

# *The Bailies of Bennachie Annual Report 2017*



We care about Bennachie, its natural environment, history and culture -  
protecting this unique landscape for future generations



## A DATE TO REMEMBER

**BAILIES OF BENNACHIE AGM: THURSDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2017, 7.30PM**  
**AT THE GARIOCH HERITAGE CENTRE, INVERURIE**

New and Existing Members - All are welcome

### **2016/17 Trustees**

Chairperson and Senior Bailie: Jackie Cumberbirch

Treasurer: Brian Cornock

Minute Secretary: Rosemary Sievwright

Membership Secretary, Web Master and Social Media: Donna Taylor

Publications: Ann Baillie

Work Party Co-ordinators: Harry Leil and Mick Taylor

Report Editor: Sue Taylor

Other Trustees:

Barry Foster, Angela Groat, Iain Ralston, Helen Summers, Andrew Wainwright

### **There are many ways to Support the Bailies of Bennachie**

- Become a member
- Join our committee
- Volunteer - Get involved in a hands-on way through:  
research, recording wildlife, archaeology fieldwork, monthly work parties etc!
- Donate money and support what we do

Please see our web site for more details [www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk)

or write to:

Bailies of Bennachie, PO Box 11535, Huntly, AB54 9AD.

Contact details:

[info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](mailto:info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk) (General enquiries)

[chair@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](mailto:chair@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk) (Senior Bailie)



**2017** has been a busy and creative year for many Bailies as we have been very successful in several grant applications.

The first grant received was from The People's Postcode Lottery. This is enabling us to run many workshops with trainees on the recording and identification of mammals, birds and plants; in fact, the mammal group have been using cameras to record wildlife in different parts of the hill ( see report page 9) and often put their sightings onto our Facebook page.

The second grant was from the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Stories, Stones and Bones element of their Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology. We are busy working with Smart History based at the University of St Andrews, creating a Bennachie Colony application which is information that can be downloaded by a user to a mobile device application - this should be up and running by Spring 2018! We are also sorting out our extensive Bailies of Bennachie research archive (much of which has been generated by the Bennachie Landscapes Group) and plan to put it online so that it is more accessible to the general public. Our Library and paper archive has now moved to the Garioch Heritage Centre which is based at the old Loco Works in Inverurie (see page 5). Please note that our AGM on Thursday 21 September will be held at this new venue. In addition to all of these projects, we are

## *Report from the Chair*

creating a 'kailyard' (kitchen garden) at Shepherd's Lodge - one of the Bennachie Colony houses near to Bennachie Visitor Centre. This will be planted mainly with fruit bushes such as gooseberry, blackcurrant etc. and a native woodland in the old fields. Both areas will be planted in Winter 2017. (Look at our Facebook page or local press for more details).

A third grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council is enabling us to work with Aberdeen University drama and education department and volunteers to perform small plays around the Colony Trail. These free, short performances will be recorded for inclusion on the new Bennachie Colony app. Writing workshops and song sessions being held around the area are also helping to provide a platform for new creative works drawing upon the traditions and landscape of Bennachie. We are also grateful to have received a grant from the Hunter Archaeological and Historical Trust permitting environmental analysis to be carried out on samples from our work at Druminnor Castle and to Aberdeenshire Council for funding radiocarbon dates on samples from that important site.

In addition to the above projects, we continue to support the Save Bennachie partnership as we all work together to prevent the dualling of the A96 onto Bennachie. Contractors have now been awarded the contract to carry out this work and we hope that we will get them to realise that Bennachie is not going to be carved up by a road!

With help from Bennachie Community Council and volunteers, we are working to keep the toilets cleaned and open at Rowantree Car Park. Aberdeenshire Council want to close them in order to reduce costs.

We are also working with Forestry Commission Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council Environment planner to create a Heathland Management Plan for Bennachie.

I must thank the Bailies of Bennachie Committee and Bennachie Landscapes Group members for all their continuing enthusiasm and support this year... wow, we are achieving a lot!

J Cumberbirch, Senior Bailie



# Treasurer's Report

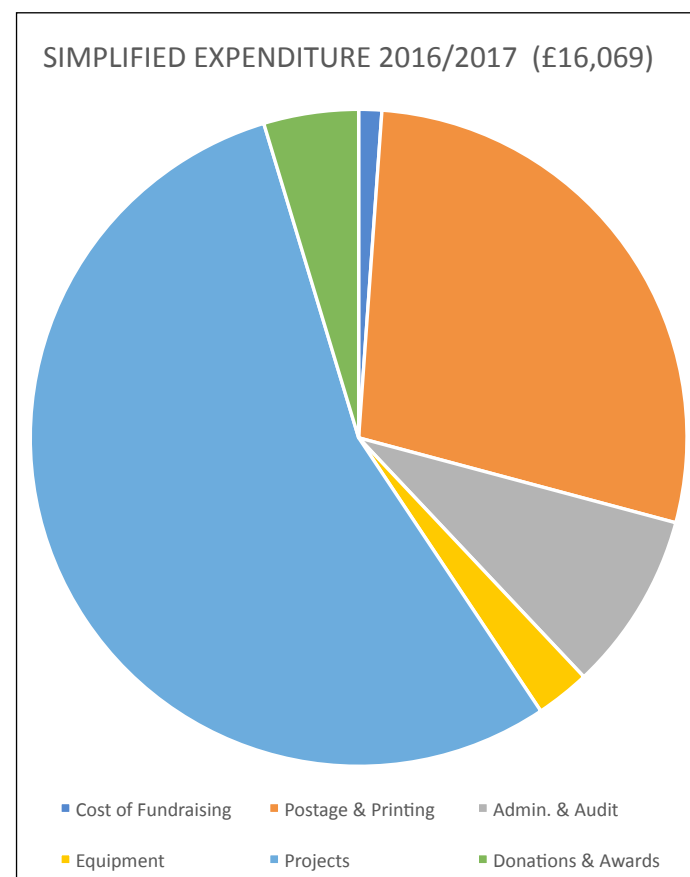
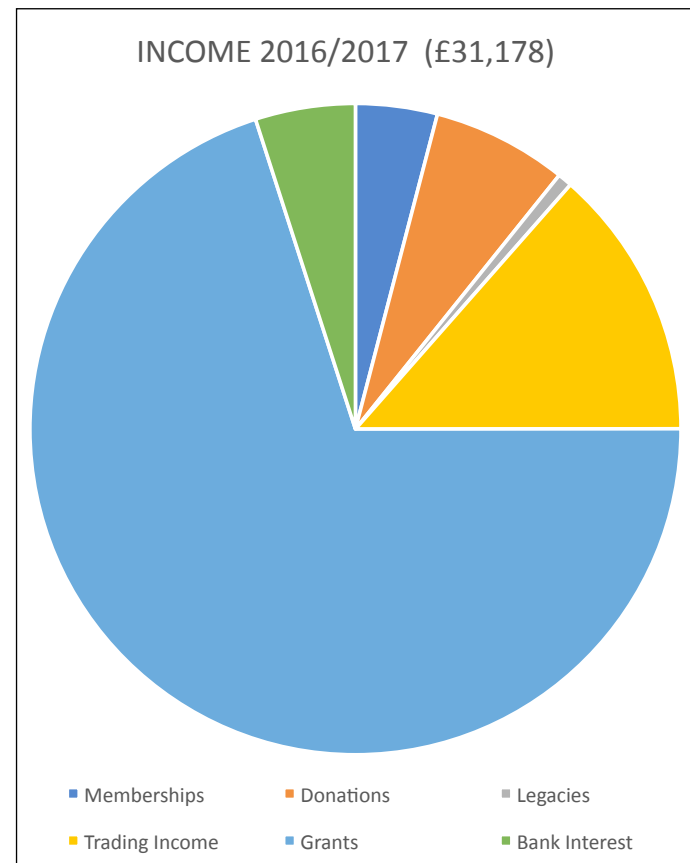
The Bailies 2015/2016 accounts for the financial year ending on 31st July 2016 were submitted to OSCR, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, at the end of May 2017. This was a month later than normally required because of difficulties encountered during the handover of treasurer responsibilities. OSCR have posted the accounts on their website in a redacted form (i.e. with most names removed) and are available to download from here: <http://www.oscr.org.uk/public/search-scottish-charity-register/charity-details?number=SC013298>

At the moment, the Bailies are running as two charities: as the original Unincorporated Charity SC013298 and additionally, since 13th March 2017, as the SCIO (Scottish Charity Incorporated Organisation) SC047231. However, all financial transactions to date have been carried out under the first of these and the Bailies plan to formally changeover financial affairs to the SCIO on 1st January 2018. Hence we have arranged with OSCR that the SC013298 2016/2017 accounts should run for an extra 5 months, i.e. to cover the 17 month period from 1st August 2016 until 31st December 2017. We have also arranged with them that the SCIO financial year will in future be the calendar year. (This might fit with a Spring rather than Autumn AGM, should that be preferred.)

Two pie plots here show a split of income and expenditure for the period 1st August 2016 until 31st July 2017. They are dominated by funds associated with two new grant-aided projects which are running for the 2017 calendar year. These projects are described elsewhere in this annual report.

At 31st July 2017, the Bailies had £39,355 in their current account and £122,212 in deposit accounts, giving total reserves of £161,567, which compares with £146,458 held at 31st July 2016. However, some major further expenditure on the grant-aided projects is expected before the end of 2017, possibly of around £30,000.

Brian Cornock, Treasurer



## MEMBERSHIP AND MEDIA

We currently have 2296 Bailies. Unfortunately we have removed some members due to post being returned “undelivered”, reflecting members who have moved away and not updated their address with us. Please remember if you move, drop us an email with your new address, also if you change your email address let us know. If you know anyone who is a Bailie but is not receiving updates from us, ask them to email with their name, old and new addresses and email address and we will update our database.

We now have just one type of Membership, a one off payment of £10 to be a life member. Since this started in September last year we have seen a rise in membership applications.

We continue to add information to our website, [www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk), and our Facebook page is updated regularly with interesting posts and photos. We have just reached 1000 followers and we encourage the public to post photos about Bennachie on our page. If you don't use Facebook you can email photos to us and we will share them for you.

Thanks to Dr Gary Whittington at Global Web Limited we now have new organisational email addresses. These can be found on the inside front cover.

Gary has also set up bulk emailing for us which will be a great help for sending our Annual Report and other communications.

Donna Taylor, Membership Secretary

*New banners at a 'Meet the Bailies' afternoon at the Bennachie Visitor Centre. Photo by Harry Leil.*



# Membership & Marketing

## MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

At last year's AGM, members chose a new logo for the Bailies and we have used this to produce a suite of new marketing and administrative materials. These include banners for outdoor events, car window stickers for members' use and a new membership leaflet. Some of these are illustrated here. We hope that you like the 'new look' which is both distinctive and representative of Bennachie and the Bailies.

This year, we have given talks to Danestone Local History Group, Bridge of Don, and to BP Connections, a social organisation for spouses of BP staff. Our banners featuring the Bennachie Landscapes Project continue to be of interest, and have been displayed at various libraries in Aberdeen, Inverurie and Oldmeldrum as well as at Turriff Show, the Garioch Heritage Centre and the Bennachie Visitor Centre.

We have been present in the car park at the Bennachie Visitor Centre on a few weekends this year to talk to the public, tell them about the work of the Bailies, and offer them our new membership leaflet. Many asked for advice on which walks to take, and told us tales of family outings to the hill in years past. We received positive comments about the work of the Bailies and we hope that some of those we met will be motivated to take up membership.

Sue Taylor, Trustee



# Workparty News

Well, it's been another busy year for the Bailies' Work Parties, with a whole range of things being undertaken. Some of the jobs we do are regular maintenance work, such as clearing the water bars and drains, especially on the well-used trails like Rowantree Car Park to Mither Tap and from the Bennachie Centre to Mither Tap. Another regular task is clearing the trails of scrub - like broom and whins - which grow across the sides of the trails. A further undertaking this year was the building of a brash fence at the back of the Bennachie Centre to shelter the wildlife feeding station so that the birds will not be so easily scared. We planted a lot of trees at Heather Brig and oak trees at Donview for Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). By raising the overflow pipe at the pond we managed to heighten the water level so as to give a bit more depth to the pond.

We installed two large drainage pipes on the trail from Back of Bennachie to Oxen Craig where the water was flowing over the trail. Some shrubs were planted at the front of the Bennachie Centre where we also put up fences to define the line of the paths and, generally, made it a lot tidier. Another annual job is pruning the Willow Structure at the Back of Bennachie so that it keeps its shape.

Sometimes, if there is a large Work Party group, we split up and carry out different jobs so that more

gets done, including building dykes, cleaning ditches, removing old tree guards and a range of other necessary tasks. We also help out some of the other groups that do work on the hill, such as the Bennachie Landscapes Group. Along with them, we cleared scrub from Shepherds Lodge so that the kailyard project could be undertaken more readily.

That is just a wee bit about our main jobs on the Hill, but we help out with any jobs that need doing. We meet up with FCS at the beginning of the year, make a programme of the works to be done and fit them into Work Party days. The only problem is when unexpected things crop up and, suddenly, the programme changes! But, we try to fit in all the jobs and keep the trails and the hill tidy. The only thing is: we never have enough time!

Harry Leil and Mick Taylor, Work Party Co-ordinators

*Erecting the brash fence behind the Bennachie Centre.*

*Photo by Harry Leil.*

*Lower picture: Laying a new drain across a path.*

*Photo by Chris Foster.*



# The Bailies' Library and Archives

For over 20 years the Bailies' library collection was based at the Bennachie Centre, prior to that having been kept at the town hall in Inverurie. Over the winter, we began its move back to Inverurie and to the new Garioch Heritage Centre, where the public will have all year round access to this fine collection of publications about Bennachie and the North East.

The Bailies founder, Dr Danny Gordon, is one of many former Bailies who have bequeathed books to our current collection. Duncan Downie from Kemnay, who made the original oak bookcases, kindly helped with the dismantling so that the bookcases could be moved without damage. His craftsmanship and skill is such that the reassembled bookcases are in their new home as though they were made for that space. The poem at the end of this article was written by Duncan in 1995 and was found still safely attached to the bookcases when they were dismantled.

Anderson of Inverurie were invaluable with the moving of the bookcases and, prior to the move, our archivist, Myrtle Anderson-Smith, had a strict system in place which meant all the books were packed, then unpacked and returned to their original shelves in the correct order.

If you have ever tidied out a box of old photographs you will understand the temptation to stop and look and remember. Indeed, these are fascinating books and I found myself absorbed in the history documented in these fine publications, some with obscure titles, but all will be available for the Bailies and members of the public to enjoy when the Centre opens later in the year.

Nora Radcliffe, from the Garioch Heritage Society, very kindly helped coordinate the move which had been originally organised by the late Dr. Geoff

Gill who was very keen that the Bailies had a presence at the Garioch Heritage Centre. I hope you will find the time to support not only the Bailies but the fine work the Garioch Heritage Society are doing, and go along to see your library.

Ann Baillie, Trustee

Old Danny Gordon, Tayloch bred  
A learned Doctor he,  
Upon his death his books he left  
To the Bailies of Bennachie

How will we store these books so fine?  
The wise committee asked  
Is there a man within these parts  
Will rise unto the task?

At length a man amongst them said  
"A press there stands within  
We'll ask the maker of that one  
To make for us a twin."

Approached was he and scratched his pow  
"Man that may cause some bother  
A simple task to make a press  
Much more to make a brother."

But none the less to work he set  
With wood and tools well tested  
And then at length produced this piece  
To match, as was requested.

D.A. Downie  
Kemnay



*Duncan Downie dismantles the Bailies' bookcases (left) ready for the library's move to its new home (below).*

*Photos by Ann Baillie.*





# Understand the Stones, Hear the Stories, Re-live the Past The HLF Grant

This year, we received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of 2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology. The grant has enabled us to do several pieces of work relating to the history of Bennachie and these are described in the following three pages.

## BENNACHIE COLONY MOBILE APPLICATION

Helped by Smart History we are learning all about digital technology! This grant is enabling us to create a free Bennachie Colony application which can be downloaded onto a tablet, mobile phone etc. and can then be used on the hill. The app will involve the reconstruction of the Bennachie Colony houses, information about the individual families that lived on the hill and lots more. In creating this app we have been joined by many new faces, including enthusiastic young people from the Inverurie Youth Forum, making this an interesting creative process for all. We hope you will like the results which will be out end of 2017.



Photo by Chris Foster.



Photographing objects for the creation of 3-D images for inclusion in the Bailes' Bennachie Virtual Museum.  
Photo by Chris Foster.



The 'Colony' being reconstructed by Smart History for use on the Bennachie App.



## A DIGITAL ARCHIVE FOR BENNACHIE

Extensive data about Bennachie has been collected and curated by the Bailies, thanks to the dedicated work of Helen Fraser, Myrtle Anderson-Smith and many others over the years.

In 2011 we published Jennifer Fagen's comprehensive study 'The Bennachie Colony'. This underpinned research by the Bennachie Landscapes Project – a collaboration between the Bailies and the University of Aberdeen.

Historically, our archives have been stored in filing cabinets which, with the Bailies Library, are now in the Garioch Heritage Centre, where research facilities are available by arrangement. However, with ever-expanding amounts of data come the responsibilities of storage and making the knowledge more widely available. Fortunately, the internet enables the prospect of a 'digital archive' website, funded jointly by the HLF grant and the Bailies. This is currently under construction by consultancy Smart History, who will enable updating for 5 years. It will be separate from, but directly linked to, the existing Bailies' website.

The Bailies' archives include many different types of materials: paper files (e.g. interview transcripts, historical notes and correspondence, Bailies' Minutes); publications, academic papers and articles; images (photos, videos, drawings, maps); audio (oral history); and artefacts. Where the material is not already in digital form, techniques such as scanning or 3D photography can be employed to enable upload. In due course it is hoped that the archive will include histories of the individual crofts and families in the Bennachie Colony. The Bailies' Library catalogue will be included, although scanning the books themselves is impracticable. Publications available externally can simply be cited, including some already digitised elsewhere.

Working with Smart History, through workshops and discussions, is a group of Landscapes Project volunteers, including representation from the Trustees. The learning curve has involved tasks such as: listing keywords encompassing the many facets of Bennachie; assessing how to prepare material for upload; designing a data entry form; developing a Bailies' data management policy (including a data management plan for the archive); and checking data protection legislation.

With the website launching later this year, we will be looking for volunteers to prepare material for upload to the digital archive. This will be an ongoing activity as there is a large backlog to process, and it is

equally important to keep up with new material as it comes in. If you would like to volunteer and have an interest in heritage and/or archives, along with basic word-processing skills, do get in touch via [info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](mailto:info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk)

Colin Miller, Bennachie Landscapes Group

George Esson, 'The last of the colonists of Bennachie', 1937.  
Photo: Jeannie L. Cormack.





# The Colony 'Kailyard'

## RECONSTRUCTING A COLONY 'KAILYARD' (KITCHEN GARDEN)

One of the projects within the HLF grant awarded to the Bailies for 2017 is to reconstruct a kailyard at one of the old Colony sites. The aim of this reconstruction is to demonstrate how the Colonists managed their land and to provide further opportunities for the local community to become involved in the Colony. The chosen croft for our trial is Shepherds Lodge, once the home of the Littlejohn family. Through our past research we know that Shepherds Lodge had a kailyard at the side of the cottage and that its inhabitants had substantially improved the soil here. It is also easily accessible as there is a good footpath leading to this old croft and we hope visitors will enjoy viewing the work and watching its progress.

Some of the initial questions we asked ourselves were how much of the plot should be developed and what fruit or vegetables should we grow, bearing in mind the difficulties in maintaining such a remote garden. We finally settled on soft fruits and a plot of about 25 square metres situated at the south-west end of the kailyard. We also wanted to keep to methods similar to those the colonists would have used and remain organic.

The kailyard had become very overgrown so the first job was to clear and tidy it up generally, which was carried out by volunteers over several months. A small archaeological investigation was also carried out to see if we could discover a path shown on the 1st edition OS map. Two test pits were dug but no evidence of a path was found. The conclusion is that it was probably a grass path, which over time had been eradicated. With more volunteers, the turf was removed, the plot dug, then levelled and raked. It was now ready for a soil test, with which pupils from Oyne Primary School kindly assisted. From these results we discovered that the soil is slightly too acidic for our chosen fruits, so over the coming months potash as well as an organic fertilizer will be added to the soil. Over the course of this work a varied and interesting assortment of broken pottery and glass has been unearthed, including part of a clay pipe and a clay marble giving us a more personal insight into the lives of its occupants.

While all this work was taking place our researchers were busy investigating what different fruits the Colonists might have grown and if any of these varieties were still available. From these results

the decision is to grow Gooseberries, Raspberries, Blackcurrants, Redcurrants, Whitecurrants and Rhubarb. Following advice from The James Hutton Institute we were able to find suitable heritage varieties and suppliers. The fruit bushes are now on order for October delivery, when they will be planted. The kailyard will then again have a growing crop, just as it once did when the Littlejohns were its keeper.

With a careful watch over the plants during the winter and spring, is it being too optimistic to hope that we might be picking some fruit this time next year?..... which raises yet another question: "have we any volunteer jam-makers out there?"

Our sincere thanks to all the volunteers who have contributed their time in helping this project along. If anyone would like to volunteer their help in the future maintenance of the kailyard, please contact the Bailies of Bennachie.

Chris Foster, Bennachie Landscapes Project

*The 'chain-gang' hard at work at the kailyard.  
Photo by Chris Foster.*



# People's Postcode Lottery Grant

## BENNACHIE WILDLIFE - TRAINING COURSES

One of the objectives of the Bailies is to study the plants and animals on the hill. This year we have been fortunate to have a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery which is funding wildlife training courses on Bennachie. We are using the money to pay local experts to show local people the mammals, birds and plants living on Bennachie and teach them how to record wildlife. Each course has places for ten adults; we advertised the courses on our website and on facebook page early in the year and gave the places to the first ten people who applied.

### Mammals

The mammals' course was the first to get started, and in March and April the group was introduced to art of tracking. Willow Lohr and Lizzie Bacon inspired everyone with their deep knowledge and expertise – both have an international tracking qualification that can only be obtained by mastering advanced tracking skills. The group learned to distinguish the tracks of a wary fox from a blustering badger by thinking how each animal moves. Lizzie's 'what is this mystery track?' emails proved very popular, with some people pausing their work to solve the puzzle. We now know how to tell whether a hazel nut was eaten by a mouse, a squirrel or a woodpecker. Our hardy nature detectives spent half an hour in a woodland on a wet afternoon in March deducing that a long scat on a log belonged to a large pine marten. One person has commented that he now knows an awful lot about poo and never expected to be so fascinated by it regardless of whether it is called spraints, scats, dung or simply poo.

In May Eric Jensen explained how he and Hella work with badgers all over NE Scotland. They are very proficient at locating badger setts. For many years Eric has provided advice about what action can be taken when badgers are found living in places that people want to 'develop'. We had a good look at a couple of setts in the woods on Bennachie and followed their tracks into the nearby fields where they feed at night, and inevitably we looked at their latrines. Eric, a pensioner for a few years, also impressed us with his ability to do headstands in the woods – this has nothing to do with badgers and we don't recommend it for all pensioners!

Aileen Salway shed light on the nocturnal life of bats one dull, drizzly, midge evening in July. The pipistrelle bats who sleep in the Bennachie Centre prefer to stay warm and dry inside when it rains, but a few



*Willow Lohr shows mammal course participants pine marten scat. Photo by Jill Matthews.*

ventured out to devour the midges despite the drizzle. Did you know one tiny pipistrelle can eat 3,000 midges in one night? Aileen, a member of the NE Scotland bat group, brought a variety of bat detectors for people to try. Most people know bats use echo-location to navigate and hunt for food; a bat detector simply converts the noises made by bats into sounds that we can hear. One of Aileen's detectors had recorded both common and soprano pipistrelles by the Bennachie Centre the previous night. One young boy was particularly fascinated to learn that bats communicate with one another using a noise sounding like a fart!

One member of the group commented, "We have had inspirational, knowledgeable tutors and the course has really re-sparked my interest in the natural world and enabled me to be able to identify and observe what is on our doorstep."

### Trail Cameras

Rose Toney and Nick Littlewood from the NE Scotland Biodiversity Partnership provided training on using trail cameras to record wildlife. Trail cameras are an important tool for recording the lives of mammals and we have a number set up around Bennachie and we have amassed a good collection of mammal images, both photos and videos. These include red squirrel, pine marten, wild cat (hybrid?), otter, roe deer, fox, badger, small mammals and various birds. We have posted the best images on our facebook page; we haven't shared the numerous images (without mammals) of grasses waving in the wind, unfurling bracken fronds, waves on a loch, cloud shadows and moths.



# People's Postcode Lottery Grant



Red squirrel. Photo by Jackie Cumberbirch.

## Birds

John Wills, a local surveyor for the British Trust for Ornithology, is leading a series of bird walks around and over Bennachie - through the woods, over the hill and along the river. People have been learning to identify the birds resident on Bennachie all year round, as well as the summer visitors which come here to breed and winter far away. So far, the group has identified 53 different species on their walks on Bennachie.

John is helping people identify birds by listening to their songs and calls as well as by sight. Initially the group found it daunting to distinguish chiffchaffs from willow warblers but under John's tutelage recognising their songs has become much easier. It is mind-boggling that a willow warbler, weighing the same as a box of matches, flies 5,000 miles between Scotland and Africa every year.

John has shown the group how to count birds while walking straight lines (called transects) through a one kilometre square. This is a standard method to survey breeding birds in spring and summer which enables national organisations to add the numbers of birds from recorders nationwide and estimate the number of birds in the country and population trends year on year.

The series of bird walks will continue through autumn and winter, even as most birds have now finished breeding and many young birds prepare for their first migration to their African quarters; John hopes to include a couple of night sessions listening for owls later in the season.

## Plants

David Bale is a local botanist who worked for Scottish Natural Heritage for many years. He introduced his group of budding botanists to the complex structure of flowers, using hand lenses to examine simple flowers and understand the difference between petals and sepals, stamens and stigmas. David, with his impish sense of humour, suggested his group could use their new botanical vocabulary at parties! But seriously this knowledge allows people to identify flowers more accurately using a key rather than picture books. The group have looked at grasses, sedges and ferns too, all of which are common on Bennachie. Examining plants in such detail has given a greater appreciation of their beauty as well as their complexity.

David showed the group how to classify vegetation to fit the National Vegetation Classification (NVC). Group members estimated the abundance of different plants in one square metre (called a quadrat) and used the information to decide which NVC vegetation communities occur on Bennachie.

There were several discussions about the Latin names of flowers, leading one participant to quip 'Who'd have thought learning Latin names could be fun?' We are more than half way through the courses and we are planning an open event in late September to show everyone what we have been up to.

We hope the courses are making more people aware of the wonderful wildlife that lives on the hill. It has been a treat for me to meet so many local people who are so enthusiastic about local wildlife. Bennachie is home to many wild creatures – mammals and birds - residents and migrants – living in a variety of habitats. Like us, these wild creatures need food, water, shelter and space to raise their families. A few people are lucky enough to live around Bennachie, but many more people visit the hill every year. If humans respect wildlife we can live together and share Bennachie with our fellow creatures.

Jill Matthews, Project Co-ordinator



# Enacting the Past through drama, song and story

Liz Curtis and a team from the University of Aberdeen have been organising opportunities for Bailies and members of the public to explore and interpret the Colony settlement on Bennachie through drama, song and story in a series of workshops and the development of a live promenade drama on Bennachie. This initiative brings together members of the Bailies, the Scottish Culture and Traditions Group, the Polish-Scottish Song and Story Group and the University of Aberdeen Word Centre for Creative Writing.

The first event organised by Grace Banks, Helen Lynch, Colin Shepherd and Jackie Cumberbirch was in early June and brought together musicians, dancers and performers with members of the Bailies who gave guided tours of the Colony and of test pitting in action at the West End of the settlement. Thanks to Colin Shepherd, Alison Kennedy, Colin Millar, Jeff Oliver and Bailies Volunteers who led the tours and organised the day's test pitting.

Also in June, the first of two Polish Writing Workshops led by Polish writer Katarzyna Maicher and Helen Lynch took place on Bennachie. The participants had a guided walk led by Liz Curtis and used this experience to reflect on Polish experiences of migration, displacement, belonging and identity. The finished pieces from the workshops will be published later in 2017 as a small anthology in the form of a nineteenth century chapbook.

Will Barlow and Tony Goode have been working with the Bailies and local drama enthusiasts to create a promenade drama which will bring the people who lived in the Colony to life. Rehearsals have been ongoing over the summer months and will culminate in a public performance on the hill on Sunday 10 September.

Grace Banks, local story teller and song maker, is working with members of the Polish Scottish Song and Story Group in Aberdeen and the Tullynessle Song Group to explore the rich tradition of songs and stories associated with Bennachie and to create new songs which make connections with the lives of the people who lived and worked here in the past.

It is planned to contribute some of the excerpts from the drama, songs and other music created in the

workshops listed above to the Bailies to be used as part of the development of the Colony App.

Later in 2017 we will be organising a series of three workshops to bring together people working and volunteering in heritage organisations and people working and volunteering in formal and informal education. The purpose of the workshops will be to provide a forum for people to develop new partnerships to explore the rich history of life in North-east Scotland.

This project has been made possible through funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Creating Living Knowledge Fund for Impact and Public Engagement and the by hospitality and support from Jan Lythgoe and her colleagues at the Bennachie Visitor Centre.

Liz Curtis, Principal Investigator





# Bennachie Landscapes Fieldwork Group

## LiDAR AND AERIAL RESEARCH

The LiDAR images are now on the Bennachie Landscapes computer at the Garioch Heritage Centre and will eventually be available for scrutiny by members of the group and others interested in what they have to offer.

Details of the longhouse reported in last year's annual report (2016) have now been sent to Discovery and Archaeology Scotland (DES) and have been published in their latest edition.

Further investigations into the LiDAR images has revealed a series of roundhouses of yet undetermined date. A measured site survey has been carried out to plot and record them. Further archaeological research is anticipated, to discover their age and history, when current work in progress has been completed.

Barry Foster

## DRUMINNOR CASTLE EXCAVATIONS

Year 6 of this ongoing research excavation carried out by members of the Bennachie Landscapes Fieldwork Group has again produced fascinating insights into the emergence of this important Lordship.

Druminnor is the original lordly centre for the politically-important Forbes family. Sitting at the west end of the Garioch and straddling the Bennachie ridge,

this lordship effectively governed access to the Don and to the Garioch from the west. The Forbeses went on to become one of the dominant powers in the North-east with cadet branches responsible for building Pitsligo and Tolquhon castles as well as maintaining a wealth of other landed estates. (They were also responsible for trashing Balquhain Castle in 1526).

This year has seen the conclusion of the excavation of a corn-drying kiln, radiocarbon-dated to the 11th/12th century. Environmental analyses of burnt remains found within the bowl of the kiln are helping to broaden our knowledge of the environment at that time. Charcoal fragments have been identified to species and these suggest that at this end of the Garioch hazel formed an important component and may well have been grown as part of a well-managed woodland.

The Bailies have been particularly lucky to receive a grant from the Hunter Archaeological and Historical Trust to carry out this environmental analysis and to have received funding from Aberdeenshire Council Archaeological Services for the radiocarbon dating. At the moment, this kiln appears to be the earliest known example found in the north of Scotland.

As well as the excitement caused by the kiln, further surprises came with the discovery of at least four separate structures, all overlying each other. These remains give us important clues about how a different part of the castle developed. The walls had been buried when the castle was redesigned and sealed the evidence for us to discover this year. As ever, sincere thanks are to be extended to Alex Forbes for his support of this project and for sharing his extensive knowledge of the history of the Forbes' and other local families.

Colin Shepherd

*Left: The Medieval kiln cut by later 19th-century foundations. Below: The burnt deposits including post hole with charred remains at right of image. Photos by Iain Ralston.*



# Planning and Conservation

## SAVE BENNACHIE ALLIANCE

Save Bennachie is a must win cause to protect the Bennachie area from the new, re-routed A96. Working closely with the Bailies, we are deeply grateful for your support and advice. We were absolutely delighted to receive your kind donation of £250, which we are using to purchase roadside and display banners and car stickers.

Amey Arup Joint Venture have recently been appointed for a £50 million, 20-year contract for the design and delivery of the Eastern Section, Huntly-Aberdeen. Two of the routes under consideration would impact the foothills of Bennachie. Within two years they will take their preferred route recommendation to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy Jobs and Fair Work and the Minister for Transport. The next two years will therefore see the route of the new A96 in the Garioch decided.

Save Bennachie are working hard to ensure that the public are made aware of this very real threat to the hill. Over 800 individual members have already teamed up with community organisations, outdoor groups, environmental and business groups in the Save Bennachie Alliance. The Alliance membership now represents tens of thousands of people. We have over 2400 Facebook followers.

Working positively and constructively, we have had countless meetings with politicians, transport bodies, council officials, and are in regular dialogue with Transport Scotland. We have achieved something quite unique - all North East MSPs, our MP, and Lord Bruce of Bennachie are united in their support for protecting the environs of Bennachie from the dual carriageway. Our 'One Year On' Report detailing our research and arguments will shortly be published.

The coming months will be critical for Bennachie as we have come to know and love it. We ask all who value this special place and want to preserve it unspoiled for future generations to support Save Bennachie, lobby the key influencers, attend the consultation events and say a resounding NO to the A96 impacting Bennachie.

For full details of our campaign please visit [www.savebennachie.com](http://www.savebennachie.com) as well as our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Margaret Garden, Save Bennachie

## WEST ABERDEENSHIRE PYLON ACTION

West Aberdeenshire Pylon Action (WAPA) continued its campaign to challenge SSE's proposed 400 kV overhead power line which would run from Huntly and Inch, west of Bennachie, through the Howe of Alford, east past Monymusk, to Leylodge, Kintore. With an average pylon height of 50 metres, the proposed line would have a devastating impact on the rural scenic beauty of the region.

Public meetings to present and discuss WAPA's campaign were held in Alford, Inch, Keig, Kennethmont and Monymusk, with large local turnouts. Donations were collected to further the campaign of roadside posters and banners, door-to-door leafletting, and a newsletter. Meetings were also held with local MSPs and the Bailies' Council was briefed about the campaign at their meeting on 28 November 2016. WAPA met with SSE project managers in December to discuss local issues and seek clarification of several aspects of their proposals. Alternative routes and technology ideas were put forward to which SSE undertook to respond.

In January, the National Grid issued its annual Network Options Assessment (NOA) in which it was recommended that the Blackhillock to Kintore line was 'not optimal at this time', i.e. a cost-benefit analysis could not justify the project economically. SSE subsequently issued a press statement that they were suspending work on the project and the project team would be reassigned. However, they did state that should Scotland's future energy priorities change in the future then they may restart the project with a review of the selected route options. It was made clear in a subsequent statement that the extent of this review would depend very much on the timing of when the project could be restarted. WAPA is concerned that should the next NOA report change the status of the project to 'proceed' then the project definition and selected route would be unchanged. WAPA will continue to keep a watching brief on the annual National Grid reviews of national energy requirements and be ready to re-engage the campaign should the status of the Blackhillock to Kintore project look likely to change.

Updated status can be checked on WAPA's website [www.wapa.org.uk](http://www.wapa.org.uk) and Facebook page.

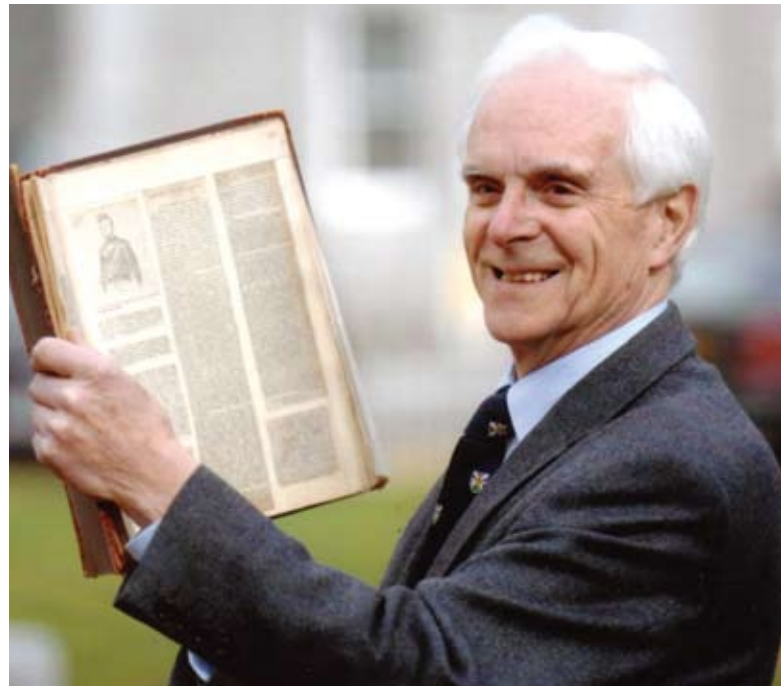
John Wills, WAPA



# Obituary

DR. GEOFF M. GILL MBE  
1930-2017

Geoff, a lifelong and active member of the Bailies of Bennachie was a man who served his community with commitment and diligence. Geoff was clerk to the Bailies and our archival records bear testament to his meticulous record keeping. As publication officer, he used to joke that he was like a door-to-door travelling salesman as he went around local shops selling the Bailies' postcards to them, from a small suitcase. He was awarded his MBE for his work with the scout movement. This extended to helping at Bailies' events and the annual Rally. Latterly, his involvement with the new Garioch Heritage Centre in Inverurie led to the Bailies Library being re-housed at the centre in Inverurie where it has pride of place in the local history section. A man greatly respected by all, his wise council will be missed.



## Publications

The Bailies produce a range of merchandise, mainly publications. These enable the Bailies to disseminate new knowledge and research in order to better inform and enhance protection of the landscape. Buying this material directly supports the aims of the Bailies and permits the continuance of research and education focussed on the hill. For further details of prices and to order, please go to:

[www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk/publications](http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk/publications)



Also available is the Bennachie Tartan.  
For further details please go to:

[www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk/bennachie-tartan](http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk/bennachie-tartan)

