

BCT UPDATE

Birse Community Trust

ISSUE 9

Autumn 2003

West Bogturk Fire!



Press & Journal, Colin Rennie

A MAJOR WILDFIRE IN THE FOREST OF BIRSE COMMONTY DESTROYED PART OF THE NATIVE PINEWOODS MANAGED BY BCT

The fire was first spotted at 2pm on the 10th April, beside the Forest of Birse road at the bottom of the West Bogturk hillside. Soon twelve fire engines and over 100 people were fighting the fire as it spread rapidly across the hill. A helicopter was also called out and, while it did not arrive until late in the day, it played a vital role in extinguishing the fire just as darkness fell.

A rota was organised to watch the site during the night for flare-ups. One occurred just after midnight and was put out by 2am after the Fire Bigade and local estates had been called out again. It was not until 48 hours after the fire started, that it was judged there was no further risk of the fire starting again.

The fire burnt over 160 acres of hillside, destroying 45 acres of existing pinewood, 65 acres of scattered pine and 50 acres of open moorland. The scattered pine were a particular loss as they were outlying seed sources helping to expand the pinewood. One of BCT's initiatives since has been to collect seed from the surviving pinewood and scatter it across the burnt site to assist natural regeneration.

BCT has also been involved with all the local estates in developing arrangements to ensure that the response to any further fires is even more effective than at the West Bogturk fire. An initial test came on 15th July, when there was another fire in the West Bogturk area which was fortunately put out in four hours with no further damage to the pinewood. The causes of both fires are unknown despite thorough investigations.

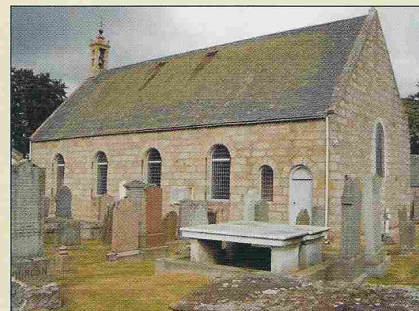
The Trustees would like to thank the Fire Brigade, local estates and many others who helped BCT put out these fires.

Historic Birse Kirk

The last issue of the Update reported that BCT was 'poised to bid for Birse Kirk'. The Kirk came on the open market on 13th January 2003 and a closing date was set for 4th April. BCT was informed on the 9th April that its bid was likely to be successful. However, The Church of Scotland's conditional acceptance of BCT's bid gave rise to a number of issues to be settled and the last of these was finally agreed on July 24th and entry date was set for the 25th September.

BCT's bid was made up of funds from BCT's own reserves and donations to the Trust to help specifically with the purchase, in particular the large donation through the Ecumenical Trust for Birse Kirk (ETBK) of funds raised for

continued page 2



Rick Paul