

**CHALLENGE** Fiona, in glasses, joins other riders in Falkirk



**TOUGH** Fiona shoulders her bike during the Falkirk race



**SILVER LINING**

Columbia have taken space blanket technology and inserted it into their clothing range. A layer of Omni-Heat Reflective fabric inside jackets, socks, gloves and shoes acts to boost body heat, without need for bulky insulation. The Powerfly Down Hoodie costs from £144 at [www.activinstinct.com](http://www.activinstinct.com)

**TAKE THREE..**

A baselayer is an essential piece of winter outdoors kit. Forget black and have fun wearing bright colours and funky designs.

**SAVE**

**Kipsta long-sleeve under-jersey**

Great freedom of movement, warmth, support, breathability and sweat-wicking in a baselayer in a multitude of colours. £16.99, [www.deathlon.co.uk](http://www.deathlon.co.uk)



**SPEND**

**Helly Hansen One**

A long-sleeved base shirt is created from lightweight polyester that is both moisture-wicking and insulating. Choose stripes or tartan-style patterns. £40, [shop.hellyhansen.com](http://shop.hellyhansen.com)



**SPLURGE**

**Icebreaker Women's Bodyfit 260 Tech Half Zip**

Made from Merino wool, this is naturally very warm and non-pongy. The snazzy pink top has a zipped neck for temperature control. £84.99, [www.ellis-brigham.com](http://www.ellis-brigham.com)



**RIDING HIGH**

Troon windsurfer Davie Edmiston has pulled off a record-breaking win in the Tíree Wave Classic 2013. Davie, already a Triple Crown Tíree Masters Champion, triumphed again last month to give him four wins overall. The current British Masters Champion saw off tough competition from other masters riders. Davie, sponsored by RRD, Neil Pryde and Boardwise, said: "I won the Triple Crown at Tíree in 2012 and I'm delighted to take my fourth win. "It was made even more special after going head to head with experienced competitors Dave White and Adam Milnes." Several other Troon windsurfers took home medals from Tíree, which saw a record 53 entries.

**SANDISON'S SCOTLAND**

BRUCE SANDISON IS A JOURNALIST, ANGLER AND AUTHOR OF A STRING OF BEST-SELLING BOOKS ABOUT SCOTLAND'S OUTDOORS. HE LIVES IN SUTHERLAND.



**GOING WITH THE FLOW THANKS TO THE POWER OF PEAT**

**F**or thousands of years, peat played a crucial role in the lives of the people who lived and worked in rural Scotland.

They depended upon it because peat was the only readily available fuel that they could use for cooking and to keep themselves and their families warm.

Even today, peat is still widely used in many Scottish communities, particularly in Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, Sutherland, the Hebrides and the West Highlands.

At the end of the last Ice Age, some 10,000 years ago, as the ice sheet retreated, plants – the most common being sphagnum moss – and trees, including dwarf oak, began to grow on the wetlands left behind.

As they decayed and where flooding occurred, the flow of oxygen was restricted and the rate of decomposition slowed. Thus peat was established, the first stage in the formation of coal.

Scotland has more than its fair share of peat. One vast area of blanket bog of worldwide importance is the Flow Country of Caithness and East Sutherland – 1500 acres of moorlands, sprinkled silver and blue with lochs and lochans where golden plover pipe from sphagnum tussock, dunlin and greenshank nest.

Red deer drink from lily-decked pools and wildcats still haunt this wilderness. Otters play amidst the rushes and hen harriers swoop by on silent, ghost-like wings.

When we lived in Caithness, the Flow Country was our family playground.

There, we introduced our children to the gentle art of fly fishing and, in doing so, also introduced them to the plants and animals that inhabit these moors.

They learned to respect and admire the flowers and animals they found there, from the humble brown and speckled meadow pipit to a sunshine-sleeping viper.

The Flow Country was a very special place and we were horrified when, in the 1980s, it suddenly became a target for tax-avoidance factory tree farming, tearing up irreplaceable moorlands to plant foreign conifers, where no trees had been, just to save money.

The fight to end this blatant act of environmental vandalism became known as the Battle of the Flows, in which conflict your correspondent fought on the front line.

The tax loophole that prompted the planting was closed, but not before hundreds of acres had been damaged.

Now the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have purchased a considerable area of these forests and is removing the trees and trying to return the land to as near as possible its original state.

I once spent a day at the peats where my task was to lay them out after they had been lifted on to the bank.

Sounds easy but believe me, by the time we were finished I knew that I had done a hard day's work.

An experienced team could work 140ft of peat bank, cutting over 1000 peats in the day. That evening, there was a ceilidh in the village hall. Lots of singing, dancing and story-telling, and, of course, a raffle to raise money for hall funds. I won a prize – a large sackful of the best peat.

PEAT Stunning scenery and historically important fuel



Picture: Norrie Russell, RSPB Forsinard Estate Manager

**THE WEEK**



Fishing for sea trout and salmon has been practiced at St Cyrus for hundreds of years, but it was in the early 18th century that the industry expanded. Much of the expansion was due to a better way to preserve the fish by packing in ice. Blocks cut from

the frozen River North Esk in winter were stored in icehouses, which can be seen at Rock Hall, Woodston and Kirkside. They were built into slopes and embankments, or into the ground, to help maintain the cold temperature, the equivalent of modern freezers.

Find out more at [www.snh.gov.uk/johnmuir](http://www.snh.gov.uk/johnmuir)



Year of Natural Scotland 2013

