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### Finzean water-powered mills - Lower Deeside, Aberdeenshire





## Buckets, brooms and two-by-four: an example of heritage and the 'common good'


*Buckets, brooms and two-by-four - a local community following the tradition of 'common good' \* forests has helped to ensure the continuing survival of three remarkable 19th century water-powered, wood-working sites in Aberdeenshire. Rubbing shoulders with the Water of Feugh (the main tributary to the River Dee), the three Category A listed water mills are situated within 1.6km of each other. These buildings represent not only a rare survival, but now also part of a community strategy of economic action, intending to enhance an already strong sense of place for those living around Finzean.*

*This unique collection of buildings consists of a wooden bucket-making mill, a wood turning mill and a saw mill, but there is also an elaborate lade system, a generator house, kilns for drying the timber to be processed by the mills, a smithy and a charabanc garage dating from the early 20th century. Water from the River Feugh is sent by means of two lades (one serving the Bucket Mill, the other both the Sawmill and the Turning Mill) to waterwheels which, through gears, wheels and power transmission systems, drive the machinery used to saw, shape and turn the wood into useful objects.*

*The Bucket Mill and Saw Mill are owned by the Birse Community Trust. The Turning Mill is privately owned, but stands on Birse Community Trust land. The money made from selling the timber from the woods (which are also managed by the Trust), as well as the products of the mills, is ploughed back into the community.*

*\*Common good as opposed to profit-orientation and competition.*





## Finzean Bucket Mill, Wood Turning Mill and Saw Mill

*In 1853, Peter Brown redeveloped an existing mill-site and waterfall for the Bucket Mill, in order to produce buckets and hexagonal floor blocks. It was worked by the Brown family until 1974. Eight years later it was taken-over by Mr Stan Moyes, who set about restoring it before opening it to the public in 1990. Thereafter, the mill passed into the ownership of the Birse Community Trust In 1999.*

*Throughout the 19th century wooden buckets were widely used. During the Second World War they were in such high demand by the Navy, RAF and others, that the business was treated as a reserved occupation with the miller exempted service. The Bucket Mill is still in working order and contains an impressive drive system, an integrated sawmill and an adjacent kiln and bothy.*

*The wood is cut into staves and the buckets are formed, pinned together and smoothed using water-powered wood-working tools and then finished by hand. Mr Moyes explains the manufacturing process below:*

*<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1546283>*

*Duncan's Turning Mill, which dates from the 19th century, is built mostly of wood, but an upper floor was added in the late 1930s. It contains lathes which are turned by overhead transmission and pulley wheels powered by a water wheel that is fed by the same lade system as the Saw Mill (see below). The Turning Mill originally concentrated on making birch broom handles, brush heads, porridge spurtles and wooden pins for golf clubs and herring barrels. Mr David Duncan explains how the broom heads were formed on the lathe in the link below:*

*<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1545777>*

*The Saw Mill, which is adjacent to the Turning Mill, has been in operation since 1850 and was also owned originally by the Duncan family. Like the Turning Mill and the Bucket Mill, it is constructed mostly of wood, with stone foundation walls and a corrugated iron roof. The power transmission, like that of the Bucket Mill, is situated under the building.*

Miriam R McDonald - Industrial Survey, Historic Environment Scotland



<https://canmore.org.uk/site/120084/finzean-water-powered-woodworking-complex>  
<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1546283>  
<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/154577>



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