

JOHN O' GROATS TRAIL

Coastal walking route from
Inverness to John o' Groats



News vol. 10 no. 1:

🌞 It's Trail Time! 🌞



A note from the chair

It's hard to believe this is the tenth year we've done a newsletter. From our humble origins in 2015, before we even organised as a charity or had trail markers made, we've come so far.

Ken our trail manager, contractors, and volunteers have been working on that and several other initiatives.

If you've walked the trail in the past, you might want to come give it

we've been busy over the winter getting the trail ready for the spring walkers. We've developed several "alternate routes" to help walkers get round some of our more challenging stretches. (See our website, stages 7, 10, 11, and 13.)

If you'd like to join as a member, this is a great time to do it. Our members AGM is coming up on Thursday, 9 May.

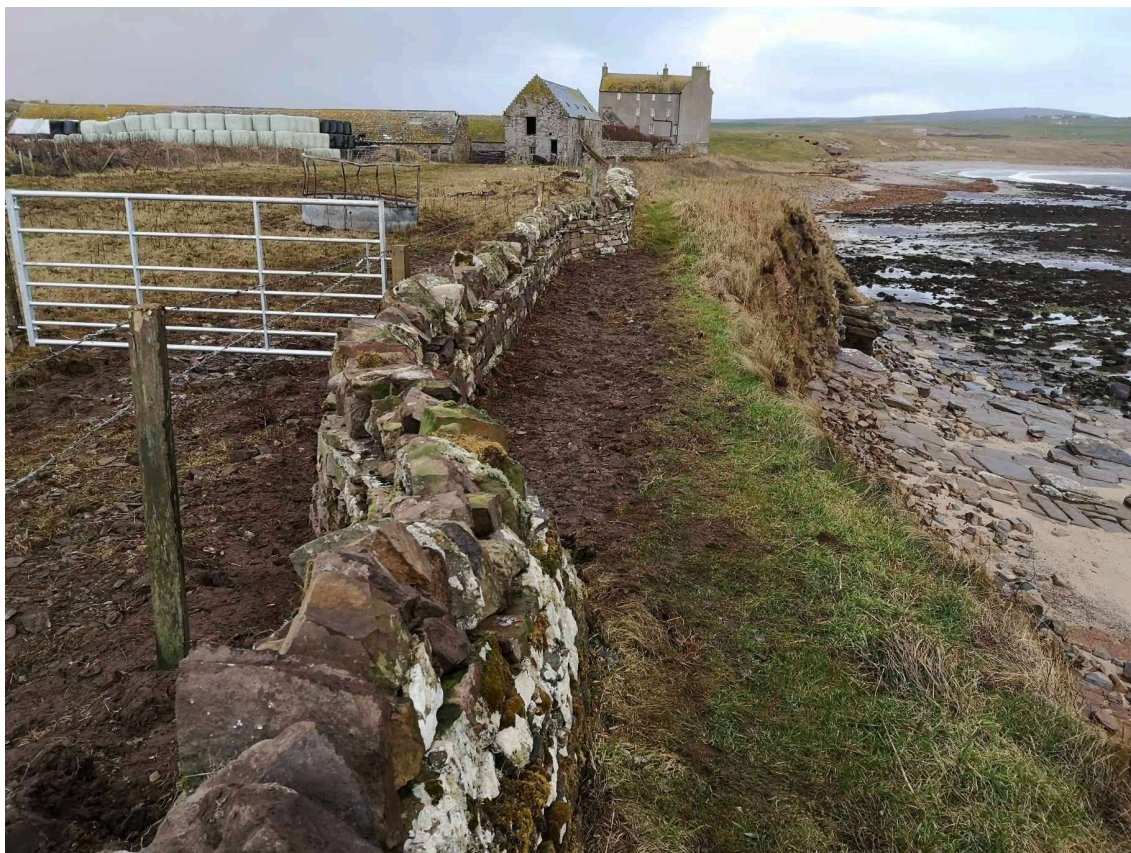
As always... Happy Trails!

Jay Wilson, Chair

👟 Walkers Report 👟

This Spring has seen a number of improvements across the Trail, too many to cover in one newsletter!

Perhaps most notably, a section of wall has been taken in just south of Freswick. You can see the original footprint of the wall in the picture - only a rather narrow ledge available for walkers!



can get particularly boggy, so hopefully the new bridges will keep your boots dry when it rains (it's when rather than if, usually!)

With no vehicle access to this site, it was a good old-fashioned tromp with some heavy old bits of wood, which soon became walkways and bridges, helping walkers to avoid some of the many ditches which help to funnel water from Ires Geo Moss.



Big thanks to volunteers Willie Watt from [Wick Paths Group](#), Ian from [Caithness Environment Volunteers](#) and Charlie Bain and Jay Wilson from our JOGT Board of Trustees! They helped Andy carry loads of heavy bits a mile or more into one of the remotest parts of the trail.

(And this is good time to remind folks that this coming Sunday (the 28th April) we're working with Caithness Environment Volunteers to undertake a little gorse removal and possible landscaping at Skeps Geo. Meet at Thrumster's Smiddy Inn at 1030 if you'd like to join us!)



Coastal walking route from Inverness to John o' Groats 



SKEPS GEO WORK PARTY

Sunday 28th April 2024
10.30 am - 13:00pm
Meet at Smiddy Inn, Thrumster
(just off the A99, ND337452, what3words sprinter.developed.mornings)

We will be helping on the John O'Groats Trail to cut back encroaching gorse at Skeps Geo.

If you have them, bring work gloves, loppers, and pruning saws. No experience necessary - new volunteers welcome.

Over 18s only.

For more information, email: caithnessenvvols@outlook.com.

All of this infrastructure building takes time and effort - but perhaps most importantly of all... money.

So, donations towards Trail infrastructure improvements are very much welcome - if you can spare a few pennies, then please donate towards trail improvements on the link below:

[DONATE TO THE TRAIL](#)

 **KEEP IN TOUCH!** 

 **An Interview with Charles Todd** 

Our trustee Patricia Pearl interviewed Charles last summer. It took Jay 8 months to publish it. Sorry Tricia!



Tricia Good to speak to you via zoom.

Where do you call home?

Charles Wiltshire – I used to be an English teacher, now retired.

Tricia When did you walk the Trail?

Charles I finished my LEJOG walk this year and used the JOGT trail for the final leg from Inverness to the top. A fascinating trail with many highlights and wonderful people en route.

Tricia What did you do for accommodation?

Charles I walked alone and carried a tent, but also stayed in B and B's. On other routes in the UK I have stayed in churches – I am a Churchwarden and my colleagues have kindly let me use some of their buildings en route. I would like to mention Marie who manages the hostel at Helmsdale who was very welcoming and helpful.

Tricia You have told me that your walk from Land's End to John O'Groats was life enhancing – can you expand on that?

Charles Walking through the British Countryside on my own has been a source of inspiration to me throughout my adult life. The landscape connects me with my Christian Faith, feeling immersed in God's creation. I even wrote an article in a Church magazine which was titled 'Its All about the Rock' where I was

our own Eden.

Tricia What are your memories of the JOGT in particular?

Charles The second half of the Trail, where the big cliffs loomed large. Although I did find the geos intimidating. I had a wonderful close encounter with seals, which did not notice me coming because of the wind driving into me – I got as close as 15 feet to them and had to skirt round them so I did not disturb them.

Tricia Have you any photos to share?

Charles Here is a selfie of me taken on the stretch between Golspie and Brora and a photograph of those seals

Tricia Thank you for sharing all this and for speaking to me, and congratulations on completing the whole walk from Land's End to John o' Groats!





Let's Keep in Touch; our Trustee Patricia has been interviewing people from far and wide who have walked the Trail - we'd love to hear from you! Please email Patricia if you'd like to tell your JOGT story.

keepintouch@jogt.org.uk

💰 **Funding Success - we're halfway there!** 💰



Many of you who have walked the John o' Groats Trail will know that there are a number of obstacles we're working hard to remove or improve.

One of these more difficult physical barriers is the Loth Burn, which runs down from Glen Loth, before sweeping into the sea. This burn is often called a river, which seems entirely appropriate when in spate, or if the tide is in, making it dangerous and sometimes near-impossible to cross!

We want to make the JoGT as safe and accessible for as many people as possible, and to link up communities across the northern Highlands. We see a bridge at Loth Burn as crucial in this respect - and so we've begun fundraising towards a bridge here.

To help cover costs, we ran a crowdfunder-style fundraising event through [The Big Give](#) - in which an anonymous Scottish donor gave away £2,500 towards our bridge project, on the condition that we match-funded it.

We managed, in the end and including our £2,500 from the mysterious donor, to raise an amazing £5,313 in total - an amazing response from our Trail walking community and supporters - thank you!

This brings the total raised to over £35,000 for the bridge so far, including

We'll keep you posted on the progress of the bridge project - fingers crossed for more good news.

Big thanks to [Drone Media Scotland](#) for helping us capture aerial footage of the Burn.

Walking the Trail this Year?

Speaking of "halfway", don't forget to book our Halfway House Hostel, located just north of Berriedale. A cheap but cheerful way to hunker down for an evening on the Trail - details below!

Also remember trail certificates are now available, as well as T-shirts and other ways to show your support. Guidebooks and maps are also available.

Please book the Halfway House in advance. You can call, text, or WhatsApp Jay on 07526281088 or email halfwayhouse@jogt.org.uk or contact us through the trail web site. We're also on Facebook, search for "Halfway House Berriedale". Income from the Halfway House will go to help build the trail.

Join the John o' Groats Trail!

Your membership is crucial to the survival and sustainability of the Trail. It allows us to demonstrate support for the Trail to funders - and so helps our applications for larger pots of money!

Join as a member! Just visit our [Membership Page](#) and join for only £10 a year!

Happy Trails!

Thanks for reading this. Now go outside!

If you have any questions about walking the trail, volunteering, or donating, please don't hesitate to reply to this email or contact us via the information below.

Donate today to help keep the trail open this summer:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/jogt-summer-trimming>

Contact us:

Email: manager@jogt.org.uk

Telephone: 07528675774

Website: www.jogt.org.uk

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