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# Volunteers team up for Bennachie event

BY GRAEME SCOTT

WOULD-BE archaeologists of all ages joined a community dig at a popular north-east landmark at the weekend.

The volunteers took to the slopes of Bennachie to help the Bailies and Aberdeen University researchers uncover more about the way people lived down through the centuries.

The weekend was the first of several events planned by the Bailies of Bennachie, a voluntary conservation society, which has recently started a Bennachie Landscapes project aimed at inspiring the community to question how landscape and communities were established, particularly around Bennachie and Garioch.

The volunteers excavated small pits and then carefully sifted out the contents in the hope of discovering evidence of the Bennachie Colonists.

Bennachie is known to be

rich in history with previous sites unearthing Pictish and Iron Age hill forts and a Roman camp.

It was a site of tension between 19th-century squatters, who settled on unoccupied common land around the slopes of Bennachie, and neighbouring landowners who eventually took court action to divide up the land. This forced the colonists to either leave the settlement or become tenants.

Senior bailie Jackie Cumberbirch said that there had been a good response to the dig.

She added: "We had more than 40 people on Saturday and another 35 today and there was a good spread of ages.

"We found some pottery and an old clay pipe. We had a lot of visitors, especially today, coming up and asking us about the dig.

"In fact, one lady was a Findlater and was related to one of the colonists on the slopes of Bennachie."

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