

GENERAL WADE & CORRIEYARICK PASS

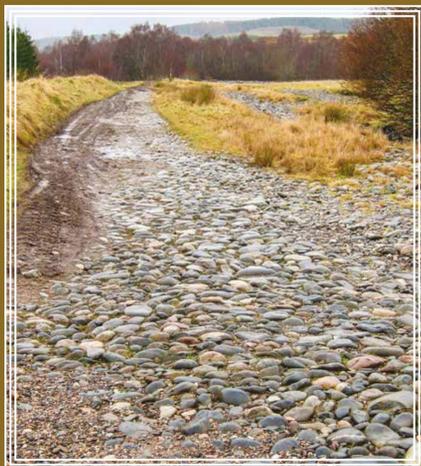
An imagined extract from the General's diary

GARVAMORE KINGSHOUSE

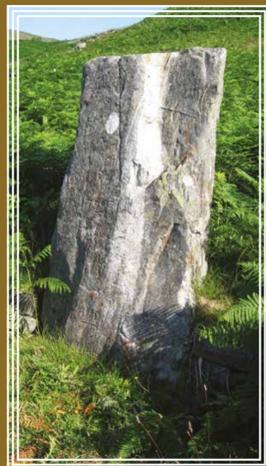
10th September 1732

Arrived here at our officer barracks, half way to Dalwhinnie from Fort Augustus, in my new carriage. We negotiated the seventeen zigzags just below the 2,922 foot summit of the Corrieyarick Pass without a problem. It was a beautiful day. It was hard to imagine our attempted crossing last winter when some of the soldiers died and our carriages had been blown over.

My passengers thought the last six miles truly amazing, so straight was the road over peat and rock. They likened it favourably to the Roman roads in the flat lowlands of England. They were also amazed that my five-hundred and



What remains of Wade's road at Dalchully



Wade's Stone, Drumochter

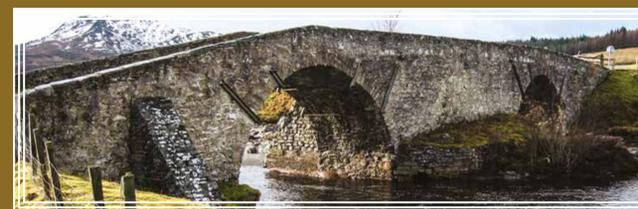
ten soldiers had completed the twenty-eight miles of road over virgin land in one summer. I told them how I had placed a gold sovereign on top of a seven-foot high rock beside the road [image above], as a wager that these lazy natives would not find it within the year. I won. It was still there.

We drank a toast on the new two-span bridge here, which I named St George's Bridge after our beloved King.



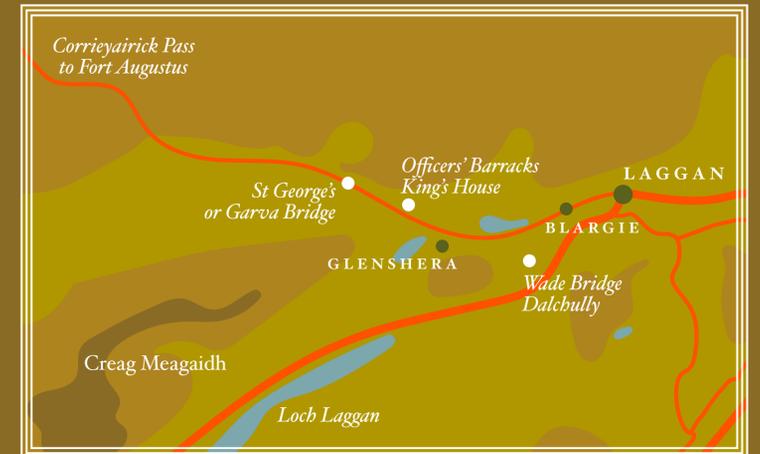
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Portrait of General George Wade in 1731 by Johan Van Diest. In the background you can see the Corrieyarick Pass with the Garva Bridge crossing. In 1745 this verse was added to the National Anthem: Lord, grant that Marshall Wade/May by thy mighty aid/Victory bring/May he sedition hush/And like a torrent rush/Rebellious Scots to crush/God save the King.



Wade's Garva Bridge on the road to the Corrieyarkick

General John Caulfeild, an Irishman like myself and who will carry on, I hope, and increase the mileage of new roads beyond the two-hundred and fifty already built. He raised his glass and declared, "If you had seen these roads before they were made, you would raise your glass and bless General Wade".



As we tarried a while two natives approached and rather than crossing the bridge, they waded through the river. Apparently the chiefs believe it to be effeminate to cross a bridge. Many are not happy with my splendid road. They find it hard to walk on in their bare feet and the drovers are having to shoe their cattle on their way to the Southern trysts. The chiefs believe that it will encourage more people into their glens and thus dilute their clan blood. No bad thing I would suggest. It might help civilise them from their barbaric past. Of course, the big advantage to us, is that we can deploy forces quickly to quell any further Rising like that of 1715 from our Barracks at Ruthven.



The King's House on the road to the Corrieyarick Pass



The National Gallery of Scotland Picture Library

THE BLACK WATCH MUTINY

An imagined extract from Samuel Macpherson's diary

THE TOWER OF LONDON

19th July 1743

As dawn broke over London, a loud rap on the cell door of the Tower signalled that my end was nigh. I was to face the firing squad along with two others. There was my cousin Malcolm Macpherson of Druiminard—the son of that township's tacksman. Druiminard is just five miles from my farm of Breakachie, in far away Laggan. Farquhar Shaw of Rothiemurchus was also to be executed. My cousin and I were the leaders of the mutiny and surrendered when surrounded; Farquhar had defied arrest and was paying the ultimate price.

As I was led to the square I reflected on the past few weeks during which our Black Watch regiment had been duped into coming to London to take part

in a pageant for King George, only to find that he was not in that city when we arrived. As we feared we were to be transported to the West Indies. The Black Watch had been formed after the 1715 rising to police our country. Perhaps we had been too successful as now we were not needed.

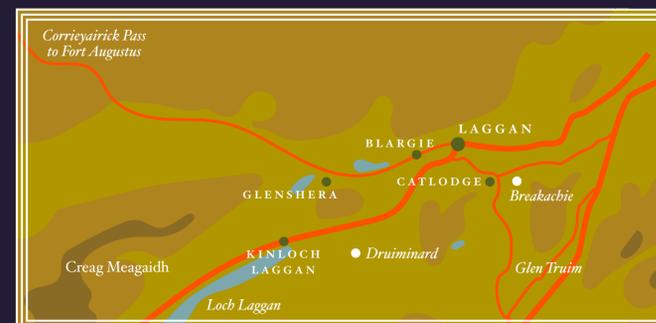
The pageant was attended by tens of thousands, most of whom had come out of curiosity as this was the first time 'Savage Highlanders' in their odd form of dress had been seen. Men scorned us, women were more curious and some were envious of our attire. After the pageant we had to make a decision, so word was passed round to rendezvous a short distance away.

I suppose it was inevitable, they caught up with us within a few days and we were cornered in an old Roman fort. Although word was given that we would not be punished, we were tricked into surrendering.

We were led on to the Square to be faced by a rank of riflemen. Before the sacks were placed over our heads I was asked to say a word to my fellow mutineers who stood forlornly along the far wall.

"My blood, I hope, will contribute to your liberty", I shouted.

*Left: a portrait of Samuel Macpherson
Right: The execution of Corporal Samuel Macpherson,
Corporal Malcolm Macpherson
and Private Farquhar Shaw
at the Tower of London on 19th July 1743*



Picture from the Black Watch Museum



THE '45 AND 1746

An imagined account by Donald Macpherson

BALGOWAN

August 1745

As we climbed up the Pass we could see figures on the skyline at the top of the zig-zags.

We were nervous, as to who they would think we were. A shout of “Who goes there?” We replied in the gaelic, “Donald and Malcolm Macpherson from Balgowan come to join the Prince.” After a short pause we were told to advance. A slim distinguished man emerged from the group with a Cameron chief and we were asked to explain ourselves. We told them that we had been in the Black Watch and had been in General John Cope’s army but we wanted to join the Prince. We were able to tell them that Cope had a forward party at Dalchully, but the main army had reached Catlodge from Dalwhinnie, and rumour was that they were going to retreat to Ruthven and then Inverness. We thought that Cluny was organising his men to join the Prince, but wondered if we could go after Cope. His men were dispirited. By this time the Prince had joined the discussion. He was handsome but we had difficulty in understanding his foreign accent. The Prince was adamant that they should make for Edinburgh now that the road was open. He did not want us fighting our own kith and kin. They were his subjects, however misguided. So we advanced down the hill with the pipes playing and everyone in good humour. We were the first army to march along General Wade’s Military Road and it gave us a great feeling. The next day we stopped at the little wood beside a Wade bridge at Dalchully where the remains of the Cope advance parties fire was still warm. The Prince produced an anker of whisky and a toast was drunk to the first victory.



*Charles Edward Louis John Casimir Sylvester Severino Maria Stuart, 31 December 1720–31 January 1788
commonly known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. This portrait was painted by Antonio David in 1732*

I raised my mug and toasted Samuel of Breakachie and Malcolm of Druiminard, for without their deaths Cluny may well have sided with the Government as of course, the Macphersons are Protestants. We stood halfway between Druiminard and Breakachie.

General Cope was to be defeated decisively a few weeks later—16th September—at the Battle of Prestonpans outside Edinburgh. Cluny Macpherson was to become one of the Prince Charlie’s right-hand men during and after the campaign.

Donald Macpherson of Breakachy, youngest

brother of Cluny, recalls Locheil, Chief of Clan Cameron, high on the Ben Alder plateau, going on bended knee on meeting the Prince for the first time since Culloden five months previously. “Oh, no my dear Locheil”, clasping his shoulder, “You never know who may be looking from yonder hills”. They had come through the ‘Window’ on Creag Meagaidh to Aberarder, where the MacDonald farmers provided him with badly needed clothes. We, then, proceeded the two miles to Cluny’s ‘Cage’ remote above Loch Ericht. The party partook of the feast that we had

prepared. Plenty of mutton newly killed, an anker of whisky of twenty Scottish pints, with some good beef sassers made the year before, and plenty of butter and cheese and besides a large well cured ham. The Prince was in better spirits that it was possible to think he could be. He took a hearty dram and kept calling for health to be drunk to his friends. “Now, gentlemen, I live like a Prince”, as he spooned minced collops out of the saucepan with his silver spoon.

A few days later, Cluny accompanied the Prince to the West Coast on his escape to France and then spent nine years in hiding around Laggan. On one occasion Sir Hector Munro, charged with arresting the Chief, appeared at Dalchully surprising Cluny. He had the presence of mind to offer to hold the horse. Munro asked him if he knew of Cluny’s whereabouts. Cluny replied that he did not and even if he did, he would not tell him for which Sir Hector awarded him with a guinea. Never once betrayed although there was a £1,000 on his head (equivalent of £100,000 today). He too eventually escaped to France, where he died in 1764. Cluny’s fine eighteen roomed house had been burnt to the ground as had been many houses of his kinsmen.



LAGGAN — MINISTERS AND DOCTORS

A FEW NUMBERS

1798
Population: 1,450; Gaelic speakers: 100%
Cattle: 800; Sheep: 12,000; Horses: 900

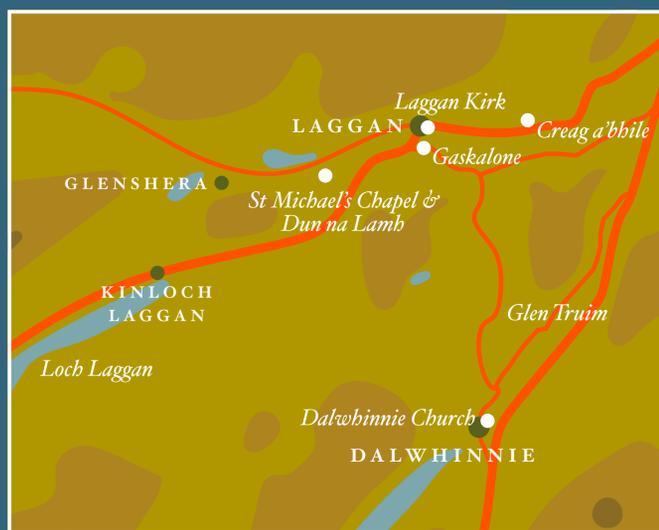
1830
Population: 1,169
Sheep: 60,000 (probable peak numbers)

1900
Population: 829; Gaelic speakers: 75%

1958
Population: 600; Gaelic speakers: 1 person
Cattle: 350; Sheep: 11,000; Agricultural men: 40
Forestry commission employees: 34

1980
Cattle: 600 (probable peak in modern times)

2010
Population: 300; Cattle 300; Sheep: 3,750
Agricultural men: 8
Forestry commission employees: 0



These panels were designed by Jules Akel and funded by:

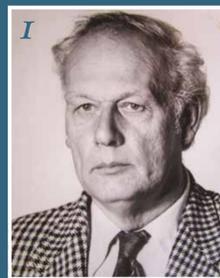


DOCTORS

An imagined account by Dr Iain Richardson

“When I came to the Laggan Practice in 1968, I was following in a line of distinguished predecessors.

In the 1920s Dr MacDonald answered a call from Kinloch Rannoch from the daughter of stalker, Joseph McCook, who lived in a cottage on the slopes of Ben Alder at the far end of Loch Ericht some thirty miles distant. Worse it was in the middle of a winter



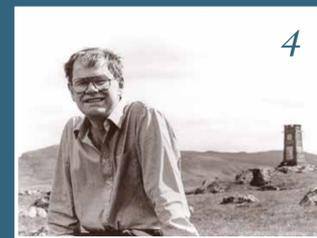
snowstorm. Joseph was suffering from pneumonia. The good doctor made the trip and cured Joseph. Dr MacDonal was honoured for his courage.

“Dr Kenneth Mackay was a mission doctor in Peru. When he arrived in Laggan in the 1960s he started a School of Piping. At his summer camp, the glen reverberated with the haunting sounds of piobaireachd, the classical music of the bagpipes. Youth came from near and far and his pupils excelled in the many concerts and competitions.

“I was the next doctor for Laggan. I came from Leith. In the days of the old A9 there were many horrific accidents. Helicopter trips to Aberdeen with brain injuries were not infrequent. With a young family of six I built on a surgery and waiting-room



to the doctor’s house at Craig a’ Bhile. Previously the sitting room doubled as a waiting room. My time in the village coincided with the spread of television to rural communities, but Laggan was too remote, so along with my successor, Dr Donald Fraser, we set up a Community Association, before Community Councils had been formed. We built our own television mast using Donald’s technical skills. With the closure of our only shop we helped set up a community shop and trading company. Later, we acquired five ex-Forestry Commission houses, which are rented out to local people. A community partnership with the Forestry Commission was formed as an opportunity to manage the Laggan three-thousand-acre plantation. This provided employment for locals.



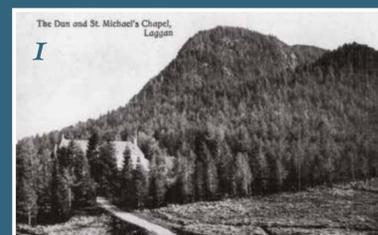
Dr Donald Fraser built the new surgery adjacent to this site in 1994, whilst he bought and remained in Craig a’ Bhile.”

1: Dr Iain Richardson MBE. 2: Dr MacDonal. 3: Dr Kenneth Mackay teaching the chanter. 4: Dr Donald Fraser.

CHURCHES

The first and only chapel in Laggan was built at the start of the nineteenth century by Evan Maceachan, a priest from Arisaig who translated the New Testament into Gaelic. It stood below the Pictish Fort ‘Dun da Lamh’ or ‘Fort of the two hands’—St Michael’s Chapel.

The present Presbyterian church



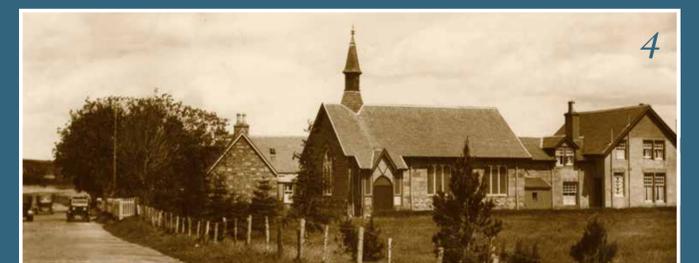
was built in 1785. The minister at the time was Rev. James Grant, who had been Chaplain at the Fort Augustus barracks. His wife was Mrs Anne Grant who wrote her famous *Letters from the Mountains*. Also a poet she wrote amongst others *Highland Laddie* and *The Bluebells of Scotland*.



In 1843 there was a serious schism within the church. About half the members defected, so the Free Church and manse were built across the Spey at Gaskalone. After two years it was rebuilt after being burnt down. Dr Isobel Grant had her Folk Museum collection here before it was transferred to Kingussie and eventually to create the Newtonmore Folk Park.



The present Church of Scotland was extensively refurbished on its bicentenary in 1985, by the minister of the time Rev. David Stoddart. He was the first minister to also minister Newtonmore when the two churches were linked.



1: St Michael’s Chapel. 2: Laggan Parish Church. 3: Dr Isobel Grant outside the old Free Church. 4: Dalwhinnie Church and Manse.

DROVING



DROVING

SHEEP AND CATTLE

Because of its geographical position Laggan—and even more so Dalwhinnie—saw huge droves of cattle from the North and West heading South to the great Trysts at Falkirk and Crieff in the autumn. Black cattle, as the small shaggy highlanders were called, passed over the Corriearick in their thousands with overnight stances every five miles or so. In the nineteenth century sheep also took the long trek. The drovers life along with their dogs was hard and they were sustained largely by oatmeal and whisky. There was the odd inn like the Kingshouse at Garvamore, Drumgask and Dalwhinnie. But some had to sleep out keeping an eye or ear on the stock.

The coming of the railway in 1863 spelt the end of the country length droves. Improving road transport after World War II finally ended the tradition.

Ronnie Campbell was the last man to drive sheep from Roy Bridge via Loch Spey and Garvamore to Newtonmore. This was in 1948.

The first sheep arrived in Badenoch in the late eighteenth century. The Mitchells from Ayreshire stocked Aberarder by Loch Laggan-side.

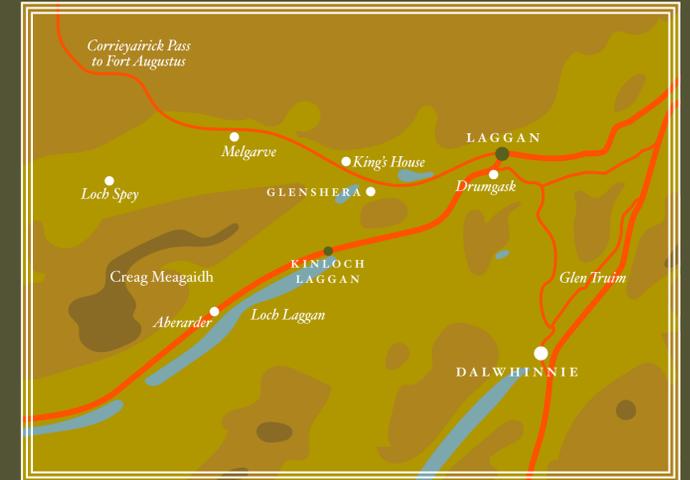
Sintons from Teviotdale succeeded for several generations and were authors and poets. Shepherd-ing was a lonely job living in remote houses. The most remote being Shesgan near Loch Spey, fourteen miles upstream from here. Harry Ross occupied nearby Melgarve at the foot of the Corriearick.

*Sleeping 'neath a starry heaven
Hoar frost round me like a shroud
I was wakened by a hoodie
Flying high above Brae Roy.
Many footsteps, many stumbles
As I pick my homeward way
Over bracken, over myrtle
Ever nearer to Loch Spey
Where Scotland's fastest river*

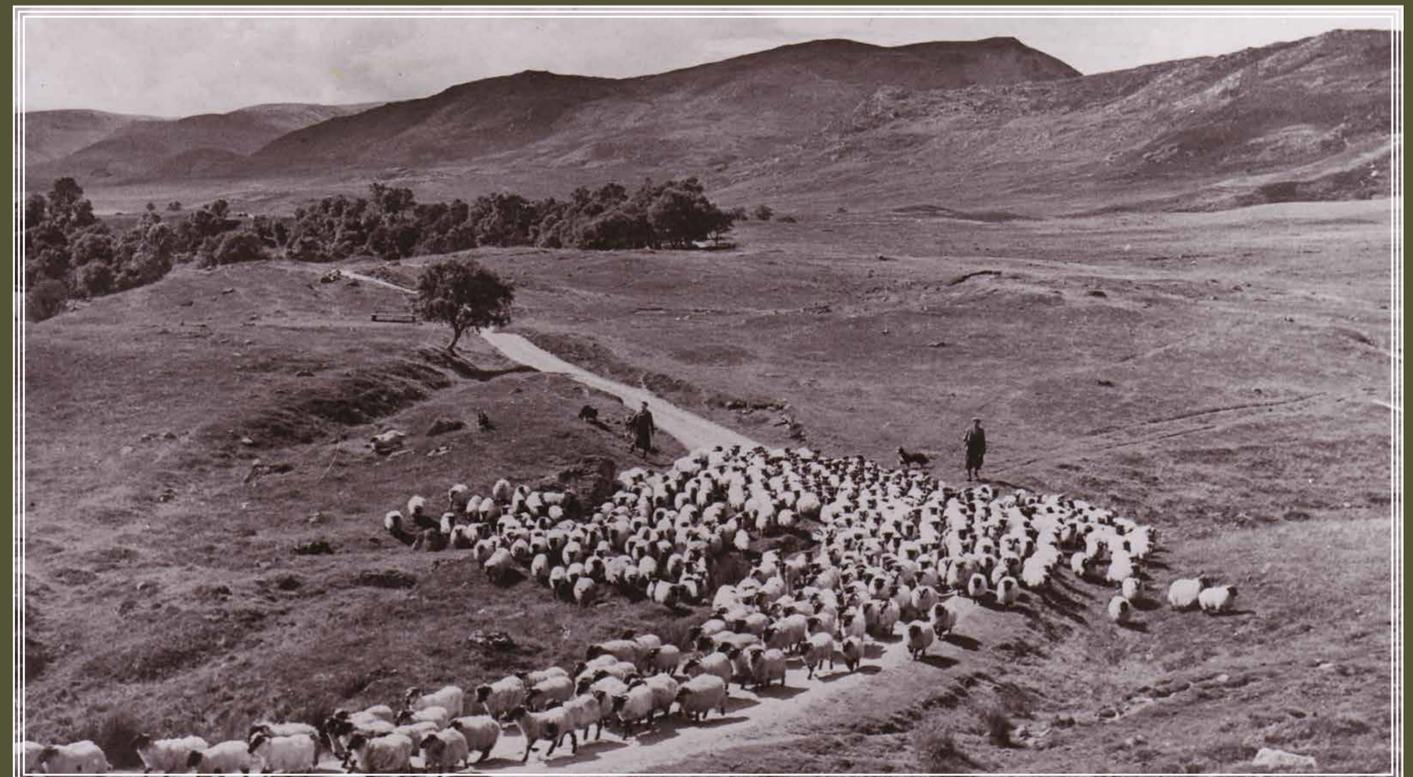
*Finds her birth mid mountain dew.
Oh, how glorious was that vision
When my homestead came to view.*

The value in sheep at that time was their wool and the clippings were and are a great social occasion as described by Thomas Sinton in *Mountain Farm*.

*When summer days are hot and long
And clipping time comes round
If cry of passing sheep arise
I startle at the sound;
I see a burn 'mong heather braes
And on its belt o' green,
The distant fold I knew of old
Where shepherds would convene.
How merrily the work was plied!
While noise o' clinkin shears,
O' dogs and sheep and men, and boys
Like music filled my ears.*



Sheep became unprofitable at the end of the nineteenth century and estates introduced red deer for the fashionable Victorian sportsmen. The last occupant of Melgarve was Martin Macaskill in the 1950s. In the 1940s Martin was the last shepherd on Loch Ericht-side and when his wife, Morag, reversed their car into the Loch, he declared, "It is easy enough to get a new wife, it is not so easy to get a new car!"



MARY ROSE, JIMMY THE POST, DONNIE WILSON

MARY ROSE

I moved to Crathie, which was on the Strathmashie Estate, with my mother when I was 14 in 1927. My father, who had been a keeper at Strathmashie, had just died. People thought that mother would want to move to Newtonmore, but she had always had a cow and now she could have three and a henhouse. Our dog would bring the cow from maybe two miles away for milking, walking together and she made butter and crowdie.



Crathie was a traditional crofting township. In the mid-1800s there were thirty houses, but when we moved, only eight remained, one of which—the MacFarlanes house—had a shop, another was a blackhouse. Charlie Macpherson was famous for doing nothing and when he married a housemaid he did even less.

My mother was a native gaelic speaker as were all the Crathie folk. I could understand the Gaelic but never spoke it and was not encouraged to do so. We were taught properly!

We walked three miles to the Kinlochlaggan school. Each year Lady Ramsden would visit the school and the boys would be given a present of wool. The girls would be given a length of red flannel and then they curtsied. The boys knitted scarves and jumpers like the shepherds. We were not sure what to do with the flannel. Secondary school was thirteen miles away at Kingussie. We all boarded and then cycled home at weekends.

After leaving school, I looked after my stepbrother, George, who was a keeper on Glentruim Estate.

With the demand for aluminium in World War II, the British Aluminium Company built a tunnel

to take the head waters of the Spey to their smelter at Fort William. This involved damming the Spey, which in turn flooded some of the Crathie pasture.

One day a man was seen lighting his pipe in the wood. Then we saw him running out, as he had set the brushwood alight. The men at the dam stood and watched as my mother shooed the hens out of the wood to the river and then raked the twigs from round the henhouse and byre, but the fire spread to the house and the men dragged her away. If they had helped immediately all might have been saved. Nothing was left but the chimney which still stands today. Mother was 67 at the time but lived for another twenty-four years.

JIMMY THE POST

Jimmy MacDonald was born in 1889 and was postman for 'The Glen'—or the Upper Spey—until he retired aged 67. Three days he cycled as far as Garvamore and three days to Melgarve, in all weathers. When the weather was too rough he walked. He would cycle over one hundred miles a week. He not only delivered the mail, as this tribute—entitled *Jimmy the Post*—explains:

*In summer in winter in sunshine and hail,
He's aye got a smile when he brings us the mail
People in Glenshero, Garva and Drummin,
Run to the door when they see Jimmy coming,
A letter from Granny to say that she's fine,
And since it is Wednesday, he'll take Miller's line.
A parcel, a postcard and a handful of bills,
And from Dr Mackay, a wee box of pills.
Thousands of miles he has done on his bike,
And if it's too stormy, he'll get off and bike.
Nobody has ever heard Jimmy complain,*



*Although burnt by the sun or soaked by the rain,
No load is too heavy, no road is too rough,
Whatever the weather, Jimmy will get here, sure enough.*

DONNIE WILSON

My first memory of a motor-car was a shooting-brake slowly winding its way up the eleven miles of General Wade Road from Laggan. We only had a Highland garron that would carry in the peats, carry the deer during the stalking and pull the cart with the dung to our hayfield. The car was full of sportsmen, ghillies and gun-dogs. My father was the gamekeeper at Drummin at the foot of the Corrieyairick Pass. The nearest neighbours were shepherds who lived four miles down the glen. Our other visitors came on foot. Often tramps would stop after coming over the Pass or up from Braeroy. They got tea in their syrup tins and a scone or pancake straight off the girdle. Mother had a plentiful supply of eggs and milk. We also had rabbits, hares, venison, salmon and trout. We only bought oatmeal, flour and salt twice a year, otherwise we were self sufficient.



One of our other visitors

was the factor, he would check the vermin board, then pay a little for the tails of foxes, stoats, wild cats and various birds of prey.

My sister Clare and I played all day long in the burn and flower meadow if we were not helping at the peats or the hay. There were blizzards in the winter when we saw nobody for weeks but we were cosy in our bedroom with its peat fire and bedtime stories.

When we reached school age, we moved six miles down the glen to Glenshera where there was a side school. Father was now Head stalker. The school was originally an army hut. There were five of us. We had to take in water and gather sticks before school started.

One of the teachers was Miss McInnes (right), who came from the Isle of Skye.



Our family then moved to remote Glenbanchor, above Newtonmore before father and I returned to the Glen taking the tenancies of Coul and Blaragie in 1947. We bought Coul in 1955 and sold it in 1961 when we moved into Blaragie, where with wife, Liz, I was to bring up our two daughters Elizabeth and Ann. For many years I was a haulage contractor for the area. From the days of the scythe, the horse and cart, I have seen the introduction of quad bikes, sheep scanning, square and round balers and mobile 'phones. But I think the most important invention was the hydraulic lift on the 'Wee Grey Fergie'.

Coul was later owned by Alex Herbage at the time when Manager Winston Nicolson and stockman Rich Thomson won the Supreme Championship at Smithfield with their steer Thunderflash in 1984.

Blaragie was the birthplace of Captain John Macpherson, who at the decisive Battle of Quebec in 1759, as orderly sergeant received the dying General Wolfe in his arms as he fell in battle.