



PRESS RELEASE

27th May 2009

American walking trail network extends to Scotland

A renowned network of walking trails in the US and Canada could soon cross the Atlantic to include Scotland. The British Geological Survey (BGS) and Lochaber Geopark will host council members from the International Appalachian Trail (IAT) on a visit to Scotland from 30th May until 10th June. The vision is to extend the existing 1350 miles of IAT trails in the US and Canada with several hundred miles of trails in Scotland.

Hugh Barron, BGS, Edinburgh said "This IAT visit to Scotland is particularly significant in this year of homecoming – as well as our cultural links, Scotland shares an older geological heritage with this region. We have been close neighbours on ancient continents, shared in the building of the Caledonian - Appalachian mountain chain, and only (geologically) recently separated by the opening of the North Atlantic Ocean."

The IAT group will have lunch with the Scottish Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham in Fort William on 1st June. Chris Townsend, the President of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and well-known backpacking writer will lead the group up Ben Nevis on 2nd June. In Edinburgh on 9th June they will present their case at a Scottish Parliament Event sponsored by Alasdair Morgan MSP.

Keith Hoole, Lochaber Geopark's Project Officer said "There are active close links between Scotland's two existing Geoparks; both seek to promote the understanding of the Highland's unique landscape. This is a great opportunity to physically link Lochaber with the North West Highlands Geopark using a prestigious international long distance footpath. There is a huge amount of local interest in this visit and we believe it is a wonderful opportunity to further our aims of promoting the Highlands on the global stage and to also publicise the International Appalachian Trail here".

The existing IAT stretches from the US state of Maine to the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland/Labrador. It connects two countries, five provinces, one state, and the English, French and Celtic cultures of North America.

Dick Anderson, IAT President said "We are excited to learn more about the hiking trails in Scotland and to explore the possibilities of collaboration in extending the concept of the IAT across the Atlantic. The long-term goal of the IAT is to locate sections of the IAT in all the countries or regions that were once part of the ancient Caledonian – Appalachian Mountain range"

During their trip they will also meet with representatives of Highland Council, Visit Scotland, The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and Cairngorms National parks, North West Highland Geopark and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Ends



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Notes for Editors

IAT Visit Schedule

Date	Event	Location
30 th May	IAT Newfoundland Labrador Party arrive in Edinburgh	
31 st May	IAT Newfoundland Labrador Party travel to Fort William via Glencoe with Hugh Barron (BGS)	
1 st June	IAT Newfoundland Labrador Party meet Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham, 13:00 – 14:00 hrs	Lochaber Rural Complex, Torlundy, Fort William
	IAT Maine party arrive in Edinburgh and travel to Fort William with Graham Leslie (BGS)	
	Afternoon: short walk e.g. Glen Nevis to Steall Waterfall Visit Atlas Brewery, Kinlochleven / Ben Nevis distillery	
2 nd June	IAT Main & Newfoundland Labrador parties ascend Ben Nevis with Chris Townsend (President, Mountaineering Council of Scotland), Hugh Barron and Graham Leslie. If weather poor, less ambitious alternative or low level walk.	Meet at Ben Nevis Inn, Achintee, c. 08:30 hrs
3 rd June	IAT Public lecture, 19:30 hrs. Hosted by Lochaber Geopark and Highland Council	Council Chambers, Fort William
4 th June	IAT Newfoundland Labrador Party train to Stranraer via Glasgow for visit to Belfast and Dublin	
	IAT Maine party travel to Inverness to meet Highland Council, Visit Scotland and SNH at 10:30 hrs	Cowan House, Inverness Retail and Business Park
	IAT Maine party travel to Inchnadamph on Point Northwest guided tour	
5 th June	Point Northwest tour: Knockan Crag – Kylesku	
6 th June	Point Northwest tour: Cape Wrath Trail, Inchnadamph to Loch na Gainmhaich	
7 th June	Return to Inverness for train to Edinburgh	
8 th June	Lunchtime lecture at the BGS, 12:30 hrs. Afternoon geological walk on Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags with BGS geologists	Murchison House, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3LA
9 th June	18:00 – 19:00 – Parliamentary Event sponsored by Alasdair Morgan MSP	Scottish Parliament
10 th June	Return to USA	

Overview of International Appalachian Trail/Sentier International des Appalaches (IAT/SIA)

The Appalachian Mountains of North America lie between Flagg Mountain, Alabama, USA and the north end of Belle Isle in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The Appalachian terrain continues as the Caledonides of Ireland and Scotland and terrains of western Europe and North Africa.



The famous and long established Appalachian Trail (AT) in the United States extends from Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. The IAT/SIA adds an additional 1,350 miles of hiking trails along the remainder of the North American Appalachian Mountains.

The IAT/SIA starts at Mount Katahdin then heads across the Canadian border to New Brunswick then on to Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. It connects two countries, five provinces, one state, and the English, French and Celtic cultures of North America.

The long-term goal of the IAT is to locate sections of the IAT in all the countries or regions that were once part of the ancient Caledonian – Appalachian Mountains.

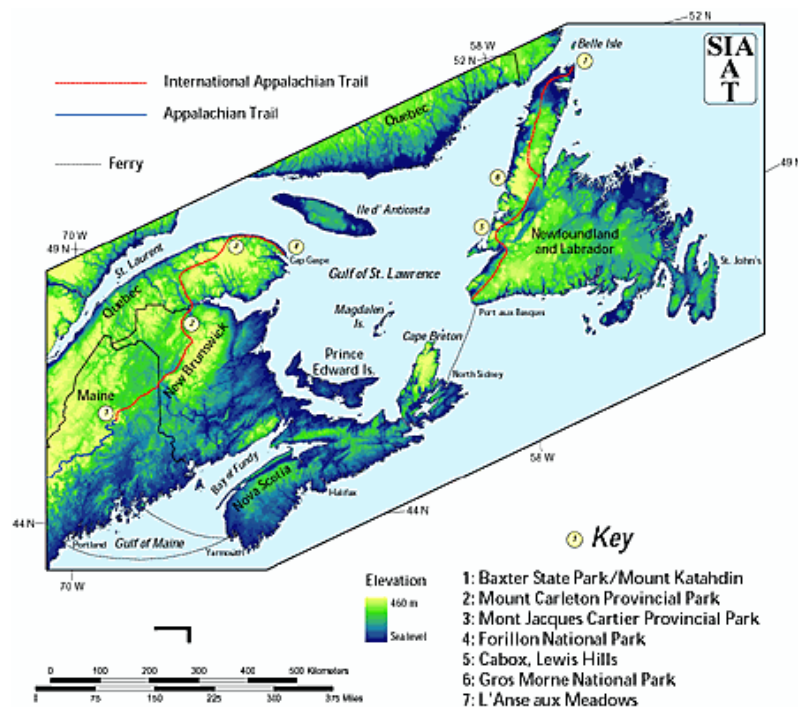


Fig. 1 IAT/SIA trail (source IAT/SIA website <http://www.internationalat.org>)

IAT Mission Statement

The International Appalachian Trail/Sentier International des Appalaches is a symbol of US-Canadian commitment to work together as neighbors, to sustain our common environment and to celebrate the grandeur of our common landscape. It connects mountains, crosses rivers, threads through spruce and fir forests and connects the people and cultures of the state of Maine with the provinces of Québec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland/Labrador and Nova Scotia. Volunteer driven, the IAT/SIA is making considerable progress working with landowners, hikers, outdoor conservation organizations and with local, regional and international governments to maintain, upgrade, and improve the trail system. For more information see:

http://www.internationalat.org/Pages/SIAIAT_Pages/membership

http://www.internationalat.org/Pages/SIAIAT_News/I011706E7

Geological links (see also Fig 2)

Around one billion years ago Scotland and the north-east of the USA and eastern Canada were close neighbours on the supercontinent of Rodinia. In Scotland the Torridonian sandstones were deposited. Rodinia began to break apart around 720 million years ago, but we remained neighbours on the eastern edge of the Laurentian continent. Around 400 million years ago England, Wales and south-east Ireland on the continent of Avalonia, and Norway and the rest of Scandinavia on the continent of Baltica collided to form the Caledonian - Appalachian mountain chain. In Scotland the Caledonian granites such as the Cairngorms were intruded and structures such as the Moine Thrust were formed. By 250 million years ago, further collisions formed supercontinent of Pangea. Around 200 million years ago the South Atlantic Ocean opened splitting Gondwana from Laurasia. Scotland was finally separated from the north-east Appalachians around 50 million years ago by the opening of the North Atlantic Ocean. In Scotland, this resulted in the formation of lavas and sub-volcanic complexes of Skye, Mull and St Kilda.

Links:

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk>

<http://www.lochabergeopark.org.uk>

<http://www.internationalat.org>

<http://www.iatnl.ca/>

http://www.internationalat.org/Pages/SIAIAT_Pages/longerwalk

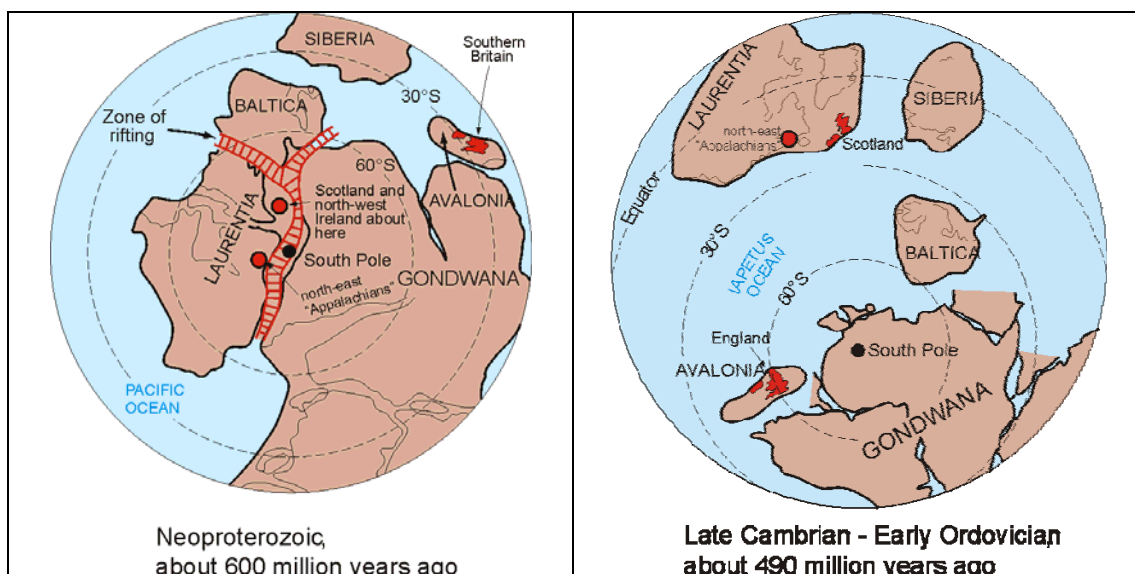
http://pressherald.mainetoday.com/story_pf.php?id=207545&ac=PHnws

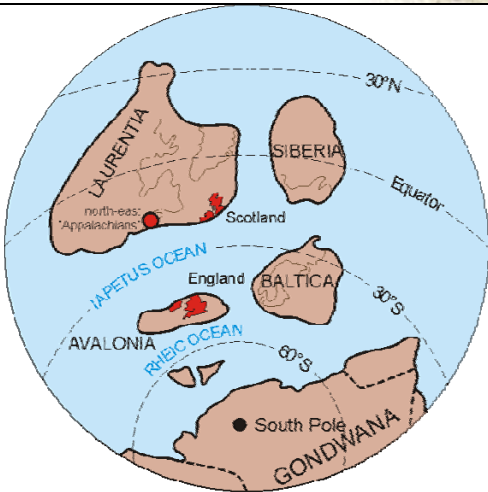
<http://www.christownsendoutdoors.co.uk/>

<http://blogs.nationalgeographic.com/blogs/intelligenttravel/2009/03/appalachian-trail-heads-north.html>

<http://www.northwest-highlands-geopark.org.uk>

<http://www.europeangeoparks.org>





Late Ordovician
about 450 million years ago



Silurian,
about 420 million years ago



Mid-Devonian,
about 390 million years ago



Carboniferous
about 300 million years ago



Permo-Triassic
about 240 million years ago



Jurassic,
about 200 million years ago

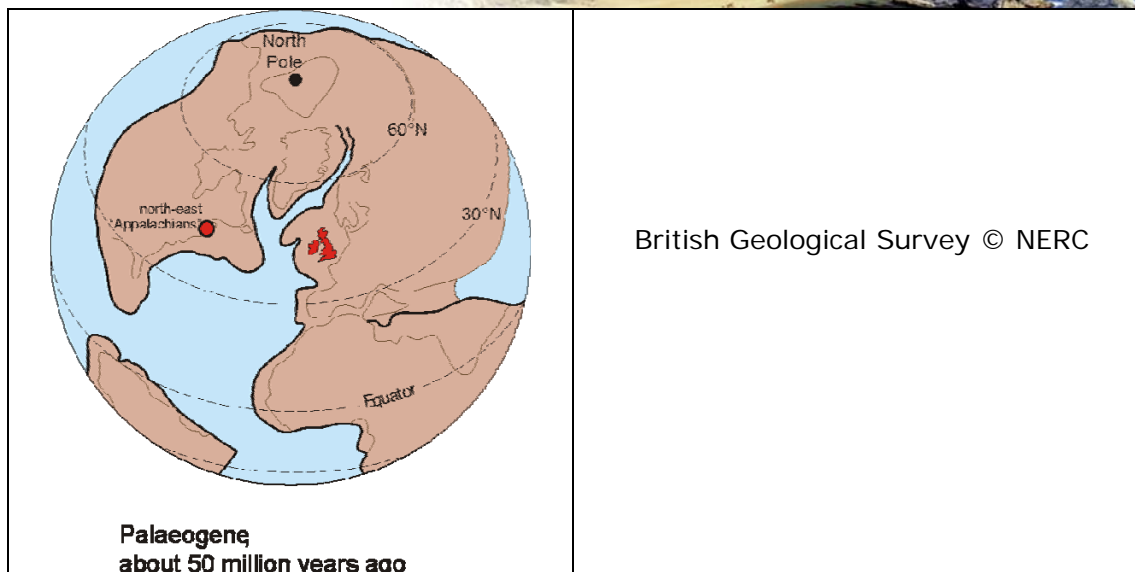


Fig. 2 Scotland and the NE Appalachian Mountains - the last 600 Million years. British Geological Survey © NERC

The British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk.

Notes for Editors Lochaber Geopark

Lochaber Geopark was accepted as a member of the European Geopark Network and the Global Geopark Network in 2007 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO. There are 33 European Geoparks and 57 Global Geoparks.

The accolade of European Geopark is given to a territory which combines the promotion of its unique geological heritage with the expansion of the area's sustainable economic development.

Lochaber, the North West Highland and all Geoparks have a common aim of promoting their Earth Heritage, which is the history of our planet—the interactions between geology, nature, and culture. Geoparks have a joint strategy of publicising both their own area and the others in the Network as being world class destinations for discerning visitors.

Lochaber Geopark and North West Highlands Geopark are both charitable community enterprises.

<http://www.lochabergeopark.org.uk/>