

Bailies of Bennachie Annual Report 2023

Photo: Mither Tap from East Aquhorthies Stone Circle - James Heasman

Trustee Chair Peter Stock reflects on an eventful 50th anniversary year.

Dear Members, it has been quite a year for the Bailies of Bennachie. As you will know, we marked our 50th anniversary this year, see pages 6-7. The year was capped off by winning the RSPB Nature of Scotland Community Initiative Award, see pages 8-9.

The reaching of any Golden Anniversary is a cause for celebration but especially so for a charity. Reaching 50 years is a sign that the motives and ethos are sound, they have stood the test of time and that the foundations laid by our founders have endured. This is particularly true where the purpose that binds and perpetuates the charity is carried on by volunteers, who are inspired by the cause.

Though appropriate in its own right, a hopeful spin-off of our activities this year was to remind members and the public that we exist, what we do and hopefully encourage their participation in the Bailies as members, volunteers or trustees. We rely on people committed to the health and well-being of Bennachie to continue our work.

A significant feature of this year was the loss of a number of trustees and volunteers, some very long serving. Many were forced to resign due to personal matters. We wish all of our past trustees and volunteers success in their endeavours and to be assured that there will always be a place for them if and when the time is right to return.

Despite the enjoyment of the 50th, we stuck to our plans and ended the year in a strong place. You will read elsewhere in this report how we have

bolstered our support teams and enter 2024 in a very strong place to better communicate with our members and the public as well as better care for the hill. Our vision, a 'Voice for the Hill' is unifying our purpose across the very diverse range of activities that is the Bailies.

On a practical level, we have continued our monthly work parties to allow us to undertake our care of the hill. Our swap over of the containers is now complete with the trellises in place to provide some level of environmental shielding.

Early in the year we negotiated with Aberdeenshire Council to open the Rowantree toilets with us paying for the weekly cleaning. This has been a direct benefit to hill users and we plan to continue this service in 2024.

The Bennachie Landscapes Project Group (BLPG) has been active this year and I direct you to their article for descriptions of their diverse activities and successes. We have retained a part-time archivist who will allow us to progress with the digitisation of our archive.

A wake-up call for all of us was the fire on Millstone Hill in early September. We were very lucky that there was no wind. As it happens, about 5000 square metres were burnt and it took 4 days and multiple helicopter dumps to finally extinguish the fire. This prompted the Bailies to open discussions with the Inverurie Fire Service to see if there was information or equipment that they could use to better tackle heathland fires. These discussions are ongoing, but we are already working on a fire access map of the hill.

“Our vision, a ‘Voice for the Hill’ is unifying our purpose across the diverse range of activities that is the Bailies”.

On the subject of land, many of you may be aware that the north-east quadrant of the hill, west and south of the

Turnpike changed hands earlier in the year.

The Bailies have proactively contacted the landowner's local agent RTS and we have had a few meetings and site visits with them to share our knowledge of sites of environmental and historical interest, for which they were most grateful. We are looking forward to a strong and collaborative relationship with them, similar to that which we enjoy with the other main landowners; Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) and Forbes Estate.

Looking forward into 2024, we are in the process of defining and planning environmental projects, working closely with existing and new landowners for the benefit of the hill. We will continue to explore the history of the hill and maintaining existing colony sites for future generations and provide information. We will keep you informed of progress.

We have a number of projects in the pipeline including:

- a number of significant environmental projects including bird-friendly planting
- an intensified Work Party programme starting in March (see Work Party report)
- our annual archaeological dig on Pittodrie Estate and beginning of the implementation of our Colony Management Plan (see BLPG report).

We are on a journey which, for the foreseeable future, is never ending and which will need to be continually adapted and adjusted to the pressures around us. The speed and direction of travel is determined by the trustees, using our history as guidance but dealing with the risks and

opportunities that our world presents us.

It has been recognised that the current board is the first in the history of the Bailies not to have a member with a direct working relationship to the founders. Would it not be a joy for our founders to look in on our activities now and hopefully smile that we still understand what they were trying to achieve?

In summary, the Bailies of Bennachie continues to thrive.

If you feel that now is the opportunity to offer more time, knowledge and enthusiasm for Bennachie, please do contact info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk to find out what is involved with becoming a Trustee and give your contribution to the future.

We thank you for your membership and your ongoing support and assure you that we will continue to steer the efforts of the Bailies of Bennachie in caring for the hill and giving the hill a voice, through this great organisation.

Roll on our 100th anniversary!

Peter Stock - Trustee, Chair



“Winners - RSPB Nature of Scotland
Community Initiative award 2023”

“Planted orchard trees at Shepherd
Lodge in honour of the Platinum Jubilee
of Queen Elizabeth II.”

“Conducted 6 week long
Summer group Archaeological
Dig by the Landscapes Project”

“Arranged 2 day conference ‘Cultural
Landscapes’ by Bennachie
Landscapes Project”

“Guided spring walk exploring
Flora and Fauna and an illustrated
talk on Butterflies and Moths by
the Wildlife Group”

“Opened and maintained
Rowantree toilets over summer”

“Collected and disposed of
approx 5,000 litres of rubbish”

“Organised 50th Anniversary
Celebration in the Inverurie
Town Hall attracted approx
500 visitors”

“Facilitated 1,000 Work Party
hours on the hill, incident-free”

“Commissioned ‘The Hill that was
Home’ for Rhona Mitchell School of
drama - 6 wonderful sell-out
performances”

“Episode broadcast on Outdoor
Scotland podcast and Radio Scotland
- 50 years of the Bailies”

“Presented talk on 100 years
of the Forestry Commission”

“Commissioned Bennachie themed
original piano music and hosted
traditional Scottish music”

“Guided walks to the sites of the
aircraft crashes and the Colony
Homes”

“a voice for the hill”

SUCCESS



"a voice for the hill"



engaging with volunteers. This has been refreshing to see and receives positive feedback from our volunteers.

Work this year has included the normal path maintenance on different areas of the hill and maintaining the main Colony Sites. We also installed cross drains and water bars to alleviate erosion issues on the Gordon Way. This was interesting, bringing

This year was the first since 2019 that we've had a full programme of Work Parties from March until December. We even managed a corporate and several mid-week Work Parties. We really do appreciate our volunteers giving up their time to join us for the benefit of the hill and recognise that, without our volunteers, none of this valuable work would be possible.

Unfortunately, due to personal reasons, Kim Morgan had to resign in July this year as Work Party Trustee, so Peter Stock and I jointly took this on. We really appreciated the work Kim did, not only as a Trustee but also in leading the Work Parties.

Around this time, we were very fortunate to engage Hugh Fraser as our Outdoor Coordinator. Hugh's role includes planning of Work Party scopes, prioritisation, preparation



back a technical level of work not done on Work Parties for several years. The corporate Work Party tidied up the bird watch area behind the Bennachie Visitor Centre.

The last Work Parties of 2023 included the overdue maintenance of the willow structures at the Back o' Bennachie and clearing significant vegetation at the Bede House site.



There remains outstanding work across the hill due to the disruptions of the pandemic and Storm Arwen. Discussions continue with landowners to prioritise these and again we plan to hold further mid-week Work Parties in 2024.

On my walks across the hill I regularly see us facing new challenges with the significantly higher level of rain we are encountering each winter and the associated erosion. It was satisfying to witness walking down from Mither Tap to Bennachie Visitor Centre just after New Year, the cross drains and water bars, which had been cleared during one of our later 2023 Work Parties, routing the water off the path



of documentation, interface with landowners and leading the Work Parties on the day. Hugh has brought a new approach to

efficiently, despite the heavy prolonged rainfall at that time.

The new container for storing tools donated by OEG Offshore in 2022 is now in use and the old container was removed from the site. Planters and trellises have been installed around the container and climbing plants will be used to merge it into the surroundings in 2024.

We remain encouraged, having welcomed a diverse group of new volunteers through 2023 from a cross section of the community. They have their own varied reasons for supporting the work we do. We continue to see new volunteers benefit as they learn from the more experienced members of the group all helping unite the group. This too is a key part of what we aim to achieve in Work Parties as we build our team.

We have been producing the Policy, Procedures and Risk Assessments required for the introduction of battery-operated tools. We have identified the tools we require and a supplier who could maintain them. This will be progressed with the landowners and we hope to start using these tools in 2024. This will remove some of the mundane work for volunteers and improve efficiency, hopefully freeing up time for more interesting and challenging work!

We are still on the lookout for Team Leaders and volunteers. If you, or someone you know, is interested, please contact us. Weather permitting, Work Parties take place on the first Saturday of each month March to December inclusive. It is a simple process to join as a volunteer.

Willie Linklater, Trustee - Work Parties.



WORK PARTIES

On the 7th of May, 1973 in Inverurie Town Hall, the inaugural meeting of the Bailies of Bennachie took place. It was attended by many people with an interest in Bennachie. A few weeks later, our first constitution was agreed and the 'Bailies' were formed.

Founding Bailies, Danny Gordon, James MacKay and Algy Watson displayed exceptional energy and vision in establishing the charity, enrolling influential dignitaries and landowners. They undertook a variety of activities and projects. They held annual picnics, published books, produced maps and guides, installed hilltop indicators, and established the Esson Car Park, to name a few. The list is too long for here but the reader is directed to the two main publications, *The Book of Bennachie* and *Bennachie Again*. The Bailies attracted diverse groups with specific interests in the hill under one umbrella.

In anticipation of our 50th, in 2022 we commissioned a number of works. We commissioned Professor Phillip Cooke (University of Aberdeen) to write a piano composition on themes from the hill; *Scenes and Stories for the Piano*. At the end of the 2023, Mancave Studios recorded local musician Tara Leiper's performance of the pieces in the Kings College Chapel. The film and score are available free to download on our website.

In 2023 we were made aware of the many Bennachie-themed tunes composed by local traditional musician Ian Thow. He has kindly allowed us to reproduce these on our website as well as other music composed for the Bailies over

our 50 years, with the help of Joe Stollery. Again, these are free to download from our website.

Lastly, we commissioned Scottish playwright Alan Bissett to write a play about the Bennachie colonists; *The Hill that was a Home*. This explores the tragic events that led to the demise of the colony after 100 years of existence. The ruins of their buildings can still be seen in the valley between Millstone and Mither Tap.



Our big event for this year was our Open Day held in Inverurie Town Hall on May 20th. This was a huge success. The event was hosted by local radio host, Mark Stephen. Harp music opened proceedings by Nadine Ralston. Piano music was performed by Tara; the traditional tunes were performed by the Garioch Fiddlers and excerpts of the play were performed by Rhona Mitchell School of Drama. A specially prepared film on the history of the Bailies was produced by young film maker Douglas Stalker, using images and films from our archive. A montage of the day, also assembled by Douglas, can be viewed on the website. The real thrill was meeting so many members, some of whom had made a huge effort to attend and many whose memberships dated back to our inception, proudly showing off their 1973 brass pin. We were able to show the original meeting book from our inception and the member's book where long serving members could find their name.

Preparing for and putting on the day was a big team effort by many people and we are truly grateful for their contribution, big and small.

The play, as mentioned above, enjoyed a sold-out run of six nights in July at the Garioch Heritage Centre. This has attracted many fitting accolades to Rhona Mitchell's troupe from the School of Drama and to the Bailies directly. We even managed a slot on the ITV evening news!

Throughout the year, we have run a number of walks and talks oriented towards the broader public, all of which were well attended and appreciated. These events all raised our profile in the latter part of the year.

In August, BBC Radio Scotland commissioned an episode on the Bailies of Bennachie for their series *Our Story*, which is hosted by friend-of-the-Bailies, Mark Stephen. It is an excellent programme and showed us at our best. It was aired in October and you can find the download on the BBC Radio Scotland website if you missed it.

A big thank you to all who have contributed to making 2023 an important milestone for the Bailies. The Bailies' star has never shone so bright. A hopeful spin-off of our activities this year was to remind members and the public that we exist, what we do and hopefully encourage their participation in the Bailies as members, volunteers or trustees. We rely on people committed to the health and wellbeing of Bennachie to continue our work.





THE PUBLIC VOTE

RSPB Scotland holds an annual award programme for charities and companies that have contributed to Nature in Scotland. We were very pleased to be notified in October that we had been shortlisted for the Community Initiative category.

Most awards are judged by a panel. However, for the Community Initiative Award, this is voted for by members of the public. Many of you will recall the Facebook campaign in early October to muster votes.

The Bailies were very honoured to win this Community Initiative Award, which recognised the 50 years of us caring for Bennachie.

Our Chair, Peter Stock, and Treasurer, Alan Henderson represented the Bailies at the ceremony held in Edinburgh on the evening of November 22nd.

The event was hosted by Megan McCubbin and J J Chalmers. At the event a short film, made by Hopscotch Films, was shown. This was recorded at our October Work Party, and included interviews with members of the BLP and the Work Party. The film can be viewed on our website.

The fact that this award was based on the public vote was extremely gratifying. Many of you, friends and members alike, took the time to vote for us. We are truly grateful.

In closing, we were advised in December that we have been nominated for the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

This process is just beginning, working towards an award in November. We will keep you informed of our progress. Thank you again for your votes and support.

Peter Stock, Chair Person
and Alan Henderson,
Treasurer
(3rd and 4th from L),
photo by Mike Wilkinson.

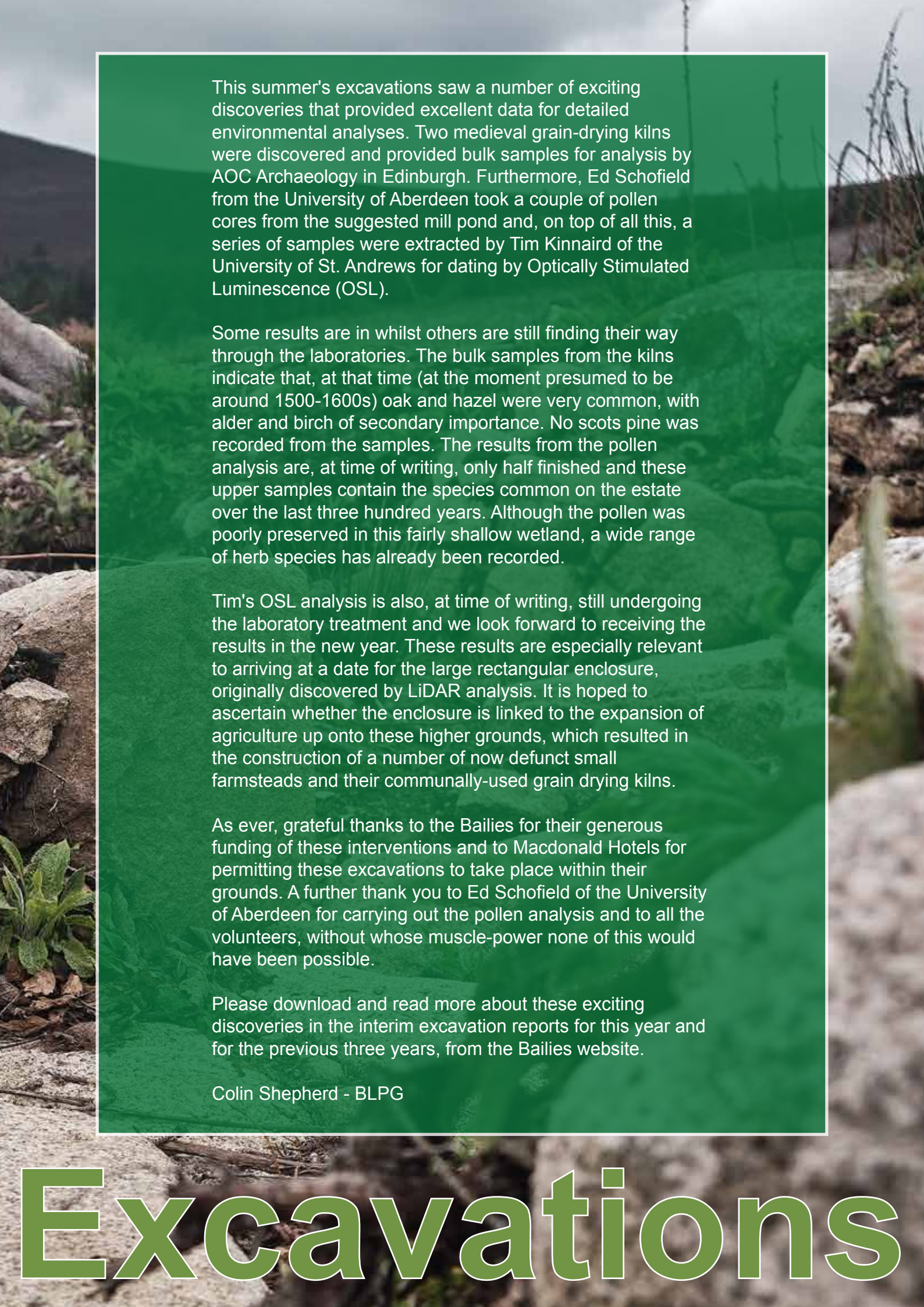


WINNERS NATURE OF SCOTLAND AND 2023 COMMUNITY INITIATIVE AWARD
2023
Nature of Scotland Awards
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE AWARD
Sponsored by GreenPower
50 Years of the Bailies of Bennachie

Pittedrie



estate

The background image shows an excavation site with rocky ground and some sparse vegetation. A large green rectangular overlay covers the central portion of the image, containing white text. The text is arranged in several paragraphs, providing details about archaeological findings and acknowledgments.

This summer's excavations saw a number of exciting discoveries that provided excellent data for detailed environmental analyses. Two medieval grain-drying kilns were discovered and provided bulk samples for analysis by AOC Archaeology in Edinburgh. Furthermore, Ed Schofield from the University of Aberdeen took a couple of pollen cores from the suggested mill pond and, on top of all this, a series of samples were extracted by Tim Kinnaird of the University of St. Andrews for dating by Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL).

Some results are in whilst others are still finding their way through the laboratories. The bulk samples from the kilns indicate that, at that time (at the moment presumed to be around 1500-1600s) oak and hazel were very common, with alder and birch of secondary importance. No scots pine was recorded from the samples. The results from the pollen analysis are, at time of writing, only half finished and these upper samples contain the species common on the estate over the last three hundred years. Although the pollen was poorly preserved in this fairly shallow wetland, a wide range of herb species has already been recorded.

Tim's OSL analysis is also, at time of writing, still undergoing the laboratory treatment and we look forward to receiving the results in the new year. These results are especially relevant to arriving at a date for the large rectangular enclosure, originally discovered by LiDAR analysis. It is hoped to ascertain whether the enclosure is linked to the expansion of agriculture up onto these higher grounds, which resulted in the construction of a number of now defunct small farmsteads and their communally-used grain drying kilns.

As ever, grateful thanks to the Bailies for their generous funding of these interventions and to Macdonald Hotels for permitting these excavations to take place within their grounds. A further thank you to Ed Schofield of the University of Aberdeen for carrying out the pollen analysis and to all the volunteers, without whose muscle-power none of this would have been possible.

Please download and read more about these exciting discoveries in the interim excavation reports for this year and for the previous three years, from the Bailies website.

Colin Shepherd - BLPG

Excavations

The Bennachie Landscapes Project Group (BLPG) had another busy year with our mission to research and promote the heritage of Bennachie.

The year got off to a sad start when Ann Baillie had to stand down as Owner-Trustee of the group. We thank Ann for her dedication and efforts for the BLPG during her term.

I was offered the opportunity to take on the role

North East Scotland' at the Garioch Heritage Centre in Inverurie.

The event attracted a broad range of speakers on fascinating subjects including 'A suggested glacial lake in North East Scotland' and 'Picts, Pollens and Peatbogs'. The event was a great success and enjoyed by all who attended. The Bailies of Bennachie have kindly committed to publishing the proceedings of the conference along with the final reports of the excavations

on the Pittodrie Estate and the Kailyard project. This will be in the form of an Open Access publication free for anyone to download. We hope this will promote the history of the Bennachie landscape to a wider national and international audience.

During 2023 we have had positive discussions with representatives of the new landowner

in April 2023 and was delighted to accept.

During 2023 a sub group led by Colin Miller and assisted by Willie Linklater, Jackie Cumberbirch and myself completed the Colony Management Plan. This detailed document represents our plan on how best to maintain and preserve this much loved historical site. Huge thanks to Colin Miller for the fine work he did in preparing this.

During the summer a team of volunteers led by Iain Ralston continued our archaeological excavations on the Pittodrie Estate, see more details on the following pages. The highlight this year being the discovery of two medieval kilns that could have a regional and even national significance. It was great to see some new budding archaeologists volunteer this year and it is certainly one of my goals to spread the word and expand our team for 2024.

In September BLP, led by Colin Shepherd in association with the Bailies of Bennachie and the University of Aberdeen, held a two day conference called the 'Cultural Landscapes of

of the east Bennachie area. Plans are afoot to clear the windblow from the Turnpike trail and for new tree planting in the area. All this will be done with careful respect for the archaeological sites in the area.

Looking forward to 2024, during the summer we are planning on excavating a fascinating 'Longhouse' site on the slopes of the hillside that was discovered by Barry Foster a few years ago. So if you have been watching 'Digging for Britain' and fancy having a go at Archaeology this year, please sign up on the Bailies of Bennachie website, we would love to have you as part of the team.

Allan Will
Trustee - BLPG



Photos by Iain Ralston



“We hope this will promote the history of the Bennachie landscape to a wider national and international audience”.



The Bennachie Wildlife Group is an informal group which anyone can join and take part in the various wildlife orientated talks and walks which are organised. Information about events is sent to those on the e-mail group list giving them priority for booking as numbers are usually limited. The first of the events in 2023 was an online talk in February entitled 'From Farmland to Wildland: an ecological journey' by Patrick Cook. He gave a very informative talk on his research which investigated the effects on plants and invertebrates as a result of the rewilding project at Bamff Estate in Perthshire.

An in person talk in March at Kemnay Public Hall saw a good attendance for an illustrated and fascinating talk on Moths by Helen Rowe, Marr Countryside Ranger. The beauty of some moths surprised many in the audience with their diverse colour, shape and size. A much misunderstood insect! The talk was followed up later in the spring at the end of May with a practical Moth Trapping and ID session at Donview Centre. The light traps were set up the night before and an array of moths were admired the next morning before being released.



Another interesting talk was given at Monymusk Hall in April by Norman Davidson entitled 'Forestry in North East Scotland over the last 100 years'. Norman had a wealth of knowledge and stories gathered from his years in forestry and he showed many interesting photographs of forestry activities in the area. A truly local expert!

The group got out and about in July with an invitation to Wark Farm near Cushnie. Here Laurel Foreman has spent nearly two decades farming for wildlife and an inspiring walk was enjoyed by all with lots of questions asked



and debated. The farm has an onsite butchery which allows meat to be prepared and pies made which are a local delicacy available from the farmers markets and online.

Another walk was led by David Bale, Environment Trustee, in August and this set off from Rowantree carpark to investigate the bogs on the upper slopes and plateau of Bennachie. The event explored how the bogs had formed and the plants and conditions that maintain them. Another fascinating insight into a less commonly explored terrain.

September saw a group enjoy a continuation of several Geology walks led by Peter Craig. This

year the walk was at Crawton, south of Stonehaven to investigate the rock formation and conglomerates found in this region of the coast. Peter again expertly explained to the non-geologists among the group how to interpret the rocks found there. A fascinating subject explained so well!

Autumn was the ideal time for a Fungal Foray from the Bennachie Centre expertly led by Toni Watt of the Grampian Fungus Group. A wide variety of sizes, colours and shapes of mushrooms were identified and their biology and ecology explained.

In November a Lichen Walk led by local ecologist Petra Vergunst was organised which provided a beginner's introduction to the lichens on the dykes, trees, soils and rocks around the Bennachie Centre. Petra introduced the group to what lichens are, how they grow and live and how to identify them. It was a very enjoyable and informative event and we look forward to Petra leading future walks looking at mosses and liverworts. Please keep an eye out for our exciting program of events already planned for 2024.

Lorna M Bell
Wildlife Trustee

If you would like us to add your name to the mailing list please contact us here.



WILD



LIST



Photo by Allan Will

If you walk along the path by Shepherd's Lodge croft, just off the main path up to Mither Tap from the Bennachie Centre, you'll be able to see the reconstructed kailyard that is now in its 7th year of growth. This year, the view is even better thanks to a summer work party that opened up a gap in the laurel 'hedge' that has grown over the years in between the path and the kailyard.

The kailyard gives us a practical feel for what life was like in the Bennachie Colony in the 1800s. It's a reminder of the hard work and active involvement in the land that they had. Although their gardens would probably have had a wider range of vegetables and fruit than we have the scope to grow today, we've shown that the land is productive and some

very good crops of various currants, gooseberries and raspberries continued in 2023.

We are gardening completely organically of course, with the addition of manure now and again for fertiliser. We have also largely stayed clear of pests and diseases so far, touch wood. The only unsuccessful crop this year was rhubarb, which despite an extra feed of manure did almost nothing. It has one last chance this spring!

Each month a volunteer checks the kailyard and carries out any tasks needed, with help from the rest of the team if required. This includes mulching, pruning, weeding, checking growth and of course harvesting. We keep in touch with a monthly update, and this year we also had a social gathering at the kailyard with some delicious homemade food.

We also said thank you to Chris Foster, our outgoing 'Chivvy' who has organised the volunteer rota and kept the kailyard in good heart since the project started. Chris also gave a most interesting presentation on the kailyard for the Bailies AGM in

April. If you would like to help look after the kailyard, or would like to be on the mailing list for updates, please get in touch at

info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk.

Jo Vergunst - Kailyard Project



Photo - Jo Vergunst

K A I L Y A R D



Launched in 2020 and gradually expanded, the Bailies Fun and Learning resources have all been designed to help promote an interest in and hopefully a love for Bennachie amongst young people and their families.

The website contains a suite of detailed nature based programmes looking at what the hill's flora and fauna are up to during each season. Factually sound, they are all presented in a light touch, fun and engaging manner.

Teaming up with the Bailies Wildlife Group's experts, as well as local specialists has been crucial to the model. We are extremely grateful to them all for their valuable input.

Hosted by Jock o Bennachie, the hill's mythical giant who can't resist telling his awful jokes, each programme contains a Doric tale ably told by Jackie Ross.



JOCK BENNACHIE

FUN & LEARNING



There is plenty of advice on how to stay safe on Bennachie for young people and their families, as well as a resource on litter, to help raise awareness of its impact on the hill and its wildlife.

The resources have been endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council and are available in their primary schools for teachers and pupils to work with.

There are so many facets of Bennachie which lend themselves to Fun and Learning - look out for more colourful and exciting material to come!

In the meantime why not dip into some of the resources here:



<https://www.juniorbailies.org.uk/>



INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	2023	2022
INCOME FROM:	£	£
Membership & donations	1,180	1,603
Publications & calendars	4,829	4,462
Legacies	-	2,287,337
Grants	672	-
Bank interest	12,903	5,447
Dividend income	51,115	15,579
TOTAL INCOME:	70,699	2,314,428
EXPENDITURE ON:		
Publications & calendars	2,771	3,522
Governance costs	10,668	16,981
Charitable donations	11,740	7,700
Bennachie archaeological digs	8,248	4,371
Outreach and coordination support	11,640	12,664
Investment manager fees	13,728	-
Costs in relation to 50th anniversary	14,435	-
Equipment and other ancillaries	7,541	4,074
TOTAL EXPENDITURE:	80,771	49,312
Net (expenditure) / income	(10,072)	2,265,116
Net gains / (losses) on investments	66,883	(127,413)
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS:	56,761	2,137,703
Fund balances brought forward	2,263,482	125,779
FUND BALANCES - 31ST DECEMBER	2,320,243	2,263,482

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Review and Reserves Policy:

It is our policy to keep healthy reserves so that we are in a position to help fund activities and major projects in relation to Bennachie.

Each year the Trustees consider whether the reserves remain sufficient to give this possibility and in general we aim to limit spending excluding investment manager fees to roughly the level of income from dividends, bank interest, membership subscriptions and other sources of income.

Our income for the year was £70,699 which includes investment income of £51,115 and bank interest of £12,903. In 2022 our income was £2,314,428 which included a significant legacy of £2,287,337.

Expenditure increased in 2023 to £80,771 compared to £49,312 in 2022. This increase was mainly due to costs in relation to the 50th anniversary and investment manager fees, less lower governance costs.

The net movement in funds for the year was £56,761 and year end funds amounted to £2,320,243.

Investment Policy and performance:

The overall objective is to hold investments to generate income and provide capital growth in the medium to long term and to help achieve this Rathbones were appointed as investment managers after a competitive tender process in 2022.

Rathbones are instructed to maximise the return of the investments, consistent with an acceptable level of risk as agreed by the trustees. The Trustees meet Rathbones at least annually to review performance of the investments.

The charity operates an ethical investment policy which prohibits shareholding in armaments, tobacco and pornography.

The Rathbone portfolio ended the year with a market value of £1,992,386 which includes a net gain on investments over the year of £66,833.

The Trustees recognise that the stock market continues to be volatile and that gains or losses in one year may be cancelled out by losses or gains the next year.

As noted above, the overall objective is to generate income and provide long term capital growth and discussions with the investment managers are focused on this objective.

Alan Henderson - Trustee Treasurer



Being a Bailie of Bennachie, a member of this organisation which has been around now for 50 years, brings a sense of pride, commitment to the hill, looking after it, enjoying it, and being part of its voice.

It was wonderful to meet so many members during the Open Day, including some from 1973! The communications sent in around that time had so many stories of the love of Bennachie, tales of tramping up to Mither Tap often in the summer, family picnics and so on over the past 50 years.

Dr Helen Kedward-Dixon wrote

find out that a wee club started in the year I was born by a few people that loved the hill has gone on to do so much for a place my Dad and his Dad held so dear."

Even more recently, members Lorraine Grant, Jenny Rae and Matthew Sunter completed a daily climb of Bennachie in July, raising nearly £2,000 for the Roy Castle Lung Foundation in doing so, still making memories on Bennachie.

You may have noticed a lone figure on the cover page of the 2024 calendar. It was later discovered that this is Craig Thomson, also one of our

also means that we are losing touch with those earlier members who don't have email addresses, as that is our main way of communicating.

With the cost of time in both sending out a mailing and processing answers, stationery, printing and



postage, a hard copy mailing to everyone would be in the region of £5,000, which is not sustainable.

We do accept there are a small number of members who have no email and we are very happy to continue posting to you. We kindly request your help in updating the membership list.

"I have a book called "The Book of Bennachie" that was published by the Bailies of Bennachie in 1976. It belonged to my grandfather Dr Norman Dixon (then rector of Inverurie Academy) who was also an inaugural member of the Bailies and who signed the book along with DG Gordon, Algy Watson and James R MacKay. In it there is an essay and poem by my grandfather which is the only surviving creative writing I have of his. I've always treasured this book and I am really excited to

members, out watching the sunset but unknowingly snapped from Millstone Hill by our Publications Trustee, Alex Doig. Bennachie is Craig's favourite hill and he goes up as many times as he can. For a while he was clocking up 100 trips yearly. He even wrote an article based on that and the change of seasons.

While being a Life Member brings convenience in that you don't have to have an annual renewal, nothing more to pay, it

We plan to contact every member, to ensure that we have your correct details.

We know that some emails too are getting bounce-backs, particularly if a work email was used and the member is no longer with that company. We have also seen some postal mail returned to us.

One area of concern is that some of our members joined 50 years ago and perhaps have

moved house, or even sadly passed on, but we are not aware.

If your contact details have changed or you know of family members who may be included in that description, please contact us, using the website where possible, as we have a membership update form now.

While we have additional benefits on membership, the Facebook following is also rising, and another 10% increase in followers from last year, with some 5,200 folks getting information from there. Items such as reuniting a lost wallet with its owner and reporting on our events are instantly cascaded out.

Some of our membership form the active Volunteers, over 120 are now on the Volunteer Register. These extraordinary folks go above and beyond, so that the practical maintenance on the hill is now back on plan. Whether it be archaeology digs, maintaining Colony sites, litter picking, planting trees, or path maintenance, these folks join the different groups and their assistance is greatly appreciated. It is hoped too that some of our members may also be available to do a little more and think about becoming a Trustee of the Bailies of Bennachie, adding their “voice for the hill”.

Any questions and comments which we can help with or pass on to the Trustees with particular expertise in an area, please do continue to send to info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk, and we will try our best to help you. We love hearing your stories of your adventures on Bennachie, so please share away!

Stella Gauld & Karen Noble, Admin & Membership

MEMBERS

INVITATION

Members are warmly invited to attend the fifty-first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Bailies of Bennachie, at 19:30 on Thursday 21st March 2024, to be held at the Garioch Heritage Centre, Locos Works Road, Inverurie, AB51 4FY.

The AGM will also have a Zoom link to allow for remote access for those members outside the local area or prevented from physically attending. This link will be emailed to you on the receipt of a request mailed to info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk.

An open forum will take place after the AGM. Apologies and questions in advance can be sent to Bailies of Bennachie, PO Box 18591, Inverurie, AB51 1DH, or email: info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk

Trustees:

- David Bale
- Lorna Bell
- Alex Doig
- Alan Henderson (Treasurer)
- Jim Herbert
- Willie Linklater (Secretary)
- Peter Stock (Chair)
- Allan Will

[The above list was accurate as of 31st December 2023. Since then, Jim Herbert resigned on the 8th Jan 2024 and David Caney joined on 4th Jan 2024]





**“A sicht
tae lift
the herts,
o’ een
ana.”**

JIMMY WRIGHT 1981

BAILIES *of* BENNACHIE

A VOICE FOR THE HILL



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Awards 2023

Winner

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