

BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

Household Kinship Connections in Birse Parish

2001

(i) Introduction

The attached tables record the households in the parish with a direct kinship tie to one or more other household in the parish – father / mother, son / daughter, grandfather / grand mother, uncle / aunt.

In general terms, connections tend to be a sign of inter-generational continuity – families that have lived in the community for more than one generation. It should be noted, however, that single households (ie those with no connection) can be members of a longstanding and previously more extensive local family.

The percentage of households in a community that have kinship connections can be taken as a measure of “social capital” – factors such as the extent to which people in a community know each other or the potential level of ‘trust’ between residents. Higher levels of social capital tend to be considered one positive measure of community development potential.

(ii) Birse Parish

The data for Birse was compiled using the Electoral Registers for February 2001 and well informed local residents to identify the connections.

The total number of households in the parish was 256 and the number of these households with one or more connections was 80 or 31%. This is a relatively high figure.

It is considered that the figure is higher than would be found in communities:-

- (a) to the east (closer to Aberdeen), where commuters and property prices have reduced the number of families that have been resident for more than one generation;
- (b) to the west of Birse where communities have been more economically marginal and fewer families have survived more than one generation. This latter fact is partially reflected in Ballater having over 50% retirement households and Braemar over 50% second homes.

It appears that Birse parish, potentially in common with some other parts of Mid Deeside, has generally been far enough away from the regional centre for the community not to be displaced and close enough not to be too economically marginal.

(iii) Halves of the Parish

There appeared to be no kinship connections between the halves of the parish, Finzean (134 households) and Birse & Ballogie (122 households).

There were also marked difference between the levels of connections in Finzean (60 households or 46% of total) and Birse & Ballogie (19 households or 16% of total).

The Finzean figure must be very high compared to most rural communities of equivalent size. Key factors behind it include Finzean Estate’s policies in the 1980s/90s of selling houses to some

resident tenants ('local families' whose only connection had become renting an estate house) and of making housing plots available on favourable terms to children of some local families.

The largest kinship group in Finzean is the Christies (10 households with four surnames), followed by the Thows (7) and Littlejohns (5 + two unrelated) and Farquharsons (4 - & now 5).

In Birse and Ballogie, by contrast, the connections tend to nearly only involve tenant farming families. The fact of Birse Estate being part of a bigger estate outwith the parish has been a factor reducing connections in Birse (eg. assistant keepers being promoted 'out of parish').

More analysis could be done of the connections and the possible significance of the figures.
