

# BEN NEVIS, EAT YOUR HEART OUT!

**LORDLY, LOFTY PEAKS** like Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, look with envious eyes on Aberdeenshire's own lowly Bennachie.

It may not have the bulk of the Highland giants, but it has stature among mountains.

Socially, it commands a unique place in the community. It is protected, groomed and even cosseted by a grand company, the Bailies of Bennachie.

Many of the 2000 members of this organisation are actively engaged in the physical side of caring for their mountain, and there are many more in other groups who also lend a hand.

But take the population of Aberdeen, the Garioch and even wider afield, and it's a safe bet that one in three or four will have wandered along its many paths at least once.

Confirmed Bennachieophiles, who have scaled its modest heights dozens of times, are known to make monthly pilgrimages summer and winter.

Books in plenty detail its long history, and ballads extol its virtues. Who hasn't heard "Whaur Gadie Rins?" Where else but "the back o' Bennachie."

## EXCELLENT

A recent poem and ballad competition organised by the Bennachie Bailies attracted an entry of 150.

"Some of the entries were of a very high standard," said Mr James MacKay, The Dell, Blairdaff, who is Senior Bailie.

"We are now considering how best to use this wealth of excellent material. We may

stone-age fort around the top might suggest.

And there are fragments of recorded history down through the centuries indicating the importance given to the mountain by those who dwelt around its foot.

But witness the last dying rays of a setting sun flickering across its distinctive shoulders, and through the flowing line of its unmistakable silhouette emerges more than a touch of mystery.

These images stir the interest, but on a practical plane, according to Mr MacKay, Bennachie's popularity is based on its accessibility and the many interesting features on and around the mountain.

"There was a body of people who were concerned about what was happening in other places," he said, "and the Bailies were formed to ensure Bennachie could be properly preserved."

## POPULAR

The membership fees of the Bailies help finance the many facets of conservation applied on the mountain along with receipts from the organisation's publication, "The Book of Bennachie" which sold 3500 copies.

accesses to the six main tops of the mountain have been improved dramatically, with car parks provided at three approaches, one of them incorporating a Forestry Commission centre.

The Bailies have also been active this year in improving and maintaining paths, cutting heather and whins and generally grooming the mountain.



*Bennachie—draws people like a magnet.*

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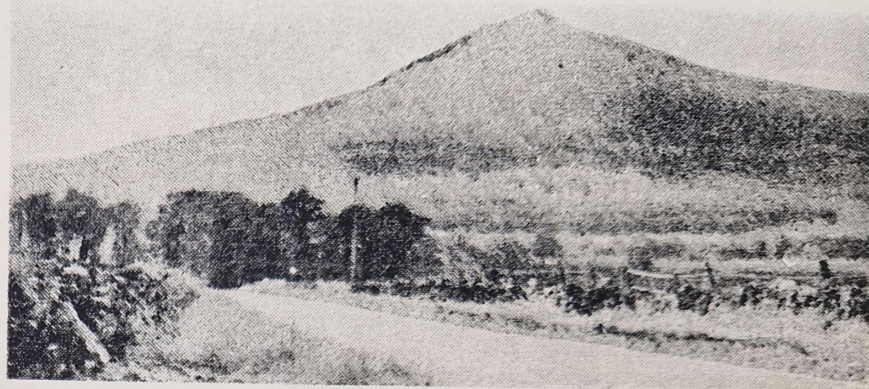
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What is it that draws people to Bennachie like a magnet?

Its broad, sunny slopes and dominating summit rocks have proved a focus of interest from very early days, as the

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The guide, jointly produced with the Forestry Commission, has sold 5000 copies, with another reprint of 3000.

A calendar on Bennachie also proved popular this year and another is being produced for next year.

"So much information about the mountain and its history has come into our possession lately that we are now considering another 'Book of Bennachie'," said Mr MacKay.

Over the past few years, the