

The Power of the Bannock

By John Dreczkowski

*It is often said
"What's in a name?"*

*The wee burn (stream) called the **Bannock** defines all that can be read and said about the town of **Bannockburn**, a name known all over the world due mainly to past history, in particular the famous **Battle Of Bannockburn**.*

Early emigrants from Bannockburn town are believed to be founders of other Bannockburn communities around the world

The areas early settlers would no doubt be attracted to the area by the powerful water flow of the Bannock, lush fertile agriculture grounds around, along with the protection the small valley affords to the elements

During the mid 1900,s the burn was partially diverted up stream and used as a feeder for the North Third Reservoir to facilitate the ever growing needs of the chemical industry at Grangemouth Town. Resulting in a decrease of flow of water further downstream and through the village of Bannockburn .To gain some idea of the strength of the Bannock's flow before being diverted this can be seen after some days of rain then the Bannock goes into high flow condition

The source of the Bannock can be found up in the Touch hills west of Bannockburn Snaking it's way down the valley gathering speed and volume of flow and joined by the Sauchie Burn when reaching the lower valley then onwards through the villages of Chartershall, Milton then on through old Bannockburn Town to join the River Forth east of Bannockburn.

Our forefathers were very good when it came to using the earth's natural environment and energy sources such as coal, timber, sun, wind and water to sustain their lives and were continually adapting to maximise the use of these elements.

In earlier times mostly in agriculture and oat meal production, later modifying or inventing system's to create diverse industries ,such as manufacturing tartan, carpets and small metal industries such as nail manufacturing ,in harnessing the power of the Bannock to it's best effect they managed to achieve these aims at the same time creating a larger community off Bannockburn

Inventive way's were used to harness the power of the bannock, creating a large source of power sufficient enough to drive heavy industrial equipment before steam or electrical power was available

Using a large diameter overshot water wheel to transfer the water force into useful prime mechanical force, it was necessary to design a water hydraulic system that was consistent in flow and force , knowing that the gravitational force developed by coming down from the touch hills would be lost as bannock reached the level sections at the bottom of the valley ,an ingenious system of weirs , sluice,s , waterfalls and dam,s (a small reservoir)was installed to meet this requirement

At Chartershall a small dam was built and a channel was dug out from this point to the Milton Village, some of the waters were diverted from the Bannock to this channel which is named the Mill Lade, this allowed water power to be employed at the Milton oat mill and, Milton flour mill .The water then rejoining the Bannock just below Beaton,s, mill

As the bannock continued through the valley, joining the low level lands known as the Carse, a series of weirs and dams were constructed along with waterfalls creating diversions feeding water power to an old mill and saw mill located between Baton's mill and Burnside cottage (known locally as the Ranch) walking in this area today outlines of the mills and weir's can still be seen

Immediately after the ranch a major construction project took place, building a waterfall, weir and sluice gate system which effectively split the Bannock flow in half with the higher level section used to fill the newly built Mill Dam and the remaining water continuing the natural level of the bannock , both these sections would feed into the manufacturing heart of Bannockburn , where the Woollen mill ,Carpet mill and Skoech mills were situated where the world famous Wilson's Tartan were manufactured , unfortunately most of the mills have demolished and the mill dam has been filled in , Leaving only 2 buildings of this period namely the old rifle range and part of the Carpet Close which has been developed into a beautiful bungalow , there is now a heritage trail which makes a very interesting walk along this very historical and beautiful section of the valley

Further along the Haugh another weir and dam were built to allow water power to be supplied the famous Royal George mill which is built into the side of the hill at New Road , next to the Telford bridge designed and built by the world famous engineer Thomas Telford , this building still exists today , from here the Bannock flows further on through the valley to meet up with the River Forth east of Bannockburn

Following the course of the Bannock from the Touch Hills to joining with the River Forth at the bottom of the valley on a good day makes for a very good walk , through some very beautiful and varying scenic views , within an area steeped in Scottish History

***Future possible micro electrical generation , water powered
A feasibility Study has been commissioned by local Councillor Alasdair MacPherson into the possibility of using the present day Bannock water flow and force to generate environmentally friendly a small percentage of the towns electrical needs.***

The project has been adopted by the local Bannockburn trust committee who are presently preceding through the mine field of grants and processes to further advance this project, all future proceeds from hopefully successful project will go towards other projects for the benefit of the community

Let,s hope this project is successful for our future environmental lifestyle

It has also been discussed with Councillor Alasdair Macpherson his excellent idea of harvesting the Bannock waters and bottling same as drinking water , this of course needs a feasibility to establish the facts of such an adventure.

This would be a very exciting proposal for the community as it would be run on the same basis as the micro generation project

It would be exciting to see the historical waters of the Bannock on our supermarket shelves with the label

“ Bannockburn still waters”

Produced in the Scottish historic town of Bannockburn

Useful Links

The battle site

<http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/stirling/bannockburn/index.html>

Bannockburn around the World

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bannockburn_%28disambiguation%29

Possible Future Bannock project would benefit the community

<http://www.bannockburn.co.uk/bburnnews/19.pdf>

Water Wheel power systems

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_wheel