



Portlethen Moss Conservation Group

Portlethen Moss - Origins

Craighead Badentoy Stone Circle
This is a reconstructed "circle"

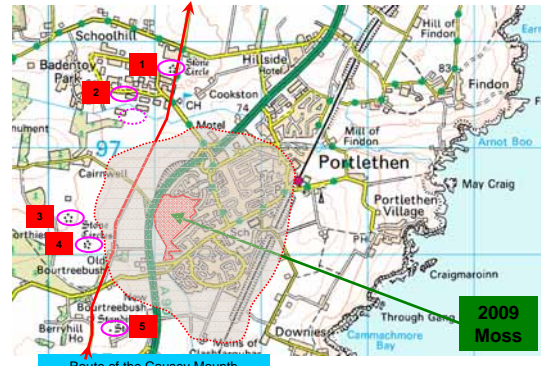
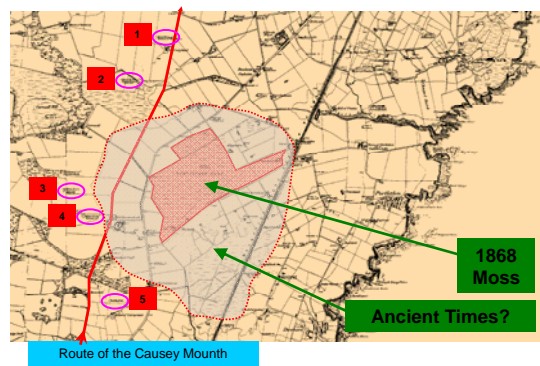


1



2

Cairnwell Ring Cairn
In 1995, a total excavation and reconstruction (175m from original site) was carried out.



Portlethen Moss Event 31st May '09
As part of the annual Local Nature Reserve celebrations Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service organised a workshop "Mosses Past and Present" to look at the ecology, history and culture of Portlethen Moss which was attended by 11 enthusiasts, many of them active members of the Portlethen Moss Conservation Group.

Botanist and environmental consultant Dr. Andy McMullen began by giving a fascinating presentation on bogs and their history in Portlethen Academy. It being a beautiful sunny day the group soon decamped to the Moss to explore the nature of the site itself. Moss habitat is especially valuable today as so much of it has been lost – Scotland still has a significant amount of what is left of the world's remaining bog. Though much of the Moss has been lost to previous housing development, the group was pleased to hear that the core area is still a living, working bog able to sustain many of the key species associated with it.

The highlight of the day was undoubtedly when Dr. McMullen sunk his coring instrument beneath the Moss to bring up samples to a depth of up to 3 metres and going back **11,000 years** in time. Perfectly preserved pieces of birch and alder trees up to 10,000 years old and seeds of plants growing on the bog in former times were looked at. He was able to deduce from the samples that the bog was formerly a fen and before that (as the deepest and earliest samples were pure silt) a lake.

Previous usage by people was also explored and areas cut for peat can still be clearly seen. Those who attended went away a great deal more knowledgeable and appreciative of the worth of the Moss – historically and as a green space, a place of varied and valuable biodiversity in a significantly expanding town

Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Natural Heritage jointly funded the event.

The **Causey Mounth** was the principle route between Aberdeen and Stonehaven. It was created (approx. 12th century AD) as an **elevated rock causeyway** to span many of the **boggy areas**, **Portlethen Moss being one such example**. It has been suggested that the **current Moss surface** height is around **3m lower** than it used to be, so it is not impossible to imagine that the **Moss** used to reach all the way over to the line of the Causey Mounth in centuries gone by!

Near **Portlethen**, alongside the **Causey Mounth** and possibly skirting the edge of the ancient **Portlethen Moss**, there are a number of prehistoric megalithic monuments; there are at least four stone circles (1-4) and one standing stone (5).

- (1) Craighead Badentoy Stone Circle
- (2) Cairnwell Ring Cairn
- (3) Aquhorthies Stone Circle
- (4) Old Bourtreebush Stone Circle
- (5) Hilton of Cairngrassie Standing Stone

Just **slightly to the West** (but not described here) there are a great number of **Ring Cairns** and **Hut Circles**; further evidence that this was a well used corner of Scotland even in Ancient Times!



3



4

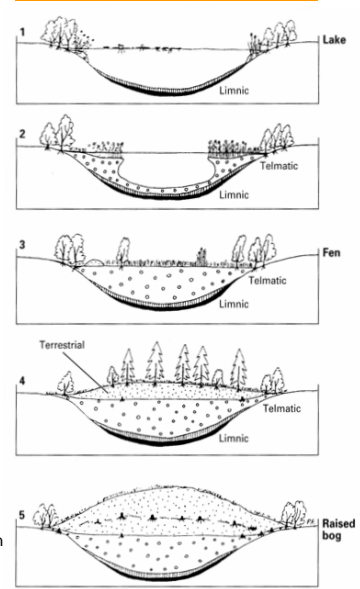


5

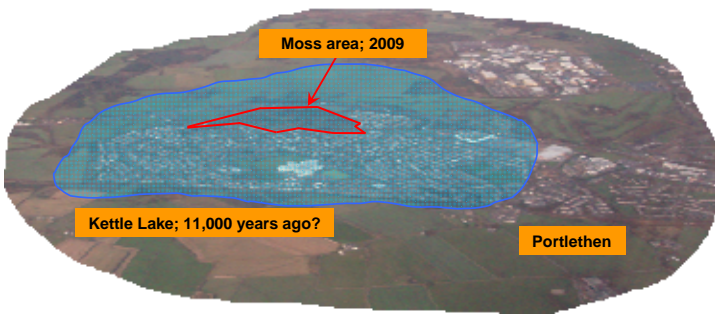
Some of the silt and other items that were cored from 3m depth



Development of a Raised Bog



Chunks of ice press into land



Ice melts slowly, leaving hollows called "Kettle Holes"

Could the whole Portlethen Moss area have been a "Kettle Lake" originally ?

Kettle Holes occur when blocks of ice calve off from the front of a receding glacier (the last ice age to affect Britain ended approx **10,000 years** ago) then become partially buried. When the ice blocks melt, kettle holes are left. Most Kettle Holes are no larger than 2km in diameter and the general depth would be less than 10m.

Kettle holes eventually fill with water, sediment or vegetation. It is known that Portlethen Moss only gets its water from precipitation, so it could be believed that the area used to be a Kettle Pond or Kettle Wetland, but then if the kettle becomes acidic due to decomposing organic plant matter, which is the situation on Portlethen Moss, it becomes a Kettle Bog or Kettle Peatland, or more specifically in this area, a "**Raised Bog**".

Kettle Bogs are important ecological niches for some symbiotic species of flora and fauna!