

Press release from *Save Gillies Hill*

Efforts to preserve the historic Gillies Hill on the outskirts of Stirling reach a significant milestone next Tuesday (6 November) when its petition to the Scottish Parliament will be considered by the Parliament's Petitions Committee.

The *Save Gillies Hill* group, who have been campaigning since April to prevent the resumption of quarrying on the beautiful raised woodland that looks onto the site of the Battle of Bannockburn, remain upbeat. A spokesperson for *SGH* said; "Quarrying was originally scheduled to begin in the early summer. It's now November, and there's been no working at the existing quarry. We think that's because of the huge opposition that we represent."

The Gillies Hill was where on 24 June, 1314, Robert the Bruce stationed his *gillies*, or 'sma' folk', as the poet John Barbour termed them – the camp servants who travel with any army. At a decisive point in the battle, these servants emerged from the hillside, their pots, pans and kitchen utensils clashing in the summer sunshine. Edward II, thinking they were fresh Scottish troops, fled with the remnants of his already severely tested troops, and the battle was won,

Quarriers were granted permission to extend present workings in 2002 by Stirling Council. Local people claim there was no consultation: otherwise, this significant development would have been opposed then, on the same grounds as present: not only because of the Hill's historic dimension as almost the last physical remnant of the Battle of Bannockburn, but also because of its wild life and amenity value. It is much used by walkers, joggers, cyclists, climbers, bird-watchers, and children playing. It is also a haven for rare creatures such as red squirrels, peregrine falcons, badgers, and possibly even ospreys, as well as being the home of Scots Pines and rare Wellingtonia trees.

The *SGH* spokesperson went on: "It would be a tragedy if this historic site were lost, and it's good that the Parliament will be discussing our concerns at the same time as the Q.C. appointed by Stirling Council will also be examining them. The 3,000 local people who signed our Petition, and the many others who have supported us, nationally, and, indeed, internationally, represent a considerable body of opinion in favour of saving the Hill.

We fully understand that the Parliament itself cannot intervene: we are simply calling on it to debate and consider the need for legislation to protect historically important sites such as the Gillies Hill. But the very fact of our concerns about the Hill being discussed nationally, is a real fillip, and it's not misty-eyed romanticism to see a connection between the events of 24 June 1314, and the existence of the parliament as the symbolic heart of Scottish democracy."

SGH members will attend the Petition hearing

The Committee meeting will be broadcast live on the internet and can be viewed at www.holyrood.tv/committee.asp

Meanwhile, *Save Gillies Hill*'s beautiful 2008 calendar with its stunning photographs of the Hill throughout the seasons, is now on sale, price £7. Get your order in early, as these are sure to go fast.

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