

Chapelfield Play Area, Cowie,

Client: Sue Gutteridge, Stirling Council , 2006

Project Managed: Sue Gutteridge

Location: Cowie near Stirling

Designers: Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect

Capital Cost: Approximately £110,000

Funding : Section 75 (Scottish equivalent to Section 106) housing developers' contributions; BBC Children in Need; Stirling Landfill Tax Trust; Cowie Play Areas Group local fundraising events.' c



In 2000, a local child drowned in a farmer's pond in Cowie, an ex-mining village near Stirling. This tragic event prompted local residents to form the Cowie Play Areas group to campaign and raise funds for a local play area.

A suitable site was identified – an area of archaeological significance which had been the site of an ancient Neolithic settlement and therefore was not available for housing development. While it was an eminently suitable site in that local children already played there, it was also contentious in that it was adjacent to the pond in which the child had drowned. It took some time to work through painful feelings about the drowning and also to achieve design solutions that took regard of these particular local safety issues, without compromising the children's need to experience challenge and risk, and also to have a degree of privacy and independence.



Local children paid a visit to a pre-history park, Archaeolink, and many of the ideas they got from this visit as well as information about the pre-historic Cowie site itself have been built into the design of the park, which includes shelters, cooking and seating areas, and a raised beach, as well as mounds, tunnels, slides and a climbing wall. The children's involvement

in the design development has meant that the design concept which underpins the site layout contains elements which the children understand and which feel familiar to them.

The relatively few pieces of equipment are set in a succession of spaces which are carefully inter-connected. Quite dramatic changes in level (particularly from a child's perspective) have radically changed what was a previously completely flat site, and although the site is quite small, the feeling that 'there's always something round the corner' means that visitors to the site are drawn to explore it and even adults are tempted to play here. The routes and paths through and round the site invite the use of bikes and other wheeled toys. The emphasis on natural elements works well in this relatively rural location, including ditches which in rainy weather can hold rain-water for a short while.

The site was originally treeless, and local children were involved in planting rowan, birch, Kilmarnock willows and Japanese maples. These planting sessions included environmental games, explanations and discussions about the value of trees to wildlife and to people, the reasons for including native species, and how the children themselves could best help to look after the trees and ensure their survival. The hedge boundary that reinforces and will eventually hide the fence between the play area and the farmer's pond includes blackthorn, hawthorn and dog rose and there are attractive shrub areas of witch hazel, holly and honeysuckle.

Some initial problems with the misuse/over enthusiastic use of the site in the evenings by local teenagers were dealt with firmly and constructively by the local residents who have taken responsibility for locking the park at night.

Balmaha Play Landscape

Client: Sue Gutteridge, Stirling Council

Location: Balmaha, Loch Lomond

Designers: Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect.

Capital Cost: £45,000.

Funding: Stirling Council; Stirling Landfill Tax Trust; Leader Plus (European funding); Scottish National Heritage; Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park; Stirling Council Local Community



Balmaha Play Landscape is situated near the shore of Loch Lomond next to a Visitors' Centre. It therefore attracts a mixture of regular local users and visitors to the area.

The main impetus for the design of this new play space was the connection between land and water and the way that people through history have lived in the local environment.

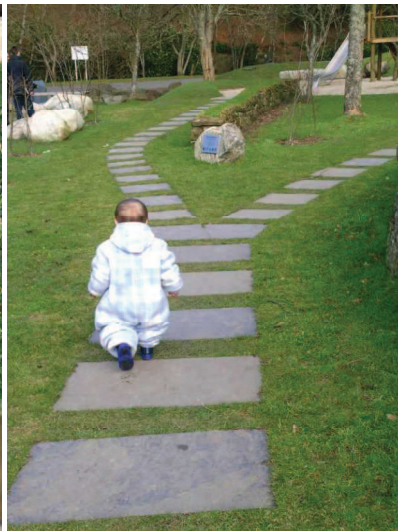
The central area represents a beach as the focus where water and land meet, where boats are hewn from mature trees and launched to fish the plentiful waters. The stilted structure echoes the ancient crannogs, which were built out into the water as living spaces where families, livestock

and belongings could be easily defended. At low water, remains of ancient crannogs can still be seen on Loch Lomond today.

Balmaha sits in one of the most naturally beautiful and bio-diverse areas of Scotland, yet children

are often separated from it. The 'play area' is designed therefore to be an integral part of the landscape, giving opportunity for children to experience and care for their natural environment.

There is a deliberate avoidance of standard play equipment in favour of mounds, dips, copses, wetland, and special places to allow the children to operate in a more authentic “natural” environment. The use of the existing changes in level, of natural materials and undulating surfaces aimed to provide a stimulating landscape, where children can experience the irregularity of life, and develop the real skills and abilities to assess risk. The play area is unfenced, blending naturally into the surrounding area and welcoming all comers. The design of the area aims to create a play landscape that is a space that adults will enjoy sharing with their children whether they are local residents or visitors. The contributions of artists and craftspeople were successfully incorporated into the design and construction of the play landscape, in the dugout canoes, the willow maze and the turfed stone wall. This project was supported in important ways by The Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. In particular, its strong community development programme was the direct stimulus to the local community’s initiation of this project and their sustained involvement with its development.



David Marshall Lodge, Aberfoyle

Client: Forestry Commission Scotland

Designers: Sue Gutteridge & Judi Legg, Play Space Designers, and Sioned Williams, Landscape Architect.

Capital Cost: £28,000.

Funding: FCS

Sue, Sioned and Judi have worked together on this project which is now nearing completion and which entailed making 'playable space' instead of the pre-existing conventional equipped playground along a trail in the Queen Elizabeth Forest. Local children were actively engaged (along with a horse logger) in aspects of the construction of this site

