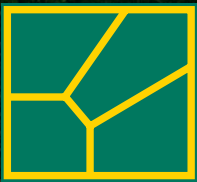


ANNUAL REPORT 2025

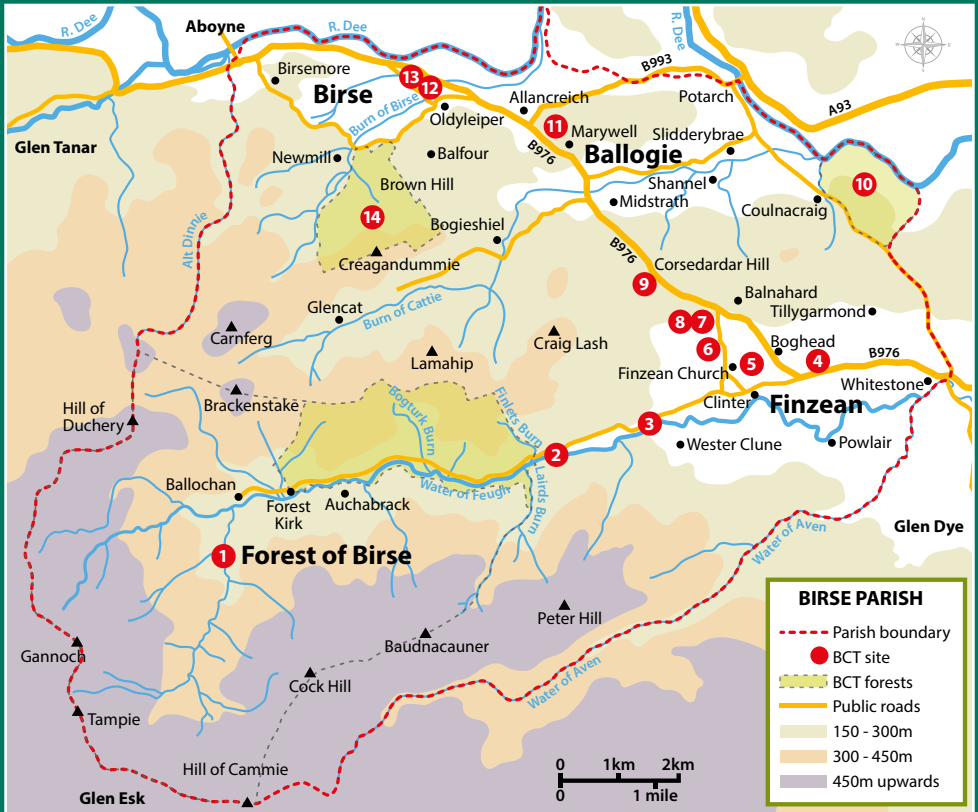


**BIRSE
COMMUNITY
TRUST**

Birse Parish

Birse Parish covers over 125 sq.kms. (50 sq.mls.) of Mid Deeside. The four main parts of the parish are the three local communities of Ballogie, Birse and Finzean and the largely uninhabited Forest of Birse. There are more than 600 voters on the Electoral Register covering the parish, which has a total population of over 800 living in around 300 households.

BCT was directly involved in managing fourteen sites in Birse parish on behalf of the community. The sites are marked on the map and the legal basis of BCT's involvement in each is listed below.



1. **Forest of Birse Community.** Ancient rights (>3,750 ha.)
2. **The Bucket Mill.** Ownership (c.1 ha.)
3. **Finzean Sawmill.** Ownership (c.1 ha.)
4. **Finzean Community Woods.** Long term leases (17 ha.)
5. **Finzean Community Path.** Long term lease (<1 ha.)
6. **Finzean School Wood.** Long term lease (<1 ha.)
7. **Finzean Old School.** Ownership (<1 ha.)
8. **Birse Parish Archive.** Ownership (<1 ha.)
9. **Corsedardar.** Long term lease (<1 ha.)
10. **Slewdrum Forest.** Ownership (173 ha.)
11. **Ballogie Soutar's Shop.** Ownership (building only)
12. **Birse Kirk.** Ownership (<1 ha.)
13. **Birse Community Hall.** Ownership (<1 ha.)
14. **Balfour Forest.** Ownership (241 ha.)

Letter on behalf of the Trustees

There is never a dull moment at the Birse Community Trust, 2025 was another year that did not disappoint.

Throughout the twelve months there have been challenges as well as successes, and by December significant progress had been made in some of BCT's projects and the trust's financial position was beginning to improve.

The felling and thinning of trees in both Slewdrum and Balfour, in 2025, enabled the forest management company, BTCo, to restart donations to BCT after nearly six years. Whilst this has helped, the Trust still has some way to go to fully recover its financial position. The understanding and constructive support at the well-attended AGM in September was very welcome and demonstrates the great interest and value residents have for the local heritage and natural heritage of Birse.

The Trustees are very aware of the importance of preserving this local heritage and 2025 saw significant progress in both the Souter's Shop and Bucket Mill.

After years of neglect the Souter Shop restoration is underway. Funds have been raised and the contents have been stored and catalogued, thanks to a huge effort from volunteers. This allowed building works to start in 2026.

Plans to restore the Bucket Mill are also progressing rapidly under the enthusiastic management of Owen Bushell. Owen has created a Community Interest Company to take on a lease for the mill and to raise funds for future work.

These projects are key to the Trust's aims of protecting and maintaining local heritage and they represent only part of the Trust's responsibility. To achieve more, the support of the community is essential and the Trust is always looking for people to get involved.

It was great to see Roy Cowie and Eleanor Craig volunteer as trustees following the AGM, they follow in the footsteps of BCT's retiring chairperson, Alison Bell.

Alison kept the Trust focused and steered BCT through a very stressful period. She enabled the Souter's Shop restoration and supported the Bucket Mill project; her calmness and leadership are missed.

The Parish of Birse has a wide and varied history that needs to be preserved and BCT greatly appreciates the volunteer support. It has been invaluable to the Souter's Shop project, and it will be to future projects. If you want to learn more and find out how you can help please contact us, BCT is your Trust!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Simon Lindsey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'S' at the beginning.



Souter's Shop

Work continued to take place to secure funding for the repairs to the building and conservation of the collection.

The inventory was completed by December 2024 and some successful tours closed the year. Time was spent planning the next steps while awaiting confirmation of grant funding. Briefs for tender applications were written and included a business plan and digital interpretation.

We were very excited when we finally learned that our bid for Lottery Funding and from Historic Environment Scotland had been successful and delighted when we were eventually told work could begin. This led to a flurry of media interest and interviews with STV and BBC Scotland.



AOC Archaeology our Conservator Company shared decant methodology with us and our enthusiastic volunteers. Training sessions were held and much of the Autumn was spent wrapping the collection and decanting it to the Old School. All who took part learning new skills.

The work that has taken place and the progress made continues to be shared through Facebook and Instagram. We are very grateful to all our 17 volunteers who continue to work with us. As you will be aware, the decant was completed by the end of March this year ready for the builders to start the repairs to the outside.

Thanks to all our funders who have made the Souter's Workshop project possible, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, The Garfield Weston Foundation, Museums Galleries Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council, The Strathmartine Trust, The Pilgrim Trust, The Architectural Heritage Fund and numerous generous individual donations of money and volunteer time. Thank you.

Thanks to National Lottery players



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA



Pilgrim
Trust



BTCo Forest Management

The Birse Trading Company (BTCo) is a wholly owned subsidiary of BCT that manages Slewdrum and Balfour Forests. BTCo leases each Forest from BCT to implement a Forest Plan that has been agreed with BCT and approved by the public forest authority, Scottish Forestry.

BTCo retains Scottish Woodlands Ltd (SWL) as its forest agent to help with aspects of managing the Forests. SWL was responsible for arranging and overseeing the timber harvesting that started in both Slewdrum and Balfour Forests in autumn 2024. The felling finished in early 2025, but it was months later before the final loads of timber left the Forests.

By autumn 2025, BTCo was so frustrated by the poor service that it was receiving from SWL that it complained to SWL's head office. A meeting with a senior SWL manager then resulted in BTCo being assigned a new local manager and receiving a significant reduction in the fees it pays SWL. BTCo was also given commitments for replanting the clear-felled area in Slewdrum in spring 2026 and the next stage of the harvesting there in autumn 2026. BTCo is grateful to Robin Callander for his significant help in achieving the improvements from SWL.

In 2025, with income from harvesting, BTCo was able to donate some funds to BCT for the first time since 2019.



Finzean Bucket Mill

In the summer of 2024, an approach was made to the BCT to explore the possibility of a lease on the Finzean Mills to rejuvenate them and keep them as working buildings – safeguarding all that goes with them, such as the unique knowledge to repair and operate them.



This conversation developed into incorporating the 'Finzean Bucket Mill CIC' in November 2024 as a viable way to safeguard the future of the mills. 'CIC' stands for 'Community Interest Company', which is a form of company known as a social enterprise. It is a not-for-profit endeavour with distinct goals to keep the Bucket Mill in good repair, teach heritage traditional skills and create a model rural craft business.

We are currently a small team of volunteers and have spent much of the last year patiently developing our business, making connections with local stakeholders and funders and wherever possible, supporting the BCT to rise to the challenge of turning around the fortunes of the neighbouring Sawmill and Turning Mill. The past year has also seen some good time spent learning from Stan Moyes, the retired miller who has run the Bucket Mill for the past forty years. We signed a 25-year lease with the BCT on the Bucket Mill on 1st October 2025 and now have full responsibility for the site.

We have a lot of challenges ahead, not least steadily working through a huge number of repairs and sensitive alterations to ensure that historic machinery is compliant with modern regulations. We are working towards being able to host volunteers and heritage skills placements and eventually, apprentices. There's much more to our project, you can find out more on our website and social media pages.



Remembrance Sunday

The Trust organised the annual Remembrance Day Service at Corsedardar on Sunday 9th November. On a damp day, over 27 people attended, plus the local Councillors. Guy Haslam read the address, Deputy Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire Jean Haslam laid the wreath for the community, and Scott Hector played the pipes.

Trustee News



Alison Bell. This year saw the resignation of Alison, a trustee since 2018 and chair since 2020. We thank her for all the hard work and loyal support she has given the trust during her time in office.



Roy Cowie. Roy joined the board after the AGM in September and we have benefited from his level headed analysis of issues and wider business acumen. We look forward to a long and happy relationship.

Current Trustees

Nancy Davidson, Simon Lindsey, Robert Dinnie, Roy Cowie and Eleanor Craig.

Join Us

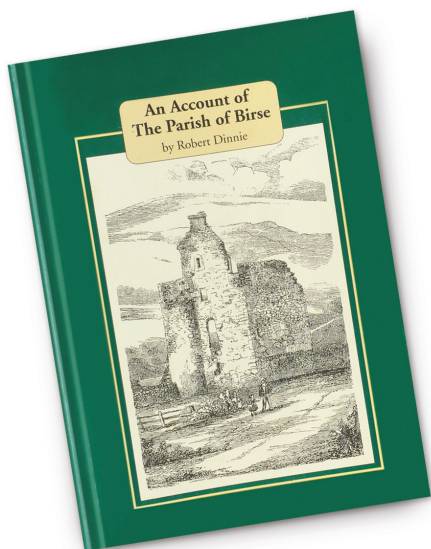
If you live in Ballogie, Birse or Finzean and you'd like to become a trustee, or to offer help with a specific area of interest or expertise, please contact us at: bctoffice@birsecommunitytrust.org.uk

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	2025 Total funds £	2024 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	79,290	493,410	-	572,700	573,565
Investments	2	-	-	2	2
	79,292	493,410	-	572,702	573,567
CURRENT ASSETS					
Stocks	1,665	-	-	1,665	1,716
Debtors	1,614	2,997	-	4,611	11,519
Cash at bank and in hand	40,202	118,256	50,000	208,458	74,437
	43,481	121,253	50,000	214,734	87,672
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	(16,856)	(104,142)	-	(120,998)	(4,406)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	26,625	17,111	50,000	93,736	83,266
NET ASSETS	105,917	510,521	50,000	666,438	656,833
FUNDS					
Unrestricted funds				105,917	111,638
Restricted funds				510,521	495,195
Endowment funds				50,000	50,000
TOTAL FUNDS				666,438	656,833

BCT 2025 Financial Summary

Income	Area	Amount	Comment
Rent	Balfour & Slewdrum Forests	6,000	Birse Trading Company Ltd
	Slewdrum Forest	5,000	EE telephone mast
Grants and donations	Grants	46,981	AHF, Aberdeenshire Council, DTA, Garfield Weston, Strathmartine Trust, National Lottery, Pilgrims Trust
Other income	Donations	43,047	BTCo and Individuals
	Sales and services	594	Book sales, wooden products, room hire etc
	Subscriptions	370	Associate members
	Total income	101,992	
Expenditure			
Land and buildings	Commonty Pinewoods	1,156	Deer control & maintenance
	Mills (General)	16,507	General maintenance
	Community Woods & Path	62	Upkeep of the paths & tree work
	Finzean Old School	130	General maintenance
	Soutar's Shop	33,827	Repair and refurbishment
	Archive	38	Cataloguing
	Total project expenditure	51,720	
Administration	Office admin/book keeping	15,045	
	Insurance	9,186	Buildings and Forests
	Accountant fees	1,965	
	Stationery, postage, phone	400	Includes mailing Annual Report
	Advertising	435	Annual Report
	Legal & professional fees	10,236	
	Depreciation	865	
	Electricity	2535	
	Total administrative costs	40,667	
	Total expenditure	92,387	
Net total		9,605	



AN ACCOUNT OF THE PARISH OF BIRSE

by Robert Dinnie

Published by BCT

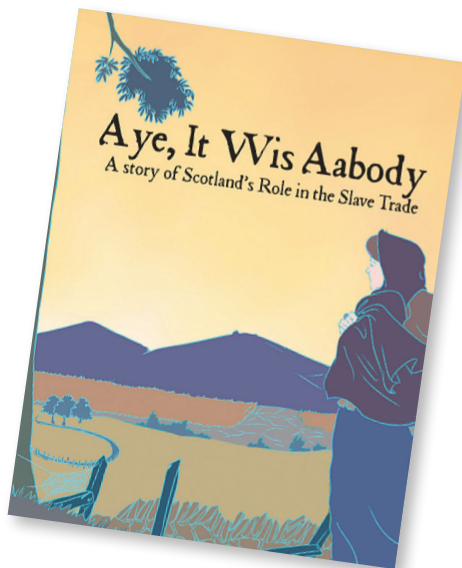
Paperback, 170 pages; £8.50
BCT's edition of Robert Dinnie's classic 19th century history of Birse Parish. Originally published in 1865, Dinnie's book contains a wealth of information about the parish, including chapters on Birse, Ballogie and Finzean.

AYE, IT WIS AABODY

Published by BCT

Paperback £5.00

A fascinating, age-appropriate graphic novel entitled 'Aye, it wis Aabody' tells the story of Scotland's connection to the slave trade. It was produced by Magic Torch Comics, in collaboration with the children of Finzean Primary, and using research the children themselves worked on.



Copies post free in Birse Parish, £2.50 postage elsewhere in UK

BCT, The Old School, Finzean, Banchory AB31 6NY

email: BCToffice@birsecommunitytrust.org.uk



Donations and Legacies

This Report describes some of the work done by Birse Community Trust (BCT) to conserve historic sites in Birse parish and carry out a wide range of other projects to promote the common good of the local community and deliver wider public benefits.

BCT is a local charity (Scottish Charity Number SC028220) and donations make an essential contribution to helping BCT conserve the heritage of Birse parish and its three communities of Ballogie, Birse and Finzean.

Please help BCT conserve the heritage of Birse Parish by making a donation.

BCT is also very grateful to those who leave a legacy to BCT for the Birse Parish Endowment Fund, which was established by BCT to help provide long term support to maintain the historic sites that BCT looks after on behalf of the local community.

For more information, please contact:-

BCT, The Old School, Finzean, Banchory AB31 6NY
email: BCToffice@birsecommunitytrust.org.uk

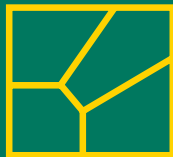
Birse Community Trust exists to promote the common good of the inhabitants of Birse parish and deliver wider public benefits.

Everyone on the Electoral Register covering the parish is eligible to be a member of BCT and responsible for electing up to seven local Trustees who run BCT on behalf of the community.

Membership comes at no cost and involves no obligation or commitment. https://www.birsecommunitytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BCT_Member_Application_Form_A5.pdf

BCT undertakes a wide range of local projects. BCT's core partners are Birse parish's three Community Associations and two Community Councils.

BCT is a company limited by guarantee (SC188799) and a Scottish charity (SC028220) with its registered office at J&H Mitchell, WS, 51 Atholl Road, Pitlochry PH16 5BU.



Birse community Trust BCT

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