



Commonty Pinewoods

THE FOREST OF BIRSE COMMONTY, with its unique pattern of legal rights, has an area of over 3,500 ha (9,000 acres) and thus covers over a quarter of the entire area of the parish.

As reported in Update 1, BCT's first main project involved a long and complex process that achieved an historic settlement over the Commonty. Firstly, the extensive ancient shared rights over the Commonty were vested in BCT to ensure their survival for the benefit of the local community. Secondly, on the basis of these rights, BCT reached an Agreement with the other two parties with rights over the Commonty: the owner of the solum (Hon. Charles Pearson of Forest of Birse Estate) and owners of the sporting rights (Hon. Charles Pearson, and the Nicol Brothers of Ballogie Estate). Thirdly, as a result of this Agreement, BCT was able to start to exercise its ancient rights to manage the native pinewoods on the Commonty.



Brown's Well half way up the Forest of Birse Road after it had been cleaned up by the Trust.

Photo by ScotGen

The Commonty pinewoods are nationally important as a major area of surviving Caledonian Pinewood. They cover over 500 ha (1250 acre) and BCT's management so far has mainly involved several major surveys to gather the information needed to plan their sustainable management. Other works have included environmental improvements to the parking spaces along the public road, the removal of derelict fences and old signs and the landscaping over of a rutted and eroding track north of the Forest of Birse Kirk. In July, BCT learnt that it had been successful in the Forestry Commission's Deeside Forest Challenge Competition and had been awarded additional funds to manage the pinewoods.

Corsedarder



THE BIRSE PARISH WAR MEMORIAL is at Corsedarder, the highest point on the public roads through the Parish. Across the road from the War Memorial, is the ancient Dardanus Standing Stone. Following local consultation about the condition of this prominent community site, BCT has started to restore the area.

BCT is re-defining the parking areas on either side of the road to prevent their encroachment ever closer to the War Memorial and Dardanus's Stone. The parking surfaces are also being improved and other derelict features removed (old fencing, dumped rubbish). Local origin native trees are being planted at the site, their number matching the number of names on the War Memorial. The Trust is also compiling a Book of Remembrance about each of the 'Men of Birse' named on the Memorial.

Another proposal will also re-inforce the unique significance of the Corsedarder site to the whole parish. BCT is planning with the parish's three Community Associations to erect a new standing stone in the north west corner of the site to commemorate the new Millennium and then to hold a community event on 1st January 2000 to dedicate the stone as the Birse Millennium Stone.

Visitors to Birse...



Photo courtesy of Aberdeen Journals Evening Express

Amongst the visitors to BCT's projects during the summer was Scotland's Deputy First Minister, Jim Wallace (seen here with David Duncan & Jack Holt).

BCT Wins Award

There were over 250 entries to the 1999 Scottish Community of the Year Awards and BCT was delighted to win the community business of the year section. The Trust was presented with its prize by Local Government Minister, Frank McAveety, at a special ceremony in Edinburgh on the 8th November.

Trust Chairman, the Reverend Jack Holt, commented: "Winning this prestigious Award is a tremendous achievement in our first year and a tribute to the generosity and hard work of the many people, both locally and further afield, who have helped and supported the Trust".



View from the western edge of Balfour Wood towards Carnferg.

Photo by ScotGen

Balfour Woods

BCT is continuing to hold detailed negotiations with Forest Enterprise (FE) to secure a partnership agreement that gives BCT a direct say in the management of FE's 240 ha (600 acre) Balfour Wood plantation. The main objective of the Agreement will be to increase the benefits that the local community derives from the plantation. BCT and the new Birse Area Community Association are planning full local consultation on the future management of the plantation.