
run our own taxi service. For three guineas a week Howe, the postman, became our gardener and handyman and a wizard he was at it. He was always galvanised by an emergency. Gatherings of people seemed to intoxicate him. Wondrous tales tripped from his tongue, tales of olden times, gruesome tales of storms and floods and murders in the Glen and ludicrous adventures that befell the laird or the minister.

Honey left us for Switzerland when the autumn came and we prepared for winter. Then, the Lord provided the Shannons, a family of empire builders home from India for a year. They wanted a home base for the winter months. They had two children old enough to go to boarding school and one young one who came complete with Burmese nanny, who turned into a major attraction in the Glen. She was tiny and dressed in startling tartan sarongs, with matching pixie hoods and smoked a pipe. To me she was a real treasure; whenever I asked her did she want another helping she would say, 'If you want to give, give; if you don't want to give, don't ask.' As it happened the Shannons arrived just in time for the Ghillies Ball, the annual event in the Glen when people from the remotest corners converged on the Hall and a tiptop band was hired by the laird to play traditional reels and strathspeys. The Shannons entered into the spirit of the Ball with such gusto and enjoyment everyone took them to their hearts. We became fast friends before long.

When the winter arrived with masses of snow and ice, they took on the milk round and ^{the} fuelling of the huge fire in the sitting room and dug out the paths around the house. Hogmanay fell on a Saturday that year and the riotous dancing in the Hall had to stop on the stroke of midnight. Beaddie, to the tune of 'The Mucking of Gordie's Byre', lead the party single file through the snow to our back door, with Smith's fiddle bringing up the rear. The party went on, Sabbath or no, until well into the early hours, fuelled by nothing but tea and black bun. It was the best first footing we could remember.

Come spring, the Shannons took off on a round of visits to friends and relations leaving Keith and Nanny with me. Honey returned and the new season brought with it a new kaleidoscope of people and events. Many of our guests became lasting friends and made an impact on our lives. There was Martin Brodie who was to become our doctor in Edinburgh years later; Charles Pagan who became our solicitor and his son who still is; Judge Hamilton who crept downstairs in his bed socks to have an early cup of tea with me over the kitchen fire, just to find out what had gone wrong with my life and to offer his help and legal advice. Then there was dear Helen Cruikshank who became my closest friend and mentor in Edinburgh days, helped me to find my lovely house there and opened my world to the arts as no one else could have done and her brother who taught Chris to fish and left him all his gear when his own fishing

days were done; the Moderator who turned up in lace and gaiters and introduced Chris to the secret powers of his amethyst ring, his charming lady to whom I instantly took because she wore her hat back to front to make it look new; Canon Rawlinson who was the then Queen's Chaplain at Glamis and a wonderful, witty old man; his sister who kept house for him and insisted on making the pancakes for tea every day; the

minister of the English High Church who was in the habit of falling out of bed with disastrous consequences; all life was there as the saying goes and last and best of all, Will Stewart turned up on the day my divorce came through and made the biggest and most lasting impact of all, though I did not know it ~~then~~ at the time. When we married years later we found Bleaton Hallett on our honeymoon, it was a kind of refuge from the south for us; in fact our retirement plans were drawn up then and there.
