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Campaign Diary

**Save Gillies Hill
AGM:**

Thursday 20 May:
7.30pm

**Launch of
Cambusbarron
Development Trust**

Wednesday 26 May
7.30 pm in the
Community Centre
All welcome

**Descent of the
Gillies 2010**

Sunday 20 June:
2pm at the Public
Park
(same route as last year,
but additional loop
through the village)

**Second Gillies Hill
Litter-Pick**

Saturday 26 June
10am
(meet at Gillies Hill
garages)

Big Widstok 2010

Saturday 31 July
Public Park:



Gillies Hill : The threat grows

All may seem quiet on the Gillies Hill front. But it’s probably the quiet before the storm, for the threat to the Hill grows.

Firstly, the danger from quarrying remains. Yes, three years of our campaign have been very successful: scarcely had Hanson Aggregates announced its intention to extend quarrying in November, 2006 than *Save Gillies Hill* was born – and Hanson then put those intentions on hold. But our principal aim, to persuade the quarriers to set aside the 2002 Review by Stirling Council, which confirmed permission to expand quarrying – now generally recognised as legally flawed – and to conduct the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) that should have been ordered then, has not yet been realised.

Save Gillies Hill has not been quiet either, but has had, and continues to have, intensive discussions channelled through our own Community Council, which is 100% behind the campaign, with Stirling Council, over the implications of the error that occurred in 2002;



with, in the next few weeks, Drygrange Estates, owners of the Hill; and, most important of all, with our own legal advisers.

To legal lay-people, the present stand-off may seem simple: an error was made in 2002 by Stirling Council, and admitted by it in 2008. *Save Gillies Hill* accepted the Council’s then position: the legislation that had required an EIA was, after all, complex, and the Council committed itself in January 2008 to persuade Hanson to thereafter conduct one. The fact that Hanson has not yet done so, and that therefore it continues to *have* permission, albeit, in the opinion of legal experts, a *flawed* permission, should, surely, make future quarrying impossible – at least until an EIA is carried out.

But, as usual with the law, things *aren’t* so simple: ultimately, it may require someone to challenge that perceived invalid legal position **in court**.

Which is, literally, a court of last resort. The one thing about the law that legal laypersons know about it is that it is highly complex, indeed, often apparently perverse: legal judgements sometimes seem to be at odds with fairness or common sense. It is also, of course, very expensive.

Stirling Council say that, as the body which endorsed the 2002 Review, it is legally prevented from seeking it to be overturned. However, back in 2008 when it recognised its error, it did indicate that a third party could seek that reversal, and implied that..

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The Descent of the

Gillies 2010

The Mighty Blast

The yellow broom is growing,
The proud pines standing tall,
Blue sky high above me
As song-birds sing their call;
But there's a sadness
on the hillside,

That day is dawning fast
When all of our land's beauty
Will be blown into our past.

The quarry men are coming
To take away our land;
We are only sma' folk
But we will make a stand,
Fighting for our future
And honouring our past:
If we can't stand together
Listen for the mighty blast.

The songbirds will be leaving,
The trees will be cut down,
Taste of broomfires burning,
Dust clouds all around.
They'll quarry all our hillside
And leave a mighty scar,
All to make a new road
somewhere,
For people in their car.

There's ancient voices calling
From far into our past,
To stop this devastation,
To stop the mighty blast.
Our past is our children's
future,
And their children's too,
So, let us stand together:
This land belongs to me and
you.

The quarry men are coming
To take away our land;
We are only sma' folk
But we will make a stand,
Fighting for our future
And honouring our past:
If we don't stand together
Listen for the mighty blast

One day the sound of
children's laughter
Will be heard high in the
woods.

The sound of diesel engines
Will be silenced for good:
No more the foreign invader –
From our land he's been cast,
Because we all stood together
And stopped the mighty blast.

The quarry men are coming
To take away our land;
We are only sma' folk
But we will make a stand,
Fighting for our future
And honouring our past:
If we don't stand together
Listen for the mighty blast

This re-enactment of the descent of the *ghillies* of 1314 to the Field of Bannockburn at the Borestone, is, of course, at the centre of the campaign for the year, Bluntly, the more people who walk, the greater publicity for the cause: in previous years, both BBC and STV news have carried film of the event in that evening's bulletins, we've had coverage in the national press, and local broadcast media. The *Stirling Observer* has, as always, given us first-class coverage.

This year's event is on Sunday 20 June, and walkers should assemble at the Public Park for a 2pm departure. As usual, Stewart Marshall and his pipers will lead the way, this time, a circuit around the bottom half of the village before, as usual, ascending the Gillies Hill itself, through the woods via Linda's Path, and out onto the Polmaise Road at Bearside, Then, as last year, we'll make our way to the Borestone via Torbrex, the Weaver Row and Coxithill. At the Borestone we'll hear from local MP Ann McGuire, MSP Bruce Crawford, and, our main speaker this year, Dennis Canavan, former MP, MSP and Chair of the Scottish Ramblers' Association.

So, to maximise the publicity, let's maximise the turn-out: get as many of your friends and family out as possible.



Descent of the Gillies 2009

Save Gillies Hill

For more information
visit

www.savegillieshill.org.uk

Ian Dowell

BIG WIDSTOK 2010

Our annual free (though feel *really* free to donate generously to the cause!) music festival kicks off again in the Public Park, Cambusbarron, at 1.30 on Saturday 31 July. The line-up this year includes *New Life*, *Konrad*, *Double Trouble*, *Tony Connors*, *Buick 55*, as well as the winners of this year's *Gala Cambusbarron's Got Talent* competition. And, of course, the one permanent fixture in a changing band-list has to be our own *Gillies Hill Billies*. However, another Cambusbarron attraction is the well-known Shaky, a.k.a Steven Mitchell, who sings with *Buick 55*. This fine outfit recently signed a record deal, after a tour supporting the late Johnnie Cash's group, *The Tennessee Three*, so Cambusbarron is fortunate indeed, to lure them here for Big Widstok. As always there will be perfect weather, first-rate music, and good spirits, some of which liquid variety can be obtained, with beer, etc., at our own *SGH* bar. (Supporters should note the customary legal requirements: it is against the law to bring alcohol in to the Park, or to consume that bought at the *SGH* bar outwith the roped-off area.)

The Big Widstok has already established itself as a great Family-Day-Out fixture for the Stirling area. Let's get as many along as possible to have a really good day – and to help save Gillies Hill.

Gillies Hill : Past, Present And Future

(Please note: this group is not part of *Save Gillies Hill*, but is an initiative of Cambusbarron Community Council. Because *SGH* approves of *GH: PP&F's* plans, we're happy to give it space here.)

Gillies Hill: Past, Present and Future was set up by the Community Council last year with the broad aim of enhancing public appreciation of what this wonderful landscape has to offer – for the surprising truth is that, to many people, in and outwith Cambusbarron, the breadth of the Hill's unique qualities is not always appreciated.

Thus, though many know of its historic associations with the gillies in 1314, many are unaware of the Bruce's visit to Cambusbarron Chapel, on the hill's lower slopes, the day before the battle – hence the name of our church: the Bruce Memorial, which is officially 100 years old this year, but its roots go back to 1314. Nor are the Hill's prehistoric remains, nor its industrial heritage,

especially in lime mining, as well known as they might be.

Then there is its recreational dimensions: walkers, runners, climbers, bird-watchers, orienteers and cyclists – Gillies Hill has now a national reputation for bikers - are only a few of those who exercise and train there. And its unique balance of flora and fauna – red squirrels, peregrines, deer, badgers, orchids, ancient woodland containing some of the most impressive trees in Britain including Californian sequoia and Scots Pine, - is only now gaining recognition, thanks to pioneering work led by our American friends, Peggy Edwards and Dale Kruse.

To enhance this public appreciation, *GH: PP&F* has designed, with the financial support of, amongst others, Stirling Council, a series of leaflets, which will be launched over the next few months. The first, on the animal and plant life of the Hill, will be available soon: watch local press for details

Clean Up 2010



Clean Up Campaign Tackling The Gillies Hill Black-spot

20+ volunteers put in over two hours of sweat and effort one March Saturday morning in the on-going campaign not just to *save* Gillies Hill, but to *save* it from those who use it as a dump, by trying to restore some of its most popular areas to their former beauty

This year's starting point was the entrance just off Gillies Hill street itself. "An embarrassment, every year on the *Descent of the Gillies Walk*", said one volunteer, "People travel from all over Scotland to join us that day, and the first bit of the actual historic woods they see is this – a natural landscape spoiled by human thoughtlessness."

That thoughtlessness was glaringly obvious to the workers, as they cleared the site of plastic bags, bits of car engines, toilet seats, paint tins, bottles, cans, building materials, car batteries and even a sack whose contents - let's call them items of personal hygiene – are literally unmentionable in any more detail.

"What makes people soil their own environment?" A rhetorical question, but really, it deserves an answer. And an appeal: let's keep the Gillies Hill entrance to the Woods free from rubbish: it is **not** a dump..

Come and join us for the next Clean-up, on Saturday 26 June, at 10pm

Save Gillies Hill would like to thank Jim Fisher and his team from Stirling Council's *Streetscape* for their customary help in the Clean-Up.

CAMBUSBARRON DEVELOPMENT TRUST

This proposal to set up a Cambusbarron Development Trust (CDT) arose from a series of meetings throughout the winter of those examining the possibilities of a community buy-out of some/all of Gillies Hill. This, though desirable in theory, was found to be very complex in reality. (One brain-curdling obstacle: because the Cambusbarron area is officially an *urban* area (!) no-one *from* that locale could become members of a potential buy-out team: that would have to come from people who live in the rural areas – beyond Gillies Hill.)

SGH thinks the proposed CDT is a very good compromise. In short, it should create an officially-approved organization, a limited company with charitable status, which will then be permitted to act *for* the Gillies Hill in a variety of positive ways: space demands that the following are merely the most obvious of the benefits:

- o Entering into land management partnerships with willing landowners
- o Raising funds for woodland and environmental improvements;
- o Preservation of its dimensions as they are as present;
- o Helping to develop public access for recreation and maintain paths;
- o Restoration, where possible, of damaged areas;
- o Increased public education / appreciation of the social, recreational, historical, health, cultural, scientific and

entrepreneurial benefits and potential of such a magnificent landscape

And calling it *Cambusbarron DT*, and not *Gillies Hill DT*, will allow the Trust to literally widen its scope and be a vehicle for developing other good community projects in Cambusbarron. (Besides which, it has always been SGH's contention that the Hill is not simply the wooded bit, vital though that is, but *all* the slopes that roll down on almost all sides, to fields, farms, rights-of-way, etc. Indeed, Cambusbarron has for centuries developed largely *on* the Hill's northern slopes.

None of this will be easy. But what it requires first of all is public support. And that has to be more than merely wishing it well: *CDT* needs individuals – first to form a team, then to help realize the ambition we all share: to Save Gillies Hill in the long term.

Please: if you can help, support this initiative *actively*. Already, some individuals have been approached – to at least attend the first meeting; but volunteers are even more welcome. The proposed timetable is outlined below.

A meeting of interested parties to discuss the setting up of the Cambusbarron Development Trust is to be held in the Community Centre on Wednesday 26 May at 7.30pm

After that, if there is enough interest, we can move forward to register the Trust as both charity and company. For further information contact Lesley Campbell at lesley@lesleycampbell.wanadoo.co.uk or phone 07709959760

The threat grows ..

(cont from page 1)

..the Council might be able to offer that party support.

Hence present discussions between Cambusbarron Community Council and Stirling Council.

Of course, this legal impasse could be resolved by Hanson's agreement to conduct an EIA. Alternatively, it may brazen things out – in theory, it can, unless legally challenged, activate its permission any time up to 2042. And, even if, in the fullness of time, another company replaces Hanson, that new quarryer could simply inherit that permission.

And ominously, the owners of the land, Drygrange Estates, have recently emphasised that, for them, mineral extraction on the Gillies Hill remains a priority.

But not the only one. A second threat to the Gillies Hill has emerged recently with Drygrange's declared interest, as revealed in Stirling Council's consultations on its Local Plan, in house building on three separate areas of the Hill. (An inevitable thought: for how long after initial development might these areas remain separate?) Not only would Polmaise Gardens, above Seven Sisters' Field, and the Fairy Hill on the Comondry (or Old

Drove Road) once again come under threat, as they were back in 1996 when development was successfully repulsed, largely through the efforts of the Community Council, but a third area, in the immediate vicinity of Polmaise Castle itself, represents new 'thinking' by developers.

All the arguments about the impact of quarrying on wild life, recreation, history and amenity, are as valid in the light of these new threats. And when you consider that the Local Plan also indicates expressions of interest in housing development on the unwooded areas of Gillies Hill – in the Seven Sisters' Field itself, in almost all the fields to the east of Polmaise Road beyond Bearside, even in the field next to the Football Park and to the west of Hayford Mill, you might want to raise your hands in surrender.

But don't. We've resisted the quarry for over three years. Keep resisting, keep fighting. Write to your MP, your MSPs, your Councillors. And continue the fight to save Gillies Hill by supporting SGH events and initiatives (these, more than merely legal, are outlined elsewhere in this Newsletter) this year.

The alternative doesn't bear thinking about.