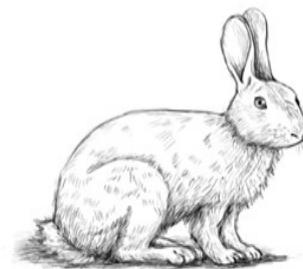


Spring 2021

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of The Rabbit—a year on from the first lockdown! But still much going on and plenty to read about!



Please send any ideas and contributions for the Autumn 2021 edition to Emma Forster (850483; dalsack@outlook.com) by September 2021—and please also get in touch if you know of anyone who wants to be added to the Rabbit email list!

FINZEAN HALL

Finzean Community Association would like to welcome Morag Thomson as our new Hall Manager, who can be contacted on finzeanhall@gmail.com. Many thanks to Mette Cormack, for all her hard work as Manager over the last few years!

And doesn't our hall look a-may-zing? Covid didn't stop Finzean community. Our new fresh look was all made possible due to the continued and behind the scenes hard work by our committee and community seeking grant assistance and raising the money to fund these renovations, and the many multi talented and skilled locals painting the exterior, redecorating and refreshing the interior and all other facilities, the installation of a fab new kitchen, plus much much more. Not forgetting our volunteers who continue to give up their time. I'm sure you will agree a sterling effort by everyone. And at last, as you may have noticed, we now have a fully tarred parking area – no more stepping in the dubs going to the recycling, or if you were one of the late comers to an event!!!

Our website is also being refreshed - take the virtual tour at finzean-hall.co.uk. Another great job thanks to Mel Shand.

In line with Government guidelines, we undertook a Covid specific risk assessment and in order to comply, have put in place many controls and measures such as installation of automatic hand sanitisers plus Covid signage throughout the buildings. Still a few things to do so that we will be "COVID READY" for when we must open the hall, "a polling station designated venue", for the forthcoming Scottish Government Elections on 6 May 2021.

Like everyone we are all desperate to return to some sort of normality and hope restrictions will continue to be eased and we will once again be able to open up the hall and welcome back our many regular groups and societies. If you are new to the area, and when restrictions have been lifted, you might like to come along and join one or maybe two or three of some of our regular groups such as the Dance Group, Badminton, Under 5s, Piping, Feughside FC, Friendship Club, Yoga, Martial Arts and more, or one of the societies meetings. Hall is currently taking provisional bookings although we cannot guarantee your event would go ahead given current Covid restrictions. For more details email finzeanhall@gmail.com.

NEED A NEIGHBOUR

Anyone new to the area and wishing to make contact, need help, feeling lonely? or in search of any local knowledge? You can either offer to help by being added to the directory or usually be directed towards someone who can help you out. During Covid we HAVE responded to requests for prescription deliveries, shop opening hours queries, local suppliers recommendations and general info as to What's On.

Please feel free to contact Mel Shand, preferably by email melshand.artist@gmail.com

BIRSE AND FEUGHSIDE PARISH CHURCH

Worship and other activities which are normally part of church life have been moved online or postponed, as we would all expect. Sunday worship at 11am is via Zoom which can be accessed by phone or PC, plus an audio recording is made available for download. We love seeing new faces so if anyone just wants to give it a try, they will be made very welcome! We also have zoom coffee on a Wednesday at 10am and we have an active Facebook group to keep in touch with each other, and we will welcome any local residents to that. We have not forgotten that there are many people in our community for whom life is very tough at the moment so we do our best to support them via our Pastoral Care Team, plus we have a contact form which can be used for requests for assistance, which will be handled in confidence.

We know that church buildings will be allowed to reopen from the 26th of March, but we do not yet have all the details about how that will look. Please keep an eye on our website or newsletter for details about the building reopening.

We will have a schedule of online services for Easter Week. Details of these, our weekly newsletter and links to the services, zoom coffee, the FB group and others are on our web page www.birseandfeughside.org.uk. You can also contact Amy Pierce the Minister directly at acpierce@churchofscotland.org.uk.

PROPOSED EMERGENCY MAST

As part of the Government Emergency Services Network project, and to ensure network coverage in remote and rural areas, the Forest of Birse has been identified as a location for a new mast. Numerous sites have been considered and discounted for various reasons in the area. The most recent proposed site is in the wood to the north of Woodend and this is being surveyed to assess its suitability and to see if it meets the necessary criteria for a mast of this kind. If the survey shows that this is a suitable site the usual planning process would then need to take place.

FINZEAN FARM SHOP UPDATE

We are really looking forward to the 26th April when we can open our doors and see you all again for breakfast , lunch or coffee and cakes!

Meanwhile, the Farm Shop is still open for grocery shopping with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and local meat and we're baking bread and scones daily as well as our popular sausage rolls! We are delighted to have a few new local suppliers on board including the Cheese Bothy in Strachan, Lottie's Larder and Grace's Highland Beef.

Why not order one of our take away afternoon tea boxes or one of our Easter baskets, for delivery or collection, filled with chocolate and home made treats.

POLLING STAFF REQUIRED FOR SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS ON THURSDAY 6 MAY

Due to coronavirus considerations the Council is recruiting additional staff for this election and Poll Clerks are needed in Finzean and Strachan as well as a number of other places in the Marr area (Rhynie, Kennethmont, Lumsden, Tullynessle, Keig, Alford, Craigievar, Tough, Tarland, Corgarff, Lonach, Towie, Braemar, Crathie, Ballater, Logie Coldstone, Torphins, Kincardine O'Neil, Drumoak).

The election payment rates for Poll Clerk staff is £215 for the days work (which includes an online training fee of £40).

Poll clerks require to be at least 18 years old. Hours will be from approx. 6:30am-10:30pm on 6 May.

If you are interested and have the time and energy for a day at the polls then email the generic email address for the Aberdeenshire West area:

wakelections@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

You should include your name, address, telephone number, date of birth, and national insurance number. You can also state if you have a preferred location to carry out polling duty.

Anyone who wants any additional information can also contact either Elaine Adam (Assistant Constituency Officer elaine.adam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or Laura Bremner (Constituency Officer laura.bremner@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

SAUCY HORSE NOODLE BAR AT FINZEAN HALL—27 MARCH

The Saucy Horse Noodle Bar is a converted Rice Horse Box, serving out of this world noodles! All noodle bowls are freshly prepared on site, are full of flavour and come with more accompaniments that you can shake a stick at.



We have recently been granted our street food licence and will be in Finzean at the car park opposite the Hall on the last Saturday of every month, we will move along to Farquharson Park when meetings/events are on at the hall.

Our Noodle Nights will be starting on Saturday 27th March from 4:30 – 7:30pm**
Pre-orders through Face Book (The Saucy Horse) messenger or e-mail (info@thesaucyhorse.com) are essential. All orders to be in by 8pm on Friday 26th.

Our March Menu is:

- Chicken or Vegan Dumpling Teriyaki Noodle Bowl ~ £8
- Southern Thai Red Curry Noodle Bowl with Chicken ~ £9
- Chinese Style Dan Dan Noodle Bowl with Chicken ~ £8
- 3 Vegan Dumplings with Edamame Beans and Special sauce ~ £4
- Kids Plain Fried Veg Noodle Bowl ~£4

***subject to weather conditions and Covid restrictions*

LILY'S DOUGH ALSO COMING TO A CAR PARK NEAR YOU

Finzean Community Association has given Lily's Dough permission to trade at Finzean Hall Car Park between the hours of 4pm - 8pm on the first Thursday of the month. They are in the process of applying to the Council for a licence so this can take 28 days. Let's hope the first Thursday will be April!! Keep an eye on finzean-hall.co.uk for updates!

FINZEAN OIL GROUP

The Finzean Oil Group has a contract with Highland Fuels and organises a group delivery to the area about every 2 months to about 10 -15 houses at a reduced price, particularly if you normally get less than 1,000 litres (orders above 1,000 litres are charged at a lower rate). Equally importantly, the group aims to reduce the number of oil lorries going around Finzean by collating orders. Anyone can join, and, once a member, Highland Fuels send out an e-mail around every 2 months. You just select how much oil you require and it gets delivered about a week later.

If you have any questions or are interested in joining please contact haslam@finzean.com.

WIND TURBINE FUND

Guy Haslam is the Finzean Community Representative on the panel of the King George V Wind turbine fund which gives around £14,000 of money every year to give to charities/groups in the AB31 area, with the maximum grant being £1,000. The panel has a pretty wide ranging remit and meets every 3-4 months. So far we have been able to support 4 projects in the Finzean area. The next applications have to be in by December. Please contact Guy at haslam@finzean.com if you need any more details.

BOULERS O'BIRSE PETANQUE CLUB

With the easing of some Covid 19 lockdown restrictions, Boulers O'Birse Petanque Club has been able to resume play and the clunk of boules clashing can be heard around Finzean again.

The club, which has a piste at the car park of Birse and Feughside Church, sought clarification from its governing body that the sport is one which can be enjoyed again before restarting.

The club meets every Saturday morning from 10am-12noon and on Tuesday evenings from 6.30pm-8pm once the lighter nights arrive. In addition, the enthusiastic club members organise other opportunities to practice and play.

The age range of members spans from teenagers to some of the more mature and new members are always welcome. If anyone is interested they can try the game for a few sessions and borrow boules. Committee members have attended coaching sessions and are happy to pass on their expertise.

BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

It's been an interesting year for BCT despite the restrictions. Movement on the re-development of the Old School in Finzean into a real community asset was put on hold by the pandemic but we hope to get working on that big project again soon. The change in people's lives and working patterns was highly visible, with a big increase in the number of visitors on the Community Path and up the Forest of Birse road. During the recent snow that caused some access difficulties for local residents, with many skiers trying to park as near to the bottom of Peter Hill as possible.

New manager

BCT has a new manager, and once the world opens up a little you'll see her out and about. We're delighted to welcome Toni Watt to Birse parish. Toni comes to us from the National Trust for Scotland, and she brings with her many years of experience as a ranger. She describes herself as an enthusiast for 'all things natural history, wildlife, bugs and beasties, trees, pollinators etc.', so as well as dealing with a wide range of administrative duties for BCT, she will be making opportunities to support community groups to get out and about exploring all kinds of natural habitat in the parish.

She replaces Eoghan Cameron, who moved away from the area last year. You can contact Toni at: toniwattbct@gmail.com 0777 3626981

Community path

Our well-used community path is needing a good clear-up. As soon as the weather allows, Roy Cowie Landscaping will be treating the weeds and then a week or so later will be clearing away the dead vegetation, so there'll be a couple of days when regular walkers will see work being done. When Roy gives us a date, we'll put it on Birse Community Trust's Facebook page, so keep an eye out for that.

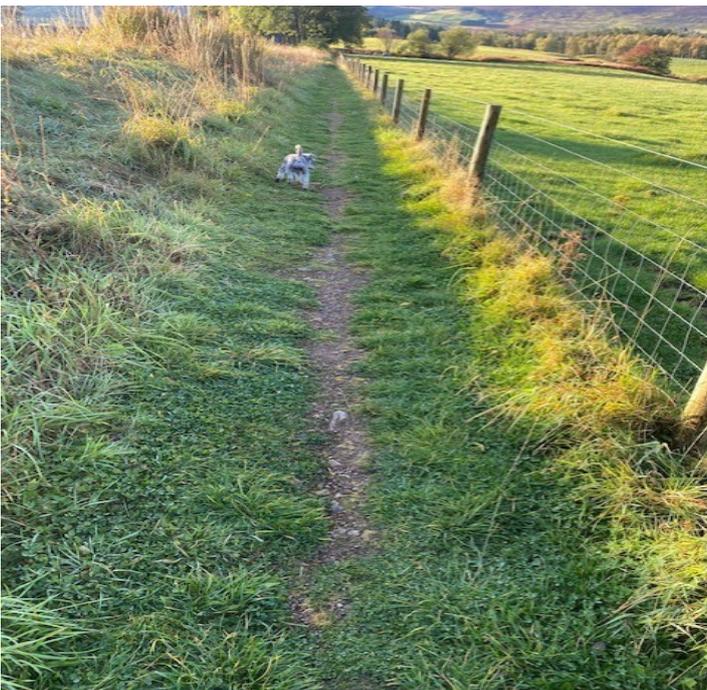


Photo courtesy of Donna Duncan

BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST CONT.

Fire Risk in the Forest

Hopefully it won't be too long before lockdown eases and we are all free to travel a bit more and enjoy meeting friends and family in the countryside. As we know from last year though this can cause its own problems with an influx of visitors to local beauty spots and popular walking destinations. The Forest of Birse is of course one of these hot spots and while we want people to enjoy our beautiful landscape as we ourselves do, we are very aware that this can cause problems, including litter and potential fire risk.

BCT are working with Finzean, Ballogie and Birse estates to try and manage any fire risks but if you notice problems developing then please do get in touch with us via the contacts below.

Birse Community Trust

Manager BCT Toni Watt

toniwattbct@gmail.com 0777 3626981

Finzean Estate Office

office@finzean.com 01330 850710

AGM

As many of you know, BCT usually holds its AGM in June. Last year we delayed until September in the hope of a face to face meeting, but in the end of course it was a Zoom affair (and a well-attended one, too). We'll let you know as soon as we can how we plan to organise the 2021 AGM – it would be good to see you all in Finzean Hall again.

Membership

BCT is a company owned and managed by the local community to promote the common good of the inhabitants of Birse parish and deliver wider public benefits.

Anyone living in the parish of Birse and on the electoral roll can be a member, all you need to do is fill in the membership form which you can download here:

<https://www.birsecommunitytrust.org.uk/what-we-do/join-us/>

So please, if you're aware of anyone new in the community, do pass this on.

Trustees

Currently there are six trustees: Alison Bell (interim chair, 01330 850740), Liz Bracegirdle, Nancy Davidson, Simon Lindsey, Sian Loftus and Toby Rider.

BANCHORY COMMUNITY SINGERS



If you want to sing, there has never been an easier time to join the Banchory Singers. All you need is a broadband connection and a desire to sing.

Banchory Singers are a long-established community choir that normally rehearses in Banchory and performs throughout the local area. Although the pandemic put an end to our normal operations, it has not stopped us singing. We have been one of the few choirs that have carried on singing in spite of the ban on communal activities. Thanks to our musical director, Tara Leiper, we moved onto a virtual plane and carried on rehearsing using Zoom. It was a steep learning curve for some of us, but we soon got to grips with the peculiarities of singing together separately. When summer arrived, instead of taking our usual break we carried on in a more informal singalong style so that we could keep up our spirits and keep connected. We've found that the choir has helped maintain our morale through these difficult times and reduced feelings of social isolation especially for our members who live alone.

When the new singing season arrived at the end of the summer, we decided that we should aim to put on a Christmas Concert as usual. Well, not quite as usual, as of course we could not hold our normal run of performances in Banchory Town Hall. In the event we held a virtual concert on Zoom which attracted a bigger audience than usual thanks to the global nature of our connections.

Singing together live online is impossible due to the varying time lags in our broadband connections. Tara helped us get round this by encouraging us to record our individual contributions which we then submitted to her for collation into an end product that sounded exactly like our usual choir, even if on the screen of thumbnailed singers we didn't look our usual selves. The success of the Christmas Choir was a big boost for us, and we are now rehearsing for our Spring Concert on 16 May 2021. We will be performing our usual mix of popular, classical and Scottish songs and this time we hope to improve the visual content as well as the audio content. This will be a charity benefit concert.

There is no audition to join the choir and we are accepting new members at any time from anywhere. If you would like to join us, please email Tara.leipertara@gmail.com or reach us through our website or Facebook Page.

If you'd like to hear us watch out for the publicity coming soon for our Spring Concert on 16 May.

Tara Leiper, musical director, said:

"Why not join us on Wednesday at 7pm for some singing and socialising during our difficult lockdown period. Singing lifts your spirits and is a fabulous diversion and gives you something to practise every day as we prepare for our rehearsals each week."

Further details from Tara Leiper, Musical Director, 019755 63277 or Dave Valentine, Secretary 07456431183