

Save Gillies Hill

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Phone: 01786 463098

e-mail: ptpaterson@hotmail.co.uk

The Gillies of 1314 Descend on Bannockburn - Again

Save Gillies Hill, (SGH) the campaign to preserve the historic hillside that contributed so much to victory at Bannockburn in 1314, and now threatened with destruction through quarrying is confident of a large turnout in its *Re-Enactment of the Descent of the Gillies onto the Field of Bannockburn* on 22 June – the Sunday nearest the anniversary of the Battle.

Gillies Hill, 2 miles to the south of Stirling, was where Bruce stationed his 'sma' folk', as the 14th century poet John Barbour termed them, before the battle. These camp followers – cooks, armourers, servants – then, according to history, intervened dramatically at a crucial stage of the battle, descending from the Hill in the bright June sunshine, waving their pots and pans and the like in the air. The hard-pressed English, taking them for fresh Scottish troops, wilted and fled. The rest, as is often said, is history.

Last year though, Hanson Aggregates, part of Heidelberg Cement, one of the biggest aggregates companies in the world, announced plans to extend quarrying on the Hill after a lapse of many years. Much of the Hill, already scarred by decades of blasting, would have been lost.

However, local, and then national reaction was furious and immediate: *SGH* was set up, a petition to the Scottish Parliament gained unanimous support there, and the inaugural *Re-Enactment* took place last year when nearly 500 people strode over the Hill to Bannockburn Field in one of the wettest days of the year.

And protestors reaped their reward: no quarrying has taken place since the *Re-Enactment*, and Stirling Council conceded in January that their granting of permission in 2002 to extend quarrying, was legally flawed, and now also support the preservation of the Gillies Hill.

Yet the quarry company retains permission to begin quarrying at any time – up to 2042.

“That’s why”, said a spokesperson, “We’ve continued our campaign, and why we’ll be crossing the Hill again on 22 June: we want Hanson to be magnanimous and guarantee the preservation of what is really the last physical remnant of the Field of Bannockburn.”

Another reason for local anger is the destruction of a beautiful and environmentally vital landscape: peregrines, red squirrels, green woodpeckers, deer and badgers, all have their home there – and osprey have also been visitors. For many Stirling people, it’s also a place to walk, run, cycle, climb, or simply play: a very special precious place.

And that’s why organisers expect hundreds of locals, and some from much further afield, to repeat last year’s success: one protestor, Peggy Edwards, is even flying in from California.

The 2008 gillies will be piped onto the Field of Bannockburn, and addressed by local MSP and government minister Bruce Crawford who is wholeheartedly behind the campaign. Crawford Logan, the actor, will also speak.

With seven days to go, and considerable coverage certain in the national media, *SGH* is signalling its intent to any who still doubt its commitment: we’re in this to win – like the gillies of 1314.