

On February 8th, 1989, Valerie Johnston spoke:

Yes, it's my birthday. May I boast, confess, it is my 72nd and a lovely way to spend the day with you, my good friends.

To take up the story about our moving into the Glen where Leslie left off. Spring, Easter 1970 we took possession. Summer '74 we became residents here as opposed to being just holiday visitors. I was intrigued to hear of the Smarts buying two houses in one year. We, when we bought our log cabin so called, for us it was the first and only house we bought in the 29 years of our marriage.

We had an awful lot of work to do around the building when we first took over because it was very bare and bleak and exposed and untidy. We cleared up various remains left by the builders and also by the time we came up here in '74 we realised that the car port at the back of the house had to be built in as a garage otherwise we would have been blown away more often than not in the winter. We also put in a tremendous number of trees to the west and also on the east to give us some privacy from the glen road, not having any idea how long these things would take to grow. The whole hillside, in fact most of the glen was very bleak and exposed. It is extraordinary to see the changes that have taken place in these past 15 years, looking back at the photographs which we took in the early days.

Leslie worked also like a navvy on the road digging and carrying and moving stones to build up a verge, an edge to the property on the roadside. We planted the trees as I've said, oh and we also dug what is known as "My Bloody Pond", because there seemed to be a stream of water running underneath the house somewhere, collecting in a marshy bit in front and I suggested that we should dig it out and have water, a proper pond which we eventually did. It hasn't turned out as large as I had hoped but we were afraid that it might cross the telephone and electric wires which go down in front of the house, so that was a good point at which to restrict the size of the pond. A lot of our summer visitors used to be put to work having a dig in the pond to keep them occupied and participating.

When we first came up there were only two other houses that were occupied full time, the McKissocks and the Berniers and also since we came up five more houses have been built bringing the total in the glen now to 19, of which six I think are lived in throughout the year. There has also been very little change in the ownership of the houses, I think only four have changed hands. Two of them had been originally a business concern for renting out and holidays and these have now been bought, one by a permanent resident couple and the other by a couple who hope to live here eventually permanently. We have an association of house owners in Glen derby and from that a

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small committee which keeps an eye on our drainage system, our sewage system, our road and things that might crop up from time to time concerning all of us and so the committee handles the business. Each year we gather, usually at the time of the Strathardle Games, and have a full meeting of all Glen Derby houseowners and frequently at Hogmanay quite a number of people in the houses come up to celebrate the holiday and whenever possible to go skiing, and again we tend to foregather in one or other of our houses. When we first came up it used to be quite the done thing that whoever was up here would take it in turn to be host to the Hogmanay party and likewise to the AGM of the houseowners. Of recent years, patterns have changed, families have grown and spread and dispersed and the rest of us get a bit older and don't wish to go out celebrating in quite the same way. But there is still a feeling of unity and friendship and community particularly during these two periods when more of us are here. Those of us who live here wish, of course, that more of the houses could be occupied more of the time but that's not the way it is.

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