

## WHO WERE THE 'BENNACHIE COLONISTS'?

In the early 19th century, rural society was changing. Landowners were developing their estates and required greater income from land to achieve these ends. Large stately homes along with the newly-planned farming landscape created the countryside we see today. These changes resulted in the demise of the small farmer.

The agricultural 'Improvements' were brought about by landowners in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and resulted in the scattering of much of the rural population. Many ended up in the developing local towns. In 1825 the first of the Bennachie 'Colonists' arrived. Others soon followed, coming from as far afield as Inverness and Fife, along with some local people. They sought to continue their way of life on the Commonty of Bennachie but the local lairds tried to remove the Colonists from the hill and divide the land amongst themselves.

## WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE ON THE COLONY?

Life was hard but probably preferable to becoming a labourer on one of the newly-'improved' farms or a factory worker in the towns. The Colonists comprised a variety of tradespeople on the hillside: from quarriers and skilled stone workers to thatchers and fish sellers. The women would help their men as well as raising the children and carrying on a cottage trade, such as knitting stockings or taking in laundry.

Food was simple but sustaining. It was, however, quite dull. Brose, a form of porridge, would have featured most days, along with some vegetables from the garden. Meat would have been a luxury enjoyed by few, unless it happened to be poached from the Bennachie 'larder'. Protein would have been obtained from home-produced dairy products and eggs.

## HOW DID IT ALL END?

The local lairds eventually agreed how to divide up the Commonty and exclude the Colonists. This was legalised at court in 1859 against an increasingly outspoken anti-enclosure movement growing amongst the local urban populations. These growing populations, we presume, were composed in large part from amongst the increasingly swollen ranks of similarly dispossessed country folk.

After the Colonists gradually left the Commonty, their lands were planted rather than re-let and, for a while, retained as the private but unused playpen of the lairds. Today it is, once again, enjoyed by the many rather than just the few and the remains of the Colonists' buildings and fields can be seen along this trail. Please treat the structures with respect and let them remain for future generations.

## SOME THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR ON THE COLONY TRAIL

### THE 'GOWK STANE'

- does the name refer to a cuckoo or a fool? - we may never know

### SHEPHERD'S LODGE WELL

- a small well providing the water supply to the Shepherd's Lodge cottage

### THE QUARRY

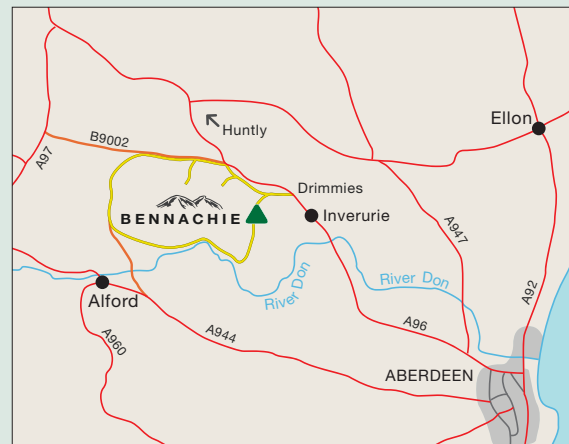
- used by the Colonists to supply building stone

### THE CORN STACK BASE

- circular stone pavement used to stack corn or hay

### THE 'THIEVES' MARKS'

- the local name given to the boundary stones set up by the Lairds following the division of the Commonty



If you wish to find out more about any of these features and the lives of the Colonists, please visit the permanent exhibition in the Bennachie Centre

Why not join the Bailies of Bennachie and help to find out more about Bennachie. Look on the web site at: [www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk)

# The Colony Trail



*"For the goodly mountain  
yielded fuel for the fire  
Stones for the dwelling house,  
the barn, and the byre  
Heather for roofing,  
and all were gotten free  
For no oppressive landlord  
could swallow Bennachie!"*  
(Anon.)



# The Colony Trail



Mither Tap  
Hill-fort

## Key:

-  Visible remains of the Colonists' buildings, gardens and fields. Please treat with respect.
-  Colony trail
-  Public road
-  Forest tracks and paths
-  Viewing and information point
-  Information point
-  Shepherd's Lodge Well (10m directly down from this waymarker, in the wall)
-  Quarry
-  Gowk Stane
-  Stack yard
-  Boundary stone

This walk takes approximately 2 hours

0 500 1000 metres

Are you related to any of the following families:  
Christie, Cooper, Emslie, Esson, Findlater, Gardiner, Lindsay, Littlejohn or Mitchell?  
Find out more in the forthcoming series of leaflets about the Colonists.

Boghead  
of Tullos

Bennachie  
Centre

Woodend

Clachie Burn