight,

Because, if deliberate, it could be a dilemma – Besides a mask and social distance, we'd require an opened umbrella.

Could this generous spread of contents intestinal

Prompt another pandemic, even more deadly and final

Perhaps called Covid 66 and all that that number implies,

Having to wear PPE all the time as long as we have supplies,

And a repeat of daily briefing by our leaders, who appear to be devout,

Being questioned by the media, who ignore answers, trying to catch them out?

Perhaps straight talking should be the rule, which could be quite a shock

As critics are told, "We can do it your way but it will be your head on the block".

Is the reality a choice – the economy or a population less?

Such a radical concept is so full of stress But will it really matter?

Will there be any who choose the latter?

Oblivious to our desperate measures

The gulls continue their pleasures

And I admit to having a moan –

Will they leave our habitat and return to their own?



**Rex Giles, Elgin  
50+ Group**

## *Lockdown brush with nature in Bieldside*

I have had some very welcome distractions which I would like share with you, all of which I would have missed had life been 'normal!'



The biggest surprise was discovering that mallard ducks were nesting beneath my boundary leylandii hedge - and an even bigger surprise to see a family of 17! I don't have a large pond and am good bit away from water!

Sadly, one little bundle of fluff



was left behind on the day they departed. Daddy was nowhere to be seen - he should have been the back marker!! Four days later 16 ducklings were spotted on the River Dee with mummy - could it be our family? It certainly makes for a happy ending if it was. The 'forgotten' bundle of fluff is in the care of our local SSPCA.



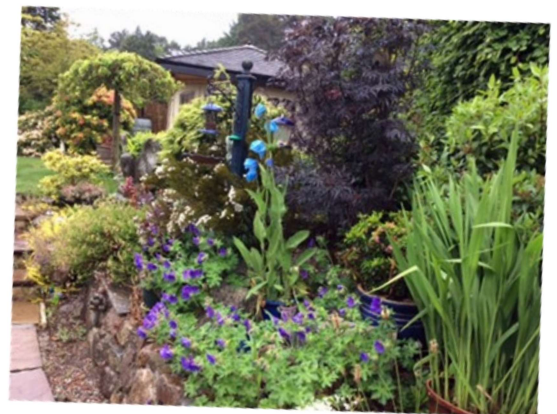
A week later I ventured into my little shed to find a wasp nest just at the entrance. Such an amazing construction, quite a work of art and it seemed such a shame to destroy it. I lived with it for two days but soon realised it wasn't a sensible idea so consulted my bee keeping neighbour and friend. Duly kitted out, Naomi arrived to remove it. She bagged it and suggested I pop it into the freezer for my granddaughter to dissect once lockdown is over. That has still to happen!

The dustbin lid I found behind the shed has now become a mini pond with donated pond weed and tadpoles, and I had no idea such a simple thing could give so much pleasure. Can't wait for the frogs to appear. Again, something that would never have happened pre-lockdown.

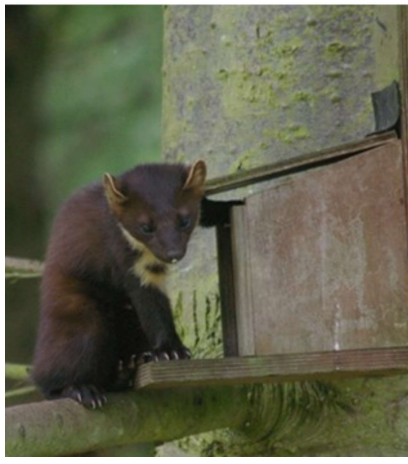


Lastly I would like to share a photograph of my Meconopsis (Himalayan Poppy). I have lost count of just how many I have purchased over the years and this is the very first one ever that has flowered. I am so chuffed!

It goes without saying that I am very much missing the camaraderie of the Culter Walking Group, the joy of discovering new walks in great company, the fun of our Network holidays and Ramblers' Rendezvous. Let's hope a safe and effective vaccine will be available soon.



**Lizzie Thomas, Culter Walking Group**



**T**hese photos were taken in our garden one afternoon when 'our' pine marten was helping him/herself to the nuts put out in the squirrel feeder.

**Dick Morris,  
FitFeet  
Methlick**



## A Report with a Difference!

**O**ur last walk as a group was on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> March. On a dry, sunny, windy morning we walked in Berefold/Ellon area. Bus dropped off the 'short' walkers at Overton Garage and 'long' walkers commenced their walk at Mains of Dudwick Farm. Both groups walked on fairly quiet country roads back to Ellon. At times wind was in our faces, and sometimes we were fine and sheltered, with great views of the surrounding countryside. All met up at the awaiting bus in Tesco area. Picnics were enjoyed before the return journey to Peterhead, and on that day we would **never** have believed that we would enter lockdown - and that this would go on for some time!

The one bright thing in April and May was the weather, which was quite exceptional and made all the difference as we were able to go out and walk or cycle on our own. The social aspect of group walks is the missing factor but at least we are keeping ourselves fit! From what I have heard many of our members have kept up their walking. Telephone calls are being made more frequently and modern technology has helped greatly with people being able to keep in touch - and I have also heard how there are now lots of fine tidy cupboards! Those of us who have a garden have also found plenty to keep us busy. Weeds always manage to grow!

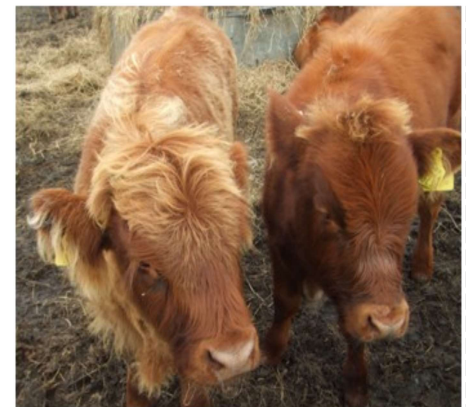
On the Asda side of Peterhead there are a couple of fine paths. One is alongside the by-pass and there are trees and bushes on either side so that the beauty of nature can be enjoyed. Birds are now being heard much more than they used to be, and this all adds to the enjoyment of a walk. On the whole, people have been very good at keeping their distance. Another path is just across the by-pass - below are sights which add to the joy of this route!



As well as these paths there is the railway line, which is a fine walk but can be busy at times.

A fox cub has made a garden visit to two of our members - they are also enjoying watching woodpeckers!

Great sights to behold!



Some day we will be able to get back to walking as a group!

**Hazel Beaton  
Bloo Toon Ramblers**

## Grampian 50+ Contact Details:

Email: [grampian50plus@hotmail.com](mailto:grampian50plus@hotmail.com) Website: [www.grampian50plusnetwork.com](http://www.grampian50plusnetwork.com)

### April 2020

1 <sup>st</sup>	No 132	G Pirie	£25
2 <sup>nd</sup>	No 16	K Ingram	£20
3 <sup>rd</sup>	No 20	K Keillar	£15



### May 2020

1 <sup>st</sup>	No 16	K Ingram	£25
2 <sup>nd</sup>	No 133	A Hogg	£20
3 <sup>rd</sup>	No 112	G Pirie	£15

### June 2020

1 <sup>st</sup>	No 18	I Edie	£25
2 <sup>nd</sup>	No 13	M Clark	£20
3 <sup>rd</sup>	No 34	M McLean	£15



### July 2020

1 <sup>st</sup>	No 89	C Tailford	£25
2 <sup>nd</sup>	No 48	C Fleming	£20
3 <sup>rd</sup>	No 4	M Forbes	£15

**THERE ARE STILL VACANCIES ON THE NETWORK COMMITTEE**

***The Network needs YOU!***

**How would you like to bring some joy to a large number of people? Easy! Volunteer to join the Committee of Grampian 50+ Network.**

So many of us have derived huge enjoyment from Network events: learning new skills, exercising together, socialising – **having fun!**

If you feel that you can make a contribution of your time and energy, please contact Marjory D'Arcy ([m.c.darcy@talk21.com](mailto:m.c.darcy@talk21.com))