

Roy Baker

BY SANDI GRIEVE

Roy Baker recently received a well deserved Provost's Award at Stirling Castle. From the first issue of the *Bridge of Allan Times* Roy has regularly contributed articles and photographs on nature in our area.

The Community Council nominated Roy for the award for maintenance of the Millennium Gardens (near Lyon Crescent) using his own equipment and resources. He has almost eliminated the spectacular but dangerous Giant Hogweed between the Centenary Walk, the River Allan, the railway line and the rear gardens of houses in Cornton Road and Cornton Crescent. The booklet produced for the award ceremony also states: 'Roy enhances Bridge of Allan for the benefit of residents and tourists alike. He regularly cycles around the Carse of Lecropt and the reservoir area checking the wildlife habitats and lifting litter. He also visits the woods above the village, checks the paths for fallen logs and keeps cycleways clear'.

You may have seen Roy at work or cycling with a dog on the back of his bike towards and through the University campus on his way to work in the Yellowcraig Wood. The *Bridge of Allan Times* felt it would be good to know a bit more about this quiet, modest man.

Roy was born in Manchester in 1937 and attended university there, studying electrical engineering. He lived in the area for the first 29 years of his life. Until the 1960s it was a dirty place, often foggy, and one could only see the hills when the factories were closed at holiday times. Roy worked in a factory with 18,000 other people and occasionally escaped to cycle in Derbyshire or the Yorkshire Dales.

The lure of the countryside was strong and in 1966 Roy and Helen, whom he had married in

1963, were drawn to work for the Hydro Board at Pitlochry. Their first home had once been a pig and poultry farm with 1¼ acres of land, which they slowly developed into a beautiful garden. With some regrets Roy later moved to work in Burroughs, living firstly in Balloch and later, in 1972, moving to Bridge of Allan. Helen taught Primary 1 here until their son Daniel was born in 1978. The previous year Roy had started to work for himself, and this gave him more time to enjoy our beautiful countryside. Later he was to take an Information Technology diploma and worked for a time as a research assistant in the Accounting Department at Stirling University.

In their spare time Roy and Helen enjoy walking, canoeing and swimming in the lochs and rivers. They have had many adventures and stories to tell. Perhaps the greatest was a six-month tour of New Zealand in 1980/81 in an old Morris van they bought in Auckland. Besides staying with family and friends they had 100 nights camping in a wee tent and two year-old Daniel sleeping in the van often in wild and lonely places, especially in the South Island. If it is a lovely day, Roy wants to be out and about, but now has little desire to go far from Scotland. This year's holiday for example was on Bute with bikes and canoes.

Roy loves the countryside and it saddens him to see mature trees felled or paths churned up. Since 2000 he has been maintaining



Yellowcraig Wood above Logie Kirk, keeping paths open by cutting back the invasive *Rhododendron Ponticum*. He has planted mostly deciduous trees - oaks, wild cherry, rowan, hazel, birch, acer, beech. He has planted chestnuts too, grown from seeds in his own garden from the large horse chestnut tree in Cornton Road. He also works hard here at keeping the bracken down. At the moment Roy's greatest concern is the maintenance of the path along the River Allan from Haughs Park downstream and back along the Forglan Burn to Cornton Road. Part of this has been badly eroded by the river and has needed rerouting, and other parts need resurfacing. Much of this he is doing himself. His other concern is the spread of the Giant Hogweed seed inland by the ever flooding river.

Roy and Helen's garden is full of oak, acer and horse chestnut saplings Roy has brought on from seed. He is always looking for the right home for them. This, and all the projects he has been involved in, are part of the legacy he is leaving for the future.



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Bridge of Allan 100 Years Ago

Seasonal Generosity

Through the kindness of ex-Provost Drysdale the burgh workmen have been presented with New Year gifts of bun and shortbread. For many years now the genial ex-Provost has contributed his gift, and the thanks of the community, as well as those of the recipients, are due to him.

(*Stirling and Bridge of Allan Reporter*,
January 2, 1909)