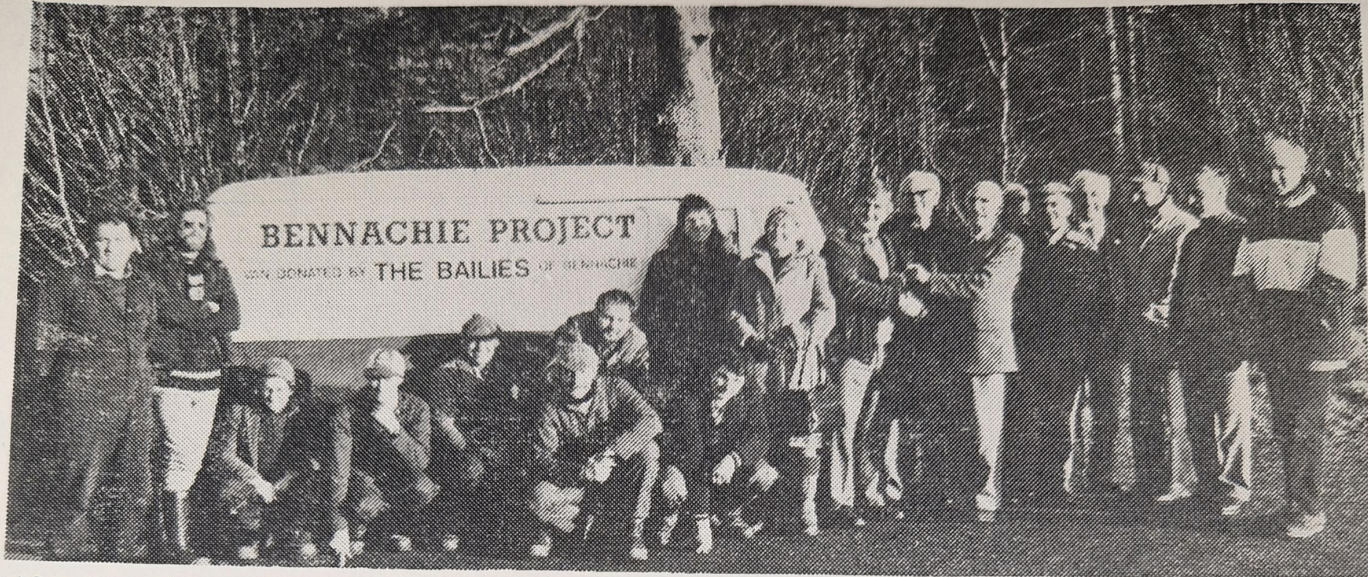


Bennachie Stream Clearance Project Now Motoring Along !



AS a result of a co-ordinated effort between G.R.A.I.N., the Forestry Commission and the Bailies of Bennachie, a Stream Clearance Project on Bennachie began earlier this year (writes SHEENAH COBB).

G.R.A.I.N. provided the men and the supervision, safety equipment and clothing through a community programme with M.S.C. funding, and the Forestry Commission provided the tools, the site and the training.

While the main funding for labour came from M.S.C. there was still quite a shortfall to be found by local organisations and G.R.A.I.N. was fortunate enough to benefit from a generous donation from the Bailies of Bennachie. They have given a van for transporting the men from Oyne to the worksites in the forest, yet another example of Bailies caring and responsible attitude with regard to conservation on the range, demonstrating once again their love of the Bennachie hills.

The Forestry Commission has many thousands of hectares of forests all over Scotland. As trees grow to maturity they are clearfelled and the branches cut off and the timber hauled away for sale. The debris of branchwood can easily be washed into streams and rivers and will soon clog up the water-courses, causing flooding and a certain form of river pollution. This of course, is harmful to the rivers and any of the aquatic creatures that live therein.

There is also the natural needle fall from conifers (where broadleaves only live one year,

conifer needles live approximately three) and when they fall into a river the water becomes slightly acid as the needles break down. There is also the problem of conifers growing close to the sides of a stream tending to shade out the stream banks, denying light-demanding vegetation the chance to grow. The banks become sterile places where neither nardwoods or animals can enjoy a happy existence.

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To cure all these ills in one stroke the stream clearance programme was undertaken. Ten men and a supervisor have moved into the forest, proceeding up all the rivers and streams, clearing debris from within, pulling back all dead branchwood and debris for three or four metres on either side of the stream. Any conifers which are growing too close to the stream will be removed to let light and air in so that hardwoods such as rowan, alder, or birch can seed-in or if necessary be planted.

At the end of the day it is hoped to achieve a healthy clean flowing stream which is much better for fish and other aquatic creatures. The streams will be lined by healthy banks where clumps of natural broadleaves grow with grass underneath

where roe and other forest animals can safely graze. A similar scheme has been operating in the Clashindarroch section of Buchan Forest District where 12 men and their supervisor have worked wonders on the streams in the area.

The Bennachie scheme will last for 12 months by which time most of the streams on the Bennachie range, Whitehaugh, Pitfichie and Corrennie will have been tackled. It is hoped that the lads who have toiled so manfully will be able to cap their achievement with a little help to nature in the form of planting some hardwoods on the stream-sides to form some instant cover.

The scheme is an excellent one, making good use of public money and will be of great benefit to all those who enjoy the countryside and want to improve conservation values in our area. The scheme is also giving work to thirteen people

who desperately want to do useful work in these sad times of high unemployment. There is a cheerful atmosphere of comradeship and goodwill among the squads and all who visit the scheme agree they are an excellent example of co-operation where everybody wins and no-one loses.

Picture: Mr James Kelman, Senior Bailie, hands over the keys of the van to Mr John Mack of G.R.A.I.N. while other Bailies (right) and the workforce look on.

