

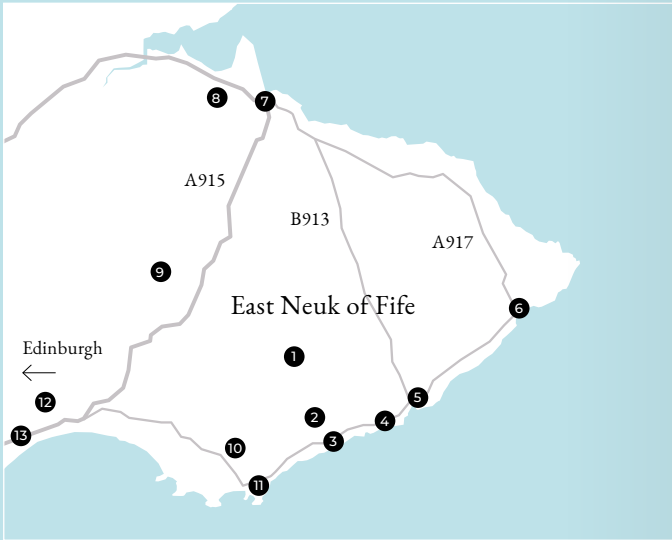
BALCASKIE



A modern working estate at the heart of the East Neuk of Fife, committed to cultivating and caring for the natural environment, nurturing local business and supporting the vibrant community.



The East Neuk of Fife



- 01 Balcaskie Estate Office / Kellie Castle
- 02 Bowhouse
- 03 St Monans
- 04 Pittenweem
- 05 Anstruther
- 06 Crail
- 07 St Andrews
- 08 Balgove Larder
- 09 The Peat Inn
- 10 Kinneuchar Inn
- 11 Elie
- 12 Blacketyside
- 13 Leven

The Anstruther family has been a part of the East Neuk community since the 12th century, when it was based at Dreel Castle in Anstruther. The connection with Balcaskie started towards the end of the 17th century, with Sir Robert Anstruther. Sir Ralph Anstruther inherited Balcaskie in the 1930s, but as he never married the title then moved to his cousin, Sir Ian Fife Campbell Anstruther. Toby Anstruther, Sir Ian’s son, now lives at Balcaskie with his wife Kate and their family. Balcaskie is a member of the East Neuk Estates group (see The Community on pg 14).

Balcaskie Estate covers 1800 ha from the coastline at St Monans to Kellie Law and into the hills behind, with a mixture of let farms and in-hand farming operations covering a wider variety of land types. The variation in soil enables vegetables and potatoes to be grown closer to the coast, cereals and fattening livestock in the middle and at the highest points, breeding livestock make best use of the more challenging land.

Balcaskie House is at the heart of the estate. It is largely the creation of William Bruce who made it his home around the late 1600s when he was architect to King Charles II and working on Holyrood Palace. Later additions to Balcaskie were made by William Burn, a prominent Scottish architect involved in several other notable designs in Fife. This early baroque house is Category A listed and sits within an archetypal designed landscape.

Balcaskie gardens include three broad terraces aligned on the Bass Rock. The terraces and vista are inspired by French Baroque gardens, such as Vaux-le-Vicomte. The gardens were restored in the 18th century and the parterre designed in the 1840s by WA Nesfield.

The estate’s head gardener collaborates with the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), opening the gardens to the public each year under the Scotland’s Gardens scheme, which has supported the Gardens Fund of the NTS since 1952 and now supports many other charities annually.

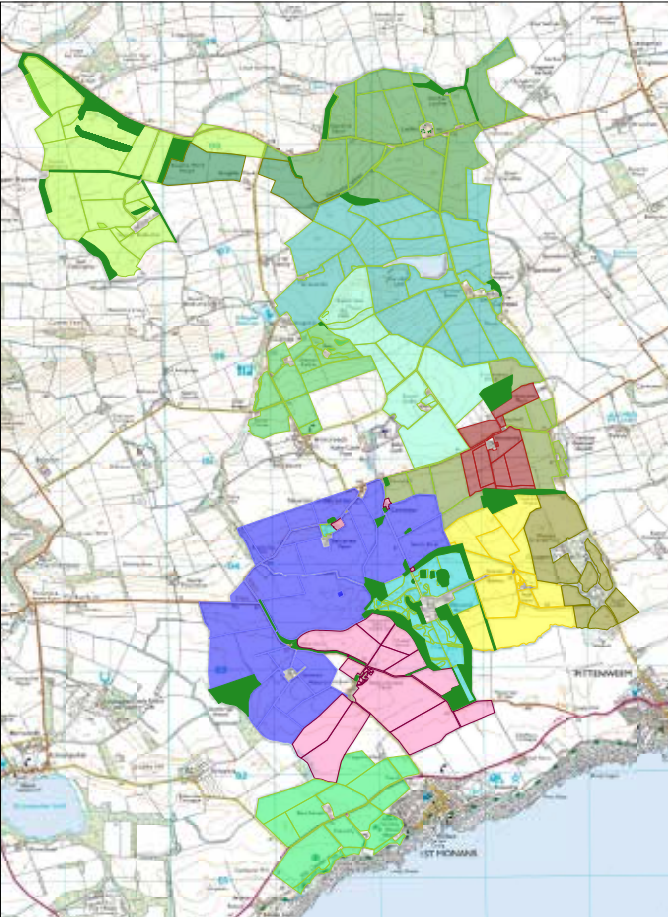
The East Neuk of Fife is the source of some of the best ingredients in Scotland. Bounded on three sides by sea and with fertile volcanic soils, its bounty includes fish, soft fruit, vegetables and milling wheat along the coastal strip, malting barley beyond and pastures feeding livestock inland. This mix of agriculture and aquaculture is the basis for sustainable mixed farming, supporting diverse communities in the coastal and landward villages. Tourism has joined farming and fishing as a key industry, with quality of life, beautiful places, great food and vibrant communities all characterising the area.

1840 engraving of Balcaskie House



The Farms

On our in-hand farm, the way we farm is as important as what we farm. To this end there has been significant investment in the fabric of the farm and the surrounding countryside. We aim for efficiency and high standards within the clear framework of farming as part of a sustainable environment. Balcaskie has four let farms covering almost one third of the estate. The farms are let under a variety of agreements and include traditional mixed family farms and diversified businesses such as Ovenstone Equine.



Always striving to promote best practice, Balcaskie is committed to the Scottish Government’s industry guidance for agricultural landlords and tenants. The in-hand farming business covers 1100 ha, producing suckled beef, grass-finished lamb, malting barley, milling and distilling wheat and oilseed rape. Produce is quality assured to the Scotch Beef and Lamb Association (SBLA) and Scotch Food Quality Certification (SFQC) and the herds’ High Health Status are monitored by National Premium Health Schemes.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Around 700 ha of the farm is dedicated to livestock production, and this enterprise is farmed organically. Certified by Soil Association (License No. AB 27055) we have developed our low-input farming further to reduce bought-in inputs and demonstrate a self-supporting, sustainable farming system. By managing the farm and wider landscape as one we benefit both and help to promote natural biodiversity.

Our organic rotation focuses on the fertility that is built during the time the grass is grazed and the release of that fertility to produce cereals for feed, milling and malting. Longer than a conventional rotation, grass clover leys make up 5 of the 7 years: 4-5 years of fertility build for 2-3 years of harvestable crops.

THE BEEF HERD

All cows are housed during the winter to protect grass and prevent soil damage. Housing design provides natural light and ventilation, essential to herd health, and straw bedding returns nutrients to the land as well-rotted farmyard manure. Purpose-built handling facilities make use of natural animal instincts and curiosity, allowing livestock flow with minimal interference, and animal growth is monitored for any underlying issues.

The Luing Herd makes best use of the naturally occurring grasses and wild flowers of the highest meadows. Originally a Highland x Shorthorn, Luing is a native breed and now a pedigree in its own right, combining hardiness and good mothering skills with plenty of milk and excellent meat quality. Around 100 suckler cows graze on and around Kellie Law through summer, where they are crossed to a Simmental bull to rejuvenate the core commercial herd of 250 Sim-Luing suckler cows. Calves stay with their mother through the first summer, and after this the male calves are fattened.

The Simmental x Luing Herd consists of the best female calves from the Luing Herd. Once there, they stay at North Baldutho for up to 10 years. The cows are calved in spring after breeding with quality beef Simmental, Aberdeen Angus, Beef Shorthorn or Limousin bulls, which enables Balcaskie to offer a range of finishing times throughout the year. The herd’s diet of grass silage and straw maintains condition and digestive health. Cows and calves are turned out on fresh grass where they spend the summer grazing clover-rich grass.



The Farms

Some of the grazing is classified as ‘species-rich’ and is protected, so a low-stocking density is essential to maintain condition of these ancient grass leys. Calves are weaned at 8 months and brought in to straw-bedded yards for the winter, to feed on silage, homegrown cereals and pulses. In their second spring, at 12 to 14 months, the young stock return to the estate’s best pastures where they are split into groups according to nature and growth rate. Housed again for their second winter and fed on the same homegrown diet, fat cattle will be ready between October and July. They will have spent their entire time on the farm eating homegrown fresh grass, cereals and other fodder.



THE SHEEP FLOCK

Along with the cattle, sheep manage the sward and make the most of the fodder. The expanding flock of 500 Scotch Greyface Mules, a cross between Scotch Blackface ewe and Bluefaced Leicester, was established in 2015. Previously ewe lambs were bought in and reared and sold at 18 months old. The ewes are bred with either a Suffolk or a Texel x Beltex tup. The Suffolk lambs are born early in March to meet the early lamb market from late June onwards. The Texel-x-Beltex lambs are born in April, and are sold right through until February/March.

Newly sown grass leys and herbal rich grass mixes ensure high-quality, clean grazing. The grass benefits from grazing, helping to tiller out and clean the new grass, free from weeds. The term ‘golden hoof’ referred to the ability of farmers to grow the best crops of barley following sheep grazing. Mixing the beef cattle and sheep also allows grass to be managed at different lengths and improves grassland species diversity.

Old traditional varieties of barley and beans, rarely grown commercially, are chosen for feed to maximise disease resistance rather than just yield. And use of legumes, such as spring beans, provides protein for livestock and fixes nitrogen into the soil. A winter cover crop of vetches and radishes also provides nitrogen, and the grazing provides phosphates and potash.

CONVENTIONAL ARABLE

As the organic conversion of Balcaskie’s additional arable land follows on from that of the livestock enterprise, the farm operates a conventional, low-input cereal rotation over 400 ha, growing wheat, barley and oilseed rape. Until land is converted we will continue to farm along LEAF’s Integrated Farm Management. Winter distilling wheat is Balcaskie’s main cereal crop. High-quality winter and spring milling wheat goes to local mills and bakeries, with the end market determining how they are produced. To maximise protein levels, these are grown following a fertility-building crop of vetch/clover – with added benefits for the local bee population. Winter barley goes for beer malts and spring barley for Single Malt Scotch Whisky and as far afield as US craft breweries. Oilseed rape is grown as a break crop, providing oil and an abundance of food for foraging bees.

SHARING MODERN METHODS AND TECHNOLOGY

Organic farming is not nostalgic or backward looking; we use precision farming with on-farm GPS and other high-tech equipment to make sure our farming is as efficient as possible. And, as part of the East Neuk farming community, we share this technology with other farms. All cereal crops grown are weighed into store using our own ministry-approved weighbridge, which is also available to neighbours. Modern storage facilities keep crops long term so they can be sold throughout the year. Inputs are minimised using GPS-technology, variable-rate seed and fertiliser placement, GPS location soil analysis and harvest yield maps. Sharing a GPS transmitter with Fife Tractors allows other farmers in the East Neuk to benefit from this progressive technology.

Wild Farming

Stewardship of the environment and wildlife is a key priority at Balcaskie and our aim is to increase the vitality of all of our land. Informed farm management takes close account of the diverse flora and fauna of the East Neuk of Fife and helps to harmonise mixed farming practice and long-term sustainability.



Conservation and best practice promote a balanced ecosystem, where animals prosper with access to feed, habitat and freedom from predators. Balcaskie has Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) certification and our Wildlife and Environment Manager assists a number of organisations on various programmes.

Our woodland provides habitat and shelter for wildlife and livestock, plus fuel for two of our biomass boilers (below), providing district heating to residential and business units. A third boiler is fueled with waste residue and chaff from grain drying. Five solar Photo Voltaic installations produce 136Kw across various sites providing electricity for businesses and residential properties.

The local Roe Deer population also shares our woodland and, more often than not, the arable crops too! The East Neuk of Fife is renowned for the number and quality of its Roe Deer, and a seasonal selective cull helps to maintain the balance and long-term health of the herd.

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

We are currently working with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and the RSPB to develop seed-mix that benefits pollinators, and with the RSPB on farmland bird restoration, which has seen numbers of Corn Bunting and Grey Partridge increase. Both are on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. A partnership with The Fife Barn Owl Project has also seen a steady increase in numbers, while hive space is provided to Fife Beekeepers' Association and notification given in advance of any agricultural operation that may affect the bees.

LARGE-SCALE LANDSCAPE PROJECTS

Over 45km of new hedges have created much needed habitat, while grass margins surround many of the fields and larger fields are split using beetle banks. The encouragement of beneficial insects reduces the need for artificial pest control and the tufted grass mixed with clover and nectar-rich wild flowers becomes a haven for bees and other wildlife. Conventionally farmed arable ground annually rotates conservation headlands, which have no artificial fertilisers or chemicals applied.

These provide a rich carpet of annual weeds as ground cover and more accessible crops on the headlands, as well as a food source and shelter for farmland bird chicks during critical early months when food is in short supply. Mini dung middens positioned around the fields attract a large numbers of insects including beetles. Bird feed hoppers and wild bird seed crops positioned around the farm provide additional vital food for farmland birds over winter.

Protecting watercourses with buffer strips of grass reduces spray drift and surface water runoff. Irrigation water is supplied by the estate's own reservoir and boreholes, so water taken from the Dreel burn is limited to times when the burn has excess. Excluding livestock from the burn and working with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has helped reduce pollution in the burn to such a degree that Brown Trout, Otter and Kingfisher have returned – this has also been key to the survival of species outside the course of the burn, such as key shellfish breeding grounds at the mouth of the burn in the Firth of Forth.

Cultivate, Care, Nurture & Support.



The Community

Balcaskie has close relationships with the East Neuk villages that surround it. Recognising our place as an active member within these communities, we work in partnership with neighbouring farmers to achieve common goals – a high quality of life in a vibrant and sustainable place.

With an active role in the local communities and the physical resource to lend a hand where possible, we are able to assist with a wide range of activities, from provision of premises to local voluntary organisations, donations of Christmas trees, deliveries of dung to allotment holders to tree planting and beach cleaning.

We are a founding member of the East Neuk Estates (ENE) group of six local family-run estates, which are working collaboratively to achieve common goals. Together with our fellow ENE members, we also founded the East Neuk Community Awards Fund and initiated the East Neuk Community Action Plan (ENCAP) that encourages long-term, community-led future plans for this part of Fife.

Balcaskie is also one of the founders of Food from Fife, a non-profit organisation promoting food production and food tourism in Fife. In partnership with the Royal Highland Education Trust, Balcaskie supports schools by providing an opportunity to see where food comes from and how it fits into the fabric of life in Fife and the East Neuk. In June each year Balcaskie assists fellow ENE member Gilston Estate as it hosts an open day welcoming over 250 children to the farm.



The Kinneuchar Inn



The Kinneuchar Inn is an 18th century inn at the heart of the picturesque East Neuk village of Kilconquhar. The Inn was bought by Balcaskie in 2016 to guarantee its future and as a showcase for Fife's best produce.

In the tradition of rural Scots pubs, the Inn is little more than a front room with a byre-turned-dining room on the back; the heart of village life. If the beautiful Kilconquhar church is home of christenings, marriages and funerals, the village pub is where much of the rest of life can play out. Since taking over the Kinneuchar Inn we have been building links with local suppliers of fruit, vegetables, farmed and wild meat and fish.

Locally caught lobster and langoustine will fill summer tables while game and Balcaskie meat take their turn through the winter, all washed down with Scottish brews from St Andrews Brewing Company.

The Inn is currently undergoing substantial restoration & investment to improve its kitchen, bar & dining rooms. These are due for completion in 2019.



Bowhouse

Where Balcaskie and our farming neighbours produce the raw ingredients, and the Kinneuchar Inn and nearby retailers sell ingredients and delicious meals, Bowhouse is a vital link in the food supply chain from field to fork.



There are few reasons why the scale of the producer should be linked to the quality of the food and drink they produce. The very best producers are rarely the largest; the skill and passion of the producer is far more important. Bowhouse is a collection of production units and a destination for producers and consumers interested in the best local produce.

Here we see the craft brewer turn malted barley – to beer and on to malt whisky; organic heritage wheat grown on the estate – milled into flour; beef hung in perfect salt-air conditions for time to mature into tender steak or rib, and much more. Bowhouse provides small food and drink businesses with space for production and wholesale of their product. Alongside is one of the very few covered market spaces in Scotland, used through seasonal events to showcase Fife’s food and drink producers both to local restaurants and retailers and directly to our community and visiting tourists. It is also used for other events, such as the East Neuk Festival, whose cultural and economic benefit fall to the wider local community.

FUTURE PLANS

We would like to offer opportunities to those who have a passion for local produce to get involved at Bowhouse.

Bowhouse Community Farm is a new initiative that plans to offer farm plots to members for growing space, with the ability to sell surplus. We aim to put together cooperative producers to ensure a sustainable agricultural rotation; growers will then be able to participate in the seasonal markets at Bowhouse to trade their produce.

Bowhouse Producer Club is like a food assembly for anyone looking for local produce, but unlike a farm shop the produce will only be available when it’s ready. Members will be informed when produce becomes available, and once orders are received confirmation will be sent of when pick up will be.

Specific requests will be welcome, with orders tailored to suit special requests. The aim of the club is to continue and extend the direct link between East Neuk producers, makers and consumers.

Anyone interested in getting involved is invited to contact the Balcaskie Estate Office by phone or email – 01333 720200 info@balcaskie.com



Live and Work

Balcaskie has a number of traditional farm steadings, no longer suitable for machinery or animal welfare standards on a modern farm. The steadings, several of them listed, remain beautiful buildings in wonderful settings. With the intention of reproviding workshop and studio space lost over the years from nearby villages, as well as residential homes, Balcaskie has an award-winning long-term programme of reinvestment into its traditional steadings.



COMMERCIAL

The workshop conversions support an intricate pattern of diverse activities at the heart of East Neuk life, bringing back much-needed jobs lost over the years from agriculture, fishing and their supporting communities.

Now a new generation of small businesses are returning vitality to the rural East Neuk and helping to sustain local communities. In order to support those who choose to live and work in this evolving and creative destination, Balcaskie's low-cost workshops keep business costs to a minimum. The internet – delivered through the estate's own superfast fibre-optic broadband network – enables these businesses to serve customers all over the world, while enjoying a quality of life characteristic of the East Neuk of Fife.

Workshop uses are clustered so that like-minded businesses can share experience and pool resources, working together as a makers' community in any one of the steadings.

We currently host 87 jobs on the estate, and together with our ENE partners this figure is over 150. The steading redevelopments over the coming years are anticipated to add a further 40 jobs, making the East Neuk Estates one of the biggest hosts of employment in Fife's East Neuk. The range of businesses based on Balcaskie includes our own farm, estate team and the Inn, as well as a nursery school, guitar-maker, photographer, marketers, designers and makers in wood, glass and precious metals and more, as well as, of course, the makers of food and drink.

RESIDENTIAL

Beyond being a place where people work, Balcaskie is also a place where people live. Many of our cottages and houses are occupied by people who work on Balcaskie, but there are also some available for rental. Anyone interested in available property is invited to contact the Balcaskie Estate Office.

The Team



TOBY ANSTRUTHER OF THAT ILK, KATE, MADDIE AND ALEX ANSTRUTHER
Toby took over Balcaskie in 2002 and he and his family moved in 2008; though for several years he spent as much time on the Caledonian Sleeper as anywhere else! Now firmly in Fife, as well as working on Balcaskie, Toby founded Food from Fife and was instrumental in the set up of the East Neuk Estates group and the East Neuk Community Action Plan project.



SAM PARSONS
Estate Manager
Studying Agriculture with Land and Farm Management at Harper Adams, Sam began estate management in Ludlow at The Earl of Plymouth Estates. Before moving to Balcaskie in 2008, he managed an estate in East Lothian. Married to Jane who runs Little Farmer Childcare, Sam’s practical approach co-ordinates Balcaskie’s varied enterprises and builds strong links with local trades, businesses and organisations.



DAVE NICOL
Farm Manager
Angus-born farmer’s son, Dave joined Lochty Farm in 1983 under the previous owner and became farm manager in 2007 when Balcaskie bought Lochty. Dave and Val have two children, Gemma, who is married to Rory (Taran Guitars, Comielaw), and Ross who also works on the farm. His enthusiasm for quality livestock with his keen eye for detail keep the farm working smoothly, efficiently and effectively.



J  R  MY LESIOURD
Environmental and Wildlife Development
Born in Normandy, J  r  my trained in Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management at Borders College in Galashiels. Having worked on grouse moors and latterly at Langholm on the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust’s Grouse Project, his experience of working on research projects enables him to develop Balcaskie’s focus on the diversity of flora and fauna to be found on the estate.



DEBS RYAN
Office Manager
Debs joined Balcaskie in 2009 bringing her impeccable multi-tasking and organisational skills with her from a background in Hospitality Management. These skills are invaluable to the day-to-day running of the estate and handling of the variety of businesses, tradesmen and workforce that she deals with on a daily basis. When not at work, Debs can generally be found with her horses, which she and husband Neil keep at Carnbee.



LEIGH RYAN
Estate Secretary
On leaving school in 2009, Leigh went to work with an accounts firm in Montrose where she completed her C.A.T. qualification. Leigh and husband Richard have been helping hands at many Balcaskie events, alongside in-laws Debs and Neil, over the years prior to moving to the East Neuk. Leigh officially joined the Balcaskie team in 2017 and Richard joined Little Farmer Childcare.



GAVIN JONES
Gardens and Lawncare
Gavin came to Scotland from Northern Ireland 10 years ago to study Greenkeeping. After attending Elmwood and completion of NC & HNC Golf course management in 2008, he worked at golf courses in England and spent most of his greenkeeping career at The Links Trust St. Andrews. Gavin has always had a love for creating and maintaining grounds and gardens, recently completing an HND Golf Course Management.



KYLIE KIRKALDY
Bowhouse Administrator
Joining the Balcaskie team in 2016 with the Kinneuchar Inn and after managing the Inn until the renovations, Kylie transferred her organisational skills to Bowhouse administration. Keeping the markets on track and traders informed. When not organising markets, she is active in the Elie Primary school clubs where her two children attend.

Managing an estate such as Balcaskie is a challenge: the work is never finished but the complexity of the choreography of so many diverse uses means we never get bored!



DUNCAN TRAVERS
Head Gardener
Moving from the Isle of Mull in 2016, Duncan brings a lifetime of skills and experience to the gardens of Balcaskie. Working within their historically important frame, future years will see the gardens developed and the designed landscape re-invigorated. Duncan works closely with the NTS to organise joint open days. And when not in the garden he can often be seen cycling around the East Neuk.



LESLEY GODSMAN
Gardens Assistant
Having completed her studies in Horticulture at Elmwood College, Lesley embarked on a new career in gardening, far from her previous role in banking. Working on a part-time basis at Balcaskie, she spends the rest of her time honing her skills at other gardens in Fife, which provides her with a large network of contacts. When not working, she enjoys travelling, going to real ale festivals and looking after her pet chickens.



LARA THOMPSON
Property Asset Manager
Brought up at Durie in Fife, Lara went on to qualify as a Chartered Surveyor in 1992. Working in London on development projects as well as asset management of portfolios for Property Companies and Estates before joining the Balcaskie team in 2018 to look after developments, property maintenance and renovations. If Lara is not walking the hills, she can be found in Fife tending her bees or plants.



JIM MCLURE
Farm and Estate Maintenance
Hailing from Crail, Jim was a creel fisherman, who then acquired a range of skills by working on a number of East Neuk farms. He joined Balcaskie in 2015 where he keeps the essential estate maintenance on course, and he and wife Laura are also foster carers. His notorious competitive streak ranges from curling to cooking – he prides himself on his creations for the estate’s ‘Cook Off’ meals.

The Team



ALLY MARSHALL
Stockman

A farmer’s son from Aberfeldy, Ally joined Balcaskie in 2012 from Atholl Estates. His livestock experience and connections across Scotland help him pick only the best breeding stock. Ally’s wife Annette is a consultant with SAC and her work is often brought home. He is a renowned Elvis impersonator and loves his Clydesdale horse which grazes with the bulls.



ANDY SCOTT
Tractorman

Andy joined Lochty Farm in 1990 and has maintained consistently straight tramlines ever since. Recently, his adoption of the modern technology used on the estate to take charge of the tractors’ steering and control seed rates has allowed him to concentrate on the rest of the task. His daughter’s husband Poul joined the team in 2016.



ROBERT WILSON
Tractorman

‘Wee Bob’ began his farming career with his parents near St Andrews. He joined Balcaskie in 2009 bringing a wealth of experience and an encyclopaedic knowledge. He and wife Wilma are stalwarts of the Strathkinness Curling Club and Arncroach Concert, but Robert is best known for his #ratemypiece blog, showcasing Wilma’s incredible ‘piece bag’ meals.



ROSS NICOL
Stockman and Tractorman

Born at Lochty Farm, Ross studied Agriculture at Elmwood College before working on Ardross Farm, helping to produce the ingredients for the well-known Ardross Farm Shop. Returning to Balcaskie in 2015, Ross has been invaluable in helping with the introduction of the sheep flock – equally happy driving the combine or lambing a ewe.



POUL THOMASSEN
Farm and Estate Maintenance

Poul studied Sound Production at Fife College. And although he was not brought up with an agricultural background, after meeting Andy’s daughter, Shannen, he joined Balcaskie in 2016 with great enthusiasm to learn the ropes and assist Jim McLure. When not at work, Poul has a passion for playing drums and also for trying various local craft beers.



CHAE CARSTAIRS
Horticultural Apprentice

After leaving school, Chae went on to study horticulture at SRUC Elmwood College gaining a level 3 SVQ. Working in various landscaping businesses around the East Neuk, Chae also set up a landscaping company with a friend. However, with his interest in technical gardening still untapped, Chae applied to become the first horticultural apprentice and will spend his time equally between Balcaskie and Strathtyrum Estates.



HUNTER PARSONS
Farm and Estate Apprentice

Having been brought up on the estate, Hunters interest in all things estate led him to apply for the farm and estate apprenticeship. Keen to learn the practical aspects of farming and estate maintenance, the apprenticeship which is run by Rural Skills Scotland will enable him to gain level 3 SVQ and on to a career in the land based industry.

Design
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BALCASKIE

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