

## Chairman's Comment

WITH THE END OF 2002, BCT successfully completed its fourth year of operation.

Some of the highlights of the year included completing the construction of BCT's environmentally controlled Local History Archive and receiving some fascinating donations to it, the Trust's very successful AGM in April attended by over 100 members, winning the Scotland's Finest Woodland Award for BCT's management of Finzean Community Woods, re-roofing of the Bucket Mill and resuming bucket production and then, in November, successfully bidding for Birse Church Hall.

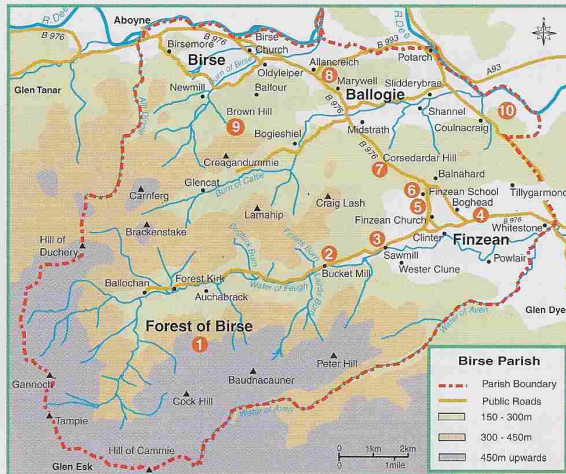
These and many other developments on behalf of the community were achieved during the year within a balanced budget where the Trust's income equalled its expenditure. A full report on the Trust's accounts and its activities in 2002 will be given to members at the forthcoming AGM on 23rd April in the new Finzean Village Hall.

While considerable challenges are involved in ensuring that BCT has sufficient financial and human resources to carry out its work, it is vital to us as Trustees to ensure that BCT's work reflects the balance of projects that the community wants and needs. In order to do this, we must have adequate local participation and feedback. The AGM provides an excellent opportunity for this to take place. I will, therefore, be very pleased and grateful if you could now put its date in your diaries and then come and help us to make it as useful and enjoyable an occasion as last year.

Jim Gordon

Chairman, January 2003

**Birse Parish** covers over 125 sq.kms (50 sq.mls) of Mid Deeside and has four main parts that form the basis of BCT's logo: the communities of Finzean, Ballogie and Birse and the largely uninhabited Forest of Birse. The ten sites in the parish that BCT is directly involved in managing are marked on the map and listed below with the legal basis of that involvement. This newsletter reports on some of BCT's site based and other parish wide projects.



1. Forest of Birse Common (c.3750 ha, ancient rights)
2. Bucket Mill (c.1 ha, ownership)
3. Finzean Sawmill (c.1 ha, ownership)
4. Finzean Community Woods (15 ha, long-term lease)
5. Finzean School Wood (c.0.3 ha, long-term lease)
6. Finzean Old School (0.3 ha, long-term lease)
7. Corseardar (0.3 ha, long-term lease)
8. Slewdrum Forest (155 ha, long-term agreement)
9. Ballogie Souter's Shop (building only, ownership)
10. Balfour Wood (240 ha, long-term agreement)

## Heritage Trees

IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2002, two trees in Birse parish were selected to be in the Forestry Commission's first ever list of the 100 greatest heritage trees in Scotland.

The trees were nominated by BCT as part of its project on notable trees in the parish. One is the Queen of the Firs beside the north drive to Ballogie House. This magnificent tree was planted in 1792 and is, at 121 feet (37 ms.), the tallest recorded Scots pine in Britain.

The other heritage tree is actually two trees – the Twin Trees of Finzean. The way in which a branch from one pine tree has grown into another is a natural curiosity. The trees are over 100 years old and have long attracted attention. BCT has a 1950s postcard of the trees in its Local History Archive.



The Twin Trees of Finzean.

## Parliament Oak

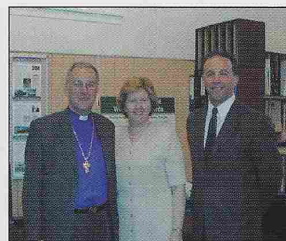
The most important contract BCT has undertaken at Finzean Sawmill was to supply oak timber for the new Scottish Parliament building. To commemorate that, David Duncan made BCT a gavel and block from a piece of one of the oaks for use at BCT's AGMs.



BCT's gavel on the silver salver BCT won in the 2002 Scotland's Finest Woods Competition.

The timber supplied by BCT is to be used "in the most prestigious 'front of house' parts of the new Holyrood building" and the Convener of the Holyrood Progress Group, John Home Robertson MSP, also wrote "I am delighted that Birse Community Trust has been successful in winning this high profile contract to supply Scottish oak for use in the new Parliament building. It is to the Trust's credit that they have been able to use their historic sawmill in Finzean to supply this timber".

BCT'S LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVE now has photographs of five embroidered samplers from the parish. The one shown was sewn at Ballogie School in 1885 by Lily Birse from Sliderybrae. The Archive continues to attract a range of interesting donations and BCT is always pleased to hear from anyone with material they might like to contribute.



In August, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland visited BCT to learn more about the work of the Trust. From left: The Moderator, the Reverend Findlay Macdonald, Mrs. Macdonald and the local parish minister and former BCT Chairman, the Reverend Jack Holt.