Building the Tarland Way

The whole idea of the Tarland way came about when a mother, living in Tarland, suggested to Tarland Development Group (TDG) that a safe cycle route to Aboyne would be really useful to her children as they would like to cycle to school and get to the Community Centre. TDG began to think about how this could be made to happen.

Money had to be raised and grants applied for; all the details can be found in the book 'Take the Tarland Way'. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) organised the building of the path. It had to be as direct a route as possible between Tarland and Aboyne and without too many hills so that it was suitable for cyclists and walkers.
Much of the route used paths and tracks that already existed, probably used by people over the centuries and that could be used again in making The Tarland Way. Some new sections had to be created and a great deal of planning and surveying was needed before work could begin. Slopes had to be measured using equipment like a clinometer and distances measured with a measuring wheel. Everything wasecorded on survey sheets so that the builders could work out what was needed for the off road section of the The Tarland Way.

Did you know that ?

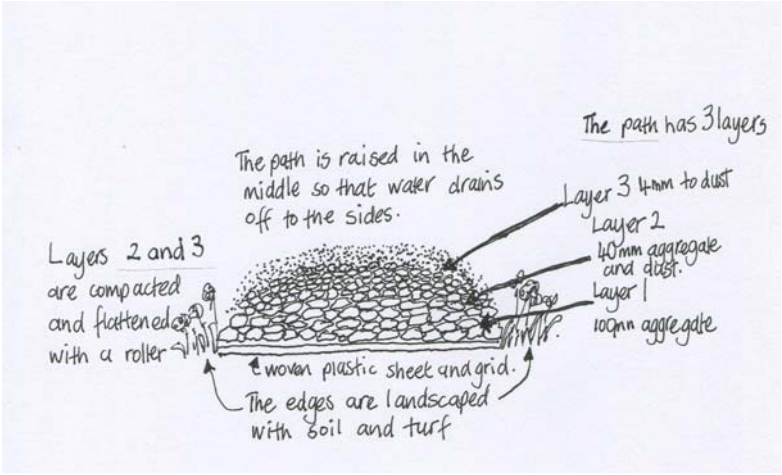
3029 metres of path had to be made.
1700 tonnes (117 truck loads) of aggregate (crushed rock) was needed.
2 bridges had to be built.

The bridges were from a Forestry Commission design where a strong lattice (criss-cross) steel structure was used to support the bridge. This kind of lattice is used for aerial masts (like telephone and radar communication masts) and so these bridges are called 'aerial mast bridges'. The bridges need to sit on and be secured to strong concrete abutments (big blocks of concrete) on each side of the Tarland Burn. They were built and then hoisted onto the abutments by a crane that could lift 50 tonnes.

Can you see the lattice structure under the Otter bridge?

How to build a path that will last a long time.

The Romans built excellent roads and their method influenced later road makers like John Macadam who built many of Scotland's roads in the eighteenth century. They had to depend on men who had to work very hard digging, lifting, dragging, pushing with shovels and carts to get the work done. Today there are mighty machines to make things easier and quicker. Excavating machines, some working in fairly narrow spaces weighing 3 tonnes and bigger ones in bigger spaces as much as 15 tonnes, are used to dig out and flatten where the path will go. This is called the path tray.



Often the path tray is lined with a woven sheet and a plastic grid to give a good surface for the next stage. Aggregate, stone crushed at a local quarry, with jagged edges (size:100mm) goes in first, then smaller aggregate with smaller jagged edges and some dust (size:40mm to 20mm). This is the middle layer and it is made higher in the middle of the path so that water drains away to the sides and keeps the middle where we walk, drier.

To be out of doors and in the countryside is very good for everyone. It makes us feel better and helps to keep us fit. It is good to share the journey with friends and family as we look out for wildlife, identify some of the trees and plants and enjoy the woodland, the fields and learn the history of some of the places along the Tarland Way.

Don't forget to download your 'Lookout Sheet' from www.tarland.org.uk to help you spot interesting things as you go. You could have a competition to see who scores the most points.