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6/2/6/3

27 June 1995

Dear James

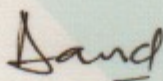
Enclosed please find a copy of the fourth draft of the script which incorporates the amendments Clare and Paul gave me last time we met. The script is still a lot longer than the twenty minutes approximately that you were aiming for - so any thoughts for trims will be gratefully received. I also enclose a copy of the filming schedule for this week-end.

As you will see when you read the script, the sections on plants and animals is only in embryo form. I had hoped to meet and talk with you and look at your photographs/slides but time has been against such a meeting. Hopefully we can have a chat this week-end.

I have sent a copy of the script and five copies of the schedule to John Nicol, a copy of each to Clare Smith and a copy of the schedule to Jason Banks, the helicopter pilot.

Best Wishes

Yours sincerely



**David Gloag**  
**PRODUCER**

James MacKay  
Dellside  
Blairdaff  
INVERURIE  
Aberdeenshire

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**PROJECT:** Bennachie

**PROGRAMME TITLE:** A Postcard from Bennachie

**PROJECT NUMBER:** PN4580

**CLIENT:** The Bailies of Bennachie

**CO-ORDINATORS FOR THE BAILIES:** Paul Stallard Home 01467 651247  
Offshore 01224 248570 xt 6106 Brent Alpha  
(Offshore Fax: 01224 882018 with instruction on header page to re-transmit to 6101)

Clare Smith Home 01467 621312

**DURATION:** 20 minutes approximately

**NARRATOR:** To be decided

**FOURTH DRAFT:** 26th June, 1995

**DISTRIBUTION:** Clare Smith/Paul Stallard; John Nicol; James MacKay; File

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

THE PROGRAMME PROPER IS PRECEDED BY A TEN SECOND, MUTE PICTURE OF THE LOGO OF THE BAILIES OF BENNACHIE

WE START ON AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE SUNLIT HILL AS THE HELICOPTER FLIES UP 'THE LORD'S THROAT' IT ELEVATES TO A HIGH VIEWPOINT - THE PICTURE FREEZES, ZOOMS BACK AND RESOLVES INTO A POSTCARD ALL BACKED BY MUSIC

WE SUPERIMPOSE THE OPENING TITLE OVER A POSTCARD OF AN AERIAL VIEW

AS THE MUSIC FADES WE MIX TO A PICTURE OF A MOTHER AND HER TEENAGE DAUGHTER AND SON AS THEY PREPARE TO EXPLORE THE HILL. THEY ARE AT THE WESTERN END OF THE GORDON WAY

THE BAILIES OF BENNACHIE LOGO IS SHOWN FOR TEN SECONDS. THIS FADES OUT AND THE PROGRAMME ITSELF BEGINS AS AN AERIAL VIEW FADES IN.

NARRATOR: Bennachie. More than just a picturesque range of hills. An island of clean countryside rising above the fertile farmland of Aberdeenshire backed by the dramatic Grampian mountains.

A place to explore to discover. Ancient, rugged, friendly. A land for all seasons - and all reasons. Bennachie.

'A POSTCARD FROM BENNACHIE'

THE MUSIC COMES TO CLIMAX AND IS THEN REPLACED BY THE NATURAL SOUNDS OF THE HILL - CURLEW; SHEEP; SNIPE DRUMMING. EFFECTS WILL BE CHOSEN TO SUIT THE PICTURES.

NARRATOR: Freedom to roam the countryside - a wish held by many but something not all can achieve.

We all need to get away occasionally from the hurly burly of daily life. But where can one get away from it all?

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

Pressure on open spaces continues to increase.  
Places where people and the wild world can  
co-exist become more precious, more valued.  
Bennachie has been valued for centuries.  
Loved and enjoyed by all who cherish  
freedom.

WE HEAR MUM FINALISING A CHECK  
LIST: '..... map and compass. Have you both  
got your notebooks handy?

THE KIDS SAY YES. THEN THE BOY  
SPEAKS

BOY: I'm too hot. Do I have to take my  
anorak?

MUM: Yes. It's not cold down here but it  
could be cold and windy on the tops.

THIS EXCHANGE WILL DEPEND ON THE  
WEATHER AND WHAT THE PARTY ARE  
WEARING. WE DON'T MAKE A BIG DEAL  
ABOUT SAFETY AT THIS TIME, BUT IT  
DOES GET A BRIEF MENTION.

MUM READING FROM THE GUIDE BOOK:  
'The Bailies ask us not to leave any rubbish -  
and to keep to the paths to avoid damaging  
wild flowers.'

AS THE FAMILY CONTINUE  
THEIR PREPARATIONS AND  
START OVER THE STYLE, THE  
NARRATOR CONTINUES

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

NARRATOR: At all seasons of the year  
people - young and old, from all backgrounds  
- set off onto the hill.

It's easy walking country with well signposted  
routes and there's a guidebook to help the  
explorer find the treasures of the hill.

THEY SET OFF

THEY SET OFF - WE FOLLOW THEM FOR A  
MOMENT, THEN GO TO AERIAL VIEWS OF  
THE VARIOUS CAR PARKS AND/OR MAPS

AERIALS OF DONVIEW

You can start from a number of places. Here at  
the western end of the range .....;  
from the south at the Donview Centre on the  
banks of the River Don below Millstone Hill  
.....;

BACK OF BENNACHIE

at Back of Bennachie Car Park on the northern  
side of the hill below Oxen Craig .....;

ROWAN TREE

at Rowan Tree Car Park near the Maiden  
Stone and below Craigshannoch .....;

ESSON'S

and at the Bennachie Centre at Esson's Car  
Park, below the Mither Tap.

OLDER PEOPLE AND SOMEONE  
IN A WHEELCHAIR

There are easy routes for people in  
wheelchairs or for those who find walking a  
problem.

AN AERIAL WITH LOTS OF  
ENERGETIC WALKERS

The energetic can travel for miles at low or  
high level.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

THE AERIAL CHANGES TO A  
WIDE VIEW OF THE RANGE

Privately owned by a number of farmers and foresters, the hill is nevertheless open to all - providing visitors act responsibly - follow the country code.

The guardians of the hill, particularly for day visitors, are the Bailies of Bennachie - an organisation founded in 1973.

THE SENIOR BAILIE, JOHN NICOL, GIVES A BRIEF HISTORY OF THEIR RÔLE. INITIALLY HIS VOICE IS HEARD OVER THE AERIAL VIEW - THEN WE SEE THE SPEAKER.

AFTER A WHILE, AS JOHN CONTINUES, WE FOLLOW THE FAMILY ON AERIAL AND GROUND BASED SHOTS. THEY APPROACH WATCH CRAIG. JOHN CONCLUDES HIS STATEMENT ON THE BAILIES.

AERIAL VIEW OF WATCH CRAIG  
AND THE FAMILY

NARRATOR: Four hundred million years ago the earth's crust heaved and surged upwards giving birth to the Bennachie range.

WS OF THE RANGE PERHAPS A  
POSTCARD - STARTING SEPIA  
WITH NO EVIDENCE OF MAN -  
THEN MIXING IN COLOUR AND  
'THE HAND OF MAN'

Initially much higher, the hill, eroded by massive glaciers, emerged from the ice age 10,000 years ago, bare of vegetation but otherwise much as we see it today.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

WE SEE THE FAMILY ON THE TOP  
- THE SHOTS EMPHASISE THE  
LINES OF STRATA

ONE OF THE KIDS REACHES THE TOP

BOY: What a view! You can see for miles.  
What's that hill over there?

THEY GATHER ROUND THE MAP AND  
COMMENT ON PARTICULAR FEATURES  
THEY CAN SEE SUCH AS BLACK HILL, ITS  
TRIG POINT AND THE GROUSE  
SHOOTING BUTTS ON ITS SLOPES; HERMIT  
SEAT; AND HUMMEL CRAIG. THE  
NAMES, INCLUDING WATCH CRAIG,  
COULD BE EXPLAINED BY MUM.

THE GIRL COMMENTS ON THE LAYERS OF  
STONE AT THE TOP OF THE CRAIG AND  
ASKS MUM TO IDENTIFY IT

MUM - REFERRING TO THE GUIDE BOOK:  
It's granite. In fact the whole range is granite  
- like much of Aberdeenshire.

There are many quarries on the hill. All are  
now closed but granite quarrying was a major  
employer of local people for centuries.

Many of the older houses, churches and castles  
around Bennachie itself are granite. It's a  
very hard rock, much harder than sandstone  
which is also used for building.

CASTLES, KIRKS AND OTHER  
BUILDINGS ON THE FOOTHILLS  
OF BENNACHIE

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

GEORGE ESSON'S GRAVESTONE  
AND OTHERS IN A KIRKYARD

Proof of its durability is to be found in every churchyard. For monuments to local heroes ..... and other folk, granite is and always has been the popular choice.

AERIAL VIEW OF ENGLISH  
QUARRY - (Algy or James to  
confirm accuracy of reason for name  
of quarry and date of closure.)

English Quarry, on the south side of the hill, produced stone for a number of major projects particularly in England - hence its name. It closed in 19???. With sheer walls and the risk of falling rock, it's a place to approach with caution.

LITTLE OXEN CRAIG QUARRY  
AERIALS AND SHOTS  
HIGHLIGHTING THE SCAR  
CAUSED BY THE WATERSPOUT -  
(James to advise on date of  
waterspout and closure of quarry.)

The quarry below Little Oxen Craig gave employment to skilled masons up until 19??. In that year a waterspout, an unusual weather phenomenon occurred just below the quarry. A very localised torrent of water washed a huge gouge out of the hillside. The track to the quarry was declared beyond economic repair - building a bridge to cross the ravine like gash was out of the question - so, with little warning, the men were told the quarry was to close.

LINTELS

Abandoned almost overnight, you can still see massive lintels, the stone beams used to support walls above doors and windows, only part finished, left lying where the masons had been working on them.



*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

BROKEN LINTELS

Many's the mason who must have cursed his bad luck when an ill struck chisel split an almost completed lintel and he had to begin again with a new piece of granite!

ARCHIVAL STILLS? - ASK THE BAILIES

Getting them down from the hill on a horse drawn cart or sled must have been a major task - especially on a freezing cold winter's day!. A few have been brought down recently are display at the Bennachie Centre at Esson's car park.

AERIAL VIEW OF THE FAMILY BETWEEN WATCH CRAIG AND OXEN CRAIG

NARRATOR: Granite makes a poor base for soil. Here on the high tops, poor acid soil plus wind and rain - especially during the winter months - means plant life struggles to exist.

WE RETURN TO OUR FAMILY. THE GIRL HAS DISCOVERED A PLANT WHICH INTERESTS HER. SHE ASKS MUM TO IDENTIFY IT.

MUM PULLS OUT A WILDFLOWER FIELD GUIDE: That's a ???

WHAT IS TALKED ABOUT DEPENDS ON WHAT WE ARE ABLE TO FILM.

MUM WOULD TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT HOW, PARTICULARLY ON THE TOPS, THE GRANITE BEDROCK AFFECTS THE FERTILITY AND ACIDITY OF THE SOIL. THE EFFECT THAT HAS ON THE HIGH

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

LEVEL PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE COULD ALSO BE MENTIONED HERE.

SHE ASKS THE KIDS TO HUNT FOR PLANTS AND TO TRY AND IDENTIFY THEM. WHILST THE YOUNGSTERS CAN SEE THE OBVIOUS, THEY MISS A LOT OF PLANTS BY NOT REALLY KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK FOR

THIS SECTION WILL BE DEVELOPED AFTER CONSULTATION WITH JAMES MacKAY

NARRATOR: The high land of Bennachie seems to be covered only in heather - particularly ling or *Calluna vulgaris*, to give it its scientific name. But, if you know what to look for and where, it's surprisingly rich in other alpine plants and mosses - low growing plants capable of surviving on poor soil in harsh weather. Many come into flower in spring and early summer such as ..... (SLIDES OR STILLS OF UP TO EIGHT SIGNIFICANT PLANTS ARE MENTIONED AND SHOWN). Others flower later such as ..... (THEN SLIDES OR STILLS OF ANOTHER EIGHT, OR SO, SIGNIFICANT PLANTS) MUCH WILL DEPEND ON WHAT IS LIKELY TO BE AVAILABLE FOR FILMING IN MID JUNE AND WHAT JAMES HAS PICTURES OF.

WE WOULD ALSO COMMENT ON BEETLES, CATERPILLARS AND OTHER GROUND BASED ANIMAL LIFE.

Generations of photographers have found

THE SUBJECT OF POSTCARDS

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

WITH A BENNACHIE  
CONNECTION WOULD FIT IN  
WITH THE POEM BY THE EXILE

AN EXTRACT FROM THE  
POEM 'WEE SPRIG OF PURPLE  
HEATHER' BY ETHEL DAVIDSON  
(p53) READ BY A LOCAL VOICE

inspiration here. Their postcards of the  
Bennachie hills, especially with the heather in  
full purple bloom, have brought a lump to the  
throat of many an exiled Aberdonian.

A LOCAL VOICE:

Sweet sprig of purple heather  
Plucked from that gorgeous brae,  
You've stirred my slumbering Scottish heart  
And gladdened all my day -  
Tonight in dreams I'll close my eyes  
And cross the ocean blue  
And climb the braes o' Bennachie  
Right to the top with you.

- THIS WOULD LEAD ON TO  
PLANTS/BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE IN  
THE LOWER AREAS WHERE IT WOULD BE  
GOOD TO FOLLOW SENIOR RANGER,  
FRED GORDON, GIVING A GUIDED TALK  
TO VISITORS.

THE CONTENT WOULD BE DEPENDANT  
ON WHAT THE RANGER CAN SHOW US  
ON THE DAY OR WHAT HE HAS  
AVAILABLE AS SLIDES OR STILLS.

MENTION WOULD BE MADE HERE THAT  
PLANTS ARE PROTECTED AND MUST NOT  
BE PICKED OR THE SEED COLLECTED  
AND WHY.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

HE COULD ALSO TALK ABOUT TREE PLANTING ON AND AROUND THE HILL FOR RECREATIONAL AS WELL AS FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES - AND PARTICULARLY THE RÔLE OF FOREST ENTERPRISE (ex FORESTRY COMMISSION) AND THEIR FOREST DESIGN PLAN.

BACK TO AN AERIAL VIEW AS THE FAMILY TRIO REACH OXEN CRAIG.

ON A GROUND BASED SHOT, ONE OF THE KIDS ASK WHERE THEY ARE.

MUM: This is Oxen Craig. Now - which is highest? This top or that one over there?

PERHAPS A SHOT TILTING FROM THE INDICATOR PANEL TO THE MITHER TAP

SHE POINTS TO MITHER TAP - THE KIDS GUESS - ONE SAYS HIGHER THE OTHER LOWER

MUM: Oxen Craig is the highest top in the range 10 metres higher than Mither Tap. What height do you think it is?

THE KIDS GUESS WRONGLY. ONE SAYS NEARLY 1000 METRES, THE OTHER SAYS ABOUT 800 METRES.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

AERIAL AND GROUND BASED  
SCENICS OF THE HILLS

AERIALS OF LITTLE JOHN'S  
LENGTH

MUM: Oxen Craig is 528 metres high - that's 1,733 feet. Not high compared to, say, Ben Nevis at 1,344 metres or 4,406 feet - but there's nothing higher nearby, so Bennachie stands out.

MUM or NARRATOR: Buried somewhere on the hill, or so the legend goes, is Jock O'Bennachie. He was constantly at war with another giant, Jock O'Noth, who lived on Tap O'Noth, a hill to the north-west. They used to hurl abuse - and rocks - at one another, which accounts for the large boulders you can find littered around both hills.

There is a strip of land known as Little John's Length on a ridge between Craigshannoch and The Mither Tap. The distance between the two cairns is said to be the height of Jock, or John, O' Bennachie. A tall man or a tall tale? You can find out for yourself if you discover the key which releases him from his tomb.

WE RETURN TO OUR FAMILY WHO ARE FINISHING LUNCH, PACKING UP THEIR RUBBISH IN A POLY BAG

MUM: So, what do we see from here?

THEY REFER TO THE INDICATOR AND COMMENT ON SUCH SIGHTS AS ARE - VISIBLE ON THE DAY OF FILMING.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

SHOTS LOCATING THE SOCKET FROM WHERE THE MEMORIAL TO THE BOY WHO DIED ON THE HILL, WAS UNTIMELY RIPPED BY HIS MOTHER. (Ask Algy or James if they have more information on this tragedy)

DOES ANYONE KNOW OF A PAINTING OF JOHN LEITH WHICH COULD BE USED - FREE OF CHARGE IF POSSIBLE - TO HUMANISE THIS TALE? (Paul & Clare are investigating)

GIRL: It looks as if someone has cut a slot in the rocks here.

MUM: That once held a memorial to a boy from the village of Oyne who lost his life on the hill. His mother wasn't asked if she wanted a memorial erected and, in her distress at losing her son to hypothermia, she came up and smashed the memorial stone.

That socket hole is a reminder that you can't take risks on Bennachie. It may be a nice warm day today but sometimes, and not just in winter, the wind and rain or snow can make it as cold and dangerous as the high Cairngorms or Ben Nevis.

DIALOGUE WILL BE DEVELOPED ON THE DAY.

HOPEFULLY WE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE SOME OF THE CASTLES SURROUNDING THE HILL - SUCH AS HARTHILL

NARRATOR: Harthill Castle, now beautifully restored, was burned to the ground nearly three hundred years ago. The owner at that time John Leith, head of Clan Leith, had run up large debts. He also upset the Provost of Aberdeen and was imprisoned in the city's tolbooth.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

Friends smuggled in a musket with which he took pot shots at the town bailies and other citizens. He escaped, returned to Harthill and, just before his creditors arrived, set fire to the castle. He watched it burn from his hiding place in a small cave below the top of Craigshannoch. But his past eventually caught up with him and he was executed - in London.

AERIALS OF THE SITE OF THE  
BATTLE OF HARLAW

Locally, the most famous historic event must be the bloody battle of Harlaw - fought on sloping land between Inverurie and Bennachie. In the year 1411 Donald, Lord of the Isles, tried to extend his territory to include this eastern part of Scotland. He was thwarted by a force led by Alexander, Earl of Mar.

ANY DRAWINGS/PAINTINGS TO  
HELP ILLUSTRATE THIS TALE  
WOULD BE WELCOME

John Hosie, a local lad, and Mary, his bride to be were dressed, ready for their wedding when news came of the approach of the Highlanders. Hosie went off to battle, fought valiantly but, when chasing off the retreating Highlanders, was captured and taken to a dungeon in the Hebrides.

PICTURES OF THE RUSHMILL  
BURN & HOSIE'S WELL

Escaping many years later, he came home to claim his bride who, in the meantime had married another. Hosie died of a broken heart and was buried on the slopes of Bennachie beside the Rushmill Burn. There's a well there called Hosie's Well.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

Cleaned recently by the Bailies and lined with fresh stones, it still weeps clean water. They say that water is the broken hearted lover's tears for the bride he lost to another man.

THERE'S A BRIEF MUSICAL INTERLUDE  
HERE - OLD BLIND DOGS RENDERING OF  
'GIN I WERE WHERE THE GADIE RINS' -  
OVER AERIAL AND GROUND BASED  
VIEWS OF THE GADIE BURN AND THE  
HILL

WE RETURN TO OUR FAMILY WHO ARE  
SKIRTING THE MOSS GRIEVE

BOY: That looks like it has been dug up by  
somebody a long time ago.

MUM: That's a peat moss where the people  
who lived and worked on the hill got fuel for  
cooking and heating. Peat is a bit like young  
coal. It's made up of plants, particularly  
mosses, which have died and over thousands  
of years have become compressed by more  
plants growing on them and dying in their  
turn. The blacker and more compressed the  
peat, the better it burns.

GIRL: It must have been hard work getting it  
down to their houses.

GENERAL VIEWS OF THE  
ABANDONED PEAT BANKS

THE FAMILY REFER TO THE MAP



*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

THERE ARE NO STILL  
PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE BAILIE'S  
ARCHIVE SHOWING PEAT  
CUTTING

THE CINÉCOSSE VIDEO ARCHIVE  
HAS SHETLAND FOOTAGE  
WHICH MAY FIT THE BILL

AERIAL VIEWS OF AMENITY  
WOODLAND AND COMMERCIAL  
FORESTRY PLANTATIONS

MUM: Not only that. It was also hard work to cut it. I've seen it being done in the outer Hebrides (or Orkney or Shetland) where it's still much in demand. The traditional way is to use a special 'L' shaped spade to cut out each soaking wet turf and lift it onto the top of the bank so it can dry in the sun.

A couple of months later, the dry peats are loaded onto a cart, a sled, or sometimes into a big basket or creel, for carrying down the hill. Then it's stacked carefully beside the croft house. It makes a lovely smell when it burns.

They say peat heats you three times. Once when you cut it; a second time when you cart it and stack it; and a third time when you burn it. It's a nice fuel but oil, gas or electricity are a lot easier to use.

BOY: Why didn't they just use wood? There a lots of forests around here.

MUM: There are now but most have been planted fairly recently. The original forests of oak, birch and Scots pine were cut down for domestic heating and cooking and to increase the size of fields. Some of the trees, especially oak, were used for shipbuilding and as fuel for smelting iron ore.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

DO SUITABLE ARCHIVAL STILL  
PHOTOGRAPHS EXIST IN THE  
BAILIE'S COLLECTION?

The trees belonged mainly to the estates. Ordinary folk would only have a small piece of land, if they had any, and that was for growing things like oats or kail and other vegetables - they had no room to grow trees. They took some wood from the hill but if everybody who lived nearby had cut down trees, the hill would have soon been bare.

NARRATOR: Until 1859, the hill was a 'Commonty', or common land, where anyone around the slopes had the right to graze sheep and cattle and take peats, wood, stone and heather for their own use.

As the local population increased and more and more people turned to the hill for food and fuel, the neighbouring lairds decided they should extend their estates and take over and control the common land of Bennachie.

In 1853 they drew up a plan to divide the hill into nine parts. This was presented to the Court of Session in Edinburgh - who, six years later in 1859, approved the plan.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

APPROPRIATE SHOTS OF THE  
COLONY RUINS PLUS ANY  
APPROPRIATE ARCHIVAL STILLS  
AND DRAWINGS

Many of the poorer locals suffered as a result. The Colony, a crofting township on the Inverurie side of the Mither Tap, was typical. It had a population of some sixty people who made a meagre living from the hill and from occasional work as farm labourers, woodcutters, stone masons and quarriers.

Suddenly they had to pay rent for land they and their families had been living on and working, rent free, for centuries. They no longer owned or even had the right to live in the houses they had built with their own labour. A few were able to pay rent and stay many couldn't and were evicted. The ruins of their cottages are a sad reminder of the Bennachie clearances.

PICS OF ESSON'S GRAVESTONE IN  
THE KIRKYARD OF CHAPEL OF  
GARIOCH CHURCH

WE READ THE GRAVESTONE '*GEORGE  
ESSON DESCENDED FROM THE FIRST  
AND HIMSELF THE LAST OF THE  
COLONISTS ON BENNACHIE*'

George Esson, a stone mason and dry stane dyker to trade, was the last person to live in the Colony. He died in 1939.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

WE HEAR (THE SOUND EFFECT  
OF) A CUCKOO - AND,  
CONVENIENTLY DISCOVER THE  
GOUK STONE - THEN OVER  
PICTURES OF THE COLONY  
RUINS AND ESSON'S CROFT WE  
HEAR THE POEM 'TH' SATTLER  
CHIELS' BY JAMES D GLENNIE  
(p15/16)

A fyou 'eers sene  
A hantle hardy chiels  
Took ower a hill,  
They bigg't steen on steen  
An' houk't teugh grun  
At th' hill fit  
Roun Bennachie

Lichtsim' their herts  
Wifes an' littlin's tee  
An' a' siccar chiels.  
Sine sma' sma' lairdies  
Socht th' sweat't grun  
An' focht wi' wirds  
Th' brawn o' Bennachie

Th' thieves mairk't oot  
Th' hill an' took't  
Fae th' sattler chiels.  
Esson wis last  
Noo he's awa' tee  
An' natur' haps th' crafts  
Roun' Bennachie.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK FROM A  
CLOSE SHOT OF THE TOP OF THE MITHER  
TAP (IF IT IS POSSIBLE AND SAFE TO DO  
SO) AND REVEALS THE FAMILY AS THEY  
CLAIM THEIR FINAL SUMMIT.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

THE HELICOPTER CIRCLES THE HILL AS THEY ADMIRE THE VIEW. ON GROUND BASED PICTURES THEY REFER TO THE INDICATORS ERECTED BY THE BAILIES AND COMMENT ON THE VIEW. DIALOGUE WILL DEPEND ON WHAT CAN BE SEEN ON THE RECORDING DAY BUT COULD INCLUDE REFERENCE TO MILLSTONE HILL AND WHY IT IS SO CALLED; AND THE MINOR TOPS OF BRUNTWOOD AND GARBET.

WHEN STANDING BESIDE THE NOW REDUNDANT TRIG POINT, IT COULD BE MENTIONED THAT IT AND THE OTHER TRIG POINT ON BLACK HILL ARE NOW IN THE CUSTODY OF THE BAILIES.

SHOTS OF THE FAMILY ON THE TOP OF THE TAP LOOKING AT THE 'THIEVES' MARK'

MUM: There are no (few?) walls on the high moorland to show where one lairds land ends and another's begins - instead there are marker stones. This one here, known as the 'Thieves' Mark', marks the meeting point of the Balquhain, Pittodrie and Logie Elphinstone estates.

DOWN BELOW THEY SEE THE JUMBLE OF STONES THAT IS THE HILL FORT - ONE OF THE KIDS ASKS WHAT IT IS

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

AERIAL VIEWS AND GROUND  
BASED DETAIL SHOTS OF THE  
FORT TO FIT THE DIALOGUE

The existence of a hill fort at this altitude surprises many a visitor. Who built it and why and when - details are scarce.

Sometime between 500BC and 500AD stone was hauled laboriously up the hill to supplement the workable stone available at the top. Here at an altitude of 500 metres a fort was built with a strong outer wall surrounding ten or more round houses.

That original outer wall, stretching from cliff to cliff, made a circuit of about 460 metres. It's difficult nowadays to fully visualise the immensity of a construction probably begun long before the Romans discovered Scotland.

The ancient masons building skills were high - similar to those of the Broch builders of North and West Scotland. They took full advantage of the natural cleavage of granite rock - though many of the stones do show traces of the hand of man so tools, however primitive, were employed in the construction. No mortar was used yet the builders raised walls of considerable height in the same fashion as the dry stane dykers of more recent centuries. How high they reached is difficult to calculate. The walls have tumbled down and their remains lie scattered on the hillside below.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

Though now dry, a construction low on the south side appears to have been a well - a supply of fresh water would have been vital if the fort was besieged.

In recent times, some of the more easily moved stone was taken down the hill along the Maiden Causeway to be used for house building and dry stane dykes.

Who did the fort defend and against whom? Other tribes and clans - or the Roman legions which certainly reached this area. At the battle of Mons Graupius in 84AD, Agricola and his invincible legions heavily defeated a force of some 30,000 Caledonians - tribes which had formed a confederation under the leadership of Calgacus. Academics argue - but many believe the site of that battle to be below Bennachie.

One occupant in the eighteenth century was Lord Pitsligo. Outlawed for supporting the Jacobite cause in 1745, he escaped from the Hanoverian troops and hid in the fort. Local people supplied him with food and drink but it must have been a cold, hard hiding place.

(Comment on the accuracy of the narrative here would be welcomed. A Bailie may have more up to date sources than I)

IS A PORTRAIT OF LORD  
PITSLIGO AVAILABLE?

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

SHOTS OF THE MAIDEN STONE -  
PERHAPS AN AERIAL VIEW FIRST  
TO LOCATE IT

CAN LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN BE PERSUADED TO  
DRAW, PAINT OR OTHERWISE  
REPRESENT THE STORY OF THE  
MAIDEN STONE?

Future advances in archaeology may tell us more of the recent and ancient history of the fort. Meantime, all visitors are requested to leave the stones alone. Moving them may damage evidence we, at present, cannot see and don't understand.

Bennachie is surrounded by evidence of early occupation by man. Prehistoric remains such as cairns from the Bronze Age, the graves of Beaker People and standing stones or menhirs from the Iron Age.

Few single standing stones are as interesting as the Maiden Stone. Eleven feet high, it is covered in intricate and beautiful pictures, rendered in relief. Erected between 700 and 800 AD it is a mix of pagan, perhaps Druidic, and Christian symbols - a comb and mirror; various four legged beasts; Celtic knotwork; 'Z' rods and 'V' rods - and a Celtic Cross.

Its name - well the story goes that a local lass, the lovely maiden of Mundurno, had many suitors. One whom she spurned met up with the Devil in Pittodrie woods and in exchange for his soul bought his revenge on the maiden.



*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

On the eve of her wedding she was baking oatcakes, singing at her work, when a handsome stranger appeared. He wagered that he could build a causeway to the top of the Mither Tap before she could bake her firloot of oatmeal. Thinking this was but gentle banter she lightly promised her hand and heart would be his if he won. He did!

When he came to claim his reward she suddenly realised who he was - Satan!! Terror stricken she tried to escape. He caught her and she was changed to stone!

WE RETURN TO THE FAMILY AT THE TOP OF THE TAP

DEPENDING ON THE WEATHER AND THE VIEW ON THE DAY, THEY WOULD TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT THE FORESTS THAT CIRCLE THE HILL - UNLESS EARLIER MENTION OF FORESTRY, ANCIENT AND MODERN, HAS COVERED THE SUBJECT.

THEY HEAD DOWNHILL. THE KIDS COMMENT ON THE LITTER PROBLEM - THEY MIGHT PICK UP A DISCARDED COKE CAN OR CRISP BAG; AND ON THE WIDTH OF THE PATH - SOMETIMES NARROW, SOMETIMES LIKE THE M25.

*'A Postcard From Bennachie'*

STILLS OF THE VISIT BY PRINCE  
CHARLES ARE AVAILABLE FROM  
JAMES MACKAY

MUM TALKS ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF  
PATH EROSION - THE RESULT OF LARGE  
NUMBERS OF VISITORS ( SOME TAKING  
SHORTCUTS, OTHERS AVOIDING PUDDLES  
IN SEASON) AS WELL AS THE EFFECTS OF  
WEATHER PLUS THE SLOW  
REGENERATION OF NATIVE PLANTS.

HERE WE COULD HEAR AGAIN FROM A  
BAILIE - JOHN NICOL OR A.N. OTHER  
(HOW ABOUT A LADY BAILIE?)- AND  
HOW THEY ARE TACKLING THE  
PROBLEM. THIS COULD BE SHOT AT THE  
CENTRE AND THE SPOKESPERSON COULD  
TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT THE CENTRE AND  
ITS ROYAL VISITOR

FINALLY THE FAMILY WOULD REACH  
THE NEW BENNACHIE CENTRE WHERE  
DAD HAS ARRIVED WITH A CAR TO  
COLLECT THEM.

THE FINAL ACT BY THE TWO  
YOUNGSTERS IS TO SELECT POSTCARDS  
FROM THE RACK IN THE CENTRE - SOME  
TO SEND AND SOME TO KEEP IN AN  
ALBUM.

THE PROGRAMME WOULD END ON  
CLOSING CREDITS SUPERIMPOSED OVER  
AERIAL VIEWS OF THE HILL.