

# Second section of West Gordon Way now opened

THE sun shone last Friday for the opening of the second and longest section of the West Gordon Way - an eight-mile stretch from the Brindy to Esson's Car Park.

An initiative by the Forestry Commission, who own much of the land, the Bailies of Bennachie and Gordon District Council's planning department, the way will eventually run a distance of about 20 miles from Rhynie in the west to Bennachie in the east.

The first section, from Suie Hill to Brindy, was opened last summer by Dr Danny Gordon and is proving very popular with locals and visitors alike.

Mr Ron Marnie, former forest district manager of Buchan Forest District, walked the new route across the shoulders of the Bennachie range on Friday, along with two hundred pupils from Gordon Schools of Huntly, before performing the opening ceremony.

## "Inspired doctor"

He paid tribute to retired Inverurie G.P. Dr Danny Gordon, founder of the Bailies of Bennachie, who first mooted the idea for the route. "The germ came from an inspired doctor over 14 years ago. Since then he has cajoled, pleaded and encouraged until we took action and it literally is 'The Dr Danny Gordon Way, for without him there would be no way'."

Mr Marnie also commended Mr Chris White, of the District planning department, and the landowners for their support, as well as Mid Grampian Employment Training Team, who had done the hard physical work of creating the pathways, building bridges and fences.

He spoke of the built-in permanence of the route. "We are making sure that this route is safe for all time. When our forests are privatised there is no certainty of access being maintained, but here the right-

of-way is established for all time and no-one can take it away from us."

## One of the finest ...

District Councillor Jock McGregor, convener of the Planning Committee, also walked the Way and said: "This must be one of the finest walks of its kind in the country, with a blend of moorland, forest and farmland and marvellous views of the Don Valley."

Senior Bailie of Bennachie, Mr Bert Cadenhead, was also impressed with the variety along the path, as were Bailies Council members Mr Algy Watson and Mr James MacKay.

"The view to the North, with the villages of Insch, Auchleven and Colpy, was really bonny in the sun today", said Mr Mackay. "Beyond that was Tap O' Noth and in the distance, Morven."

"Then there are views of Lochnagar, and Deeside as well as the beautiful Don valley with the Menoway range, the English Quarry and Monymusk Triangle."

Mr Cadenhead said: "This is yet another example of the continuing good work of Gordon District Council and the Forestry Commission, who are working to improve facilities for outdoor people in Gordon and from other areas."

## All weather team

Mr Bill Malone is supervisor for Mid Grampian Employment Training team. He praised the 12 men who have worked in all weathers to create the path: "They have done a great job in difficult conditions. We cannot always get our vehicles to where we work and have had to carry materials considerable distances."

Part of their work was to create

a disabled walk suitable for wheelchair users, which was enjoyed on Friday by a group from Harlaw Centre, Inverurie.

Neil Watt, Kennethmont, Mrs Agnes Duff and Mrs Jessie McWilliam, of Inverurie, were escorted along the way by Mrs Mary Grant, Mrs Wilma Smith and Miss Mary Strachan. They all found the path easy to negotiate and thoroughly enjoyed being there.

Mrs McWilliam said: "It was great. The smell of the trees, the birds chirping and the sunshine made it really special."

## 'Turned out perfect'

Neil added: "We were all involved in the planning of the disabled route from Esson's car park and think it has turned out perfect."

Mrs Duff said: "This means that we can enjoy Bennachie like other people. I will be able to come here on a Sunday with my husband, which will be lovely." Driving the Harlaw mini-bus was Mr Ian Mellis, of Port Elphinstone. He had great praise for the project. "It is ideal for us as we can go round the walk in about half an hour, have a picnic and be back at the Centre within two hours."

Mr Sandy Sandilands of the Forestry Commission's Buchan District Office, also highlighted a new walk, linking the Donview Centre with the car park at the Back o' Bennachie. "This five-mile trail links with established forest walks around Donview and crosses over some heather moorland," he said.

"Whatever your ability or interest there is sure to be a country walk to suit you on Bennachie."



Happy smiles as Harlaw Centre members complete the new disabled walk from Esson's car park. From left to right, Mrs Mary Grant pushing Mrs Agnes Duff, Mrs Wilma Smith and Miss Mary Strachan.