



Chairman's Comment

The Trustees and those who run BCT on a day-to-day basis are convinced that the interest and involvement of our members is essential if BCT is to be successful in helping to meet the needs of our community. Our AGM provides one of the few occasions during the year where we can receive feedback on what we are trying to do. We were, therefore, very pleased to see the large number of you who attended this year and helped to make it such a successful event. Please, however, don't make this the only occasion on which we hear from you. Write, or e-mail the office, or drop in to the Old School and let us know what you think.

It has been particularly pleasing to see the completion of two of our largest projects, the purchase of Birse Community Hall and Birse Kirk, the more so since they were only made possible by the joint efforts of ourselves, ETBK, BACA and Birse and Ballogie Community Council. Well done to all of those who were involved and our thanks to all of the other individuals and organisations which made possible this fine example of community initiative.

We are just starting work on BCT's Strategic Plan for 2004 to 2007. It is important that we don't do this in isolation and that it is founded on what the community wants. To this end, we shall be consulting during the next few months with the various community organisations and, of course, would very much like to hear from individuals, either via the office, or directly to Trustees.

Jim Gordon
Chairman



Trustees Left to Right
Lynne Gordon, Neil McConnach, Jim Gordon (Chairman), Fiona Mackenzie & Guy Haslam

Birse Community Hall

After many months of negotiation, BCT finally completed the purchase of Birse Community Hall at the end of May. A management agreement has been set up between BCT and Birse Area Community Association (BACA). The event was celebrated with an Opening Ceremony and Barbeque on 9 August. Jim Gordon, BCT Chairman and Rick Paul, Chairman of BACA thanked the Scottish Land Fund, Aberdeenshire Council, Marr Area Partnership, the Ecumenical Trust for Birse Kirk and BACA for their contributions towards the purchase of the Hall. A rare Forest of Birse oak seedling was planted by Peter Argyle (Local Councillor) and members of the hall committee to commemorate the occasion. A series of social events is currently being planned for the Hall, and BACA along with Aboyne Community Learning and Development are discussing its use as a venue for Adult Education classes. It is also available for hire for meetings, small conferences and parties – for more details contact Lucy Paul (BACA secretary) on 013398 87436 or e-mail rickandlucy@btinternet.com.



Photo The Deeside Piper

Historic Birse Kirk *continued from front page*

the 'Save Historic Birse Kirk' appeal. During the negotiations over the Kirk, the local Congregational Board of the Church of Scotland donated to BCT's Local Heritage Archive at Finzean Old School, a collection of historic old bibles and other items from the Kirk to join the existing collection of old Church papers in the Archive. As part of the negotiations, BCT also agreed with the Congregational Board arrangements for the use of Birse Kirk whilst Finzean Church undergoes redevelopment. In anticipation of taking over the Kirk from the Church of Scotland, BCT has drawn up and agreed a long term lease of the Kirk to ETBK to enable them to manage and maintain the Kirk in ways that conserve and enhance its important spiritual and heritage values. The lease includes a detailed schedule describing the current condition of the building as well as an inventory of the contents of the Kirk. BCT has also been working with ETBK to identify the most pressing work required to conserve the building and to investigate grant support that might be available to carry out the repairs. The successful purchase of Birse Kirk by BCT on behalf of the community is, with the earlier purchase of the Church Hall, an historic local achievement.

COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARDS

Two BCT notice boards were erected in March 2003, one opposite Finzean Stores next to Farquharson Park, and one on the bridge over to Aboyne. They have proved to be very useful and all the community groups have access to the boards. If you would like anything to go into either of the two notice boards contact the BCT office. Please note that only local community related items are to be placed on the boards.



Jane Bennett

Archive - a query from New Zealand

Two brothers, Thomas Horsburgh Duff and James Duff came to Birse to obtain work in the sawmills sometime in the period 1920-25. Aged 15-17 the boys, who were born in Edinburgh, had spent their childhood in an orphanage in Haddington.

Thomas later recalled how they rubbed the cut ends of the timber with cow-dung to stop the wood splitting. He also spoke of how kind the people in Birse were to the boys. One person gave each boy £5 and encouraged them to emigrate to Canada.

By some misfortune, Thomas boarded the wrong ship and found himself in Otago, New Zealand, while Jim landed in Quebec, Canada, in September 1927. They never saw each other again. Thomas died in 1964 just after discovering that he had another five brothers and sisters in Canada that he and Jim had never known about.

With the help of the BCT Archivist, descendants in New Zealand now have much more information about their Scottish ancestors but would like to know about the Birse connection.

This story, and others like it, are examples of the work of the archivist.

Eileen Bailey, Archivist.