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## Asset, burden, Cultybraggan. Community site ownership in a Scottish village

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### ABSTRACT

In 2007, the residents of the village of Comrie, Scotland, collectively bought the site of Cultybraggan Camp and nearby hillside land through a 'community buy-out' scheme under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. A Development Trust, made up primarily of voluntary trustees from the village, manages the site. It has goals of promoting environmental awareness as well as the site's unique cultural heritage. Cultybraggan's history as a prisoner of war camp during the Second World War intended to hold 'hardcore' Nazi prisoners, and then as a Ministry of Defense training camp engenders mixed feelings from residents and visitors alike. In this article, we reflect on our findings from ethnographic and public archaeology fieldwork in summer 2017. We use the case study of Cultybraggan to problematize the concept of community ownership of cultural heritage sites, especially those perceived as having a difficult or controversial history.

### KEYWORDS

Community buy-out; Scotland; conflict heritage; community heritage; contested heritage; heritage management

### Geolocational data

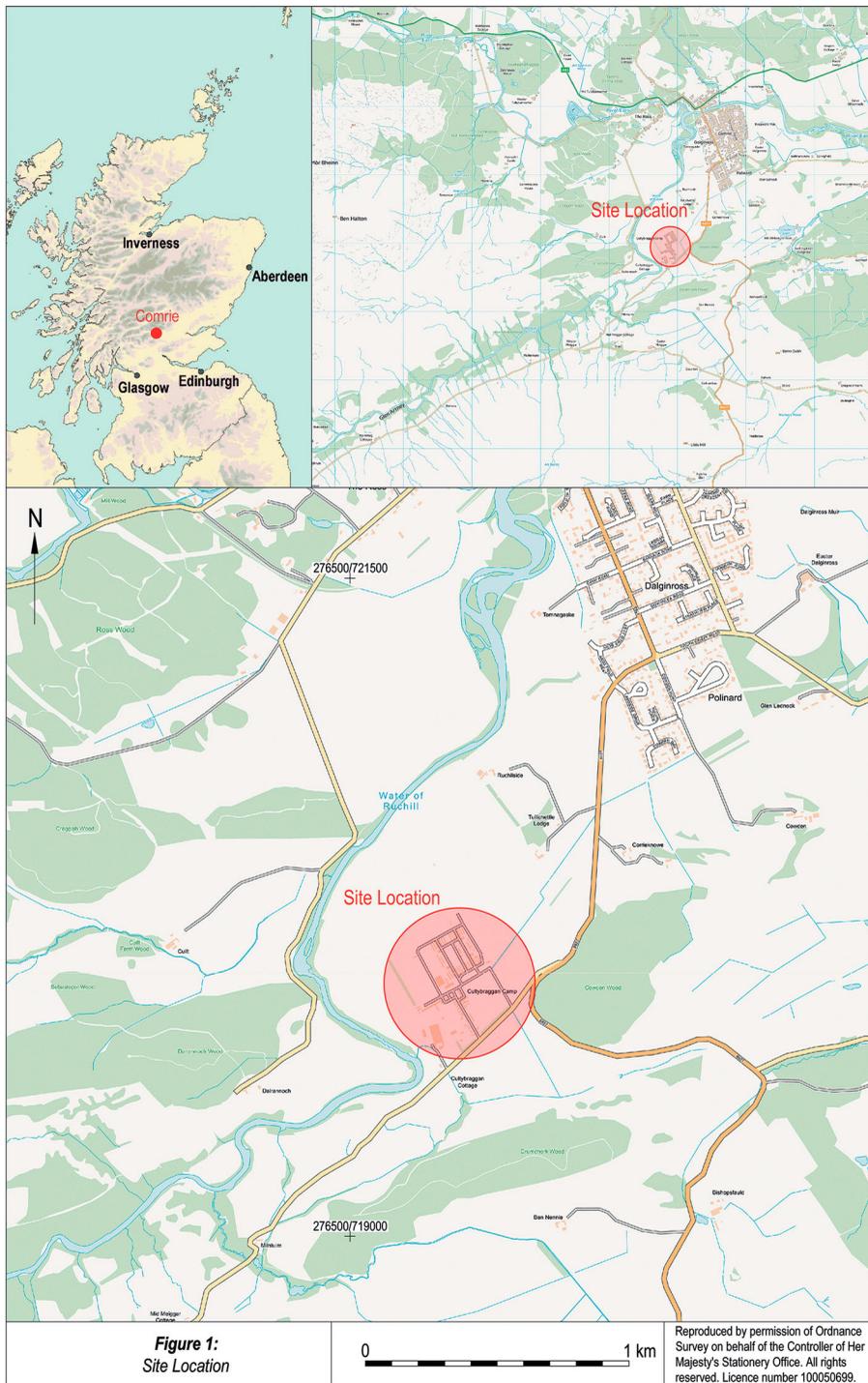
56° 21' 20" N 3° 59' 39" W;  
NGR NN 7685 1990

## Introduction

In this article, we explore and discuss the unusual case of a conflict heritage site, which has become a community-owned multi-use site. Although 'ownership' in the context of cultural heritage can mean a number of things, from cultural affiliation and identity through to different levels of decision-making capacities over specific kinds of heritage (e.g. Hodder 2010), we focus especially on the legal proprietary ownership as expressed through the nature of the community buy-out scheme in this case study. As we discovered, there are significant challenges for both the heritage preservation needs and for community cohesion. The 'community buy-out' model of communal land ownership in Scotland has attracted both media interest and academic scrutiny. In many community buy-outs, the communities involved have been crafting communities with (arguably) previous experience of land management and the challenges that it presents, as well as a cultural affinity to the land itself through their crafting traditions. However, in the case of Cultybraggan (Figure 1), which residents of the Perthshire village of Comrie own, this has not been the case. Local residents include a high proportion of retired people – both originally from the area and people who have moved to Comrie later in life – as well as small business owners. It is not unfair to comment that Comrie is in general a fairly affluent community. Additionally, Cultybraggan has arguably a complicated and even difficult heritage for some (see also Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996 for a lengthy discussion of the concept of 'dissonant' heritage). During the Second

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**Figure 1.** Map showing location of Cultybraggan and Comrie.

World War (WWII), the Ministry of Defence acquired the site from the neighbouring farmer, for use as an internment camp for captured Axis soldiers. After WWII and the repatriation of prisoners of war (PoWs), Cultybraggan became a training camp for British army soldiers and cadets, before

becoming available for community purchase in the 2000s. As community-owned land, there is multiple use including allotments, rental space for small business and light industry, and a planned touristic hospitality scheme converting some of the WWII period Nissen huts (Figure 2) into luxury accommodation.

We unpack the site's history in the next section, but the key issue as far as our study is concerned, is that this history is complicated. Some people have a very strong emotional and historical connection to the cultural heritage represented at Cultybraggan, while others are ambivalent, uncomfortable or even resentful towards it. Coupled with this, we argue that there are serious issues with the very concept of community buy-outs of land, especially when there are competing interests. The burden placed on the community to become stewards of this complex and – for some – controversial site, suggests that this model may be severely flawed. Considering that so-called top-down or bottom-up models of heritage ownership and management are rarely as simplistic as they seem (e.g. Woolverton 2016; De Leiuon and Arthure 2016), the current challenges that the community of Comrie face with Cultybraggan seem also to be a side effect of governmental policy of devolving responsibility to local communities. Furthermore, the nature of the ownership model as promoted through the Scottish community buy-out scheme seems currently only to recognize ownership in the sense of legal title. This – understandably pragmatic – take on ownership in this context neglects other forms of heritage ownership that may occur, and assumes uncritically that the past can even be treated as straightforward property to be 'owned', as Carman (2005) has critiqued. Nonetheless, as MacDonald has also noted, we also concur that:

A manifestation of possessive individualism, heritage invariably implies ownership – at least metaphorical but usually actual property relations – and as such instantiates whosoever's heritage it is said to be. More broadly, one of the most important accomplishments of heritage is to turn the past from something that is simply there, or has merely happened, into an arena from which selections can be made and values derived. (MacDonald 2013, 18)

Instead of facilitating empowerment, however, such models may place too much pressure and responsibility on individuals and groups, who may be poorly equipped, either in terms of time or expertise, to handle the challenges that come with heritage and land management.

We first present the historical background of Cultybraggan. We then give an overview of the phenomenon of community-owned assets in Scotland. Next, we analyse our research findings, a combination of ethnographic interviews and experiences stimulated by a small-scale, public archaeology



**Figure 2.** Some of the Nissen huts at Cultybraggan, for which there are plans to refurbish as tourist accommodation. Photo: Suzie Thomas.

programme in June 2017, and offer some reflections concerning the challenges for community ownership and management of heritage assets as we observed in Cultybraggan. The contested nature of Cultybraggan's particular heritage makes our case study possibly unique among community-owned sites in Scotland and provides us with insights into how communities may react to the responsibility of stewarding difficult heritage connected to still relatively recent history. While it is clear that there are tensions within the community concerning Cultybraggan's management, there are also reasons to be hopeful concerning the site's future preservation.

## History of the site

'Camp 21' at Cultybraggan was built in 1941, 2 km to the south-south-west of Comrie, by the 249 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps (Campbell 2017, 3). These men were refugees who had volunteered to assist the war effort. In the early phases of WWII, people designated as enemy aliens legally could only join the Pioneer Corps, and refugees from Europe joined in large numbers (Hansard 1941); later, they were able to join the armed forces. This means that it was largely German and Austrian Jews who built the camp; one of them was Bruno Scheftelowitz, better known after the War as the eminent Classical archaeologist Brian Shefton (Crawford, Ulmschneider, and Elsner 2017, 152). The camp was initially built as a military camp (Campbell 2017, 3), but switched to holding Italian PoWs by the time of the North Africa campaigns of 1943. These soldiers were held at Cultybraggan until the Italian surrender of 8 September 1943, after which point they were transferred to work camps as co-operators (Hellen 1999). Britain had implemented a programme of dispersal of German prisoners for most of the war, sending them across the British Empire and to the USA due to a fear that they would be a security threat in the event of invasion. In the wake of the D-Day landings and the end of the invasion threat, and with large numbers of German servicemen being taken prisoner, the decision was taken late in 1944 to start bringing German PoWs into Britain to work. German PoWs were moved to Cultybraggan, partly because of its relatively remote location (making escapes more challenging), with numbers increasing as WWII came to its end. Many of the men sent to Cultybraggan were considered security threats who needed to be held in more remote conditions, particularly once a plot to break out of the Devizes camp in the south of England had been disrupted (De Normann 1998).

The camp was divided into four main compounds, each within a separate barbed wire fence. Designated as A, B, C, and D, each compound was virtually identical, including barracks, latrines, showers, and storehouses. The prisoners were divided amongst the compounds according to their category; Britain attempted to divide the prisoners according to their political views. Category A was anti-Nazi, B was *Mitläufer*,<sup>1</sup> and category C was ardent Nazi. The intention was to keep A and B separate from the category C prisoners, although this does not seem to have worked all the time. Part of the problem was the sheer number of category C prisoners; largely young men who had grown up almost entirely under Nazi indoctrination.

The camp became notorious for a while in late 1944, due to the murder of one of the German PoWs. A group of hardcore Nazi prisoners beat and hanged Feldwebel Rosterg in November. The events took place in Compound B, which was a hotbed of category C prisoners, and Rosterg was a category A prisoner suspected of having supplied information to the British authorities about the Devizes escape plan. We located the excavation in Compound B, and one of the targets of the excavation was the shower block where the group hanged Rosterg from a pipe. Compound B seems consistently to have been a compound where the category C prisoners held sway, and it is the compound where PoWs appear to have attempted to make escape tunnels. Interestingly, there are people in the Comrie community for whom the category C prisoners characterize the inmates, with the result that they are uncomfortable with preserving a place where 'hardcore Nazis' were accommodated. Others, however, characterize the camp through remembering the prisoners at the end of the war and in the subsequent two years before their repatriation. This appears to have been a much happier period, and the prisoners were treated with a great deal of affection that in some cases led to marriages with local women. This was not an isolated situation; over 25,000 German former PoWs remained

voluntarily in Britain after 1948 (Hellen 1999, 217). In the case of Comrie, there are stories of German PoWs sneaking out of the camp to go to the cinema with local girls, and then sneaking back in again.

After the prisoners' repatriation, the camp remained active. By 1948, it had become a training camp for the Territorial Army, and later for cadet groups from across Britain. It remained in this role until 2004 when the British Army decommissioned it; however, during the site's use as a training camp, large numbers of people had the experience of the camp's hospitality, which has fed into a steady flow of visitors coming for return visits. The site also has a Cold War history, with a Royal Observer Corps underground monitoring post that began work in August 1960, and mothballed in 1992. A more substantial reminder of the Cold War is the Regional Government Headquarters, a large semi-subterranean nuclear bunker facility designed to accommodate the Scottish Office in the event of nuclear war. It opened in 1990, but never properly came into use (Campbell 2017, 140–141).

### Community buy-outs and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 followed the repeal of Scottish Feudal Law, dating back to the 11th Century (Bryden and Geisler 2007, 28). It was an attempt to empower communities, and to go some way to remedy Scotland's long history of few landowners making decisions about large swathes of the country's real estate. The Act's debate and then enactment also coincided with the establishment of a devolved Scottish Parliament in 1998 – as a result of a referendum under the so-called New Labour government of the UK which, as part of its election promise in 1997, held referenda in Scotland and Wales concerning delegation from central UK government in Westminster to the two nations. The Scottish Parliament rapidly sought to 'exert influence throughout the areas for which Westminster has not retained power', including the issue of landownership and its management, which became a key area for debate and discussion (Chevenix-Trench and Philip 2001, 139).

More recently, the Scottish government has introduced further laws to encourage and support communities to take control of their local assets, including the Community Empowerment Act 2015, and the Land Reform Act 2016. A full analysis of these laws is beyond this article's scope, but it is notable that both build upon existing legislation. The Community Empowerment Act 2015 broadened the eligibility for community rights to buy property and assets (Gillespie 2017), while 'strengthening their voices in decisions about public services' (Scottish Government 2017). Meanwhile, the Land Reform Act 2016 builds upon the 2003 Act, with new measures coming into force in the coming years, such as the right to force the sale of land in order to further sustainable development, expected to be a possibility from 2019 (Gillespie 2017). It is too early to see precisely the impact these changes will have on current and future community buy-outs, but it does appear that these legislative reforms seem to encourage greater community ownership and management. Such models seem to point to increased community empowerment, with communities deciding for themselves how to handle their local surroundings. However, while community empowerment is laudable, there is also a risk that if taken too far without adequate support, it can lead to dependency on voluntarism and charities for core services and public provisions that, arguably, the state should provide (Kisby 2010).

For some current Scottish community-owned properties, the impetus may have come out of direct opposition to government policies and measures. With the Govanhill Baths in Glasgow (now a 'community hub', with shares for sale, and management through a community-based Trust<sup>2</sup>), community activation took place through resistance to a local government decision to close the Victorian-era swimming pool, leading to protests and even the site's occupation (Mooney and Fyfe 2006). In the case of Cultybraggan, the decision to purchase the site did not come out of a sense of resistance to authorities, but was nonetheless an almost unanimous decision from the community to enter into a buy-out. In the present time however, there seems to be a significant sense of burden and even burnout as the community struggles to handle this complex site and its heritage. This leads us to question the extent to which communities should be expected to take on full responsibility for complex heritage sites without specialist support, especially in instances where the heritage is

contested at best, with different community members expressing different feelings about its meanings and about the ways in which site management decisions come about.

### *Comrie Development Trust*

Cultybraggan became available for community purchase in 2004, when it became 'surplus to the requirements of the Defence Estate' (Cultybraggan Local History Group 2010, 44–45). Following Comrie Development Trust's (CDT's) formation, a major community meeting in 2005, and its incorporation establishment as a charitable trust in 2006, a village-wide referendum in 2007 led to the almost unanimous support for purchasing the camp (Campbell 2017, 2; Cultybraggan Local History Group 2010).

The Board of Trustees for CDT have always comprised voluntary local residents. By definition, the ownership of Cultybraggan and some nearby hill ground rests with the community of Comrie, and hence the directing force of CDT originated with the village. However, for various reasons the Trustee membership has regularly changed since CDT's inception, with only one member still on the Board since it began (Comrie Development Trust 2018). The Annual Reports of CDT since 2011 are available via their website<sup>3</sup>, and indicate that from 2011 to 2017, there have been some 28 different Committee members. Although some members served for six to seven years during this time, the average length of time of committee service was just 1.3 years. There are likely numerous reasons for this, and the numbers are incomplete as the data is not online for CDT's earliest years. Yet, it does seem likely that burnout and stress could be contributing factors to Trustees stepping down relatively quickly.

CDT has regularly published newsletters. These have informed villagers about upcoming projects, developments at Cultybraggan, community events, and more. Despite this apparent community focus, CDT has continued to attract suspicion, and some residents have doubted the integrity and intentions of the Trustees. Rumours surrounding the nature of the grants the Trust has received over the years have apparently been so divisive that CDT had to resort to repudiating some of the stronger accusations. In the April 2012 newsletter, the CDT published the following list of points, which provide some clues as to the nature of some of the criticisms they have received:

We are aware that there are different views in the village about 'grant funding' and we just wanted to say a few words about this:

- The Trust will continue to secure money for the village.
- We are delighted to help any village group secure grants for their projects.
- It is usual for community groups to receive grants for both staff and to make projects happen.
- Grants are really difficult to get and are only given when the funder is sure that the project is worthwhile and fits their rules.
- Funders give grants for specific things that fit their priorities – e.g. youth projects, environmental improvement, carbon saving, employment, etc.
- The community group can't use the grant for anything else.
- Grant funds are there for anyone to apply for. They are all competitive and if Comrie does not get the money, another community will.
- If the funder does not think Comrie deserves it, they wouldn't get the grant (CDT 2012, 4).

CDT evidently has not only the challenging task of managing the site itself, but also periodically faces apathy<sup>4</sup> or – at worst – antagonism from its own community.

Within CDT are various Working Groups with particular responsibilities and interests, including the Comrie Heritage Group, with whom we had close contact for the public excavation. There is space for reflection regarding the situation of CDT. It is a community organization and it has the role of curating the camp for the community. For that reason, we assumed at first that it was a gatekeeper for the community itself, and that by dealing with CDT, and especially the Heritage Group, the excavation

project would be working with the community. Furthermore, it was not our intention to 'step on the toes' of local partners, and thus we left it to the group to handle publicity surrounding the public excavation. Aware of criticisms elsewhere that community involvement is often 'limited' to 'inclusion as volunteer workers' (Greer, Harrison and McIntyre-Tamwoy 2002, 282), we were careful to make sure that CDT, and the Heritage Group in particular, had ownership over the project and a distinct task in publicizing the opportunities to participate with the archaeological fieldwork. However, it later became clear that, despite its origin and composition, CDT is seen as something 'other' by a sizable proportion of Comrie residents. Because interactions between the local community and the archaeologists were largely mediated by CDT's Heritage Group, and despite their own very good intentions, this apparently alienated some residents. This echoes the earlier experience of working at the Scottish battlefield site of Prestonpans (Pollard and Ferguson 2009, 24). In the case of Prestonpans, there were tensions between local residents and the local landowner, with an assumption on the part of the residents that the archaeologists were associated with the landowner, an inaccurate sentiment that nonetheless undermined attempts to involve residents in the archaeological fieldwork.

### **Excavation in 2017**

In June 2017, Historic Environment Scotland funded the excavation of a small part of the camp; the excavation was a research-led project investigating historical and oral history reports of escape tunnels that the German prisoners had supposedly dug. The excavation was part of a long-term collaboration between Banks and CDT going back to 2013, and is part of a research trajectory around PoW camps. The excavating team, with Banks leading, consisted of Masters-level students and professional archaeologists from the University of Glasgow and GUARD Archaeology – a Glasgow-based archaeological company. Many of the students were international students, and the team thus consisted of individuals from the UK (Scotland and England), the USA and Denmark. The team opened three trenches in Compound B, following geophysical survey. Banks determined trench locations through reference to surviving plans of the camp's layout: one trench exposed the gap between Compound B and Compound C; the second revealed the storehouse which was the most likely location for a tunnel that the camp commandant allegedly discovered (Campbell 2017, 10; De Normann 1998, 138), and the third was over one of the shower blocks, which reports had described as the location of other tunnels. Community participation was part of the project's design, and Comrie Heritage Group undertook to publicize participation opportunities within the village. They did this primarily through posters throughout the village and at Cultybraggan's entrance, as well as a notice on the group's Facebook page and website, and some local press releases. The excavation was open to volunteers, although there was a very limited take up of the opportunity. However, there were four volunteers participating in the excavation during the week, with around another 15 using the open day as an opportunity to have a go at excavation. The main challenge was that the recruitment process was very passive, and it was clear that stronger community involvement would have required a much more proactive process of publicity and recruitment – something we can note as an area to focus more on in future endeavours. That said, previous experience such as that at Prestonpans has shown that even strenuous efforts to bring local residents into the excavation process can be unsuccessful (Pollard and Ferguson 2009, 24), and that local tensions, as we discuss later in the article, can have a major impact on the take up of fieldwork opportunities. The results of the excavation are to be published separately. In addition to the archaeologists and handful of volunteers, a local production company, Mousehole Films, was on site during the excavation to film footage for a documentary about Cultybraggan that they are preparing (Figure 3).

The excavation week commenced with a public lecture on the first evening in the White Church (now a community centre) in Comrie, which attracted over 70 local people, and at which we encouraged people to come along to the excavation either as participants or as visitors. It finished with an open day on the final Saturday with over 100 visitors, several of whom took the opportunity to have a



**Figure 3.** Mousehole Films taking footage of the excavation. Suzie Thomas is talking to the camera, and the former Ministry of Defense firing range is in the background. Photo: Iain Banks.

go at digging, with final backfilling duties on the Sunday. The excavation provided a focus for interest in, and discussion of, the camp and the relationship of the local community to the site; Thomas conducted interviews both on-site with visitors to the site while the excavation took place, and off-site with local residents and others at various locations in and around Comrie.

### The interviews

During our time in Comrie, we wanted to understand how the local and wider community felt about Cultybraggan, given its unusual status as a community-owned asset *and* a conflict heritage site. Thomas first contacted several individuals via email with Banks' assistance. This meant that she had several 'appointments' set up before arriving in Comrie. She sourced further interviewees either through personal recommendations (so-called snowball sampling, which also allows the sample to reflect the community's social network – see Noy 2008), through chance encounters with visitors to the site during the public excavation, or through conversations in the village. This included initially informal discussions at the bar of the hotel where she stayed – as it turned out this was a key meeting point for villagers in the evenings. Interestingly this approach also led to other material, with one of the interviewees for example insisting on giving Thomas their collection of past newsletters and newspaper cuttings concerning Cultybraggan.

The interviews followed a semi-structured pattern, in which 'interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important' (Longhurst 2003, 143). This meant that certain questions appeared in all the interviews (for example 'please describe your relationship to Cultybraggan'), while others led on from avenues of particular interest or relevance to each interviewee as the conversations progressed. All interviewees gave consent for Thomas to record their interviews and were aware that the data would be used for research purposes. Thomas later analysed these recordings and transcribed key sections.

Out of 26 interviewees in total, 13 were residents of Comrie, with a further eight from the wider area (including Perthshire and the Central Region of Scotland) no more than half an hour's drive away from the village, and a further five from England who for various reasons were regular visitors to Comrie and Cultybraggan (Table 1). In the table, we have opted not to record the place of residence or the location of the interview to help protect the identities of the interviewees. The gender split was such that 15 interviewees were men, and 11 were women. We did not enquire about people's ages during the interviews, but it would be safe to estimate that about nine of the interviewees (three women and six men) were of retirement age or older, while the three youngest interviewees (two women and one man) were in their mid-twenties. We estimate the rest of the interviewees to be middle aged; that is aged between 40 and 59. In some cases, more than one person participated in a single interview, and thus Thomas carried out a total of 18 interviews. The varying numbers of people present depended upon the circumstance of the interview, and also individual interviewee preferences.

### Emerging themes

Although respondents rarely shared identical opinions about the site, a number of themes did appear to emerge from the interviews: Personal connection to the site; Ambivalent views on the site's heritage; Ambivalent views towards CDT and the 'burden' of Cultybraggan; Cultybraggan's future, and Views on the archaeology. In this sense, although many of Cultybraggan's challenges come from issues around its management as a community-owned piece of land, it became clear that individuals' perceptions of and feelings towards the site's heritage – particularly that which related to WWII and later British military training phases – have a direct bearing on how people feel the site should be managed.

#### Personal connection to site

Almost all interviewees, even those with negative attitudes, reported some kind of personal connection to Cultybraggan. For male interviewees, this was most often a connection to the site's military past, recalling their own or family members' attendance as either Territorial Army soldiers or school-age cadets. For some, the memories of this time in their lives led to a wish to return and reminisce.

It's a lovely place. I don't drive now, but when I had a car I would often just take off on a Saturday afternoon and drive up to Culty. Just, you know, have a nice walk around and go into Comrie. I spent many happy hours there. (R2)

**Table 1.** List of people interviewed about Cultybraggan during the research.

Interview number	Interview date	Participants (their gender and approximate age)
1	19 June 2017	R1 (man, middle age)
2	20 June 2017	R2 (man, retirement or older)
3	21 June 2017	R3 (man, middle age)
4	21 June 2017	R4A (man, retirement or older), R4B (woman, retirement or older)
5	21 June 2017	R5 (man, retirement or older)
6	22 June 2017	R6 (man, middle age)
7	22 June 2017	R7A (woman, mid-twenties), R7B (woman, mid-twenties)
8	22 June 2017	R8 (woman, retirement or older)
9	22 June 2017	R9 (man, middle age)
10	23 June 2017	R10 (woman, middle age)
11	24 June 2017	R11A (woman, retirement or older), R11B (woman, middle age)
12	24 June 2017	R12A (man, middle age), R12B (man, middle age), R12C (man, mid-twenties)
13	26 June 2017	R13 (man, retirement or older)
14	27 June 2017	R14A (woman, middle age), R14B (man, middle age)
15	27 June 2017	R15 (man, retirement or older)
16	28 June 2017	R16 (man, middle age)
17	29 June 2017	R17A (woman, retirement or older), R17B (woman, middle age), R17C (woman, middle age)
18	30 June 2017	R18 (man, middle age)

Another interviewee had trained and also been an instructor during Cultybraggan's training camp phase. When some of the Nissen huts came available to rent, he knew exactly what he wanted to do:

The reason I got the hut was I was here with the British Army in 1983 and 1989, and I come back for a big multi-national exercise in the 90s. And I stayed in hut 61, which is this hut. And when I come here just as a day visitor and I found they were, they were leasing the huts out and selling some of them, I decided that's – I want that for a base for my museum. (R12A)

This interviewee now has a private museum in the hut, based on his personal collection of militaria and memorabilia from WWII and other periods, which opens most weekends. He also goes into schools to give talks about military history.

Some interviewees had interest in the site also for the earlier WWII history. One of the older interviewees had been a young girl during the time that PoWs were at the site, and she recalled the attachment her family formed with one young German in particular:

My mother just thought, her son being in the army, and thinking well I hope somebody looks after him, you know, and she took to him. And he was just like one of the family after that. (R11A)

This association of the young man's situation with local families' own predicaments, with male relatives away fighting or captured as PoWs elsewhere, clearly helped develop compassion for the German PoWs. In this particular case, the Scottish family reconnected years later with the German former PoW, who by this time was living in the USA, and both families visited each other and kept in contact until his death. At the time of the interview, R11A continued to keep a photograph of the German as a young man on her mantelpiece (she said to Thomas, 'isn't he handsome').

As well as friendships, romances developed. Another interviewee (R8) was the daughter of a German former PoW and his Scottish wife. Her father had met her mother during his time at Cultybraggan, in the period after the war when the PoWs seem to have had more freedom to move around and befriend local people. After repatriation back to Germany in 1948, he had returned within the same year to marry and settle in Scotland.

### *Ambivalent views on the site's heritage*

While many interviewees had particular interest in the site, which seemed to be more common overall in the people interviewed than apathy or negative feelings, some were aware of more negative attitudes, even if they did not hold these opinions themselves:

It's rundown and shabby when you come up here, it's desolate, you know, we've got a physical disconnect from the village which has always been a barrier for us, that it's not something, somewhere where people are just walking by every day. So, people can feel it as a burden rather than as an asset. And I think part of the reason for that is that right from the start the heritage value, in terms of actually the revenue that the heritage can generate, has been underestimated and has never been fully, you know, it's never been priced out. (R7A)

Another interviewee expressed personally his distaste with the WWII history in particular, focusing on the site's connection with hardcore Nazis as an aspect that should perhaps be forgotten rather than commemorated:

Do we really want to be reminded of the Second World War and the SS Troops that were up there? And the way our troops were kept in Stalag Three and all of, you know ... .. no. (R5)

In an unrecorded incident directly after Banks' public lecture, two other residents approached Thomas to express shock and discomfort at knowing that 'Nazis' had been kept near to the village. This echoes debates around 'undesirable heritage' (e.g. MacDonald 2006), and whether at least some Comrie residents would rather simply forget about this part of their locality's past, especially if there is no connection to them personally.

### *Ambivalent views towards Comrie Development Trust and the 'burden' of Cultybraggan*

A recurring theme across many interviews, particularly with Comrie residents, was the potentially problematic impact of CDT itself, and the extent to which it had apparently failed to garner wider community support and participation (despite being formed of residents from the village). Comrie is known for its numerous voluntary groups – more than 70 (Herald 2016). One interviewee attributed the difficulty in attracting community 'buy-in' for the buy-out to CDT's structure appearing top-down, 'other' as we noted earlier, despite the trustees all being local residents:

- ST: Is it surprising then that there are issues with Cultybraggan, given that people here are very community-involved?
- R13: Maybe a wee bit, yeah, yeah. I'm not sure of the answer to that one ... .. but it's strange that, I don't know, it's strange that the gala fortnight – the Comrie Fortnight – and the Flambeaux<sup>5</sup>, they seem to attract a general buy-in, but the Trust doesn't. Or my perception is that the Trust doesn't enjoy that sort of buy-in. And it may be a bit of what we talked about earlier on, that it's because it's not been, it's not a grassroots Comrie development, you know. That might be something to do with it.

Several of the respondents echoed this sentiment, including those that had been or are still involved with CDT. One acknowledged this disconnect and even had tried to find solutions:

I started to try and heal the rift between the village and Comrie Development Trust because there was a lot of mistrust in the Trust, and people didn't, like, didn't want to invest time or energy in Cultybraggan because they felt that it was a Comrie Development Trust project rather than what it is, which is something owned by the community and managed by the Trust. (R7A)

One current CDT committee member was attempting to restore the association through how she herself spoke about and referred to CDT:

I've actually stopped saying that [CDT], it's Comrie Development Trust, because that's what it's been cut down to ... .. so now if there's any leaflets going out, I want them Comrie in capital – C O M R I E ... .. It's Comrie's place here. They'll say, oh that's CDT, that's nothing to do with the village ... .. and that's going to be a big hill to come up. (R10)

Elsewhere, researchers have commented on government-initiated agendas for community-managed projects and increased participation, concerning the impact on the political exploitation of, for example, community archaeology (Sayer 2014). This echoes with Kisby's critique of the UK Coalition government's (2010–2015) concept of Big Society: 'the idea that shifting responsibility for welfare away from the state towards community organizations, as well as the idea that individual citizens ought increasingly to take individual responsibility for their own welfare needs' (Kisby 2010, 486). In this light, although community-run heritage is not a new phenomenon per se (Pyburn 2011, 30), some respondents clearly felt community-managed models were in themselves troubling. This perception of having had to take on a duty that perhaps should instead have remained the responsibility of the state or some other authoritative (and perhaps specialized) organization had contributed to the notion of Cultybraggan as a burden:

The government's got quite a lot to answer for in that they're wanting all these community-type things, but do they see how, you know, that it's either running people into the ground, the volunteers that are doing it, or the friction and that, that it's causing as well ... .. I don't think that it is, you know, really a goer, that, it's handing all these things over to the community but, you know, it's just not viable. (R14A)

Another interviewee suggested that because the Comrie community is not connected to crofting, an established form of land management but also a traditional way of life, this was why the community buy-out was struggling. Certainly many other community land purchase schemes in Scotland, including some of the earliest under the Land Reform Act 2003, had centred on crofting (Mackenzie 2006, 383). This points to wider challenges of general land management that go beyond (but of course include) heritage management considerations, while noting that such identities and lifeways as traditional crofting have themselves elements of both tangible and intangible heritage. The interviewee thus commented that:

You had to be registered to vote here [in Comrie], so it was done that way. And I seem to remember the vote was 97 per cent 'yes let's go for it', and I was one of the three per cent ... .. and the reason I was, I knew the cost of land management ... .. anyway it worked where you had crofters who had a claim to the land and who had farming capabilities, but they also had other jobs. (R5)

However, this kind of management structure has arguably led to similar community discords even within traditional crofting communities. Chevenix-Trench and Philip noted that in their study of the North Assynt Estate (The Assynt Crofters Trust): 'Crofters are generally not keen to join the board due to the responsibility it entails and the delicate balance involved in being both crofter and landlord.' At the same time, their research found that: 'The assistant to the Trust suggests that there is insufficient communication between the small group of people actively involved in the management and the remaining crofters within the township' (Chevenix-Trench and Philip 2001, 146–147). This might also go towards explaining how CDT committee members come to be seen by other villagers as somewhat separate from the wider community, despite being of that community themselves. Communication is clearly a key challenge and potential barrier.

### *Cultybraggan's future*

On considering Cultybraggan's future, most interviewees returned to the theme of the site's heritage, once more emphasizing this aspect's central role in how people perceive the land. It was clear from several respondents, visitors and local residents alike, that they found heritage preservation and protection to be important:

R4B: I'd like to see it preserved as much as possible.

R4A: Yes me too, I mean I knew there are one or two small businesses here, but I wouldn't like to see it as a big industrial, you know, a money making thing really. I would like it to stay as a heritage site.

Another Comrie resident had views on the integrity of the site, and expressed concern about the commercial and other plans for the site's future use, perhaps reflecting the nature of CDT's mixed use of the site to try to raise revenue and also demonstrate the economic potential of Cultybraggan:

Well I know they've kept part of it as a museum, which I'm glad about that, you know. And there was a bunker, eh, I mean that was all fascinating, I'd want to see that. As long as they don't touch all that ... .. You see, to me, what they were wanting to do with the camp, and it would be sacrilege ... .. I would hate it to be, I think it should be kept. (R11A)

These interviewees, and others, expressed concern at the potential loss of the site's heritage value, although a number of other interviewees had little interest in the site's history; either due to discomfort with the site's use as a PoW camp for 'hardcore' Nazis, or due to a lack of interest in history generally. One interviewee (R5) even expressed that they would prefer to see the whole site demolished and developed as a location for a luxury hotel (in the hopes that this would also generate local employment opportunities), while another (R12B) believed that despite any efforts to preserve the site, Cultybraggan would 'all be bulldozed one day'.

### *Views on the archaeology*

We expected that the public excavation taking place would engender comments from interviewees, even though relatively few people actually took up the opportunity to participate. The archaeology did indeed form a focus for local discussion, including much overheard casual evening hotel bar conversation (both positive and negative). This ranged from individuals approaching Thomas to ask about the events of the day, through to expressed scepticism about the whole exercise (most commonly, this took the form of doubt that the escape tunnels had ever existed, or that it would be possible to locate them through the archaeological investigation).

A couple of interviewees admitted to having no interest in archaeology personally, but nonetheless accepted that it could interest others:

Doing digging and so on that's great, you might find the odd bullet or whatever, some people that might interest. Other people, I mean, as I say, I've got an allotment up there, I'm interested in that part of the facility. If people don't have a particular interest in that, they might think, well that's not really much, you know, why are they doing that, why are they doing that? Whereas, yes, it will excite some people ... (R18)

I'm not interested in archaeology. But I don't mind people that are. You know, everybody's different. (R10)

Others were excited that there had been excavations, ranging from thinking about the significance of archaeology itself at Cultybraggan, through to the impact of having 'done archaeology' on the site's public profile:

I think it needs to be, it's an archaeological, a living archaeological site. It's an episode in our history, our national history, that looks at an aspect of the Second World War, which is about prisoners. You know, enemy prisoners. And it gives you an idea of how they were living, how they were treated. (R2)

That actually drummed up more positive excitement than I expected ... I mean the meeting on the Monday, that was, I tried to count them ... I think there was 60 or 80 people there ... I thought that the dig might have a little bit of a reverberation, which I think it did actually because there was a bit of, I mean, some locals came round on the Saturday. (R10)

## Discussion and Conclusions

One of the questions that Bryden and Geisler (2007, 31) asked, is which community do community buy-outs of land target? Often the 'community' is perceived to be those physically living within a set area, as is the case with Cultybraggan and its legal ownership by Comrie residents. Yet this is only one definition of community: 'what of seasonal residents, family members who live and work elsewhere, and conservation land trusts and their constituents who, though 'absent', may have legitimate claims to and interests in estate lands, sometimes in partnership with place-based community members?' (Bryden and Geisler 2007, 32). We also know from heritage studies debates, despite common assumptions that the 'community' is a locally-based entity, communities can identify across a much broader (or narrower) range of shared experiences or commonalities such as gender, age, or political convictions (Smith and Waterton 2009, 18).

Many of our observations are relevant particularly in the context of the practice of allowing communities to purchase legal title to land. It should be clear that archaeological and heritage-related perspectives do not exist in a vacuum, and thus for any contemporary land management there are likely additional considerations to keep in mind, in relation to how different communities and individuals identify with the historical and sometimes also prehistorical aspects of different places (e.g. Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000; Waterton 2005). In the case of Cultybraggan it is easy to argue that the heritage status of the site means it has a particular significance to a wide range of people, who may have very close and emotional ties to the site without ever having been a resident of Comrie. We only need to consider the former military servicemen (and schoolchildren) who reminisce of times spent in training camp at Cultybraggan. As we have seen, one former soldier felt such an attachment that he simply had to rent the Nissen hut which had been the site of his former digs. Others have significant family connections to the former inmates, as in the case of the woman whose father had been a German PoW at Cultybraggan. Although the family never settled in Comrie, it is clear to see that this interviewee and her siblings owe their very existence to events that took place there. Therefore the heritage 'values' extend far beyond the finite and geographically demarcated community of residents of Comrie, and run contradictory to the sense of 'ownership' as prescribed by the community buy-out. In contrast, unlike some other community buy-outs in Scotland where the trustees have had a collective connection to the land which they communally purchased (as is the case with crofting communities), many Comrie residents may feel no emotional or place-based connection to the former PoW camp at all. This makes it a dislocated heritage of sorts, with less meaning to its immediate community than to those who are spread further away geographically, but that have nonetheless powerful attachments to the site. With the progressive loss of

the generation who were alive while the camp held PoWs, and the continued arrival of new residents from elsewhere, Comrie's connection to the WWII history is fading, and it is clear that Cultybraggan may become an example of orphan heritage (Price 2005), or more clearly detached heritage (Ferguson 2007, 86–88) in the future.

Siân Jones (2017, 21) has posited that, for heritage resources, '[S]ocial value encompasses the significance of the historic environment to contemporary communities, including people's sense of identity, belonging and place, as well as forms of memory and spiritual association.' There are clearly instances of senses of identity and place being connected with the meanings that people make around Cultybraggan. There are forms of memory, for example from people who have nostalgia for bygone times. Others appeared baffled by the idea of heritage 'value', and saw only the potential for financial 'value', feeling that the site should make money in some way for the community, even if that meant selling the land and destroying the camp's remains (although a handful of interviewees suggested that the heritage value itself could be better converted into tourism income). Possibly the venture's failure so far to get out of debt, and CDT's continued reliance more on grant funding rather than income generation, has led some residents to resent the apparent burden that Cultybraggan seems to represent. In Fiona Mackenzie's case study of the North Harris Trust community buy-out, she notes that the community's ability to use wind power to turn a profit without losing control to larger developers has contributed to that community buy-out's success (Mackenzie 2006, 393).

Two interviewees were explicit that they do not find archaeology interesting. This seems to be a sentiment echoed in Pyburn's observation about some archaeologists' justifications not to engage local communities that 'someone invariably comments that the people who live in the area where they dig are not interested in archaeology' (Pyburn 2008, 201). Yet, many more were interested that archaeological investigations were taking place. While we welcomed relatively few volunteers to the excavation itself, the remarkable turn-out of over 70 people for Banks' presentation in the community hall suggested significant curiosity about the fieldwork. This presentation was also important for outlining the goals of the excavation project, and why the site was interesting from an archaeological perspective: 'explaining to people where archaeologists derive their ideas about the value of the past, their beliefs about science, and their passion for preservation can humanize our intentions and make us more sympathetic to a skeptical audience' (Pyburn 2011, 35). We would have hoped for more people to have volunteered to take part in the actual excavation, although heavy rain on one of the days may have affected willingness to spend time outdoors in cold mud. Additionally, we have already discussed strategies to improve communication in any future public excavations, for example working more closely with CDT's Heritage Group to publicize advice about what clothing and equipment volunteers should bring. This would give a clearer picture of what would be involved in an excavation, while we also need to be mindful of the possibility that an association with CDT alienated some would-be participants. It may also have been beneficial to request volunteers to sign up beforehand (as happened in public excavations we have run in Finnish Lapland – see Banks, Koskinen-Koivisto and Seitsonen 2018), which would perhaps make potential volunteers feel more committed to attending, rather than having a 'drop-in' policy as we did.

Perhaps one of the strongest findings of our research has been the extent to which Cultybraggan's management as a community site has come to be seen as a burden, and a source of stress for the voluntary committee members involved. Much of the literature encourages a deep engagement with heritage for communities, although the notion of the so-called 'collaborative continuum' acknowledges that the extent to which communities engage with heritage either independently or under the direction of paid professionals necessarily varies from case to case (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Woolverton 2016, 137). Similarly, and borrowing from urban planning, Sherry Arnstein's classic 'ladder of citizen participation' (Arnstein 1969), has found application in community archaeology and heritage (e.g. Belford 2011; Nevell 2013). The notional ladder features steps representing different levels of participation. The highest rungs represent 'degrees of citizen power' with lower rungs for 'degrees of tokenism', and then finally 'non-participation' (Arnstein 1969, 217). While the lowest levels of this ladder are the least preferable, it is perhaps also arguable that true

'citizen power' is very difficult in practice, particularly in relation to contested and specialized heritage sites such as Cultybraggan.

Cherrie De Leuien and Susan Arthure (2016) have applied another model for public participation – the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) community engagement model – to archaeological work in southern Australia. Reminiscent of Arnstein's ladder, this model offers five 'phases' of community engagement ('Inform', 'Consult', 'Involve', 'Collaborate' and 'Empower' – De Leuien and Arthure 2016, 89), but recommends following each step in turn. In other words, according to this model, the empowerment goal is attainable, but communities first need guidance through the earlier phases of participation. It is tempting to think that one reason why the actual management of Cultybraggan – including the challenges of community 'buy-in' of the community buy-out but also the issue of 'burn-out' for many of the volunteers – could be that these earlier phases of participation (which would need professional guidance), were effectively omitted. Instead the community had to step immediately in at the 'empowerment' stage. It could be that expecting a community to 'jump in' at this very involved and autonomous stage without extensive training or support (notwithstanding the consultancies and other groups that have helped CDT at different times) could be a reason for the challenges that the community currently faces in trying to find solutions for managing their site sustainably. For archaeologists wishing to engage with this site and others, it could indicate that not only dialogue but even more pragmatic intervention such as providing training and clear instructions, especially about site preservation and interpretation issues, could help in the long run with empowering the community through assisting them in making better-informed heritage management decisions.

Another observation is that local organizations can become problematic merely by existing. CDT formed as a community group through public meetings as a means to manage the community buy-out, and it consists entirely of local residents. However, while it might be reasonable to assume that CDT was representing the community in accordance with its genesis, it very quickly became problematized by some members of the community. In conversation, it was characterized as 'them' rather than 'us', with some village residents (even those serving or having served on one or more of CDT's committees) seeing it as an external organization. There were criticisms that CDT consisted of the same people who were always involved in community affairs, which while possibly true may also reflect those people who were prepared to devote the time required. The mere existence of CDT is enough to create opposition and a body of opinion that the situation is being mishandled and is not in the interests of the community; frequently, these 'interests of the community', when defined, align more closely with the interests of the individual holding the opinion than with the community as a whole. What is inescapable, however, is that CDT remains the sole organized local voice for the camp, whatever criticism might be levelled against it. Community archaeology approaches applied uncritically can tend to assume that communities have a cohesion, a level of commonality that means the archaeologists can create meaningful relations with the local residents that will produce a truly collaborative result. However, while this may be true in some cases, in many others, the best that can be hoped is to work with an element within the community: largely middle class, and frequently retired (Thomas 2010). This is not always the case, but to assume that we are working with 'the community' is to ignore the diversity and fractured nature of that community. Many others have noted that a greater community involvement in heritage-related issues usually leads to greater rates of disagreement and conflicting agendas (see e.g. Dragounis, Fouseki and Georgantzis 2018 concerning involving communities in decision-making about heritage tourism development in Kastoria, Greece). Responses to community archaeology projects will range from active participation and support, through vague interest such as attending an open day, to outright hostility and a belief that public funds are being wasted (whether or not public funds are actually involved).

It is difficult to tell what the future holds for Cultybraggan and Comrie. Already since our visit there in June 2017 there have been further changes, with people joining and leaving the different committees, reportedly in at least some cases the latter being due, once more, to burnout. On the positive side, CDT has been able to use one of its successful grant applications to employ a professional events

and heritage manager from late Summer 2017 to improve grant capture and broaden the use of the camp. This has paid dividends, with more major public events taking place at the camp, and the camp featuring on television programmes and in the national newspapers; one such event was the launching of a book of cartoons drawn by one of the wartime inmates of the camp, that depict camp life. The archaeologists are continuing to work with CDT on the camp, but recognize the problematic nature of the relationship between the CDT and the community. One aspect of this is, we have noticed, a local-level tendency to complain about the appointment of an 'outsider' in the role of events manager, despite the success that the appointment has had. This is an interesting issue, as the appointee lives close by in one of the neighbouring towns to Comrie (although is not from Scotland originally), and brings professional cultural heritage management skills and experience that are lacking within the village itself. Time will tell whether the role – which has seen success already in raising the site's profile in the media and in events planning – will become 'accepted' within the wider community. It draws attention to an interesting conundrum; on the one hand local residents seem to resent the burden of the work that managing Cultybraggan entails, whereas on the other hand they are sometimes wary of outsider intervention. And although we as 'outsider' archaeologists have more often encountered welcoming attitudes rather than hostility, we are also aware that at least some local residents see little value in the archaeological investigations we have made so far. The experiences at Cultybraggan and at other community-owned sites in Scotland suggest that there are serious questions to ask concerning how community buy-outs are managed and supported, even as the Scottish Government updates legislation in this area.

## Notes

1. Literally fellow-traveller, but meaning in this context compliant with the regime but not complicit
2. <http://www.govanhillbaths.com/>
3. <http://comriedevelopmenttrust.org.uk/accounts>
4. A subheading from a newsletter in 2010 asks 'Why didn't more people vote?' to approve a strategic plan for the site (CDT 2010, 1).
5. Comrie Fortnight and the Flambeaux are two well-established local traditions. Comrie Fortnight is a two-week gala festival taking place annually in July, while the Flambeaux is a New Year's Eve (Hogmanay) torch-lit procession through the village. Both events enjoy high levels of local and tourist participation.

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