John Hutton Balfour (1808-1884)

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Born on 15 September 1808 in Edinburgh, John Hutton Balfour was Professor of Botany at the University of Edinburgh and Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh but is notable also as the protagonist who with his students triggered the ‘Battle’ of Glen Tilt in 1847. That incident and the lawsuit which followed helped transform the nascent ScotWays from a local into a national body and clarified many of the key issues of common law around rights of way. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Professor Balfour, noted for his sense of humour, may have deliberately provoked the confrontation that led to the legal case.