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# Exploring history of colony at Bennachie

COMMUNITY TO JOIN  
ARCHAEOLOGY EVENT

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BY ASHLEIGH BARBOUR

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BUDDING archaeologists are being encouraged to take part in a dig next weekend which could help unlock the secrets of the Bennachie Colonists.

The colony is celebrated in Aberdeenshire for having been a site of tension between 19th-century "squatters", who settled on unoccupied common land around the slopes of Bennachie, and the private owners of the neighbouring land.

The landowners eventually took up court action to divide the common land, forcing the colonists to either leave the settlement or become tenants.

Much of the settlement can be still seen today in the form of ruined stone dwellings, garden plots and dry-stone enclosures.

Researchers from Aberdeen University and members of the Bailies of Bennachie - a voluntary conservation society - will host a community archaeology event on September 24 and 25 at the site to investigate. It forms part of Scottish Archaeology Month, which runs during September.

## LAND-HUNGRY

Dr Jeff Oliver, lecturer in archaeology at Aberdeen University, said: "These are settlements largely abandoned in the latter half of the 19th century when land-hungry estates on the perimeter of the common land eventually carved up the whole area."

"Through this project we hope to discover more not only about what life was like for the 19th century colonists but whether the site has older roots. We hope to find out when the site was first inhabited.

"These test pits will be used to inform the locations of more detailed excavation in areas of interest in the future."

The digs run from 10am until 5pm on both days.

Participants should meet at the Bennachie Centre, near Chapel Garioch, at 9.30am.

For more information visit [www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk](http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk) or contact [bennachieandsca@scottish-heritage.org](mailto:bennachieandsca@scottish-heritage.org)