



B Belonging TO ABERDEENSHIRE



Belonging TO ABERDEENSHIRE

We are grateful to all the photographic societies, camera clubs and individuals across Aberdeenshire who participated in this project and supported Belonging to Aberdeenshire.

Special thanks to Andy Hall (www.andyhallphotography.com) for a dependable and devoted commitment to the project, and to Colin Prior (www.colinprior.co.uk) for sharing his technical expertise.

Belonging to Aberdeenshire is an Aberdeenshire Council initiative. It was project managed by Saskia Gibbon from the Arts & Heritage Team with support from Community Learning & Development. The publication was designed in-house.



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Belonging to Aberdeenshire is a celebration of what makes Aberdeenshire unique and special.

This book shows us in images and words the powerful relationships people have with places and the true diversity of Aberdeenshire.

The participants have shared personal memories, feelings and emotions for the locations and landmarks that matter to them. Creative expressions of their sense of belonging to the area.

The imagery showcases some of Aberdeenshire's most evocative locations through the breadth of creative photographic talent we have in the area.

The project was widely promoted as a competition to encourage lots of communities, clubs and individuals to take part.

A balance of submissions emerged reflecting people and place; younger and older; colour and monochrome; land and sea; work and relaxation; close-up and wide vista; seasonal differences.

Aberdeenshire's diverse and changing communities were also reflected with contributions from long-standing and newly relocated residents, businesses and entrepreneurs, day trippers, and ex-pats with an affection for the area.

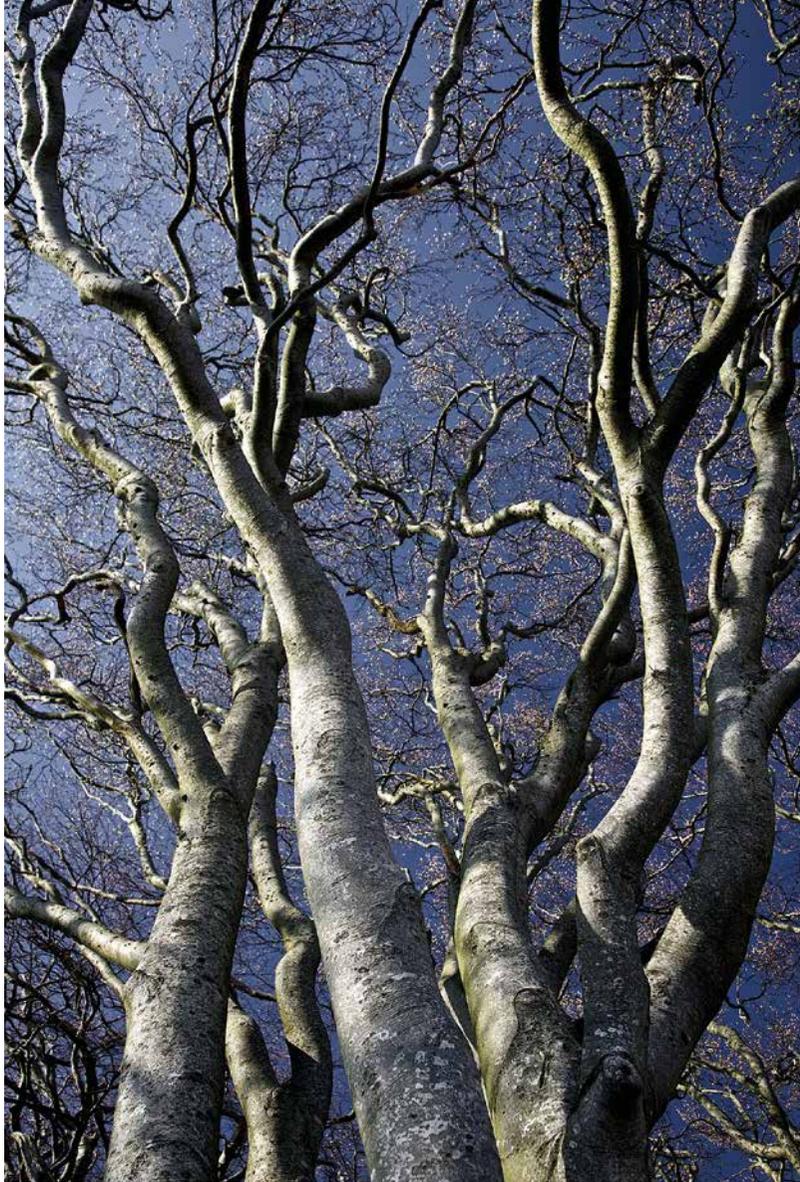
The work was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council and based on a concept developed by Stonehaven-based photographer Andy Hall, who received international recognition with the success of his book, 'A Sense of Belonging to Scotland', featuring the favourite places of Scottish personalities.

Andy provided creative direction for the project and with fellow Scottish international photographer, Colin Prior, judged the photographic submissions.

Lots of local people took part in this initiative. The collection here celebrates 34 winners considered the very best entries from almost 400 submissions.

We hope you enjoy.





Westhill



Words: Heather Wood
Image: Andy Hall

There is a group of wonderful beech trees that are a lovely landmark in Westhill, rapidly disappearing between Tesco and the newest offices going up in the East End of the town. I've admired them from my living room window up the hill for the 22 years I've lived here.

Sometimes enveloped in mist, they stand proud, displaying golden colours in autumn and fresh, green growth in Spring. Long may they be there!



Henry Gray, Farmer



Words & Image: Allan Sutherland

As an 'inabootcomer' from West Lothian in the 1980s I was sitting next to a group of farmers in the Aberdeen Arms in Tarves, impressed by their strong faces, strong voices, capacity for whisky and confidence borne of centuries of their families belonging to the area.

Thainstone Mart reminds me of that night; the same weather-beaten farmers clad in the same bunnets, jackets and 'bilies' (boiler suits), but hundreds more of them, not supping whisky but intently eyeing up the other half of this great agricultural saga; the 'beasts'.

You are watching farmers, shepherds, dairymen, rams, ewes, lambs, bulls, cows and calves doing what their fathers and mothers had been doing for hundreds of years; buying and selling, being bought and being sold. A great example of the permanence and pride that is the hallmark of Aberdeenshire. It's where I go to remind myself that 'progress' should not mean discarding tradition, straight dealing or hospitality. Or boiler suits, for that matter.





Common Blue



**Words & Image:
David Watson Hood**

Sands of Forvie nature reserve is a liminal space. As we walk it and visit hut circles, the ruined church, the salmon station and the remains of war time defences all buried in the dunes; it questions the myths of entitlement that premise so much of our contemporary decision making. Here I can escape briefly from the idea that reality is what is imagined by the rest of mankind. So I have a sense of belonging to the earth here but I also realise here that 'Aberdeenshire' is just another imagined construct.



Beach
Impressions



Words & Image: Trevor MacPherson

Despite holidays abroad and the obvious scenic attractions, I have always been drawn to the beauty of Aberdeenshire; particularly Banff where I reside.

On a late afternoon winter day, whilst walking along 'The Links', I saw that the light had a beautiful warmth and tranquillity. I experienced an inner peace. By gently moving the camera and pressing the shutter button, I created this impressive image which I think epitomised the sense of place and beauty of the area.





Mill of Hirn



Words: Bert McIntosh
Image: Russell Adams

The Mill of Hirn, near Crathes, is where John Johnston, the Miller o'Hirn, lived. He was a friend of Scott Skinner's father. One of Skinner's best known and most popular Strathspey Reels is dedicated to him.



Dean's of Huntly Sign



Words: Bill Dean
Image: Ian Talboys

My favourite place in Aberdeenshire that gives me a strong sense of belonging is at Dean's premises in Depot Road, Huntly.

As a boy, I used to walk a few metres from here each day after school to meet my father finishing his work at the Council Depot. The building that housed the snow plough that he drove still stands and is directly opposite my office window. My first job when I left school was less than 20 metres away at the then engineering firm, Alexander Dey. I so much loved to play football next to here at the Market Muir fields in my youth. Our community bonfire was on the very same street each and every November.

I am proud that this place has forged such fond memories for me, both as man and boy, and continues to nurture a great sense of belonging to the area. Born, brought up, played, lived and work all but a few footsteps away.





Bennachie from Loch Skene



Words: Sylvia Raji

Image: Andy Hall

I have lived in the backdrop of Bennachie all my life. My parents were also born and brought up in Inverurie and Oldmeldrum. As a child we were always told that when we saw Bennachie we were nearly home.

We used to go to picnics there and walk up Bennachie as a family. I never quite conquered the summit though, too much of a coward! I always found it more difficult to coming down.

I could see Bennachie from my bedroom window as a child and can see it still from my home now. We have a picture of Bennachie in our family home and we buried my dad with one also – Home.



Collieston & Harbour



Words: Andrew Booth
Image: Andrew Simpson

Although I grew up only 5 miles from the historical fishing village of Collieston, it is where we went on many of our summer holidays (farmers never did like to travel far!).

It was a great place as a kid with loads of different areas to explore. There were a lot of people who descended onto Collieston for the summer and the local community welcomed us all with open arms.

Now that I am significantly older, Collieston is my sanctuary where I go to relax with the family and hope they have equally as much fun as I did at their age. The view overlooking the harbour or from the pier back towards the village is what I would say is the typical image of Collieston.





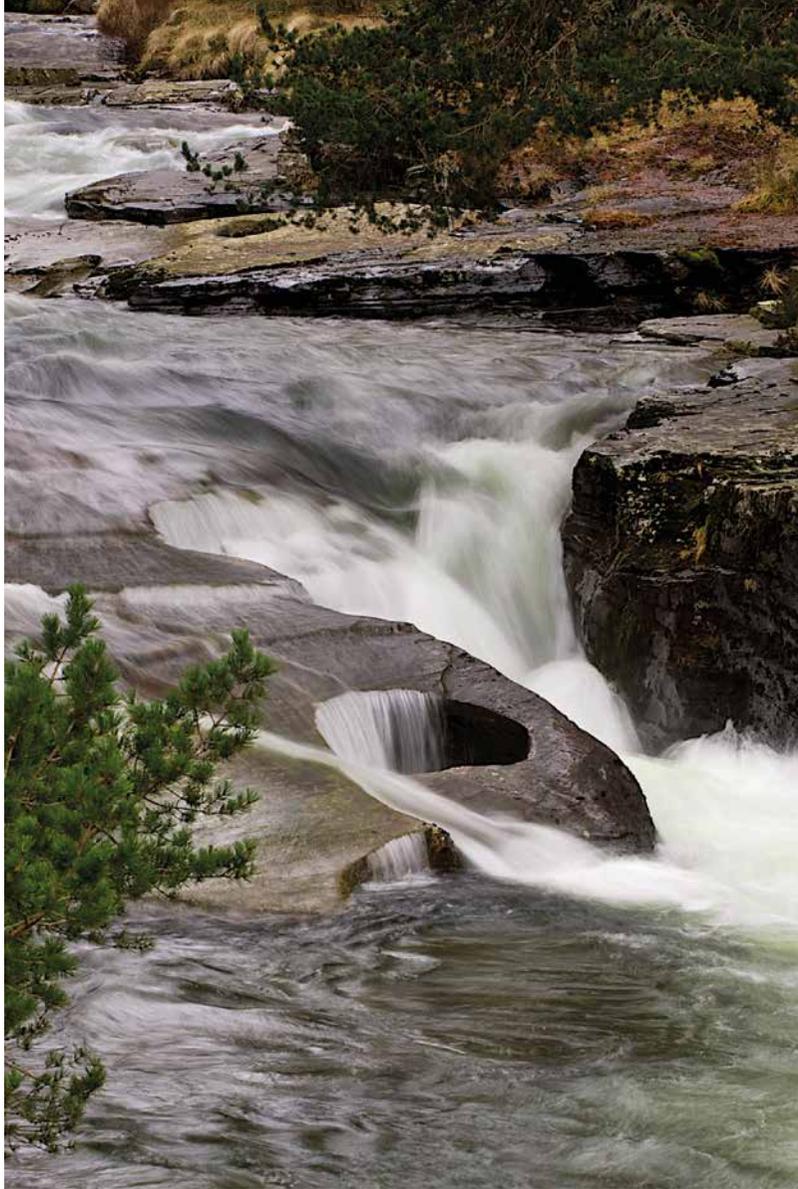
Arbutnott



Words & Image: Andy Hall

Arbutnott was the inspiration for Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song*. The distinctive red soil of the Mearns at ploughing time, in the golden low light of late afternoon, is one of the most unforgettable landscapes in Scotland. This image encapsulates the essential character of the Mearns for me.

Sunset Song is part of *A Scots Quair*, a trilogy which describes the life of its heroine Chris Guthrie growing up and living in the Mearns before, during and after the first world war. In 2005 it was voted Scotland's favourite-ever novel.



Linn of Quich



Words: Duncan Bryden

Image: Sandra Steele

I have always been drawn to places where history and scenic beauty combine. Just a mile or so down stream from its popular neighbour, the Linn of Dee, near Braemar, lies the beautiful Linn of Quich amid the ancient Caledonian pine trees in a quiet corner of Aberdeenshire. It is amazing to think that events took place here that could have changed the course of British history.

Gathered under the pine trees, it is said loyal clan chiefs enjoyed alcoholic punch prepared in the rocky pothole - still to be seen beside the Linn today. But, politics and military ventures then, as now, were not for the faint hearted and 'Bobbin John' was by all accounts good at neither and the rebellion failed.

Just below the Quich is Queen Victoria's Tea House where a monarch that once ruled a third of the world took her refreshments in one of her favourite places. The Quich may be a peaceful backwater today but when you visit, just close your eyes for a moment and you may just imagine, above the rushing water and wind-washed pines, hearing some fervent rebellious cries or perhaps some genteel royal conversation on affairs of the empire.

Belonging



Hard Times

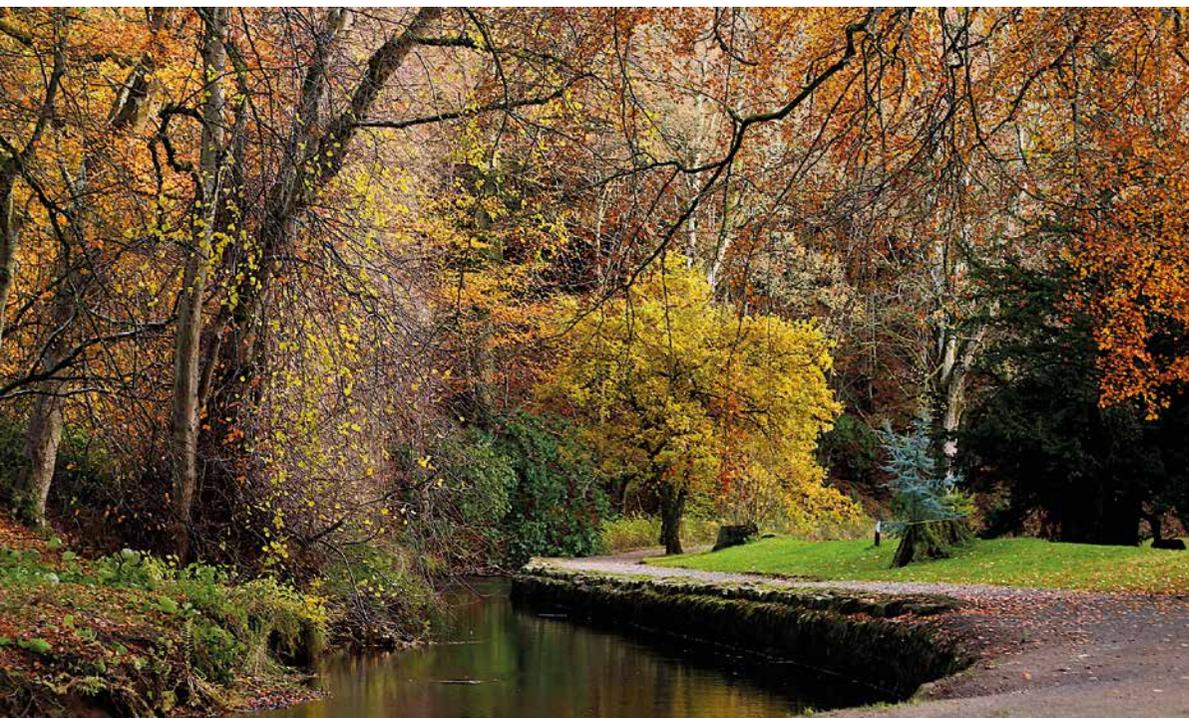


Words & Image: Moyra Gray

Glendye is my favourite place because it is where my heart is and where my husband and I live and earn a living from sheep farming.

As the seasons go on you have many opportunities to look forward to; in spring, the hills greening up, the arrival of lambs and ground nesting birds rearing their young. The wild flowers are budding and blooming through the seasons. The heather turning the hills purple. Then golden colours in the autumn, and finally, what can be the most beautiful time but farm-wise, can be the most difficult time, the winter.

Along with the seasons, it is amazing how the different weather, skies, and light can vary a scene so much. When checking sheep, there is always something that will catch my eye and make me reach for my camera.



Autumn in Aden Park



Words: Jimmy Buchan

Image: William MacIntosh

It's very quiet and peaceful down by the river at Aden Country Park. If you ever want to go and be somewhere away from everyday life, and you need somewhere to just be yourself, I'd say this is it. It's a place you can go and sit for a few hours. It's about being far enough away from everything to concentrate on what you really want to.

It's a beautiful walk in all seasons. You can go in the summer when it's sunny and warm, but if you go in the dead of winter, it could be hard frost and snow and it's still a beautiful place. In the spring you have got new life coming into the ground. And it's beautiful in late fall. You really can go and see all the seasons.

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The West Rocks, Rosehearty - 'The Wastard' (Doric)



Words: Fiona Thomson

Image: Andy Hall

I grew up in Aberdeenshire and if I'm honest I can't imagine growing up anywhere better. We stayed in a cottage near New Aberdour House farm and between there and Rosehearty I have so many happy memories.

The Wastard or West Rocks to give it its formal name, next to Rosehearty, is a place very close to my heart. I have so many memories of long walks in all weathers with my dad, my granddad or the whole family. Usually at the end of these walks we stopped to fish in one of the many gwights (coves) with lots of stories along the way. Some days we might stop to catch bandies (sticklebacks) in the shallow sea water ponds on the Pots and Pans and if you were lucky on a clear day and if you listened carefully enough you might hear the piper play at the piper's gwight or why not go as far as the flat rocks where the devil once danced.

I feel very happy and content on a sunny evening looking down over the rocks, it makes me feel home.



Aboyne Community Centre



Words: Stuart Robertson

Image: Eric Swan

Aboyne Community Centre is a catalyst for integrating new comers to the area. Since arriving in Deeside from the Mearns in 1975 the activities on offer from the centre and the combination of both primary and secondary schools have enabled me and my subsequent family to feel very much at home. Getting to know the community has been certainly facilitated by the presence of the centre.





Dunnottar Castle



Words: Samreen Azeem

Image: Andy Hall

When I first came to Aberdeenshire I was very lonely as there were very few Asians and a very small Pakistani community. Westhill is a very peaceful place to live and I consider this my second home. Being brought up in Pakistan, which is very hot and humid, I'm getting used to the weather and thought that summer here was winter!

There's a great tolerance for other religions and nationalities in Aberdeenshire. Our favourite place to visit and take everybody when they come is Dunnottar Castle. We love the sea, how clear it is, the different shades of colour and the castle towering high above it. The most favourite things I have seen. I feel very safe and secure here.



Crovie Village



Words: Marc Ellington

Image: Mike Chandler

Nestled at the bottom of steep hillsides and cliffs, looking out to sea, Crovie is one of the least altered and best preserved fishing villages in Northern Europe. An outstanding conservation area, Crovie remains visually much as it would have appeared at the end of the 18th Century. Located on our family Estate, Crovie is a place that holds many memories for me of special times with family and friends, both in the village and sailing on Gamrie Bay - the sight of approaching Crovie by sea is an experience never to be forgotten.

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Stonehaven
Open Air
Pool



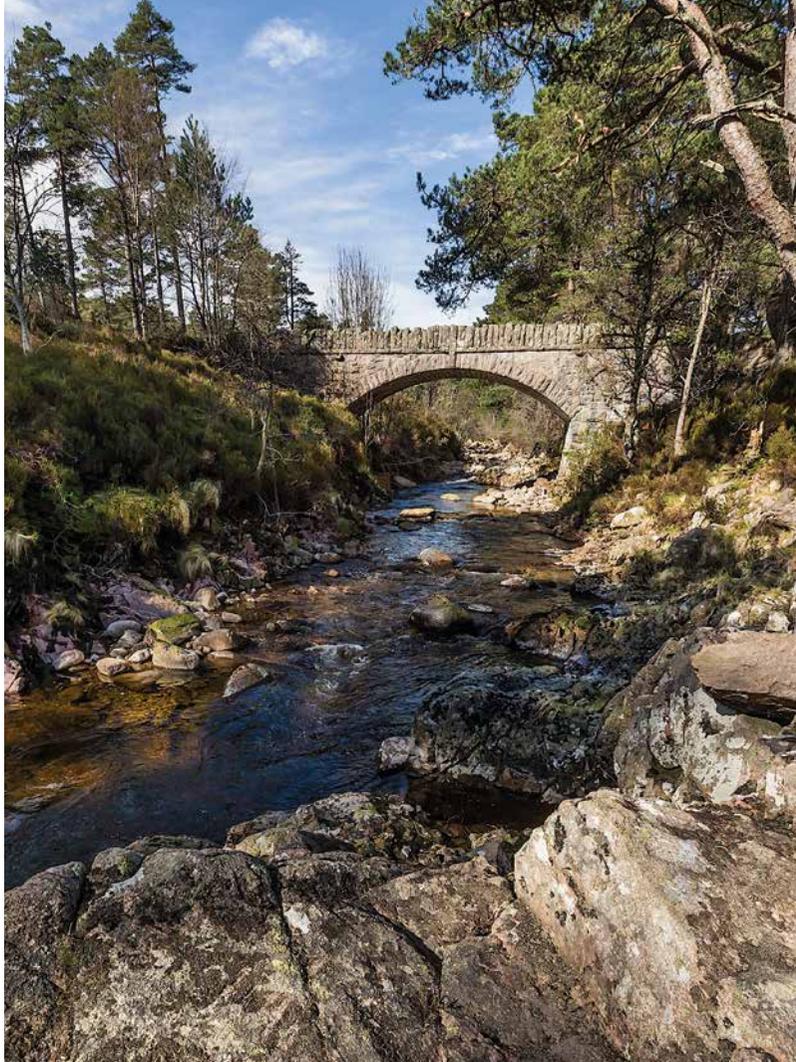
Words: Edel Harris

Image: Iain Wood

Swimming in a 50m, outdoor, salt water pool is one of the most pleasurable ways to spend your time. The opening day in May hails the start of summer and when the doors close in September I feel a real sense of loss.

I spend as much time in the pool as I can and have 24 years of fond memories including teaching my children to swim there - one of whom went on to win a swimming Gold medal in the Special Olympics in 2003 for Team GB.

The pool offers me quiet, reflective time and represents the one place where come rain or shine, I find peace.



Glen Tanar Estate



Words: Claire Bruce

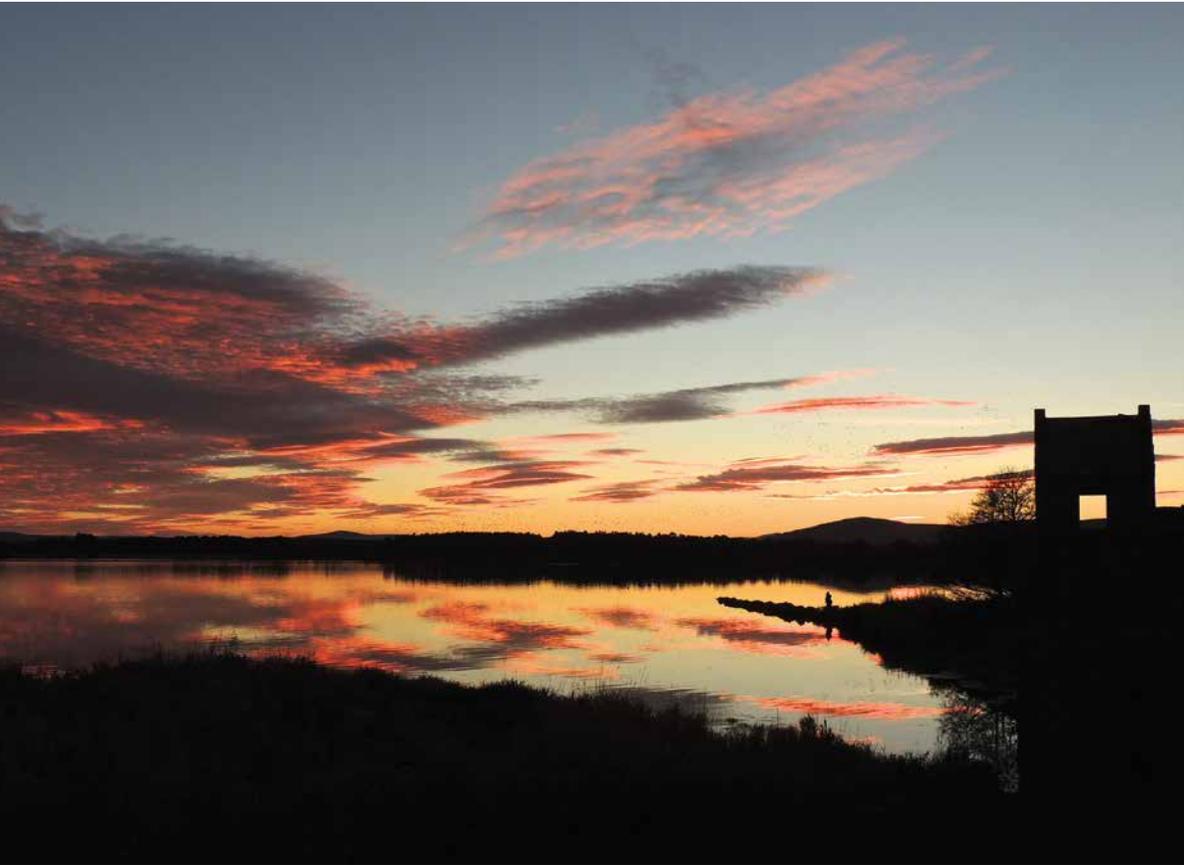
Image: Andy Hayes

Standing on the Porphyry Bridge over the 'Water of Tanar' you know you are in the midst of an ancient forest and a place of rich heritage. The Gaelic word 'Tanar' is said to refer to a thundering stream.

As I stand there I can imagine the fearless Glen Tanar men of the 'smuggling days' who brewed whisky in illicit stills that were hidden in remote parts of the glen. I can also picture the small communities of wood cutters who gathered after the illicit trade was abolished. The timber felled was floated down stream to Aberdeen for ship building.

Today, we are surrounded by the rich, diverse vegetation typical of an Ancient Caledonian Pine Forest. Listen to the sound of the river rumbling beneath the bridge, hear the birdsong and if you are quick you might catch the nervous gaze of a woodland deer.

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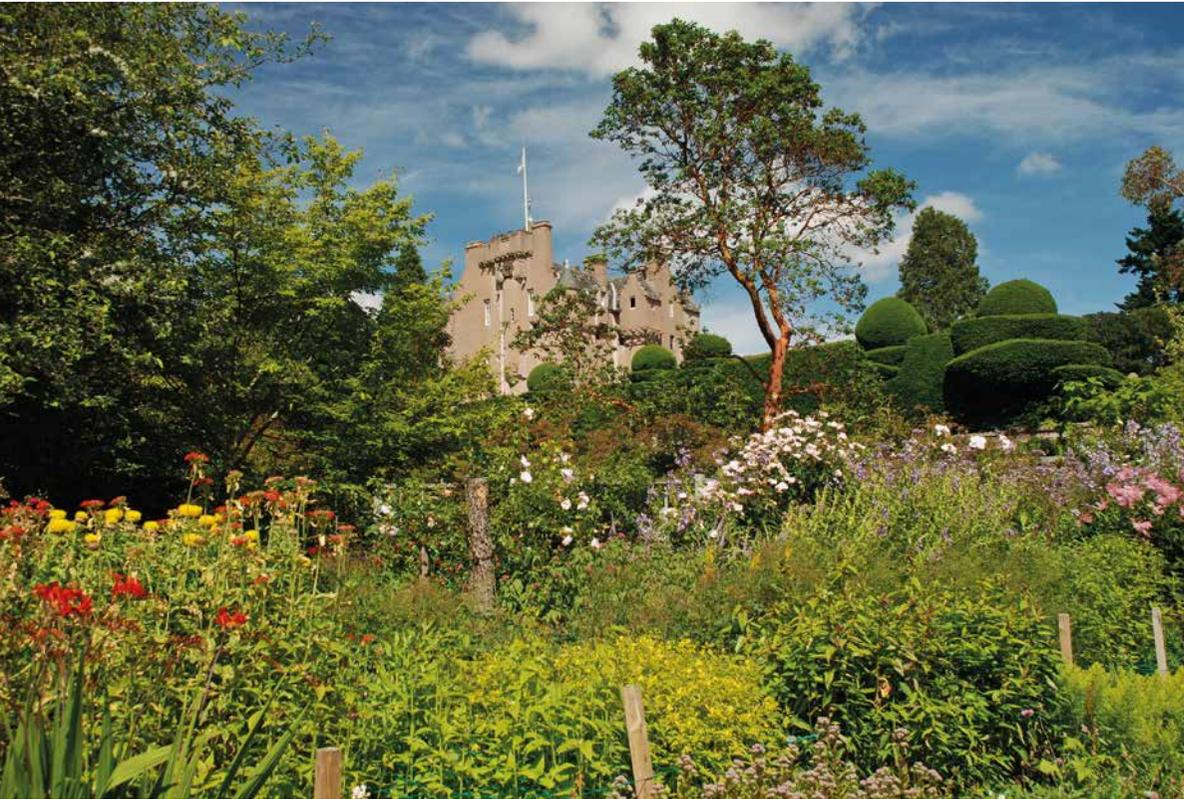
Loch Skene



Words & Image: Allan Rae

Loch of Skene is my favourite place to photograph as it is a place with a calmness, stillness and natural beauty, set within Dunecht Estate and a backdrop to the south which sets a perfect canvas for capturing the stunning skiescapes and sunsets on reflective water through the year.

It is one of the few open areas in Aberdeenshire and adds very much to the character of the area.



Crathes Castle and Garden



Words & Image: Ian Talboys

Crathes Castle, its lairds and estate with the sights, colours, textures and smells in the garden changing every day are full of history whilst still being a working landscape. Look closely and it's also home to an array of wildlife including red squirrels, song thrushes, blackbirds and bats. These resident species are joined by nature's tourists like swallows from Africa and painted lady butterflies from southern Europe coming for their summer holidays.





The Cairn at the top of Creag Choinnich
Joint overall winning image



Words: Trevor Garlick
Image: Iain Wood

I regularly visit this viewpoint which overlooks the village of Braemar, the Rivers Cluny and Dee and to the Cairngorms beyond. It's hard to stand there and not reflect on the first folk who came, from whichever route, and decided to start a settlement at the junction of the two valleys.



Rainbow at Slains

Joint overall winning image



Words & Image: Susan Laskey

Cruden Bay holds a special place in my heart. I love listening to the sound of the sea lapping over the rocks, watching the tide fill the rock pools as it comes back in. The pleasure of walking on the beautiful sandy beach, I listen to the crashing of the waves against the seashore. From the village car park, a peaceful walk takes you through the woods, past a stream and up to Slains Castle where Bram Stoker got the idea for his book, Dracula.

One time, whilst walking on the beach with camera in hand, I met someone as he was walking his dog. We met again several years later, we then got together and now live at Cruden Bay, close to the beach. I have all this on my doorstep.





Storm Clouds



Words: Kate Ferguson

Image: David Watson Hood

Being born in Turriff, this rural town has always been special to me. The rich surrounding agricultural land, the nearby River Deveron stocked with salmon and trout and the vast open skies make this area such an attraction.

This image captures an atmospheric landscape showing looming storm clouds over a field just before the onset of rain. It's very reflective of Turriff and agriculture.

Known as the jewel of the North East, Turriff is surrounded by historic castles and has interesting stories such as that of the famous Turra Coo. The town is also well known for the largest two-day agricultural show in Scotland.

But most importantly it's the people that make a place. The people of Turriff care; for their community, the local environment and ably support many local organisations and charities.



Prop of Ythsie



Words: Prof Ferdinand von Prondzynski

Image: Alexander Cowie

I nominate the Prop of Ythsie as a special place, in part because of the really important historical people and developments associated with it, including Lord Aberdeen, Prime Minister in the 19th century. I live just a couple of hundred yards away from the monument and can see it from my house. It is a monument that symbolises some interesting history, a period during which Aberdeenshire was at the heart of UK and more global politics.

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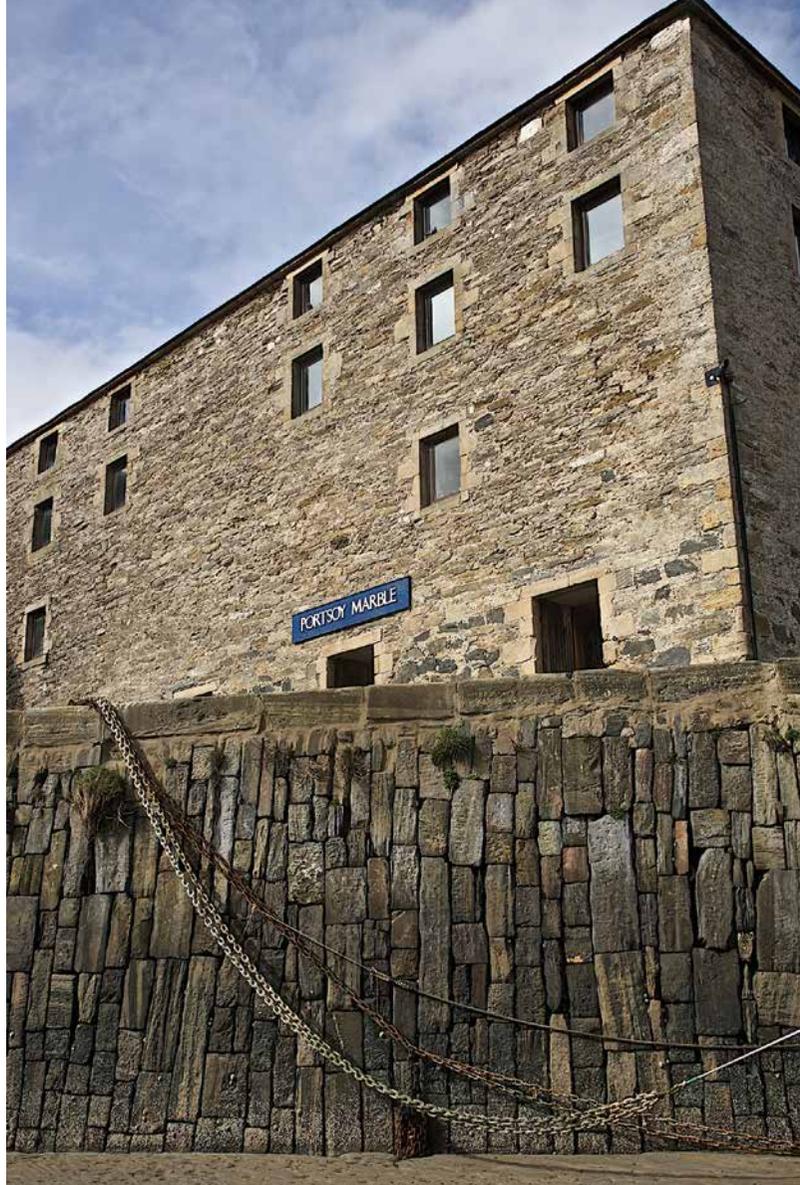
Loch
Muick,
Ballater



Words: Prof Sir Ian Diamond

Image: Ian Parkhill

My favourite place in Aberdeenshire is the top of the lightning path above Loch Muick. Here you get a sense of the real space and beauty that is Aberdeenshire as well as its accessibility to the wider world.



The Corfe House, Portsoy



Words: Brian Shand

Image: Andy Hall

I am a local loon, born, bred and educated in Macduff. I have been making my living at Portsoy Pottery since 1971. The pottery is situated in The Corfe House built in the 1760's for Lord Findlater by John Adam at the side of the 17th Century harbour that was built by Sir Patrick Ogilvie.

I set up the pottery having first ventured into Aberdeen to Grays School of Art. The view from my studio has over the years inspired my work – the stonework, the boats, the seas and ever changing light. Part of the delight of being in one place for so long is the privilege of making for locals and visitors alike for special occasions and for every day. I am happy to have welcomed customers whose children and now grandchildren come to my pottery. It's great to have been able to be so creative for so long in what was Banffshire and is now Aberdeenshire – I am delighted to have been 'hame drafted'.

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Stonehaven Harbour



Words: Sir Moir Lockhead OBE
Image: Joan Remington

I have a special connection with Stonehaven as it's where me and my wife have shared many memorable moments with our grandchildren, especially the youngest.

We take a special trip there every Friday to have fish and chips on the sea front and ice cream from the local sweet shop.



Hill of Morven



Words: Frieda Morrison

Image: Jim Henderson

From across the croft field where I live in Birse this is the first thing I see every morning, my spiritual hill. Sunsets over the hill are spectacular and very evocative of Aberdeenshire. You can read the light and use the hill as a barometer for the rest of the day. It has always been a very spiritual area for people who come from Aberdeenshire. In winter the hill has a constant topping of icing. You can look out over the valley from part way up the hill.

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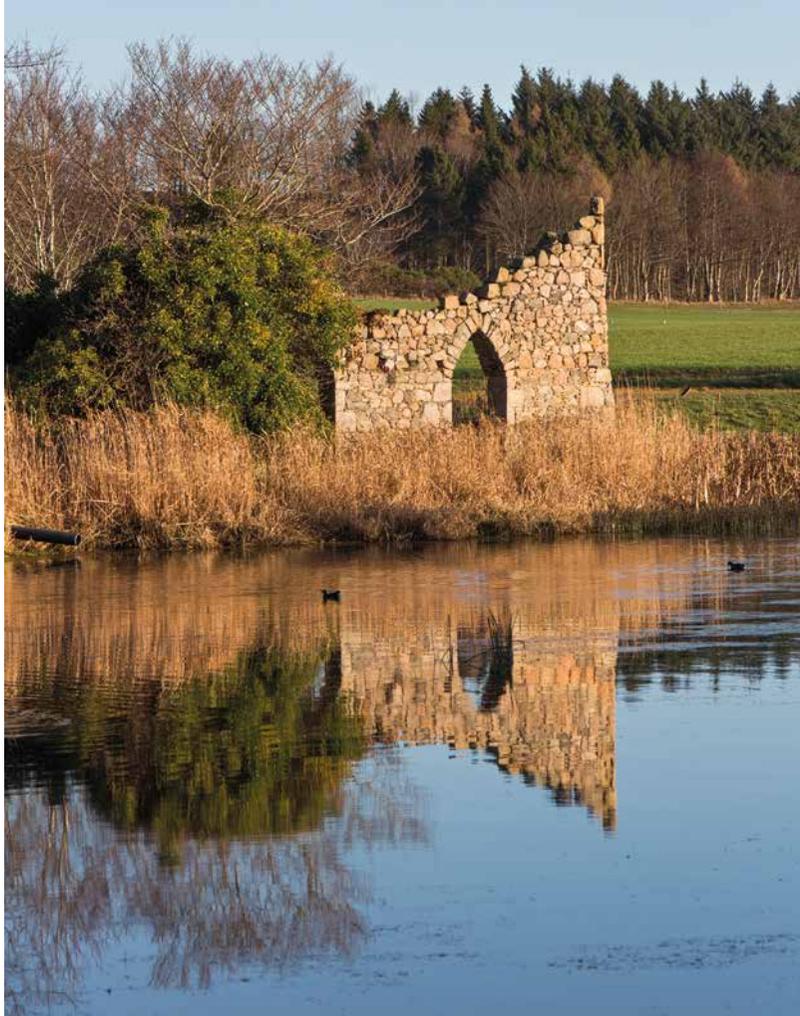
Woodend Barn Wild Garden



Words: Mark Hope

Image: Eric Swan

I envisage a view from the Wild Garden behind Woodend Barn Arts Centre and Buchanan's Bistro. Perhaps taken from the top of the wild garden's 'cairn' - a pile of large stones dug out of the old mill pond - looking over the Barn towards Clachnaben and Scolty Hill in the distance. It would contain the beautiful Aberdeenshire sky, wild garden and edge of the allotments in the foreground, over the converted farm buildings (a disused agricultural barn now transformed into a thriving arts centre).



The Folly, Pitfour Lake



Words & Image: Kathleen Laird

It was a dream of mine when I retired to return to the Mintlaw area where I grew up. What I like most is the peace and quiet and to watch and photograph the wildlife.

My favourite place is Pitfour Estate. The lake is full of swans and ducks and it is a pleasure to watch sygnets and ducklings grow over the summer months. There is even a pair of breeding ospreys in the area. From here it is an easy walk to Drinnies Wood with its Stone Circle and Observatory and White Cow Wood beyond. From the top of the Observatory you have a panoramic view of the surrounding areas – it's well worth the climb.

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Cullykhan Bay



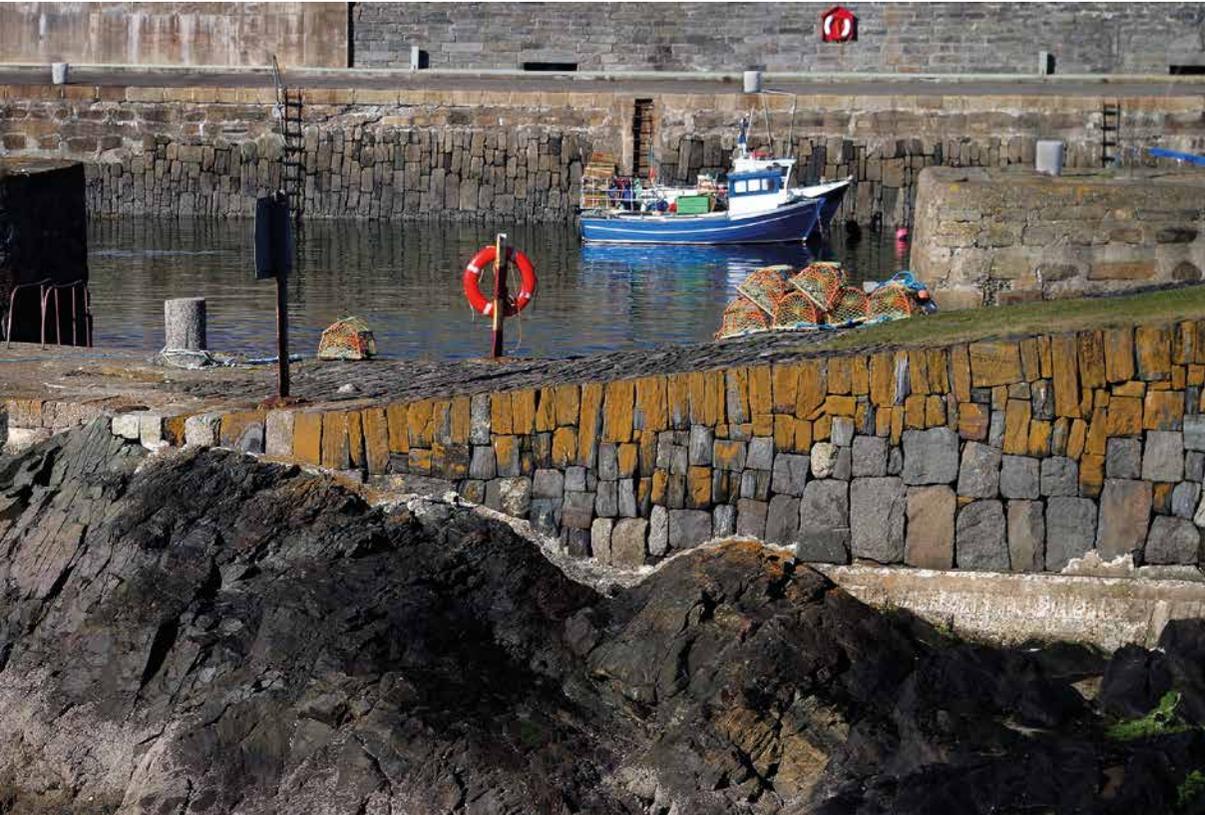
Words: Maggie Slessor

Image: Andy Hall

Not many people know about this place on the Fraserburgh coast. When clambering down to the bay you will see a cliff edge on your left; wait until the tide goes out and walk further down and over the rocks. You will spot an opening in the rock face that looks like a key hole just big enough for a person to get through.

On the other side, the array of rocks and dungeons are fascinating. Some have grass growing in and within them even though the sea comes in daily.

Before I emigrated to Australia we spent many happy family times at Cullykhan Bay. 'Through the keyhole' is a place where I found Peace, often finding not another soul there.



Old Harbour at Portsoy



Words: Roger Goodyear MBE
Image: Pat Copner

It is 26 years since I discovered Portsoy on Aberdeenshire's northern coast. Brought up in Troon in Ayrshire, the sea has always been important to me and so it was that on finding the town's fascinating harbour I knew I had found the place I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

Scenically beautiful and historically important, it is a harbour with a special charm and whether it's the peace of a spring morning or the roar and crash of wind and sea in a full blown northerly, its appeal is unchanging. Add to that the amazing people who make up Portsoy's community and you have a place that is truly magical.





River Dee, off the Deeside railway line



Words: Keaton Irvine

Image: Andy Hall

A picture is worth a thousand words - for me this picture is worth a thousand memories. I have lived in the same house, in the same village, for all 23 years of my life and have spent countless hours sat at this bench, contemplating and appreciating all the things life has thrown at me.

However, each year hosts one or two visits which have left a more distinctive memory. I have experienced some of my most nerve wracking moments of my life on this bench, I have been more elated than you've ever seen a person be at this bench and cried on the phone to my family from this bench.

As at least once a year I've sat here alone looking at the river, the beautiful river that runs through my home town, to read the outcomes of some of the most important benchmarks in my life.

Living in Scotland has taught me that beauty is simple and has truly shown me that, "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."
(John Muir)



Crovie



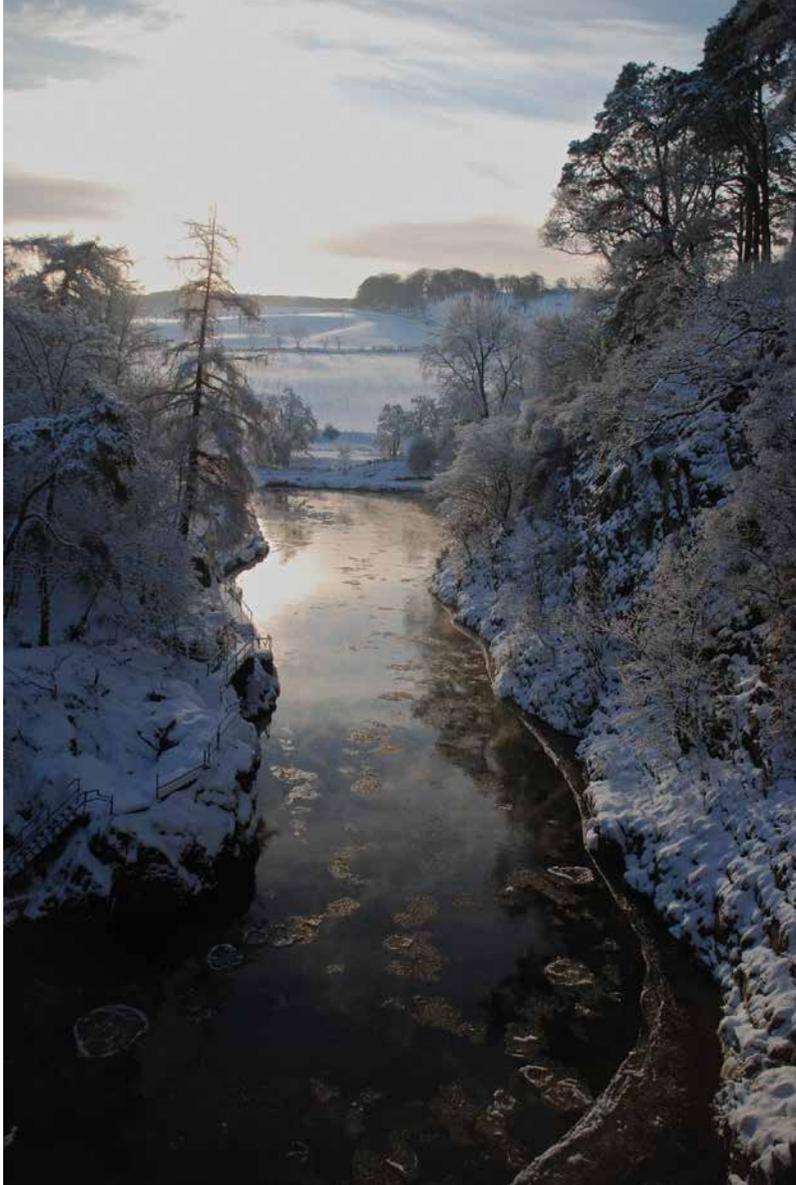
Words & Image: David Porter

The coastal village of Crovie is an eclectic mix of traditional housing related to the historical fishing community and while the fishing fleet is gone, the sense of identity and association remains, making it a unique location for photography due to its sheltered location, bright and vibrant paint schemes and postcard looks which are maintained by its small band of full time residents.

Crovie is the exemplary village when it comes to fishing heritage, showing how the smaller communities lived and survived and coming from a family with a heritage of sea-going there is both an old-world charm and intimate connection with the village which makes it special for many reasons. While nearby Pennan is more well known for its film association, it is Crovie that retains the feel of being a true part of our history.



Belonging



View from the Bridge of Alvah



Words & Image: Caron Westmorland

The Bridge of Alvah has been a favourite spot of mine since I moved to the Banff area over twenty years ago.

The winding track that goes from Duff House to the Bridge of Alvah is an ever changing vista that shows off the seasons and north east woodland environment with great aplomb. A place of colour, texture and light it invites you to explore further and further until the reward of the view from the bridge.

It is a place used by all sections of the community: families, runners, dog walkers and provides visitors with an easy connection between coast and countryside. Indeed anyone coming to stay with us can be guaranteed that a 'walk to the bridge' will be on the cards at some point.



Rock Hall
Fishing Station,
St Cyrus



Words & Image: Colin Prior

My connection with St Cyrus goes back to my childhood when we made regular visits from our holiday home in Montrose. At the time there was a thriving salmon fishing industry, which I regret not documenting in its heyday.

All that now remains are three converted fishing stations and a couple of headstones in the Nether Kirkyard which bear the inscription of 'Salmon Fisher'. Both Rock Hall and Woodston fishing stations possess circular subterranean 'ice-houses' built into the hillside where salmon and sea trout were stored in ice which was originally collected from the river North Esk.

In the photographs I made of St Cyrus, I attempted to capture something of its past fishing heritage. The image of Rock Hall Fishing Station, taken early in my career, shows the original poles on which the nets were hung out to dry.



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TO ABERDEENSHIRE

This book shows us in images and words the powerful relationships people have with places and the true diversity of Aberdeenshire.

If you have been inspired by this project and are interested in developing your knowledge of photography and camera skills, there are a number of clubs which meet regularly across Aberdeenshire including:

Peterhead Camera Club

www.peterheadcameraclub.org.uk

Ellon Photographic Group

www.ellonphotographicgroup.co.uk

Mearns Camera Club

www.mearnscameraclub.co.uk

Deeside Photographic Society

www.deesidecameraclub.org

Fraserburgh Photographic Society

www.fraserburghps.weebly.com

Deveron Camera Club

www.deveroncameraclub.co.uk

Donside Camera Club

<http://farm4.clik.com/donsidecc>

Oldmeldrum Camera Club

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/clubs