

## **DOMESTIC WATER SUPPLIES IN BIRSE PARISH**

### **All Local Sources**

Access to a supply of water for drinking and other domestic purposes has always been a major influence on the pattern of settlement in the parish. This has been the case for thousands of years. An archaeological study in the parish, for example, which investigated the factors determining the distribution of 2,000+ year old neolithic settlements in part of Finzean, found that close proximity to a water course or spring was always a central factor (Sabine, 1979).

Profound changes have, however, taken place to the ancient arrangements for domestic water supplies during the last fifty years. It has only been since the 1950s that, firstly, no inhabited household in the parish has relied on surface water (i.e. from a burn) brought closer to the house in an open lade (for example, at Haughend into the 1940s) or, secondly, relied on drawing water directly from a water course (for example, Garrolfoot into the 1970s).

Thirdly, in addition to this change to the universal use of ground water from a spring or well, there was also the increase during this period in the number of houses with the water piped directly into the house from their spring or well. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, every inhabited house had piped-in water even if this was just a single cold water tap (eg. Muir Croft in 1999 still).

A fourth major changes has been the development of public water supplies in the parish. Until 1963, every domestic water supply in the parish was a private supply. This essentially meant a supply from the land of one of the four private estates in the parish (Finzean, Ballogie, Balfour and Birse). They owned more or less all the land and houses in the parish still at that time.

The only other land owners were the Church and the Forestry Commission (which had acquired Balfour Wood, Slewdrum Forest and Easter Clune Wood in the 1950s) and their lands held the water sources of less than a handful of houses (for example, Boggiefern on Balfour Estate from Balfour Wood). The only owner occupied houses in the parish other than the Manses, were those developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at Birsemore above the Aboyne bridge road end (History in Birse, p.72 (BCT 2000)) and they all drew their water from a supply on Birse estate land.

The Birsemore houses were supplied by an estate scheme that piped water a couple of miles from springs near Brackloch Craig on the south side of Birsemore Hill. This scheme dated from before Second World War (possibly from the development of the houses) and was then expanded and improved between 1947-50 (see map and other details in Appendix -).

In 1963, the first public water supply was developed in the parish. This was a very small scheme based on springs and a reservoir tank on Kinminity and supplying c.12 houses in the Birse School, Birse Kirk, Oldyleiper area (for details, see notes in Appendix - and map in in Appendix -).

This remained the only public water supply in the parish until 1979. Thus, until 25 years ago, all domestic water supplies in the parish were from local sources within the parish and over 95% of all households were on private supplies.

### **Expansion of the Mains**

In 1979, fifteen years after the Birse springs supply was installed, work started on laying a public water supply in a circuit round the main settled part of Finzean. The pipe came from the Glen Dye Water Treatment Works in Strachan, while the water itself is abstracted in the upper reaches of the Dye and piped 13 kilometres to the Treatment Works (see notes in Appendix – and map in Appendix – for details of the scheme).

Finzean Estate had lobbied the Water Authority to have mains water brought into Finzean and, as part of that, had had to demonstrate that there was local demand. The Estate's tenants were given strong encouragement to register for the supply and there were also the units in the Sheltered Housing planned for beside Finzean Shop and Post Office. The mains water was essential for this locally supported Estate project.

The number of houses and other premises on the Finzean mains supply has continued to increase since it was installed due to both further existing houses converting to it from their traditional springs/wells and new houses being built within reach of it. By 2001, c. houses in Finzean were on the supply.

While the Finzean circuit was still being completed in the early 1980s, by the end of the 1980s another public supply had been brought into the parish across the Potarch Bridge from the Cockardie Reservoir to the north. This supply was developed in stages up valley of the Cattie and by the time the scheme was completed in 1997, it reached through Marywell and over to Allanreich. While not all houses along the way connected to the mains, it essentially replaced the private scheme developed by Ballogie Estate in 1972 with a reservoir tank at Torquandalloch and which had had consistent problems.

In 1996, before the Cockardie mains was finished, another mains supply was brought into Birse across the bridge at Aboyne from reservoirs to the north of Aboyne. This new scheme became the supply for most of the properties that had been on the Birse estate scheme and also some other houses that had previously relied on other local springs/wells (see notes in Appendix – and map in Appendix -).

The final stage of these development was the new main that was laid in 2001 to connect the Birse mains and mains at Allanreich, with the pipe laid via Oldyleiper (see notes in Appendix – and map in Appendix -). This route enabled the Birse Springs supply to be replaced, as by that time it was seen as a small and expensive scheme. The scale of its supply (c.10 cu.ms / day) is put in context by comparing it with the capacity of the Glen Dye works (c. 4,000 cu.ms / day) and Invercannie (c.60,000 cu.ms / day).

The development of these mains supplies is summarised on the map in Appendix -. It can be seen that, having brought supplies into the parish at its the north-west, north east and south-east corners and then connected the north-west and north-east lines, the obvious next link is between the north-east and south east lines across the Shooting Greens road. There is enough pressure to do this from the Glen Dye works. It could take in the houses along the road and around Coulnacraig though, from a water authority point of view, the reasons to make the link would be strategic rather than the small number extra customers. For the Authority, more links in their supply network gives greater flexibility for dealing with leaks or other problems in their overall system.

### **Position by 2001**

It appears that, by 2001, approximately 170 or two thirds of the c.260 inhabited houses in Birse parish were on the public mains supplies.

