



**1978 - 2018**

**WELCOME TO BLAIRGOWRIE & RATTRAY**



**'Holland Baby' Tulips - Spring 2018**

Situated on the banks of the River Ericht in picturesque north east Perthshire, Blairgowrie & Rattray is rooted in an industrial past with the growth of flax and later jute mills. With the decline of the industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, attention was drawn to soft fruit farming and the town became known as the 'Berry Toon'. Whilst berry growing is still a focus for the town, restrictions in employing casual labour and a need to provide good accommodation for the casual workforce has brought a change in the industry. Some farms continue to grow berries but in much reduced numbers, relying on the workforce from Eastern European countries to pick the fruit.

The town is now largely dependent on tourism which, together with a small number of diverse employers, makes up the bulk of employment opportunities.

The population is now around 10,000 making it the largest town in Perth & Kinross.

## Introduction

Blairgowrie & Rattray in Bloom was formed in 1978, which makes 2018 our 40<sup>th</sup> (Ruby) anniversary year. It was the first Bloom group in Perth & Kinross. Behind every Bloom group is an army of dedicated volunteers and committee members and Blair in Bloom is no exception. We have a dedicated committee of seven, plus 16 local volunteers who turn out whatever the weather to plant, weed, prune, litter pick etc to ensure the town looks as good as it can.

The group raises all its annual planting from plugs each year in a heated polytunnel. These are then used to make up hanging baskets, which are sold to local businesses. Every year we are heartened by their support and this year we sold 102 baskets, which give a colourful focus throughout the town.

We are supported by our local Councillors and we work closely with the local authority's Community Greenspace Team concerning the public areas such as the Wellmeadow and riverside. Whilst we are not responsible for the upkeep of these two areas, we are very obviously keen that they look as good as possible and we help with weeding, litter picking etc when necessary. Members of other voluntary groups such as BRAN (Blairgowrie & Rattray Access Network), Blairgowrie & Rattray Community Council and Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust assist us with some of the heavier tasks such as removal of old planting, containers or hard landscaping. The support from local schools with planting spring/autumn bulbs, annual planting of tubs and containers is always enthusiastically given. St Stephen's RC Primary School recently received its Green Flag and has a thriving gardening club.

The past twelve months has been a year of change for Blair in Bloom. Our Chair of 10+ years Helen McCann and her husband left the area so a new Committee has been formed.

The Committee is now:

- Honorary President            Sir William MacPherson of Cluny
- Chair                                Mary Birch
- Vice Chair                        Pat Lumsden
- Secretary                        Sheenach Shepherd
- Treasurer                        Andrea Graham
- Members                         Janine Seymour, Avril Wilson, Phil Seymour

### Volunteers:

Hanne Anton, Chris Campbell, Marjory Carnegie, Ersell Carruthers, Anne Dow, Joyce & Mike Jones, Jean Laburn, Wendy Mackey, Jan McHugh, Jacki McCorkindale, Nichola McCourty, Barbara Oswald, Kate Patterson, Morag Reid, Moira Somerville.

We took the decision not to enter into either the Take a Pride in Perthshire or Beautiful Scotland competitions in 2017, but rather to take a step back, take stock and concentrate on improving certain areas. Two of our projects for this year are ongoing, namely the upgrading of Coronation Corner and a replacement 'golf related' structure at the corner of Golf Course Road/Perth Road. These have proved to be taking longer than first anticipated and Coronation Corner in particular has become major redesign project, but we hope both will be completed by 2019.

## SECTION A – HORTICULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT

In previous years Blair in Bloom has been awarded a Gold Medal in Beautiful Scotland campaigns, along with Best Town and Best Involvement with Youth awards in the Take a Pride in Perthshire competition. The new Committee, along with our volunteers, has a highly regarded reputation to live up to.

### YEAR ROUND PROGRAMME

In the Autumn of 2017 to mark the start of the A93 'Snow Road' from Blairgowrie, 1000 white crocuses were planted on the verge at the Westfields car park in Balmoral Road. These will be added to year-on-year. The Westfields vintage 'Berry Cart' was also planted in white. More crocuses were planted along the 'crocus walk' in Elm Drive by local school children. On the corner of Golf Course Road/Perth Road 1000 Tete-a-Tete daffodils were planted with the help of the Community Payback Team.



The Westfields vintage Berry Cart – December 2017

Spring 2018 - crocuses, planted with the help of local school children in the Autumn.



Spring 2018 – Tete-a-Tete daffodils on the corner of Golf Course Road, Perth Road

As 2018 is the Ruby Anniversary of Blair in Bloom, we have reflected this theme in our planting this year. Tulips planted in containers around the town during the autumn of 2017 put on a tremendous show in April/May this year, prompting many messages of delight in the colour they provided in the town. The variety was Holland Baby and the bulbs have been saved to plant again this coming autumn.



Spring 2018  
Holland Baby Tulips



June 2018 – hanging baskets ready to go out

The baskets were put out with the help of the local Fire Brigade and volunteers.

Regular work is carried out on the four large herbaceous borders for which we are responsible, where trees, perennials and grasses have been planted to reduce the use of annuals.

Volunteers giving the Ardblair herbaceous bed a spring clean



We have a wildflower roundabout which is re-sown every year and this year, once again, we have included more red poppies to reflect our Ruby Anniversary. The heather and evergreen bed at the corner of Golf Course Road is being replanted and a new structure is at the drawing-board stage to replace the 'ageing golfer' who sadly collapsed last year with metal fatigue.

The 'Berries & Cherries' bed on the main road into Blairgowrie from Coupar Angus, is cared for by Blairgowrie & Rattray Community Council and is regularly weeded and planting refreshed where necessary.

## **SECTION B – ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

At our Mount Ericht site we have compost areas which we use as mulch on our herbaceous borders. We also use peat free recycled compost and bark supplied by Perth & Kinross Council. For our hanging baskets we use peat free compost supplied by the local nursery. We are using more trees, perennials and grasses to try to reduce the energy and cost of raising annuals.

Spring bulbs have been planted throughout the town, which provide nectar for insects in the early part of the year. Two cherry trees planted to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee in 2012 also extend the availability of spring nectar, which will be another food source for the bees. We use coffee grounds supplied by a local restaurant to spread around hostas to deter slugs. As mentioned above, our 'Berries & Cherries' bed has been planted to reflect the fruit grown in the area and the fruit can be picked by the public, or used by local restaurants.

A monthly Community Market is held in The Wellmeadow, where local produce is sold, or distributed free, thus reducing food miles. In 2017 the first apple pressing festival was held, where anyone with a glut of apples could get them pressed. Bags of free apples were also distributed at various points around the town for people to help themselves. It was very successful and is being held again in the autumn of 2018.

Recycling - There is a well used local amenity site for recycling, plus four secondary sites in the town. All local residents have blue bins for paper/plastic/cardboard/tin, brown bins for garden/food waste (although these now have to be paid for at £25 per annum) and green bins for household waste.

All Things Fair – a fair-trade shop in the town, which stocks a wide variety of fair-trade goods and ethically sourced accessories.

Wisecraft – an organisation run for people with mental health issues, run by Perth & Kinross Voluntary Service, which uses recycled wood and other resources to make items for sale. They also use our large polytunnel at Mount Ericht over the winter.

## **SECTION C – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust** – formed in the second half of 2017 between The Ericht Trust and One Voice to create an umbrella organisation supporting the various groups in the community.

They now have their own premises, which is where we will be taking the judges for the presentation and where they will have the opportunity to meet members of other organisations and volunteers. Blair in Bloom is represented on BRDT.

**The Riverside Venture Group** has been formed to improve the riverside for the local community and make it more attractive for visitors. Two members of Blair in Bloom's committee represent us on this group and will be involved in the planting of native wild flowers around the Cuttle Burn area of the riverside.

**Loon Braes** – we are working closely with the Community Greenspace team of Perth & Kinross Council to take forward plans to regenerate the site as a nature park. We shared a stall at the first Community Market in April with the Greenspace Ranger to promote both Blair in Bloom and to hear first-hand the views of the community regarding the future of the site. We also had sunflower seeds for children to plant.



April 2018 – the Community Market

**Cornerstones Nursery** – We were asked in the Spring to visit Cornerstones Nursery to discuss ideas for their garden. They are working towards their Green Flag and wanted some ideas how to involve the children. We suggested raised beds, to avoid little feet trampling over the plants! We went back to visit them in late May and helped them plant seeds and sunflower plants. They are very enthusiastic gardeners.

**St Stephen's RC Primary School** – In January 2018 we held a competition for local organisations/schools/individuals to design a replacement golf-related structure to replace the metal golfer who had stood at the junction of Golf Course Road/Perth Road for 20 years. He collapsed with metal fatigue in 2017. The children from St Stephen's came up with the winning design of thistles made from old golf clubs.

The winning design, chosen by Blair in Bloom in conjunction with Blairgowrie Golf Club.



With some financial sponsorship from Blairgowrie Golf Club, we are taking the design forward with renowned sculptor David Wilson and hope that by spring 2019 a new structure will be in position.

**Create at Nest** – the craft hub situated in the town has been instrumental in organising yarn bombing for various parts of the town. Following a chance remark at a meeting late last year that we would ‘paint the town red’ for our Ruby Anniversary, the idea for yarn bombing was born. We have held drop-in sessions at The Nest, promoted it on our Facebook and Twitter pages, had lots of publicity in the local press, involved schools, the local SWI and other groups. Together with individuals from all over the area and beyond, we now plan to yarn bomb various areas of the town in time for judging. The response has been tremendous and really caught the imagination of everyone.



A yarn bombing drop-in session for crafters at Create at Nest – April 2018

**Blairgowrie Golf Club** – until summer 2017, we had a polytunnel situated at the BGC. However, due to increased insurance regulations we were no longer able to access the site so had to dismantle our polytunnel. This is now in the process of being re-sited at our Mount Ericht site, to provide additional space for working and storage. The golf club continue to support us in our project to find a replacement structure for the golfer. They have provided financial support of £500 towards the cost and old golf clubs/balls to be used in the design and construction of the structure. They were also involved in judging the entries to the competition.

**Strathmore Centre for Youth Development** – the young people of SCYD help with the Community Market every month and were responsible for distributing produce from the ‘Berries & Cherries’ bed free of charge. Some years ago, we worked with SCYD to build a garden/meeting area on a derelict site in the town. From September, there will be youngsters from the local High School helping Blair in Bloom in order to learn gardening skills. The school is now in the process of setting up a gardening club.

**Blairgowrie & Rattray Access Network (BRAN)** – this hardworking group has taken over responsibility for the path network in and around Blairgowrie. They have been extremely helpful to us with any heavy work and have cleared the Mount Ericht site on more than one occasion. We work closely with them and two of our volunteers are also members of BRAN, so there is lots of cross-referencing. They also help with any litter picks we organise.

**Rattray & District SWI** – the Scottish Women’s Institute celebrated its centenary in 2017 and to mark this special anniversary, each institute in Scotland planted a tree. A rowan tree was chosen by Rattray & District SWI to plant in Coronation Corner. This is currently being looked after by a member of our committee whilst our revamp of the site is ongoing. It will be replanted in Coronation Corner at a suitable time. The Institute also held a ‘yarn bombing’ evening when members knitted, sewed & crocheted various items for us. Our Chair, Mary Birch gave a talk to the members on the history of Blair in Bloom and our plans for the future.

**Take a Pride in Perthshire Association** – Mary Birch is also secretary of the Association, which keeps us in touch with other Bloom Groups. Also through their Project Development Manager, assistance is provided for applying for funding and carrying out projects.

**Ericht Allotment Association** – Plants left over from our annual plant sale were donated to the EAA for planting in their community bed. Produce from this bed can be harvested by members of the community who do not have their own allotment. In October 2018, we will be sharing a week long ‘pop up’ charity shop with them and splitting the proceeds.

**Community Payback Team** – they have been extremely helpful in doing a lot of heavy work for us such as removing the pergola at Coronation Corner and lifting turf for bulb planting.

## FINANCE

### Sponsorship, Donations, Grant Funding & Fund Raising

Annual Grant from Perth & Kinross Council	£2800
*Tesco Bags for Help (Grant Funding)	£4000
**Community Environment Challenge Fund (Grant Funding)	£8500
McCarthy & Stone (Sponsorship)	£ 500
Blairgowrie Golf Club (Sponsorship)	£ 500
Donations	£ 700
Coffee Morning (November 2017)	£ 470
Easter Raffle	£ 395
Sale of Hanging Baskets	£5100
Plant Sale	£ 425
Scottish Water	£ 500

*\* £3000 given initially and final £1000 on completion of project*

*\*\* Not given as a lump sum, but payable on submission of invoices for materials or work completed*

### Support in Kind

Admin Hours (to date) @ £7.50 per hour	126hrs	£ 945
Volunteer Hours (to date) @ £7.50 per hour	560hrs	£4200
Volunteer Hours for Litter Pick £7.50per hour x 42 volunteers		£ 630
Free use of meeting room at Blairgowrie Fire Station		£ 240
Community Payback work throughout the year		£2500
R Smith Contractor - site clearing and supply of gravel		£ 500
Support from professional sculptor with Golf Course Road Project @ £150 per hour x 4 hours to date		£ 600

## FUTURE PLANS

- **Coronation Corner** - As mentioned earlier, we are in the process of doing a major upgrade to the site, which has the potential to be a pleasant and inviting place for residents and visitors alike. We have removed the imposing pergola which made the site very dark. The planting has been removed, with some plants stored for replanting and others sold at our annual plant sale. Having successfully secured funds from both Tesco Bags for Help and the Community Environment Challenge Fund we now plan to redo the path network with resin bonded material to make the layout of the site accessible for all. Drawings are in the process of being finalised, on receipt of which we can apply to PKC for a License to Occupy.
- **'Golfer Bed'** – following the winning design being chosen for a new structure on this site, we have received a more detailed sketch from the sculptor David F Wilson. We can now proceed with obtaining the necessary permissions for this to be placed on the site and hope it will be in situ by spring 2019. Some funding for this sculpture has been granted from the Community Environment Challenge Fund.
- **Loon Braes Parknership** – we will continue to work with LBP on the regeneration of this area.
- **Nurseries and Schools** – we will continue to support the local nurseries and schools who are working towards their Eco Awards.
- **Bulb Planting** – we will continue to plant spring bulbs to ensure that early nectar plants are available for insects and will maintain our links with the local Rotary Club to promote their PolioPlus campaign.
- We will also renew/refurbish containers around the town during the coming winter with the help of the Community Payback Team, who plan to take them back to their workshop to work on during the winter months.
- Increase the use perennial and herbaceous plants in containers to reduce the need for annual bedding plants.
- We hope to have new signage in place for 2019, with funding awarded by the Community Environment Challenge Fund.

## COMMUNICATIONS

We have our own Facebook (Blairinbloom) and twitter accounts (@blairinbloom) which regularly updated with events, work being carried out each week and lots of photographs. Social media has proved to be an important and efficient way of promoting the work we carry out and of advising of forthcoming events. It is also a good way of asking for volunteers to help with such events as litter picks.

The local press – The Courier and Blairgowrie Advertiser – cover our activities and advise of forthcoming plans, events etc.

An article is put in The Hub magazine, a quarterly publication for residents of the town, advising of our plans.

Posters are put up around the town advising of forthcoming events.

We give talks to local organisations such as the WI and Ladies Tangent group.

The majority of our members also volunteer, or are involved with other community groups in the town, such as Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust, Blairgowrie & Rattray Community Council, Blairgowrie & Rattray Access Network, Rattray & District WI, Blairgowrie Rotary Club, The Garden Network, Take a Pride in Perthshire to name but a few.

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In conclusion, we would like to say that we look forward to welcoming our judges Jenny Sibbald and John MacLennan on the afternoon of Friday 10 August and hope they enjoy their visit to our friendly town.

Mary Birch  
Chair  
Blairgowrie & Rattray in Bloom