

9/16/1

STYLISH OPENING OF GORDON WAY

THE Gordon Way, a hill walk 18-miles long, which stretches from Bennachie to Rhynie, was opened in style this week, with the guest of honour, Dr. Danny Gordon, flying in by helicopter.

The weather was ideal for the occasion, with a warm wind blowing across the Suie Hill, where several hundred people gathered for the opening ceremony on Monday morning.

The walk is a joint venture between the Forestry Commission and Gordon District Council, and is easily identified by the special logo which was designed by pupils of Lemnay Academy.

Monday's ceremony was attended by representatives of Gordon District Council, the Bailies of Bennachie, the Forestry Commission, Nature Conservancy Council, and Mid Lothian Employment Training.

Dr. Gordon, a retired Inverurie, G.P., founded the Bailies of Bennachie in 1973 and the Gordon Way was his 'brainchild'. At the opening, he spoke of his childhood in the area. He was born two miles north of Clatt and later attended the Gordon Schools at Huntly.

This was of particular interest to the 600 Gordon Schools' pupils who walked five miles of the Gordon Way from the Brindy Hill, to attend the ceremony, with Inch teenager William Robb being the first to finish.

Dr. Gordon confessed to having been dreading the helicopter trip. "Friends told me it would be very noisy and I was a bit apprehensive, but it was lovely and I was very comfortable. Ron Marnie, recently retired from the Forestry Commission, was sitting beside me as we flew the length of the walk.

"He pointed out each part as



Dr. Danny Gordon waving to all his friends as he alighted safely from the PLM helicopter which flew him along the route of the Gordon Way, just before he performed the opening ceremony. Mr Ron Marnie, retired from the Forestry Commission waits to greet him.



we went along. My biggest impression was the huge area of forest at Knockhall, Suie and Coreen, stretching away to Rhynie.

He then stressed that although he had conceived the Gordon Way many years ago, he had not contributed to its construction. "I have never lifted a spade, but I am deeply grateful to Ron Marnie and his successor, Sandy Sandilands, of the Forestry Commission, to Provost James Lawrence and Gordon District Council for bringing it to fruition.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my day and am glad that my voice and my legs held out. My tongue has certainly wagged very well," he quipped.

Dr. Gordon remained Senior

programme by the squad on the privately owned sections of the Way.

On behalf of Gordon District Council, Councillor John McGregor, planning convener, added his congratulations to the squad and to everyone involved in the project.

"The members and officials of Gordon District Council are very pleased to have been associated with this walk, which we feel will give a great deal of pleasure and extended opportunity to the hundreds of people, residents and visitors to the area, who climb Bennachie and the surrounding hills.

"We are grateful to Dr. Gordon for coming up with the idea all these years ago; for having the

it, and for persuading the Bailies of Bennachie and others it was a worthwhile project.

"We wish to thank the Forestry Commission for the work they have done and the access given to cross their lands, and we are grateful for the consideration by other land owners along the route.

"Thanks are also due to past members of the Council, who in the days when it was little more than an idea, gave it support and financial backing; also the officers, especially Chris White, who dedicated many hours of their time identifying land owners, negotiating access and sorting out the legal niceties.

"It is the Council's stated intention to make Gordon a

want to visit, but also want to stay for a few days, a week or even longer. There are many features of interest in our District and this walk is an important addition. We are sure it will give a great deal of pleasure to a great many people for many years to come," he concluded.

When the ribbon was cut by Dr. Gordon, he walked a few yards of the Way with two girls from the Gordon Schools and was then driven to the Village Hall, Clatt, where he was joined by the other guests, for a light meal.

The unique tearoom at the Hall is run by the community and caters for coach parties and organised groups during the week and for afternoon teas for the public at weekends.

Mrs Angela Head manages the tearoom, and the craft shop, run by Mrs Joyce Tuhill, appealed to many of Monday's guests who found time to browse over the pottery, knitwear, paintings and home-baking.

The hall was the perfect place for guests to exchange impressions of the happening on the Suie, and of course, in the centre of it all was Dr. Gordon surrounded by friends old and new, on his very special day.

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Assisted by (left to right) - Gordon Schools pupils Louise and Beth Mackie, Dr. Gordon cuts the tape to mark the beginning of the Gordon Way. Mr Ron Marnie (far left) lends a hand.

...he quipped.

Dr. Gordon remained Senior Bailie of Bennachie until 1978, and has seen membership of this unique conservation society grow from around 40 in 1973 to almost 4,000 today.

Mr Bert Cadenhead is now Senior Bailie, and he was delighted that Dr. Gordon was asked to perform the opening ceremony. "This must be a proud day for him," said Bert.

His colleagues in the Bailies, Mr Algy Watson and Mr James Mackay, shared his pleasure. They walked part of the Way last week and enjoyed the lovely views from the ridges.

"It will be a great asset to the area," said James, "and to the people who like getting out into the wide open spaces."

Algy stressed that the walk can be done in sections. "One of the benefits of the Way is that there are several accesses on to it, but of course only the section between the Suie and Brindy Hills is complete at the moment."

Mr Sandy Sandilands, of the Forestry Commission, agreed. "By the end of this year most of the Gordon Way will be open, and hopefully we should have a car park at the Suie Hill, which will be screened from view, as we do not want cars on the skyline."

The Mid Grampian Employment Training squad were there to receive the compliments of everyone for their excellent work in preparing the walk. With their gaffer Bill Malone, the team, mainly from the Huntly area, have been working since last summer, cutting trees, strimming the heather, building bridges, fences and stiles.

Gordon District Council has just agreed to fund a further

"We are grateful to Dr. Gordon for coming up with the idea all these years ago; for having the belief and dedication to stay with

"It is the Council's stated intention to make Gordon a place where tourists not only

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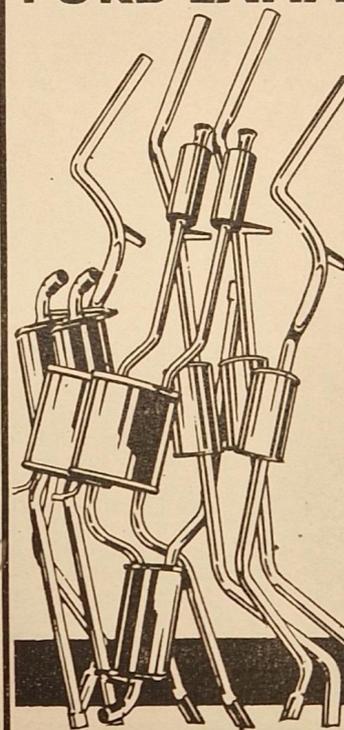
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