

Outdoor Education in Scotland

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Abstract

Although Scotland is part of the United Kingdom it has a distinct cultural identity and a separate education and legal system. These factors, which have influenced the development of outdoor education, are likely to have an even greater impact in the future following the re-establishment (after a break of almost 300 years since 1707) of a Scottish Parliament in 1999.

Scotland was one of the first countries in the world to formalise outdoor education. This was the result of a combination of factors:

- *Geophysical and climatic factors together with landholding and land-use practices established in the 18th Century have ensured that much of Highland Scotland is depopulated and devoid of forests; leading to the perception that the area is a "wilderness" and therefore attractive for outdoor recreation.*
- *Exploration for political, economic and scientific reasons in the second half of the millennium, which both led to and developed from Britain's empire, stimulated a national taste for adventure as expressed in seafaring, mountaineering and polar exploration.*
- *Growth in wealth, mobility and leisure-time in the late 19th and 20th Centuries provided the means by which many more people could engage in their own, more modest adventures, leading to the development of stylised forms of outdoor activities in the UK.*

Consequently the landscape and surrounding seas of Scotland have long presented challenges for outdoor recreation, and post-war development of outdoor education fitted quite naturally into this physical and social landscape.

In the 1960s and 1970s outdoor education (often formalised as physical outdoor activities and based on a residential experience) was extensively developed in Scotland and was of international significance. In recent years, primarily as a result of political effects, provision has been in some decline; a trend markedly at odds with the concurrent rapid growth in outdoor recreation. A shift away from public provision through the education service seems to be countered by growth in "charitable" and "private sector" provision, especially in the case of residential outdoor education centres.

Some concerns are raised about possible future trends, and the argument made that educational theory should be taken into account in the design of programmes which focus on personal and social education; or which capitalise on the learning potential of the landscape to encourage cultural awareness and principles of sustainability, which are seen as having both local and global significance.

Geophysical Setting

Scotland was a well-travelled country, dad told us. Within the oceanic depths of time that lay beneath the surface of the present, there had been an age when, appropriately, an entire ocean had separated the rocks that would one day be called Scotland from the rocks that would one day be called England and Wales.

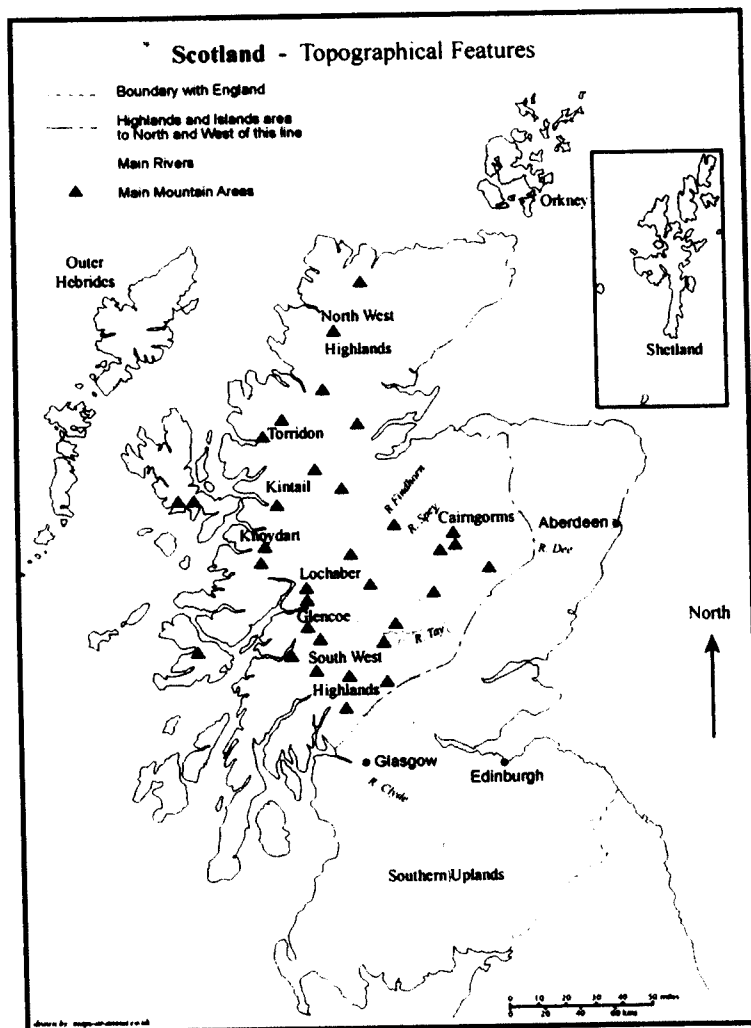
(Banks, 1993: 306)

The geological story of Scotland is dramatic, complex and difficult to summarise (see Fortey, 1993 for a recent summary). However, the underlying geology together with the characteristic climate, has had a formative influence on the physical and cultural landscape, and consequently opportunities for outdoor activities and outdoor education. In the quotation above, Banks is referring to a time of tectonic plate movement which, 500 million years ago, brought the lower portion of the British Isles to meet the bulk of Scotland which was at the time part of what is now North America and already contained ancient rocks almost 3000 million years old. The collision of these plates (around the Equator at the time) created a mountain chain comparable to the present day Himalayas before fracturing to form the separate continents of North America, Africa and Eurasia. Around 350 million years ago the mountains of Scotland became separated from the Appalachians and those of Norway. One ocean closed (known to geologists as the Iapetus) and eventually a new one opened (the Atlantic). The resulting mountain building, major fault formation and volcanic activity generated a landscape of extremely diverse rock types which, when Scotland finally became relocated in a more northern latitude, formed the stage for several glaciations over the past 2 million years. The resulting landscape has no mountain ranges of alpine proportions, but does offer lower mountains (up to 1200m), rivers and coastlines ideal for most forms of outdoor recreation. Figure I shows the location of the Highlands, the main mountain ranges and the major cities.

At over 30,000 square miles Scotland covers around a third of the UK and has a coastline of 2,500 miles (around half that of the UK). It contains most of the high mountains, wildest coastline areas etc. However, much of the "wild land" is held in the form of "sporting estates" and maintained primarily for the purpose of hunting. As very few individuals own this land (40% of Scotland held by around 280 individuals; 50% by around 600) (Wightman, 1996: 158) and the activities of hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation can appear to conflict (Wightman, Higgins, Jarvie, and Nicol, in press), access rights are often contested. This may lead to some complications for those wishing to journey through such areas, but on the whole recreational access to most land and water is generally possible. It is worth note that although there are a number of National Parks in the rest of the British Isles, these are not in public ownership and none exist in Scotland. After a recent public consultation the Scottish Executive has decided to establish two National Parks ("Loch Lomond and The Trossachs" & "The Cairngorms") in 2002-3. That this has taken so long to achieve is an odd situation for the home country of John Muir, the founder of the National Park movement. Muir, who was the key figure in establishing the world's first National Park in America (Yellowstone, 1872), was born in Dunbar near Edinburgh, but is little known in Scotland.

An obsession with the weather comes quite naturally to anyone who works in the outdoors in Scotland. This can be best described as "variable" and results from the temperate maritime climate of an island country sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and the continent of Europe. The climate is dominated by the wet westerly winds which sweep in as a result of the oceanic current called "the Gulf Stream", but a fair proportion of winds come from the south, east and north, bringing respectively warm, dry and cold air.

Figure I



The combination of variable climate, geological history and the resulting topography has had a major influence on the development of outdoor activities in Scotland. For example, the development of winter mountaineering required freeze-thaw cycles of the accumulated snow in the gullies of mountain crags. This particular brand of climbing led to technical developments, which have had an international impact (McNeish & Else, 1994). The opportunities offered by the natural physical heritage of Scotland have also encouraged the development of, amongst other activities, river and sea kayaking, sailing, rock climbing and mountaineering. Variable amounts of snow lies in the mountains in most winters and allowed the development of skiing from as early as 1892 (Simpson, 1982).

Clearly the countryside, wild areas and the surrounding seas of Scotland have long been attractive to outdoor people from all over Britain and indeed many other parts of the world. Little wonder then that Scotland provided one of the earliest venues for the development of formalised outdoor education.

A Brief History of Scotland

The essential nature of any country is as much a product of its history as its geophysical and climatic situation. Scottish history is dominated by its relationship with England and in turn with Europe and the wider world. This is manifest in the fact that in 1996 83% of overseas visitors to Scotland visited castles, monuments etc (Scottish Tourist Board, 1997). The purpose here is not to provide an overview of the history of Scotland, however, it can be contended that carefully planned experiences in the landscape we *use* for outdoor education can be invaluable in increasing understanding of social and economic history (Nicol & Higgins, 1998a, 1998b; White, 1998). These authors argue that this is a justifiable and important form of outdoor education and that it has particular, but presently little acknowledged relevance to practice in Scotland. The following represent aspects of such history which both aid in a general understanding of the "place" in which outdoor education is carried out in Scotland, and has been proposed as part of an appropriate range of issues for inclusion in "learning outdoors" (Nicol & Higgins, 1998a, 1998b; White, 1998).

Landuse and Land Ownership

Perhaps the most relevant aspects of the history of Scotland relate to the way in which land has been owned and used. This has had considerable influence on the "national psyche" and the "sense of place" of many Scots, and also upon the perceptions of those who visit Scotland for outdoor recreational purposes. Callander (1998) provides an overview of the mechanisms by which the feudal system became established (in the 12th Century), whereby the Crown (the "Paramount Superior" in feudal jargon) assumed ownership of the whole territory of Scotland. Prior to this the land in a given area was held by an "extended family" in the form of a clan (e.g. Campbell, McDonald, Fraser etc.) with its own chief. The feudal system as established did allow for others to own the land but only through allocation by the Crown. In return for loyalty and allegiance the monarch allocated land to those who had previously been clan chiefs, ensuring good behaviour.

The loyalty did not last long and on several occasions throughout the early part of the 18th Century a number of the Scottish clans rose against the British State. Although they met with early success the eventual result was the defeat of the Jacobite army and their charismatic leader (Bonnie Prince Charlie) at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. The British Government went to great lengths to destroy any remaining support for the Jacobite cause and those clan chiefs who supported the cause had their estates forfeited. The impact of the Jacobite uprising and the military suppression which followed was to decisively quash any prospect of the Highlands and Islands remaining outwith the political control of the rest of the British State. An erosion of the clan system (a process which had been underway for over a hundred years before Culloden) was accelerated and those clan chiefs who had not already started to exploit their land more commercially began to organise their affairs more on capitalist estate-management principles, rather than as kinship-based peasant agricultural holdings. Land was now a commercial asset and began to be traded extensively by Highland chiefs who, having secured feudal charters from the Crown in earlier centuries began the process of economic transformation of their estates.

The Highland Clearances

From early in the 18th Century the economic value of the hardy Cheviot sheep had become acknowledged. They needed little attention, could live in cold wet windy climates and despite this managed to be efficient at turning the vegetation of such places (which were very inexpensive to

buy) into meat and wool. The technology to spin and weave wool on an impressive scale had been developed concurrently in the industrial revolution so everyone stood to gain (with the exception of the people who lived and subsisted on the land coveted for sheep of course). These people were an inconvenience to the landowners who wished to maximise their profits and so many of them were, in the period between the late 18th and mid 19th Century, persuaded or forced to leave the land they had occupied for generations. There has been much made of the impoverished conditions these people lived in at the time of the "clearances" and this has been used in some quarters as a justification for forced eviction. Some of the events of this period are well documented, others are unclear. In summary it can be said that some clan chiefs were protective of their clans, others "sold out" completely and were responsible for the deaths of many; some of the highlanders were willing to leave, others were forced; some survived their move to the desperately unproductive margins of Scotland (and continued to subsist) or their passage to the New World, but many died on the journey as a result of disease or starvation. The events of the Highland Clearances are recorded extensively in the written and musical folk tradition of Scotland and are a recurrent theme. Academics have been attracted to study the period and excellent accounts can be found in the works of (amongst others) Hunter (1995), Prebble (1963) and Richards (1985). The potential of this as a theme for "learning outdoors" has been promoted by Nicol & Higgins (1998a, 1998b).

Environmental and Social Impact

Coming as it did, hard on the heels of millennia of deforestation of the Highlands, the environmental impact of this period and the land ownership situation which developed were deeply significant. Sheep are highly selective and efficient grazers, preferring to eat the freshest shoots of the softest plants. The consequence of overgrazing is therefore a predominance of the tougher plants such as heather, and complete absence of regeneration of broadleaved trees. As the sheep grazed they converted the "natural capital" of the land into flesh, bone and wool. Little was returned to the land and consequently a landscape which was not best equipped (in terms of geology, soils and climate) to withstand the pressure became impoverished. With the subsequent reduction in demand for wool, the much poorer returns from the land, and the romanticisation of the Highlands as a "playground" by Queen Victoria and the aristocracy, estates were turned over to red deer and grouse which were shot for sport by those who could afford such leisure pursuits (see Fraser-Darling, 1955; Lister-Kaye, 1994; Hunter, 1995 and Jarvie, Jackson & Higgins, 1997). The consequences are clear to a modern day observer:

- The Highlands remain a deforested "wet desert" (Fraser-Darling, 1956: 353), stripped of much of its natural nutritional potential;
- A pattern of land use which, it is argued (superficially at least) is the only option, and therefore no other possibilities for changes to existing practice are seriously discussed;
- The maintenance of land holdings as predominantly large blocks (the most concentrated in Europe) as these are of an appropriate scale for their use (and resale value) as sporting (hunting) estates;
- Little opportunity for employment in work associated with the landscape and a consequent pattern of depopulation;
- A perception amongst resident and visitor alike that it has always been, and will always be, like it is at present.

So the landscape within which a "Scottish" outdoor educational experience (whether travelling on foot, ski or by boat) takes place has a complex environmental, political and social history. The outdoor educator is uniquely placed to address the wide and inter-related set of issues noted above. Hence Nicol and Higgins (1998a, 1998b) and White (1998) suggest that engagement with such issues should be a central theme in "learning outdoors". Furthermore, Higgins (2001) has argued that it is the interconnectedness of these issues is a vital aspect of learning, which is very difficult to deal with other than in an outdoor context.

The Past

Outdoor Recreation - A "New" Land Use

Long before the "Ordnance Survey" mapped the land many a shepherd must have gone to the top of a hill just to see the view, or even for the simple adventure of it. So the notion that recreational use of the outdoors is new seems misguided as it has simply been formalised and reported (Mitchell, 1998). However, the stimulus for this process in Britain (and subsequently other parts of the world) seems to have come (in the 19th Century) from the "Romantic" school of writers and artists (Blake, Wordsworth, Constable and others), as much as the subsequent inculcation in the "national psyche" of the character value of exploration (which originally took place for predominantly political, economic and scientific reasons) as epitomised by the race to the North and South Poles, Mount Everest etc. Such factors, combined with the added social pressure resulting from the love of the Highlands evidenced by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, led to the Highlands becoming both a training ground (for the European Alps and the "greater ranges") and a venue in their own right for mountaineers. Any contemporary mountaineering or climbing guide will provide evidence of the dates of first ascents of "new" routes and the names of the members of the party. This was to some extent also true of the rugged coasts of the Highlands and Islands which were increasingly explored under sail and more recently by kayak (Dunnett, 1950). In particular the names of many of those who "cut their teeth" in the mountains of Scotland during the early to middle of the 20th Century (Abrahams, Whymper etc) are synonymous with first ascents in Norway, the European Alps and other mountain ranges throughout the world.

Outdoor Education - Formalised Adventure

The early history of outdoor education in Scotland from the 19th Century to the 1970s is covered in detail by Parker and Meldrum (1973). In addition to the acceptance that "adventure was a good thing", a number of factors led to the climate becoming favourable. In particular, a number of Acts of Parliament had led to protection of natural heritage and increased holiday opportunities for workers at all levels led to subsequent growth in interest in outdoor activities. Furthermore, a number of Education Acts (1944 Education Act, 1945 Education (Scotland) Act) and other reports had encouraged and led to the use of the outdoors for environmental and nature studies (Cook, 1999). Finally, the rise of the "progressive" education movement through the 20th Century until around the 1970s encouraged the use of experiential educational techniques.

Parker and Meldrum (1973) note the importance of Cecil Reddie who founded Abbotsholme School in Derbyshire (in 1889) on the principle of exercising body and mind and encouraging social responsibility. At about the same time similar arguments were being put forward in Scotland by Sir Patrick Geddes, for the emphasis in education to be on the three H's (Heart, Hand and Head) rather than the three R's (reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic). (For a review of the considerable significance of

Geddes as an educator, biologist, town planner and peace campaigner see Boardman, 1978). However, the most well known of those who sought to use the outdoors for educational purposes was the German émigré Kurt Hahn. The first school he established based on these principles was in Scotland. He founded Gordonstoun School in 1934 and it still incorporates much of Hahn's philosophy in its practice today. Hahn subsequently moved to Wales where he established the first Outward Bound School.

The 1944 Education Act explicitly stated the value of direct experience of the outdoors and encouraged Local Education Authorities to establish "camps" for the purpose. During the 1960s and 1970s it became fashionable for Education Authorities to provide such camps and many went a step further in buying and converting old mansions (which were relatively cheap to buy in Scotland at the time) as residential bases from which outdoor adventurous activities and field studies could take place. This was the heyday of outdoor educational provision in Scotland. In most Local Educational Authorities it was extensive in scope and offered progressive outdoor educational opportunities for the school pupil. At this time Scotland, and in particular Lothian Region (the area around Edinburgh) had what was probably the most comprehensive formalised provision of outdoor education in the World (see Cheesmond, 1979). Consequently, outdoor education courses designed to meet the demand throughout the UK for trained teachers and instructors were established in a number of colleges and universities throughout the UK (Higgins & Morgan, 1999). In Scotland the training of outdoor leaders was given extra impetus because of the death of five school-children in the Cairngorm Mountains in the winter of 1972-3. The children were from an Edinburgh school and on an outdoor education expedition led by a schoolteacher. This was a significant factor in the development of the first training courses at Scottish Colleges (Moray House College and Dunfermline College) in 1973 (Crowther, Cheesmond & Higgins, 2000). These colleges have now merged with the University of Edinburgh where these courses are still offered.

Theoretical Perspectives on Outdoor Education

Many of the arguments put forward for the educational use of the outdoors are of course the same in Scotland as they are in the UK, Europe and indeed much of the rest of the world. However, theoretical perspectives on outdoor education in Scotland deserve some attention for the reason noted above; namely its early development in the context of the natural and cultural heritage. The following offers an insight into such factors but for a more extensive overview and critique see Hopkins and Putnam (1993); Higgins, Loynes, and Crowther (1997); Nicol and Higgins (1998a, 1998b); and Nicol, 2002.

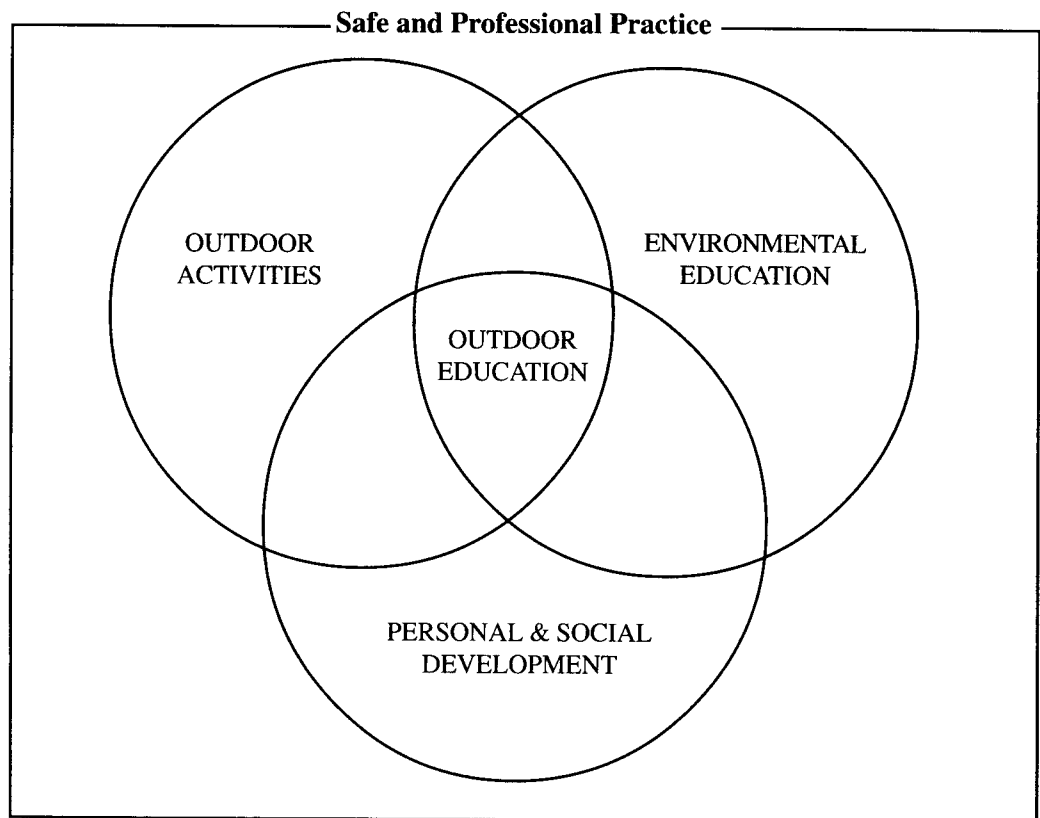
Two of the earliest attempts to offer a philosophical perspective on the use of the outdoors for educational purposes were provided by Drasdo (1973) and Mortlock (1984). In summary they make a strong case for the creative developmental power of outdoor adventure experiences but raise concerns about the dangers of a "utilitarian" approach. Nicol and Higgins (1998a) have echoed their concerns, describing this as an "instrumental" approach with the "environment being used explicitly as an educational resource". Such an approach pervades contemporary outdoor programmes in Scotland. The origins of this lie in Kurt Hahn's philosophy for the Outward Bound movement which emphasised physical fitness, endurance, craftsmanship and community service (see Skidelsky, 1986). These have been translated in modern terms into the pursuit of "outdoor activities or sports" and "personal and social education". These are now the predominant approaches taken by the majority of providers in the UK. However, as Nicol and Higgins (1998a) point out a

third dimension “environmental education” has to some extent fallen out of favour due to the growth of “instrumental” approaches to the outdoors but it has both a long tradition and validity. Indeed, the early programmes which ran in Scotland’s National Outdoor Training Centre (established in 1948) had considerable emphasis on field nature study (Loader, 1952). This was incidentally the first book on outdoor education to be published in the UK.

Figure II provides one current view of the nature of outdoor education in the UK. Whilst the model comprises three interlocking circles with outdoor education at the centre, the expectation is that an outdoor educator will work within the whole domain, shifting emphasis from one area to another and merging approaches as opportunities arise within the dictates of the programme (Higgins & Loynes, 1997). There is some evidence that, in response to global environmental imperatives, World summits (e.g. Rio in 1992 and Kyoto in 1997) and the translation of such commitments into “Local Agenda 21” the “third circle” is now becoming more fully integrated into outdoor educational practice in the UK (Cooper, 1991; Nicol & Higgins, 1998a; Crowther, Higgins & Nicol, 1998). The fact that, as will be argued below, a number of pressures have conspired to force outdoor education providers to reinvent themselves has perhaps added to the urgency.

Figure II

The Range and Scope of Outdoor Education



The Present: A Changing Pattern of Provision

The Public Sector

The following section has been published previously in full (Higgins, 2000) but is included in an abbreviated form here for completeness of this paper.

In 1983 the Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) published the results of a survey (conducted in 1982) reporting the existence of some 163 Residential Centres providing for "outdoor activities of a recreational or educational kind", representing "a resource of considerable value to both the education and leisure markets" (CCS, 1983: 16). In the conclusions section the authors presage the financial pressures which have led to a decline in provision in recent years, noting that "in the public sector, outdoor education may be looked upon as one of the first extras to be cut, partly due to the high costs of transport and building maintenance" (CCS, 1983: 16). They also made a number of suggestions of ways in which this challenge could be met and emphasise the importance of this form of educational provision (CCS, 1983: 17-18). Little published evidence exists of the changing pattern of provision within the nine Regional Authorities of Scotland other than that for Lothian Region (with Edinburgh as its major city), and to a lesser extent Strathclyde Region (with Glasgow as its major city). Details of both are noted below.

The development of outdoor education provision in Strathclyde Region has recently been charted by Halls, (1997a, 1997b). He notes the growth and increasing "organisation" of the subject area to a peak in the 1970s and early 1980s and identifies reasons (such as its non-statutory status) for the subsequent decline of robust, diverse and Region-wide provision.

Lothian Region was particularly successful in developing outdoor education during this period and in 1978 and 1979 they collaborated with Dunfermline College, Edinburgh on a substantial research project to review the status of outdoor education within the Region (Cheesmond, 1979). This review of provision can be summarised as follows and is compared with the current situation:

1978 - 1979 (Cheesmond, 1979)

- All Secondary Schools (for ages 11 to 18) had some programme of outdoor education, either formal or informal.
- Almost all Secondary Schools (45) employed promoted staff responsible for outdoor education, and these were assisted by many others.
- There were a high number of other staff (estimated 500 to 600) who assisted in outdoor education provision, ranging from only one of two in some schools to over 50% in others. The majority of these were volunteers.
- Four outdoor education Centres were operational, each fully staffed.
- Several additional resource bases were provided.
- Primary School (for ages 5 to 11) provision was very limited.

Current Provision - 1999 (Smith, 1999)

- Under Local Government Reorganisation legislation enacted in 1996, Lothian Region was split into 4 new Councils.
- Very few Secondary Schools have a programme of outdoor education, either formal or informal.

- Few Secondary Schools (6) employ any staff responsible for outdoor education, and several of these have only a part responsibility for the subject. The total number of school based staff (includes special schools) amounts to about 7 "fte" (full time equivalent).
- Relatively few other staff now assist in outdoor education provision.
- Two Outdoor Education Centres are operational, each with a much reduced staff complement.
- One additional resource base has been provided.
- Prior to Local Government Reorganisation a "Disadvantaged Pupils Fund" existed to help with the cost of residential courses. Only 2 of the 4 new Councils provide this support.
- Primary School involvement is somewhat more extensive, but this is rarely reflected in staff appointments and designated responsibilities.

Outdoor education has often been perceived as expensive, but in times of less financial pressure the educational arguments and long term benefits have generally prevailed. In recent years a number of factors have led to a decline in formal outdoor education provision in the UK. The gradual attrition has left the area susceptible to pressures, which have taken some provision past the point of viability. For example, recent legislation (Activities Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act, 1995) has inadvertently resulted in staffing or financial pressures. Similarly reductions in the Rate Support Grant from Central Government have led to substantial cuts (in real terms) in Local Authority provision for most "services". Within education, outdoor education has not been the only casualty as other "non-core" subjects such as music, art, drama and curriculum support have also suffered. In Scotland the changes in the structure of Local Authorities instigated by the UK Government in 1996 have led to major restructuring or closure for many Centres. This process which was designed to reduce bureaucracy through the disaggregation of the nine Regional Authorities to form 32 "Single Tier Councils" has left the newly formed Councils searching for ways to balance their budgets. The financial arguments have taken centre managers into new territory from which they have been ill prepared to argue.

Whilst there has been no national survey of residential provision following these changes, a number of centres have been closed and anecdotal evidence from schools suggests a substantial reduction. The Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) who inspect providers to ensure safe practice under the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act (1995), have reported on recent trends. In the past five years they note a decline in permanent jobs, an increase in freelance staff, an increase in schemes for diversion or intervention with youth "at risk", the opening of several new centres and an increase in the number of AALA licence holders from 126 in 1999 to 147 in 2002 (AALA Inspectors, 2002). These 147 licences includes those held by 28 of the 32 Scottish Councils, with several of these holding several licences.

Much of the activity noted above is associated with outdoor centres in rural areas of Scotland. Clearly with shrinking resources there will be a reduction in this type of economic contribution and this may have a significant effect (Higgins, 2000). The natural expectation is that the commercial and charitable sectors will gain and bookings will still be made by schools. Whilst this may be the case in the short term, the long term prospects for continued enthusiasm in the schools may well decline if the situation in the rest of Scotland mirrors that in the former Lothian Region where so few schools now have a member of staff with a responsibility for outdoor education.

The situation is, however, varied and some of the new Councils are making substantial new investments in provision. For example North Lanarkshire Education Department recently instigated a major new educational initiative termed "Raising Achievement" which recognises the value of "multiple intelligences" (see Gardner, 1993). Much of the focus is in the schools and local community but as part of the programme, most secondary pupils (usually aged 13 to 14) go on a residential outdoor education programme designed to complement this. The Council maintains its own outdoor centre for children of primary school age, and so in order to run the residential part of the "Raising Achievement" programme they have entered into a contract with an outdoor centre to cater for the secondary age group.

Community Education

Education in the community is a separate branch (from school) of provision within the Scottish Councils, and in some, responsibility for outdoor education lies within these departments rather than within education. Some of the most extensive public sector provision in Scotland has been provided by these departments (e.g. in the former Grampian Region, located around Aberdeen), but much has been lost since local government reorganisation in 1996. Although in some areas (e.g. Fife Council, Aberdeen City Council, Highland Council) provision seems fairly healthy, a recent survey conducted for the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE) showed little evidence of other provision (Higgins, unpublished data). Whether or not the responsibility for outdoor education lies with these or the education departments, this is a disappointing situation, as clearly the majority of the population cannot take advantage of the (few) opportunities available in schools.

Social Work Departments

Whilst the Social Work Departments of many councils have traditionally made some use of outdoor education, the survey noted in the previous section showed virtually no formal commitment through staff employed to work with clients in the outdoors. A disappointing result in the light of the claims of the therapeutic value of outdoor educational experiences.

Charitable and Private Sectors

The past 20 years has seen a steady growth in the number and scale of provision in these sectors. They are considered together as their common characteristic is that they are not funded by public money. They are separate in that charitable status allows, provided criteria relating to the educational or charitable nature of the work are met, considerable taxation and trading benefits. Other than that, boundaries are increasingly blurred and even a number of public sector providers are considering a shift to charitable status. A number of established outdoor centres (Abernethy Trust, Outward Bound for example) have continued to develop their programmes and have seen some expansion; and a number of centres previously in Local Authority ownership or management have transferred wholly or partly to charitable status (eg Castle Toward Trust). Furthermore there has been growth in the number of small scale but creative providers who run programmes at bases they hire for the purpose. These providers have shown themselves to be increasingly competitive in recent years and pressure has increased on the public sector to keep costs of provision low.

Scottish fee-paying (private) schools have a long tradition of provision, which in the case of Gordonstoun stretches back to Kurt Hahn. There are a considerable number of such schools in Scotland and most make a feature of their commitment to the outdoors and exhort its personal development potential. Often most staff are expected to contribute to the programme and many schools are either located in or near the Highlands (e.g. Rannoch School) or have their own outdoor centre.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme offers three levels of award for young people who achieve certain levels in defined areas of effort (e.g. service to the community, skills etc). One of the categories requires the completion of a self-sufficient expedition or exploration and this is the focus of much effort in both the private and state schools of Scotland. It has significance as it is one of the ways in which young people are "introduced to the outdoors", though it is not formalised into any educational structure. The scheme has recently merged with the Outward Bound Trust. In addition the Scout and Guide movements still continue to have significant influence in introducing many young people to the outdoors, primarily through camps.

"Developmental" Use of the Outdoors

A number of UK and Scottish agencies focus their work on young people who are considered to be "disadvantaged", "at-risk of offending" or already regularly doing so. In most cases the programmes on offer are broad based and include training for work etc, but all involve some use of the outdoors. As part of its UK role Fairbridge works with "disadvantaged youth" in the inner city areas of Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh (see Ruck, 1999). Similar work is done by the Venture Trust in the north-west of Scotland. Others, such as Airborne Initiative work through social work departments with young adults referred by the courts or probation service. Agencies such as Scottish Centres and Venture Scotland focus their efforts on "inner city youth" to encourage them to take part in outdoor educational projects. All such organisations are charitable in their constitution and, despite the unpredictable nature of short-term funding are, at present meeting with some success in maintaining provision.

During the period 2000 and 2001 the Westminster Parliament made an initial financial commitment of £1 million, followed by a further £10 million to provide "Summer Activities for 16 Year-Olds". Almost 12,000 young people were given places on the scheme that was administered by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (www.dfes.gov.uk/research/). From 2002 funding has been provided by the National Lottery New Opportunities Fund and administered through the Connexions Service. A key aim of the scheme is to assist 16 year-old school-leavers in the transition from school to work or to continue with their education. Outdoor activities and a residential period (often at an outdoor education centre) are a significant component of the scheme. On a similar basis New Opportunities Funds (£87 million over three years from Spring 2002) have been made available in Scotland for PE, Sport and "Out of School Hours Activities." Within these funds there is an allocation of £43 million for capital facilities (which could include refurbishing an outdoor centre) almost £21 million for "diversionary activities" and the same amount for "Out of School Hours Activities" (National Lottery New Opportunities Fund). Whilst such financial support is generally welcomed by the outdoor sector, considerable disquiet has been voiced¹ that such a significant allocation for "diversionary activities" is both inequitable and not based on reliable evidence that such programmes work. Nonetheless such a significant level of funding, albeit temporary, will undoubtedly have an impact on both the orientation and delivery of outdoor programmes.

¹ A number of individuals and organisations such as the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education and Outdoor Learning Scotland responded to the consultation stage of this process expressing their concerns. These responses have not been published by the NOF or the Scottish Executive so for details consult individual organisations.

Overview of Provision

The situation is clearly complex and it is often difficult to find out who has responsibility for provision let alone what is actually happening within a council or a sector. Many Council Outdoor Education Advisors report that there is probably more going on than they know about, and because some provision is licensed through the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority (see Legal Considerations) and some is not, the AALA Inspectors do not know the situation either. However, it is clear that whilst much activity continues in this sector Council Advisors report that a great deal has been lost (primarily as the result of financial pressures and "Local Government Reorganisation") over the past 10 years or so.

There is a longstanding debate in the UK which centres around whether outdoor education is a "subject in its own right" or an "approach to education which uses the outdoors". The web-like nature of provision as noted above is probably a manifestation of this lack of clarity, with each part of the sector selecting arguments for its own purpose. Perhaps because outdoor education has never been included fully in the curriculum as a subject it has been vulnerable to the political and financial pressures noted above. (See Cook (1999) and Humberstone (1992) for an overview of the situation in England, and Loynes, Michie, and Smith, (1997) for that in Scotland). Education department commitment has clearly decreased and this has left many students with limited or no opportunities and few teachers left in-post to argue the educational benefits. Nonetheless there are many who make the effort to take students outdoors and to residential outdoor centres. For some school pupils this may be limited to just three or four days in their whole school career but for other this can be significantly greater. Taken as a whole though the number of outdoor education student days per year is substantial and significant. A recent estimate puts this at around 200-300,000 days per year (Higgins, 2002).

Legal Considerations

The legal situation for outdoor education is complex but will have many parallels in other countries. It is worth at the outset to note that much of the legislation is common to other sectors and relates to residential, hygiene, transport and "duty of care" contexts so will not be reviewed here. This is covered, along with specific considerations for outdoor educators in Scotland by Michie, Higgins, and Nicol, (1997). There are, however, two areas worth specific mention; the law relating to access to land and water (which is specific to Scotland) and the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act (1995) noted earlier.

The access situation is a function of the land ownership situation noted earlier. At the time of the clans there would have been no legal reason to preclude travel over much of the land used for outdoor education today, although it must be said that encountering a hostile clan might place the issue beyond debate. Successive generations of landowners have influenced Parliaments to enact measures that have enshrined the rights of owners in preference to "freedom to roam". The current situation is complex, compounded by the fact that much has been "imported" from English law. The present situation is perhaps best described as follows. The "trespassers" (an outdoor educator and group entering without permission) have no explicit rights of access over "open ground" nor, with few exceptions, to the rivers of Scotland. Occasionally an "owner" or their agent will ask them to leave. Whether this is lawful, and under what circumstances this could be legally enforced is an issue of some legal debate (Blackshaw, 1999). As no-one has been successfully prosecuted for recreational access on open land or water there is no case law to base such judgements on.

This situation is clearly out of step with other European countries (notably Scandinavia) where with legal or natural rights of access come responsibilities (Scott, 1998). Some efforts have been made to clarify the situation in Scotland and an "Access Forum" has now recommended a change in the law to allow "freedom to roam" over open land but with attendant responsibilities in the form of a strengthened "country code" (Scottish Natural Heritage, 1998). These recommendations have been made to the Scottish Executive and over the past two years the Scottish Parliament has consulted on a Bill concerned with access to the countryside and a wider "land reform agenda" Land Reform (Scotland) Bill (2001). The outdoor education and outdoor recreation community in Scotland has been very active in arguing the case for freedom of access to the countryside, whilst many landowners have argued for restrictions. The former argue their case on the grounds of customary access (Blacksaw, 1999), equity, education and economics (Higgins, 2000, 2002), whilst the latter focus on agricultural economics. The Bill was presented to Parliament in Spring 2002 and we await the practical consequences. As far as outdoor educational access is concerned it is to be hoped that one consequence will be a reduction in heated discussions with landowners and their agents and a welcome emphasis on a duty of care for the environment. As noted earlier in this paper, such issues provide a valuable but traditionally little used focus for outdoor education (Nicol & Higgins, 1998a, 1998b).

In 1993 a group of young people on a school visit to a commercial outdoor centre in Devon were taken in kayaks on a crossing of Lyme Bay by an unqualified leader. The events which ensued were the result of a long history of mismanagement and a series of poor decisions on the day. A multiple capsize occurred, four young people died as a result and the centre manager was imprisoned. (See the British Canoe Union report (1995) for a brief analysis of the incident.) Legislation followed in the form of the Activities Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act (1995). This Act makes it a criminal offence to provide, in return for payment, certain specified adventure activities to young people under the age of 18 unless the provider has been granted a licence. These activities include caving, climbing, watersports, and trekking. There are exceptions, which include schools, but it is clear that in the event of an accident all providers will be judged against the criteria of the Act. Inspections are carried out by a commercial franchised inspectorate, the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority (AALA)

Whilst there was clearly a need to tighten up on poor practice in what should really be termed the "Activity Holiday" part of the sector, the introduction of the Act has been seen by many as an extreme over-reaction. Very few fatalities have occurred, and those under the supervision of qualified instructors or leaders are extremely rare indeed. (Three in the past 20 years, of which two were from medical causes (Loynes & Higgins, 1997)). Indeed the risk of fatality for those engaged in outdoor education in such circumstances is probably far less than when in the home or on the roads. It is worth noting that safety in all other "industries" in the UK is governed by generic legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Acts, and professional practice is self-regulated. There are several exceptions to this; the munitions, asbestos and nuclear industries, to which, bizarrely, must now be added the outdoor sector. Of these, the only one which pays for its own inspection and regulation is certainly by far the poorest — the latter.

Whilst some small providers have suffered and in some cases the range of activities provided has been reduced, there is little doubt that the Act is now generally well regarded in Scotland. It encourages providers to engage in discussions on safety practice with their technical advisors and the AALA inspectors, and allows them to advertise the fact that they have a licence. It seems likely that the scheme will be extended in due course to allow providers within the voluntary sector to be inspected and "accredited".

Organisation and Management

It seems highly likely that the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act (1995) would not have been introduced if there had been a national framework for the management of outdoor education. I have argued elsewhere (Higgins, 1997, 1998) that a national professional body, devised broadly along the lines of those for the teaching, medical or legal professions might set and regulate standards, and look after the interests of members. At present a bewildering number of bodies exist in Scotland which can justifiably claim to speak for various parts of the profession (Higgins, 1997). In brief these can be categorised as follows:

Many *National Governing Bodies* (NGBs) were originally clubs which developed an interest in training their own members but which have subsequently devised instructional awards which have been adopted as standards and hence validated by the profession and more recently AALA. These are often the same as or closely "federated" with comparable English, Welsh and Irish NGBs, and include the Scottish Canoe Association, Scottish Mountain Leader Training Board, Royal Yachting Association, British Association of Snowsport Instructors, Scottish Orienteering Association.

Several *Advisory Panels* exist which had their origins in Local Education Authority provision. The Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education is essentially a forum for debate amongst those who hold an advisory position within the 32 Scottish Councils. Similarly, the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (Scotland) is essentially a similar forum for those who hold such positions. These are both "federated" with other UK bodies with similar titles.

Outdoor Learning Scotland is an *Individual Membership Organisation* for those who have an interest in the sector. Membership is completely open with a number of benefits being available (insurance, discounts etc). The Scottish Activity Holidays Association is also a membership organisation that represents the interests of commercial providers.

Scotland has its own *General Teaching Council*, which regulates qualifications and standards for those who teach in Scotland and advises the Scottish Executive on such matters. It has argued consistently for a number of years that there should be a teaching qualification for outdoor education, but despite this and the case made at frequent intervals by the various panels described above, the Scottish Executive has declined to support one. A number of Institutes of Further Education and two Scottish universities have validated their own courses in outdoor education. Strathclyde University offers a BA in Outdoor Education in the Community and the University of Edinburgh (Moray House Institute) offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate outdoor education programmes including a BSc, a Postgraduate Diploma and a Masters (MSc) degree. Moray House has been running such programmes for 30 years now and has, several times, sought support for the introduction of a teaching qualification. Early in 2001, at the request of the then Minister for Education and Children (Peter Peacock MSP) the Scottish Executive and the General Teaching Council for Scotland were asked to review the situation. The advice of the group set up to conduct the review was that such a qualification was needed and draft entry qualifications were agreed. Unfortunately the sudden death of the then First Minister (Donald Dewar) led to a cabinet reshuffle and the issue has, for the time being, dropped off the political agenda.

At the time of writing there is no overarching body to integrate the efforts of these, and many other, bodies. However, change is in the offing and it now seems likely that a new membership organisation "Outdoor Learning Scotland" will endeavour to do so. The expectation is that this organisation will provide a forum for joint meetings of a number of the above bodies, a focus of effort, credibility within the profession, and a political voice.

The Future

It seems odd considering the substantial effort and financial resources invested in outdoor education in both Scotland and the UK over the past 50 years or so there seems to be little in the way of a coherent, commonly accepted philosophy or consistent professional standards. A number of explanations might be proposed for this. Perhaps it is in the nature of outdoor educators that they prefer to be out there "doing it" rather than indoors "writing about it" or in a political arena "arguing about it". Perhaps the lack of an outdoor education teaching qualification in Scotland, or a single professional voice have been other factors. Perhaps those with responsibility within the field have been preoccupied with survival in the face of increasing financial pressures. Whatever the reasons, it seems likely that we might now expect a change in this situation. Most of these factors have been noted above but there are others worth mention and elaboration.

The Act defining the responsibilities of the new Scottish Parliament sets out the legislative areas within which it will have jurisdiction, the remainder still remaining the responsibility of the London Parliament. Historically very few days have been given over to Scottish business in London whereas the Edinburgh Parliament will sit for many more days a year and its focus will be on issues specific to Scotland. "Land reform" is very high on the agenda and it seems highly likely that tourism, including that with a focus on recreation in natural heritage areas will also catch the interest of the Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). There is little information on the relationship between outdoor education and outdoor recreation (Higgins, 2000) but it seems likely that there is one. Residential outdoor education centres are significant employers in rural areas, and outdoor recreation makes a substantial annual contribution to the economy generating around a third of all tourist income to Scotland (£600 to £800 million) (Higgins, 2000, 2002).

Education is a devolved responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and it seems clear that this presents opportunities for outdoor educators. This is certainly so if a broad based position is presented through the notion of "learning outdoors". The current 5-14 guidelines offer scope under the Environmental Studies curriculum where a broad and integrated conception of "environment" is presented, including natural and Earth sciences, history and sustainability (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2000). Furthermore, other 5-14 documents (Structure and Balance of the Curriculum) (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001) provide opportunities for Personal and Social Education, and Education for Citizenship (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002). It remains to be seen whether schools in general and outdoor educators in particular will look outside the classroom to embrace these educational opportunities.

In Scotland as elsewhere in the UK a number of providers have addressed the changing financial circumstances within which they operate by shifting towards the provision of what Rubens (1998: 65-66) calls "narrow adventure" experiences. In essence this is a tendency to provide activities which are short in duration and focus on high thrills, but require little or no effort on the part of the student who takes little or no responsibility for his or her actions. Zipwires, ropes courses and

abseiling may be cited as examples. He contrasts this with "broad adventure" (Rubens, 1998: 65-66), which provides the converse, but most notably requires the student to take responsibility for their actions and sustain effort. Such activities are characterised by, for example, journeys by canoe or on foot. Through a comprehensive review of the educational and psychological literature Rubens makes a strong case that "broad adventure" encourages a mastery approach to education which leads to a willingness for students to take responsibility for their actions in later life. "Narrow adventure" appears to have no such benefits. In other words he makes the case that outdoor educational experiences should focus on connections (which might be personal, social or environmental) and encourage awareness of the consequences of ones actions (Higgins, 1996; Nicol & Higgins, 1998a, 1998b.). Although these and other theoretical arguments for outdoor education have been put forward with conviction and the benefit of considerable experience, Barrett and Greenaway (1995) point out, that there have been few serious attempts to assess the effectiveness of outdoor education programmes, and this has left those who design courses without much to underpin their work. In a more recent review of 96 studies into the effectiveness of outdoor adventure programmes, Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards, (1997) found gains in personal and social educational outcomes both during and (remarkably) after the programme. They found considerable variations according to the nature of the programme, but note that outcomes improved in longer programmes and with older participants. Enormous practical effort goes into running outdoor programmes in Scotland but perhaps because of recent financial and political pressures, there seems to be little awareness of these significant studies which put forward convincing arguments against short term and high thrills courses.

Whilst two Scottish universities (the University of Edinburgh and Strathclyde University) and several Further Education Colleges now offer training and qualification towards entry into the profession, employers recruit from all over the UK. Whilst a degree or further education training is seen as valuable, many employers also look for National Governing Body Awards in the outdoor activities. Whilst a focus on the latter is an understandable response to the strictures of the Adventure Activities (Young Persons' Safety) Act an over-reliance on such awards can lead to a lack of exposure to the theory associated with learning in general and outdoor education in particular (Higgins & Morgan, 1999). Nonetheless the college courses noted above recruit well and the majority of graduates find employment in the sector in Scotland or farther afield. These two universities are the focus of research in outdoor education in Scotland each with a small number of academic staff, several of whom have a UK and international involvement in the field. In recent years they have awarded their first outdoor education PhD degrees, and currently there are five PhD students and 15 MSc students registered at the University of Edinburgh and two PhD students at Strathclyde. Provided the relationship between theory and practice is developed this research should have both Scottish and international value and relevance.

A view back from the beginning of the 21st Century generates a sense of pathos so often associated with the history of Scotland. Whilst outdoor education has been characterised by bold innovation and subsequent decline, the landscape is still there, as is much of the old drive and passion to ensure that such opportunities continue to be provided for all those who might benefit from them. For those who have been part of it, it has been a journey with an uncertain outcome; an "adventure" with a number of gains and losses on the way. New environmental and social challenges have been recognised; a new Parliament and a representative outdoor association should take their own responsibilities in facing them. Much has been learnt but the task is perhaps greater than it has ever been and must be addressed. The new millennium seems as good a time to start as any.

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