



## NATURAL HERITAGE GROUP

After three years of SNH-funded surveys, involving local experts wherever possible and with the support of the private estates in the parish, BCT has built up a detailed picture of the natural heritage of the parish. In the coming months, BCT is planning to circulate a leaflet about the natural heritage of Birse summarise much of the information

This year we discovered that the present in very small numbers at This species has suffered a due to introduced American mink, to community-led conservation



endangered water vole is still one site in the Forest of Birse. catastrophic decline nationally but is a species that is well suited efforts.

In the future BCT would like to conservation initiatives in the are of interest to BCT members.

natural heritage work, please contact Paul Chapman on 01330 850645.

Photo Anka Addy

## Hydro Feasibility Study

The ingenuity with which the power of the water in the Feugh has been harnessed for many years at the Finzean Wood Mills is very impressive, and in addition to powering the various saws and lathes, the potential to generate electricity was recognised years ago when a DC generator was installed to light up the mill and sawmill cottage across the road. (This historical equipment was restored a couple of years ago with support from the Prince of Wales Charitable Foundation).

Inspired by this, BCT hoped that with modern technology it might be possible to generate sufficient AC power at the Sawmill to provide a modest income to fund the long term conservation of the mill buildings and equipment.

Preliminary estimates of flow and available head were sufficiently encouraging to take things further, and this year with support from the Scottish Community Renewables Initiative, (SCRI) we commissioned a detailed feasibility study.

Unfortunately, the conclusion was negative - there just isn't enough water available, particularly in summer months, to support a viable low head hydro scheme connected to the grid.

On the positive side, our thorough study produced a number of useful lessons for similar projects elsewhere and these were discussed in a workshop hosted for SCRI by BCT at Finzean in September. in the meantime the search for long term funding goes on!

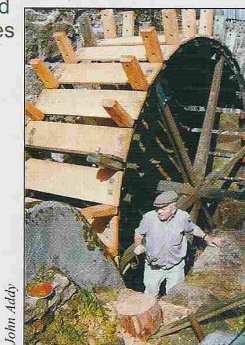
John Addy. Project Manager



### BCT's Fifth AGM

BCT held its 5th AGM in May this year. More than 70 people attended the function at the newly opened Finzean Hall and were regaled by superb performances by Louise Jolly with student Seonaid Dey on fiddles, and Davie Duncan's wonderful rendition of 'The Cremation of Sam McGee'. This is an event not to be missed. Put it in your diary for next year.

Extensive repairs have been carried out to one of the cast iron rims at the Sawmill. The damage occurred during one of the rare wet days this May when the wheel was operating at full speed. Many of the paddles required replacing and the rim had to be welded in several places. BCT would like to acknowledge the support of Historic Scotland and James Jones who supplied timber from the original Larch Plantation in Blair Atholl. The repairs are now completed and the wheel will be turning again when there is some water!



John Addy

David Duncan repairing the Sawmill wheel

## BCT OFFICE REFURBISHMENT COMPLETED

**A new office!** The BCT office at the Old School has recently undergone redecoration and is now a very attractive place in which to work and to visit. During decoration an old cupboard was uncovered, which is now in the process of being restored to provide a display area for the various wood products and books sold by BCT. This redecoration was part of the continuing restoration of the Old School, taking place over the past 2 years. Do remember to use the BCT office facilities for photocopying/fax or lamination.

## News In Brief

### Broadband trial

BCT is hosting a trial for an innovative scheme, which aims to provide remote rural communities such as Birse Parish with access to broadband internet services. The trial is run by Banchory-based firm ABC Communications. The project has so far involved the installation of a temporary satellite internet delivery system which will be replaced by wireless antennae during October. You are all invited to come and try out this internet access which has a downloading capacity of up to 20 times faster than a normal dial-up modem. To book a place to try out this new technology please call the BCT office for an appointment. Birse Broadband will be available to the community after October 2003. The cost will be £29.99 per month plus installation. To register your interest contact BCT office.

### The Soup Kitchen

The Soup Kitchen on the Old School site is being used by Finzean Primary School during the first school term of the year. Finzean Primary School is growing in size and has reached the magical number of over 45 pupils, which qualifies the school for a new classroom. However, the new room, in the form of a smart portacabin including staff room and toilets, will not be arriving until late October. In the meantime the Soup Kitchen is reverting to its original purpose!

### Waste not - want not!

BCT are collecting printer cartridges and would like members to drop any used printer cartridges into the office so that we can send them off to be recycled. Not only will you be helping the environment but also helping BCT to put a little into our piggy bank! Collection points are Finzean Store, Sarah Butterworth's Gallery and BCT office.

### HEALTHY INTERESTS

Deeside Local Health Care Co-operative are setting up a database of members of the community who are willing to be consulted on the planning, development and evaluation of services within Deeside. If anyone would like to register their interest in a specific health topic, forms are available from the BCT office.

### Archive News

BCT recently received a grant from Shell which will go towards the purchase of a new display cabinet for the archive in the Soup Kitchen.