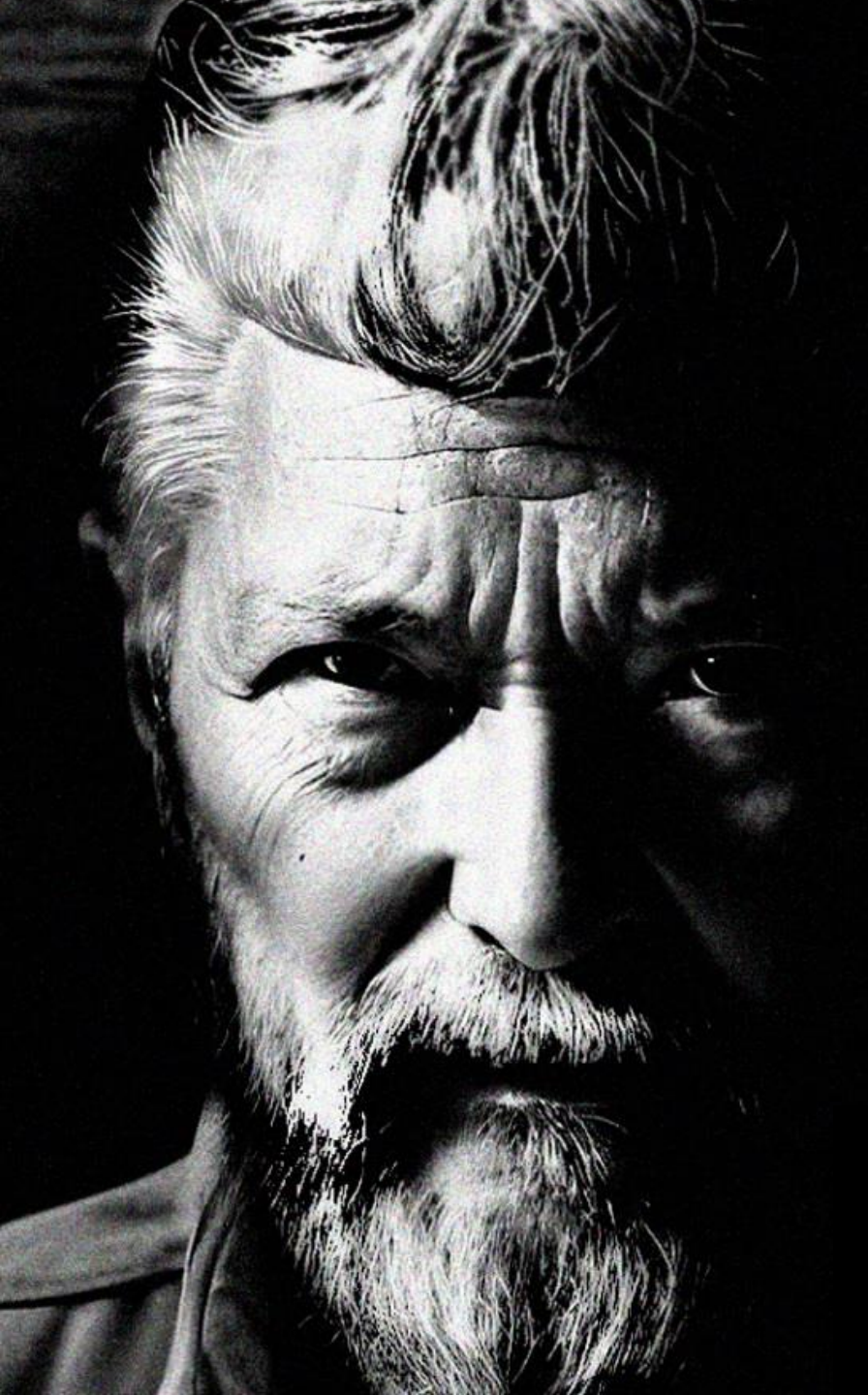


Telling the story, of telling the story ... of telling the story.

REID, P., PIRIE, E. and IRONSIDE, R.

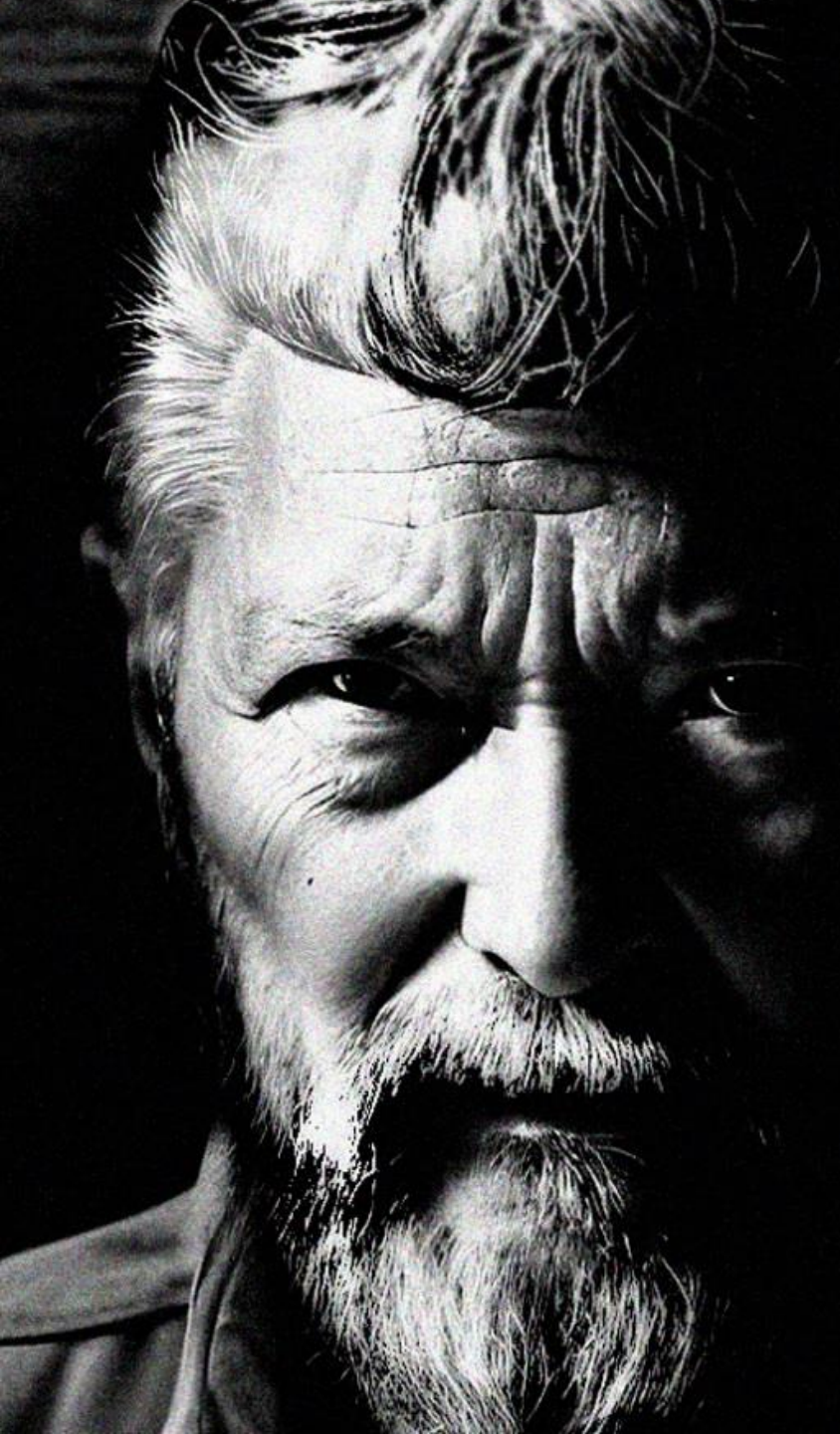
2024

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**TELLING THE STORY OF
TELLING THE STORY OF
TELLING THE STORY.....**

**PROFESSOR PETER REID
DR ELLIOT PIRIE
DR RACHAEL IRONSIDE**



GOSWEN



THE
CABRACH
TRUST

**PROFESSOR PETER REID
DR ELLIOT PIRIE
DR RACHAEL IRONSIDE**

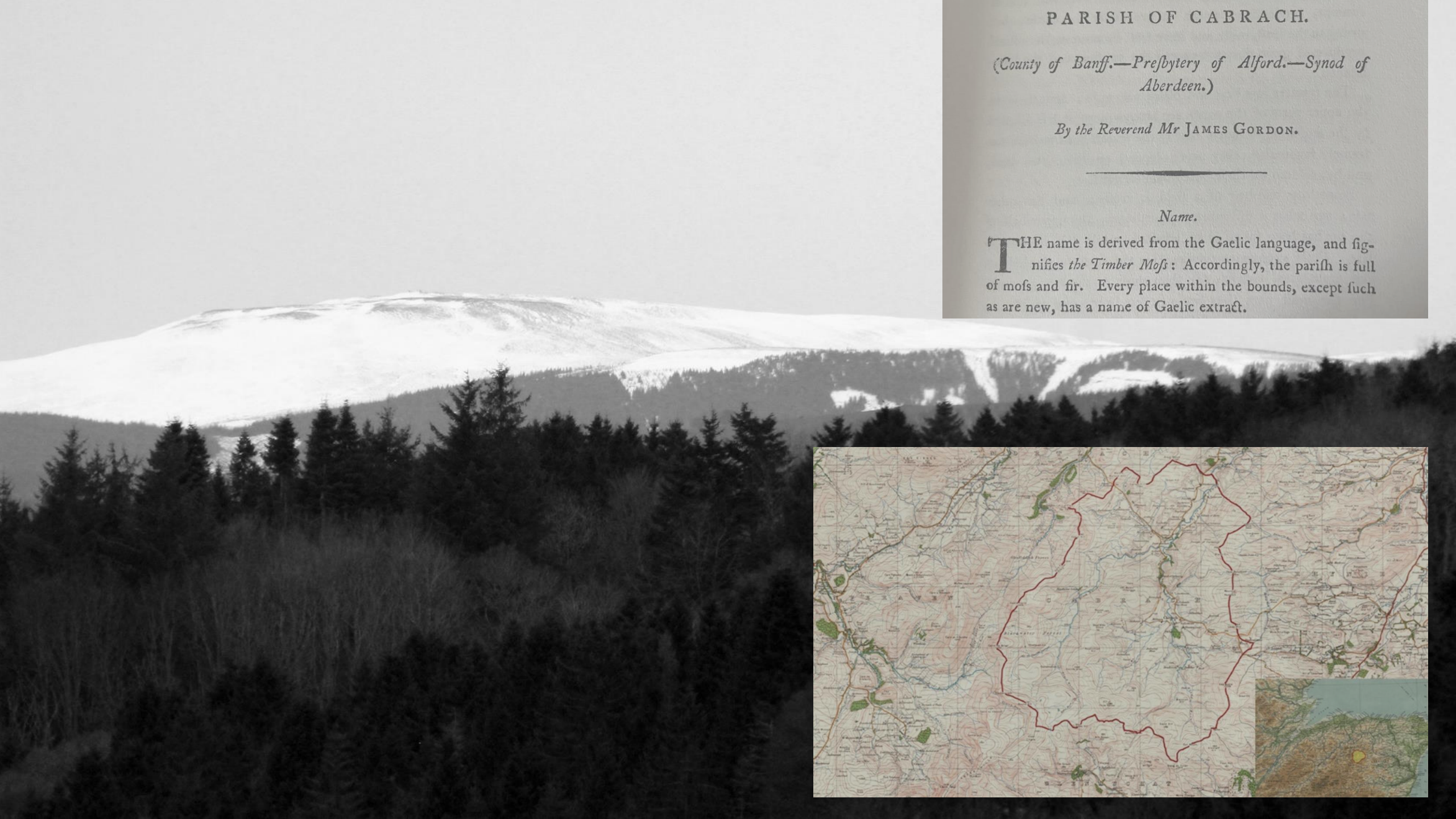
**AND THE ILLICIT WHISKY STILL:
TELLING THE STORY OF TELLING STORIES**

A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there's a grassy slope leading up to a stone building with a gabled roof. Several trees are scattered around the building. In the background, rolling hills and a road are visible under a clear sky.

The Cabrach

For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it. All these infinitely obscure lives remain to be recorded.

Virginia Woolf. 1929.



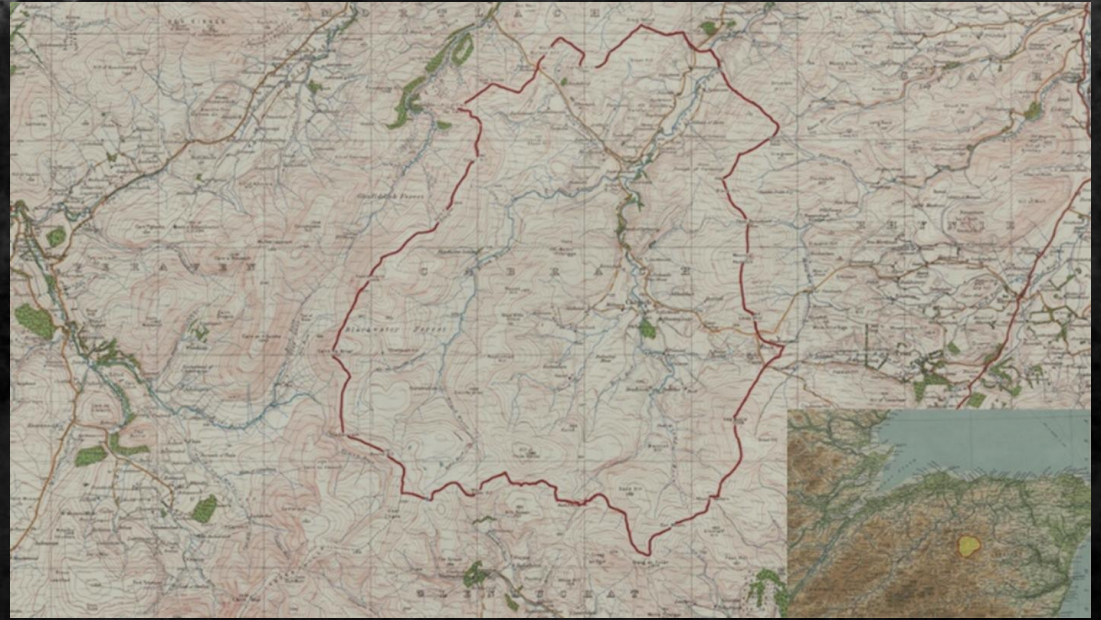
PARISH OF CABRACH.

(County of Banff.—Presbytery of Alford.—Synod of Aberdeen.)

By the Reverend Mr JAMES GORDON.

Name.

THE name is derived from the Gaelic language, and signifies *the Timber Moss*: Accordingly, the parish is full of moss and fir. Every place within the bounds, except such as are new, has a name of Gaelic extract.





THE
CABRACH
TRUST

Vision & Mission

Our Vision

Our vision is to regenerate the Cabrach as a thriving, sustainable community with its history, heritage and place in Scottish history celebrated and shared by all.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to inspire, educate and engage visitors and revitalise the Cabrach community with a sense of place, pride and belonging.

MEETING	DATE	PARTICIPANTS	RESEARCHERS	THEMES
Scoping Meeting	22/06/22	Colin Mackenzie (CM) Alan Winchester (AW) Sam Dowdall (SD)	Peter Reid	
Workshop 1	27/09/22	Jonathan Christie (JC) Colin Mackenzie Alan Winchester	Peter Reid Elliot Pirie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of themes
Workshop 2	28/10/22	Colin Mackenzie Alan Winchester	Peter Reid Elliot Pirie Rachael Ironside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniqueness of the place • Melancholy & emotions • Contrast • Landlocked island
Workshop 3	28/11/22*	Colin Mackenzie Alan Winchester	Peter Reid Rachael Ironside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Critical incidents • People
Workshop 4	17/02/23	Colin Mackenzie Alan Winchester	Peter Reid Elliot Pirie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curation • Use
Summary meeting	22/02/23	Jonathan Christie Sam Dowdall	Peter Reid	

* Zoom owing to heavy snow

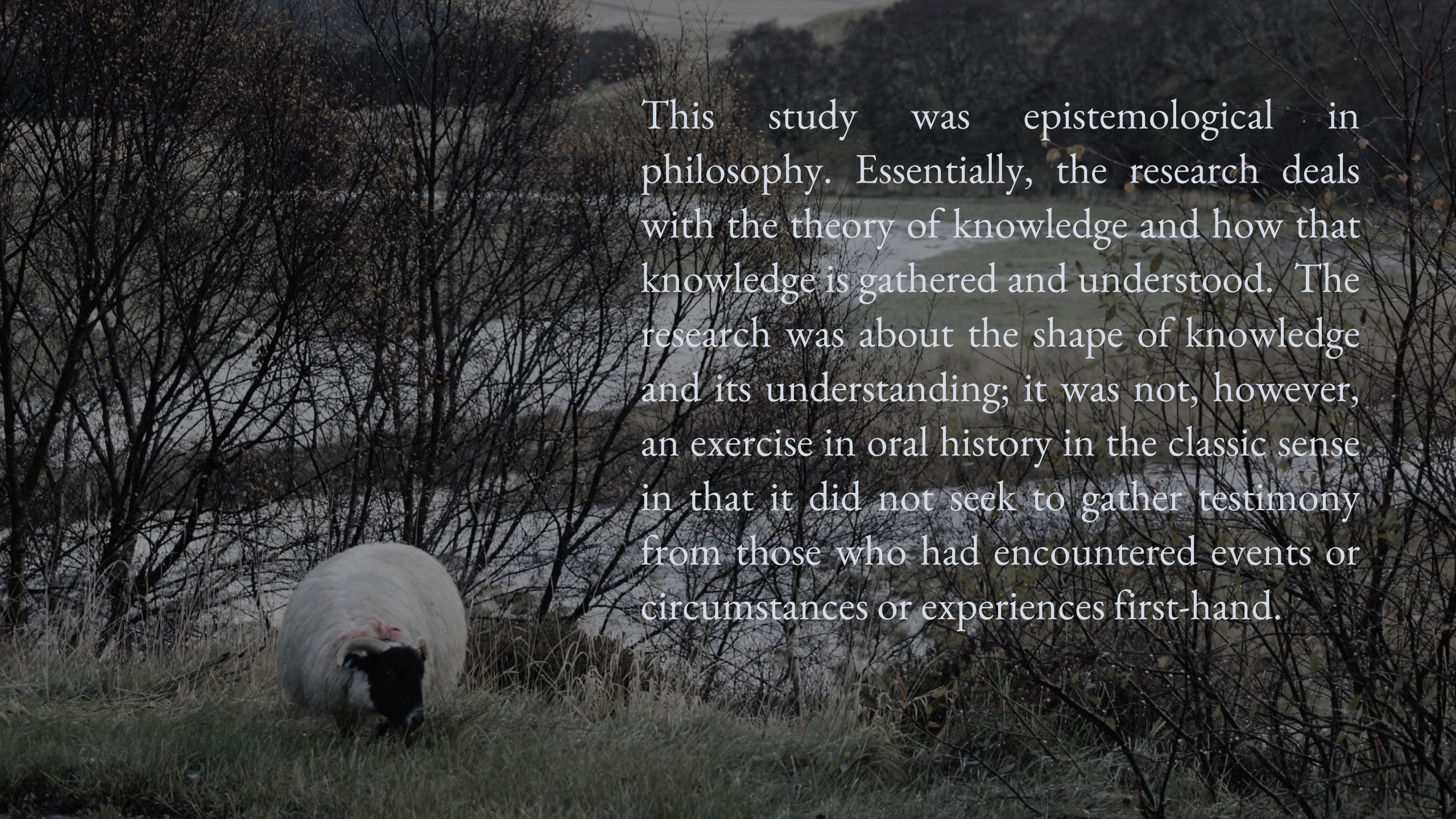


RESEARCH
PHILOSOPHIES



METHODOLOGICAL
APPROACHES



A sheep with a large, white, curly woolly coat is grazing in a field of tall grass. The sheep's face is black and white. In the background, there are many bare, dark trees and a hazy, overcast sky. The overall scene is somewhat somber and quiet.

This study was epistemological in philosophy. Essentially, the research deals with the theory of knowledge and how that knowledge is gathered and understood. The research was about the shape of knowledge and its understanding; it was not, however, an exercise in oral history in the classic sense in that it did not seek to gather testimony from those who had encountered events or circumstances or experiences first-hand.

Social epistemology has paid little attention to oral historiography as a source of expert insight. (Kenyon, 2016).

The approach is not without potential issues, particularly that expert oral historians treat testimony with a default trust, suggesting an epistemic warrant for the acceptance of testimony even when independent supporting evidence is unavailable. (Coady, 1992).

The exploration of expert-generated heritage storytelling has highlighted that such experts can act as 'gatekeepers [and] their reviews, reports and studies can be influential as they can legitimize and raise awareness about ICH elements and bearer communities'. (Rinallo, 2020)

Workshop lasted approximately two-and-a-half hours and were the in-depth conversations with Colin Mackenzie and Alan Winchester and focused on themes identified in workshop one.

Conversational workshops which were free flowing but with the odd tangent investigated. Probing questions were used, but sparingly; MacKenzie & Winchester were left to discuss what they wanted to talk about within the context of the thematic framework.



Issues of bias & authority

Mackenzie and Winchester are very close to the topic and know the subject thoroughly;

Involvement and Detachment Theory (Elias (1939, 1956, 1987), and Turner and Pirie (2016));

The authority (*involvement*) of Reid and the potential of this to result in his own bias due to his attachment to the area or for specific details being under analysed due to the implicit understanding he, Mackenzie and Winchester had of the subject was mitigated by the contextual naivety (*detachment*) of the Pirie and Ironside who had no specific knowledge of the Cabrach prior to the research. This allowed their questioning to mitigate against potential bias in the research, by asking pertinent 'so what?' questions.

THE METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES



OVER-ARCHING THEMES

A black and white photograph of a stone church with a bell tower, set against a backdrop of a snow-covered landscape and a cemetery in the foreground. The church is built of rough-hewn stone and has a steep gabled roof. A small bell tower sits atop the roof. In the foreground, several gravestones are visible, including a prominent Celtic cross. The background shows a wide, snow-covered valley or plain under a cloudy sky.

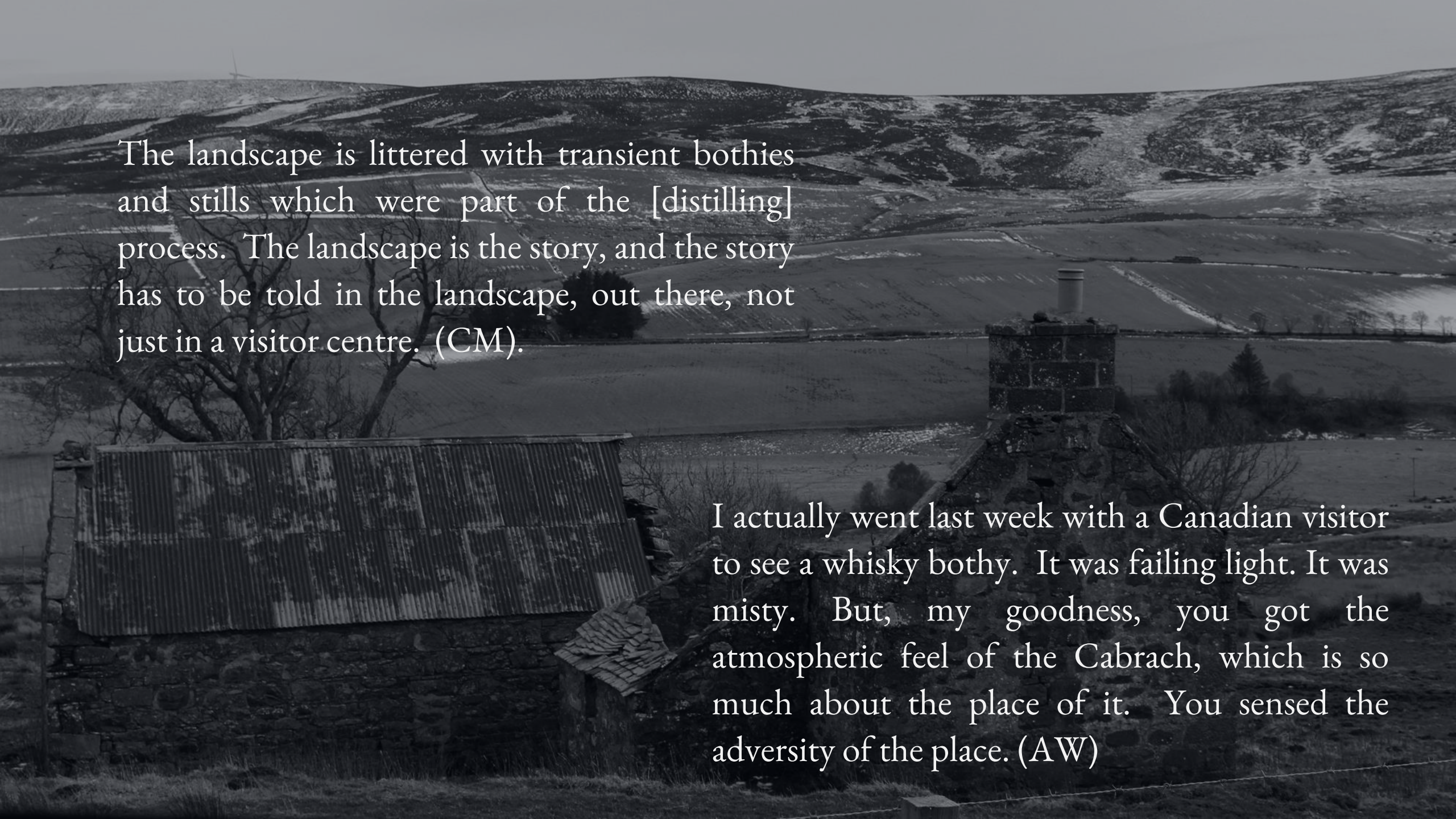
STORY OF WHISKY | PEOPLE | LANDSCAPE | EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

The Cabrach is a place of juxtaposition – harsh & peaceful, storms and stillness, togetherness, and isolation (JC).

‘The uniqueness of the place and its setting is really important. It’s really unique across Scotland, not just the North-East, and we need to show that’.
(AW)

‘It is the microcosm of the complete [whisky] story... its unique, with a beginning, middle and defined end when it petered out’. (CM).



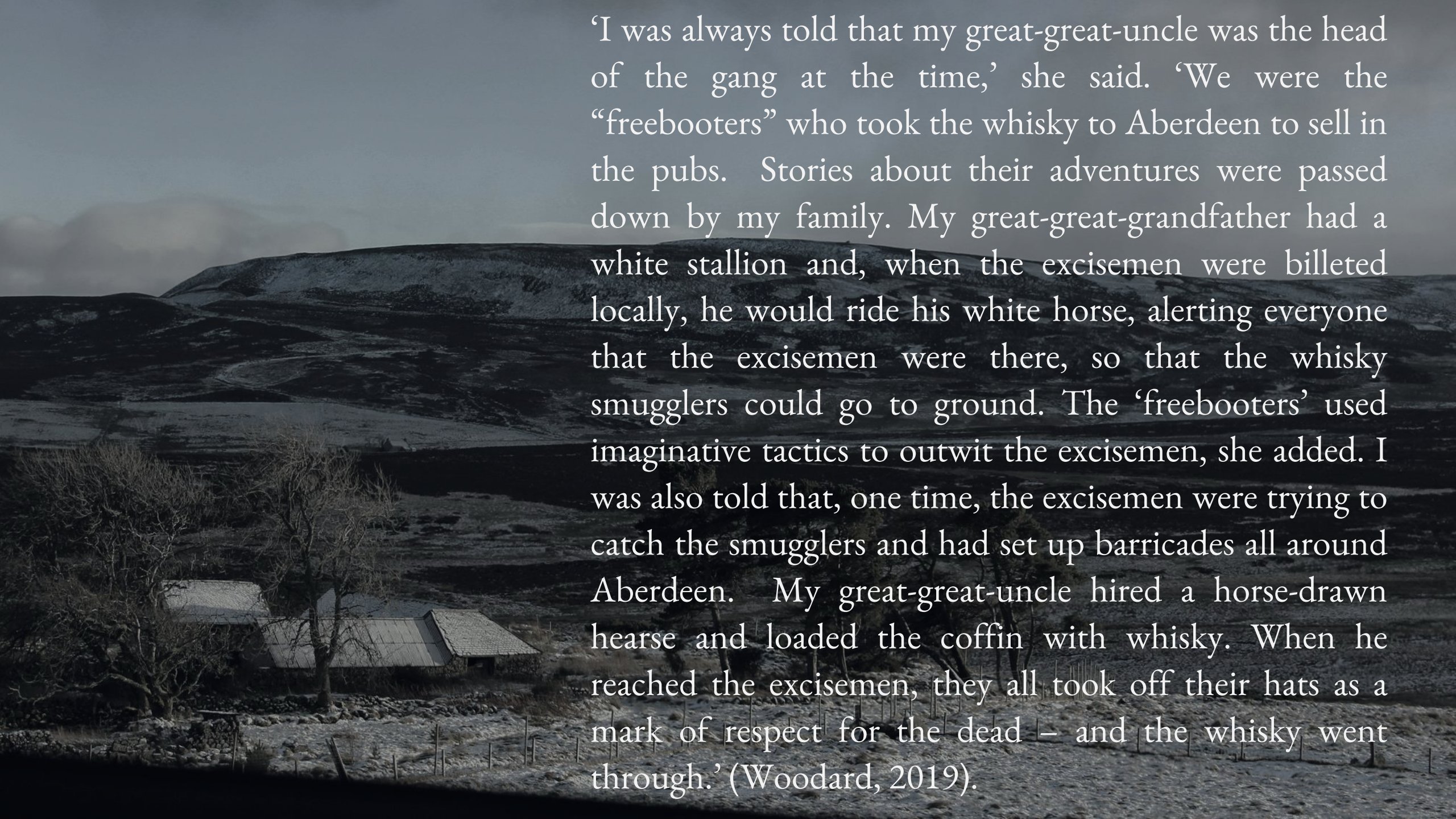
A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a stone building with a corrugated metal roof. To the right, a stone chimney stack with a small pipe on top is visible. The background shows rolling hills and fields under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The landscape is littered with transient bothies and stills which were part of the [distilling] process. The landscape is the story, and the story has to be told in the landscape, out there, not just in a visitor centre. (CM).

I actually went last week with a Canadian visitor to see a whisky bothy. It was failing light. It was misty. But, my goodness, you got the atmospheric feel of the Cabrach, which is so much about the place of it. You sensed the adversity of the place. (AW)



‘You’re often only getting a snapshot of what life was like, we’ve got a very limited number of sources [in which] these stories appear in. We’re only getting limited numbers, bits and pieces, aspects of life being talked about’.
(CM)

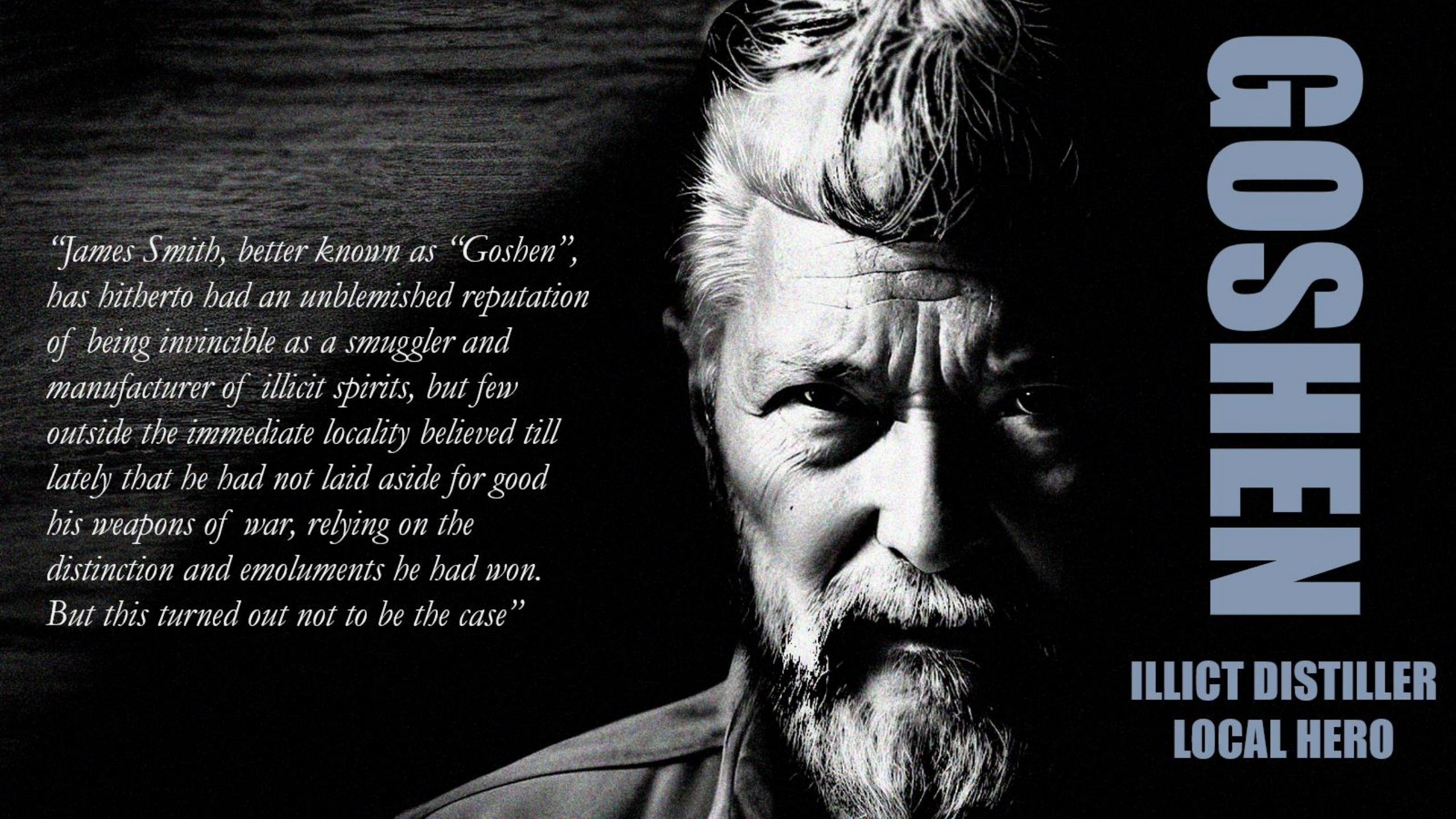
A dark, atmospheric landscape with rolling hills and a small building in the foreground. The scene is dimly lit, with a heavy, overcast sky. In the foreground, there are several bare trees and a small, simple building with a gabled roof. The middle ground shows a wide, open field or valley, and the background features more rolling hills under a grey sky. The overall mood is somber and historical.

‘I was always told that my great-great-uncle was the head of the gang at the time,’ she said. ‘We were the “freebooters” who took the whisky to Aberdeen to sell in the pubs. Stories about their adventures were passed down by my family. My great-great-grandfather had a white stallion and, when the excisemen were billeted locally, he would ride his white horse, alerting everyone that the excisemen were there, so that the whisky smugglers could go to ground. The ‘freebooters’ used imaginative tactics to outwit the excisemen, she added. I was also told that, one time, the excisemen were trying to catch the smugglers and had set up barricades all around Aberdeen. My great-great-uncle hired a horse-drawn hearse and loaded the coffin with whisky. When he reached the excisemen, they all took off their hats as a mark of respect for the dead – and the whisky went through.’ (Woodard, 2019).

‘A poor soul caught smuggling’

(AW)

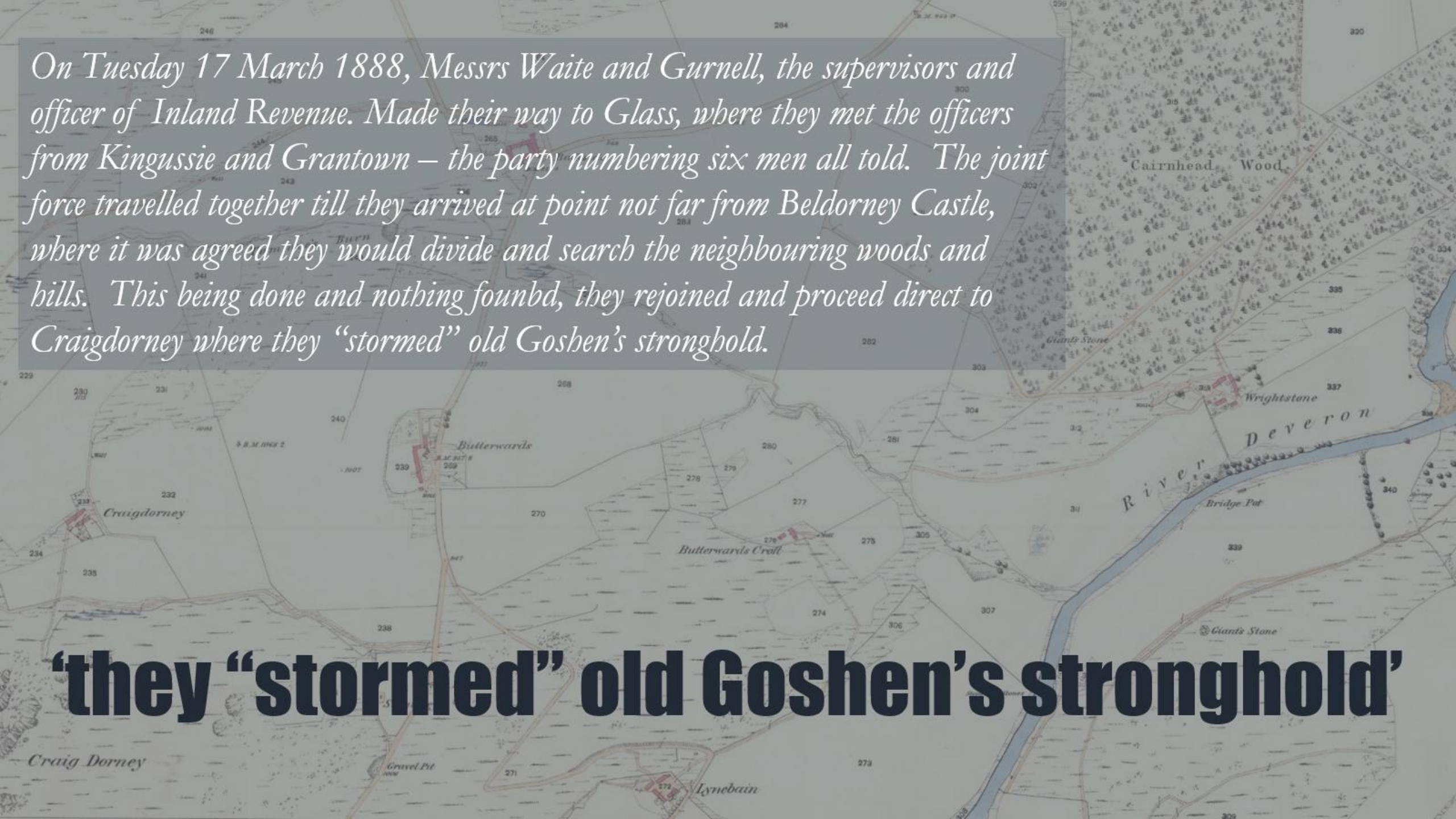




“James Smith, better known as “Goshen”, has hitherto had an unblemished reputation of being invincible as a smuggler and manufacturer of illicit spirits, but few outside the immediate locality believed till lately that he had not laid aside for good his weapons of war, relying on the distinction and emoluments he had won. But this turned out not to be the case”

GOSHEN

**ILLICIT DISTILLER
LOCAL HERO**



On Tuesday 17 March 1888, Messrs Waite and Gurnell, the supervisors and officer of Inland Revenue. Made their way to Glass, where they met the officers from Kingussie and Grantown – the party numbering six men all told. The joint force travelled together till they arrived at point not far from Beldorney Castle, where it was agreed they would divide and search the neighbouring woods and hills. This being done and nothing found, they rejoined and proceed direct to Craighorn where they “stormed” old Goshen’s stronghold.

‘they “stormed” old Goshen’s stronghold’

Goshen's wonder grew to astonishment....

to be the case. The party, under Mr Waite's directions, searched "Goshen's" house from floor to roof, and at length came upon a still and still-head, concealed between the ceiling and the roof, amongst some lumber. "Goshen" himself, to his credit, could scarcely believe that such strange and unfamiliar pieces of furniture could have been found in his humble and peaceful dwelling, but wonder grew to astonishment when, searching further, the officers found two sacks of ground malt ready for immediate use. This was at once destroyed. Examination of the out-houses and stack-yard failed to discover anything of importance, although every little cask, jar, and bottle in the house testified to the soul that lately inhabited them. Taking a more extensive sweep round



What will be done to poor Goshen?

The next question that arises is what will be done to poor "Goshen"?. If all accounts be true he is not the only culprit in this affair, but has been made the tool by others with whom the law cannot touch. If this be the case it would be very heatless for his friends to allow an old man of 80 to be put in gaol in default of paying the heavy fines usually imposed in such cases, especially when some of his neighbours share part of the guilt. On the whole it is well that illicit distillation should be put down with a firm hand, especially in this case, as we learn that "Goshen's" had lately become a centre for Sunday evening drinking.

HUNTLY EXPRESS 17 MARCH 1888

COLLECTION

SPIRIT OF THE CABRACH

THE LANDSCAPE

'A landlocked island'
Challenges and opportunities
Depopulation

THE PEOPLE

Lives, knowledge and skills
Diaspora
Progenitors of the whisky story

MALT WHISKY

An authentic story of malt whisky
Genealogy of malt whisky
The critical incidents

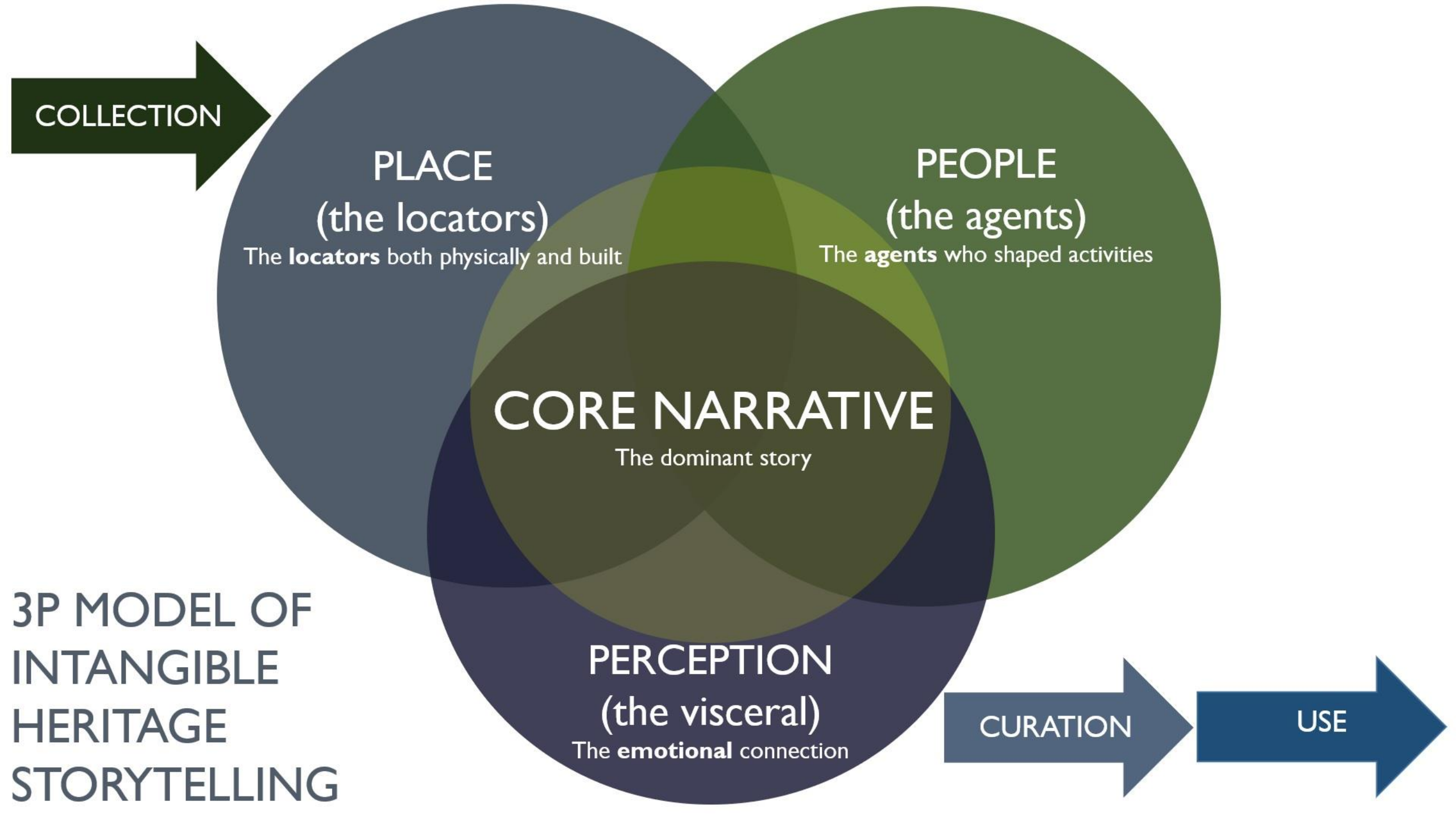
THE VISCERAL

Melancholy
Emotional
Sustainable

CURATION

USE







‘It is about cultural stories – not just whisky and history – and how the community moves forward. Cabrach Trust is leading on a community agenda of development, a social enterprise like no other, a multi-million-pound enterprise for a distillery and, therefore, ultimately sustainable. It’s all about renewal and sustainability’. (JC)

“Telling the story of telling the story”: capturing intangible heritage storytelling on the origins of malt whisky in the Cabrach

Peter H. Reid, Elliot Pirie and Rachael Ironside
School of Creative and Cultural Business, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK

Abstract

Purpose – This research explored the storytelling (collection, curation and use) in the Cabrach, a remote Scottish glen. This study aims to capture the methodological process of storytelling and curation of heritage knowledge through the lens of the Cabrach’s whisky distilling history, a central part of the area’s cultural heritage, tangible and intangible. This research was conceptualised as “telling the story of telling the story of the Cabrach”. It was concerned with how the history, heritage, historiography and testimony associated with the parish could be harvested, made sense of and subsequently used.

Design/methodology/approach – The study was epistemological in nature and the research was concerned with how heritage knowledge is gathered, curated and understood. It was built around the collection of knowledge through expert testimony from Colin Mackenzie and Alan Winchester, who have extensively researched aspects of life in the Cabrach. This was done using a series of theme-based but free-flowing conversational workshop involving participants and research team. Issues of trust and authority in the research team were crucial. Data were recorded, transcribed and coded. A conceptual model for heritage storytelling in the Cabrach was developed together with a transferable version for other contexts.

Findings – The research was conceived around identifying the stories of the Cabrach and grouping them into cohesive narrative themes focused on the most important aspect of the glen’s history (the development of malt whisky distilling). The research showed how all crucial narratives associated with the Cabrach were interconnected with that malt whisky story. It was concerned with identifying broad thematic narratives rather than the specific detailed stories themselves, but also from a methodological perspective how stories around those themes could be collected, curated and used. It presents the outcome of “expert testimony” oral history conversations and presents a conceptual model for the curation of heritage knowledge.

Practical implications – This paper reports on research which focuses on the confluence of those issues of heritage-led regeneration, intangible cultural heritage, as well as how stories of and from, about and for, a distinctive community in North-East Scotland can be collected, curated and displayed. It presents methodological conceptualisations as well as focused areas of results which can be used to create a strong and inclusive narrative to encapsulate the durable sense of place and support the revival of an economically viable and sustainable community.

Social implications – This conceptual model offers a framework with universal elements (Place, People, Perception) alongside a strong core narrative of storytelling. That core element may vary but the outer elements remain the same, with people and place being omnipresent and the need to build an emotional or visceral connection with visitors being crucial, beyond “telling stories” which might be regarded as parochial or narrowly focused. The model informs how communities and heritage organisations tell their stories in an authentic and proportionate manner. This can help shape and explain cultures and identities and support visitors’ understanding of, and connection with, places they visit and experience.

Originality/value – The originality lies in two principal areas, the exploration of the narratives of a singularly distinctive community – the Cabrach – which plays a disproportionately significant role in the development of malt whisky distilling in Scotland; and also in terms of the methodological approach to the collection and curation of heritage storytelling, drawing not on first-hand accounts as in conventional oral history approaches but through the expert testimony of two historical and ethnographic researchers. The value is demonstrating the creation of a conceptual model which can be transferred to other contexts.

Keywords Heritage, Scotland, Storytelling, Narratives
Paper type Article

Funding: This research was funded by the Cabrach Trust.

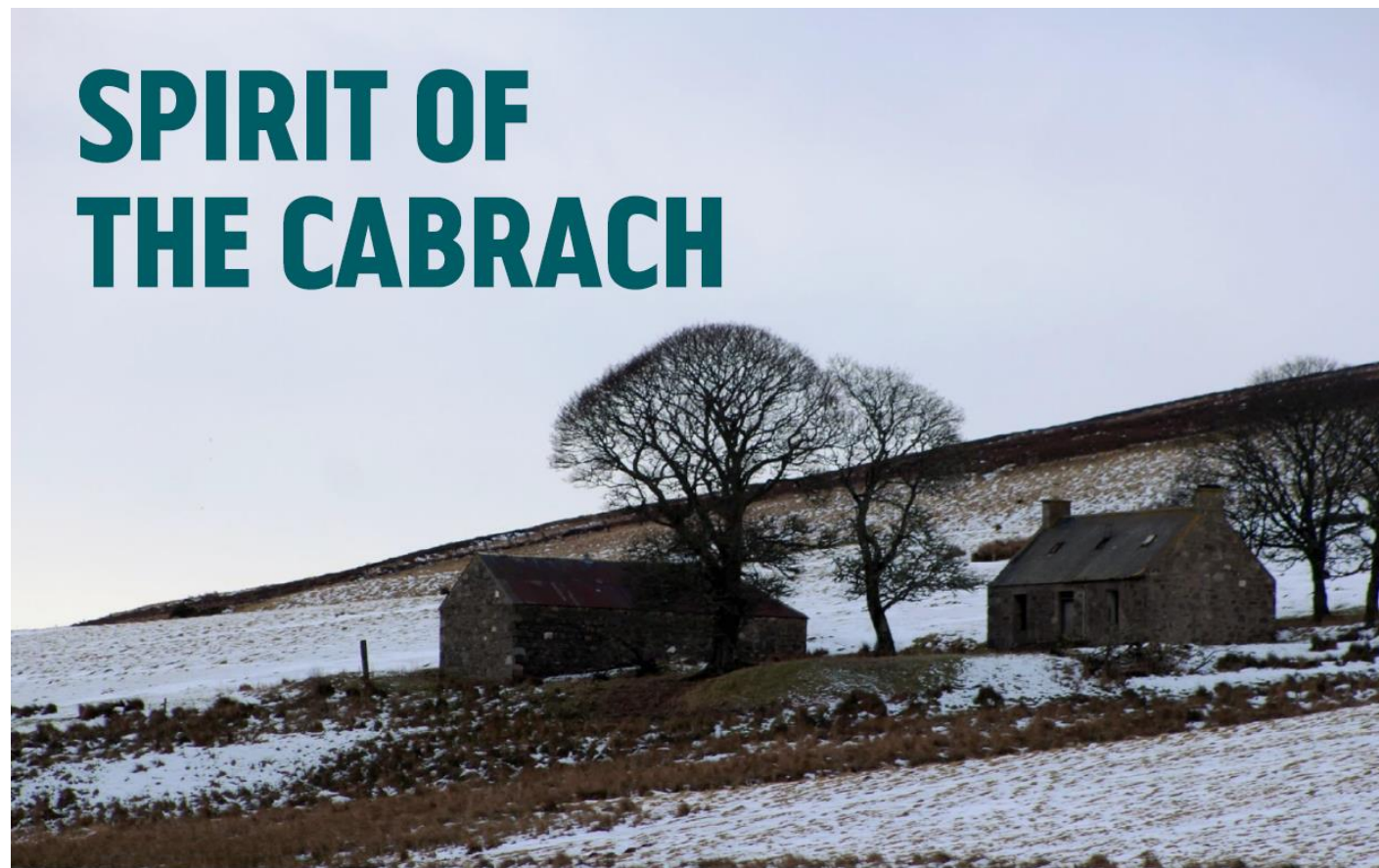
Origins of malt
whisky in the
Cabrach

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SPIRIT OF THE CABRACH



A REPORT EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND
CHALLENGES OF HERITAGE STORYTELLING IN THE CABRACH



A perfect example of collaborative and inter-disciplinary
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE AND CULTURAL BUSINESS
research

Cultural heritage | storytelling | economic development |
digital | branding and marketing | regional engagement