

WILSON

PART 3. WHAT BROUGHT THEM?

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WILL STEWART

Boyhood memories of the glen, its folks and its houses. The same of a much-changed Blairgowrie. Has a lifetime experience of reporting and recording. Has acquired a liking for research into the history of the glen. Possesses a deep knowledge of politicians and bureaucrats, national and local, and of ways of circumventing "awkward customers".

In his good days, a fisherman, a labourer in the garden, a hewer of wood.

Shies clear of Dundee despite earlier associations but quite likes Perth and likes to tour around the glens and visit old houses and well-maintained gardens.

Is happy when members of his family come to visit and to sit or stand with them by the river wall or the bridge and watch the Falls of Dalrulzion.

MARTY STEWART

Has brought a liking for glen living and making a new home in the glen. Possessed of a glorious sense of colour she has used this to renovate the garden at Bleaton Hallet Lodge and earn herself the description of "the most dangerous woman in the Glen" because motorists coming eastward across the river bridge are so entranced by her floral displays that they tend to overlook the fact that they have a difficult corner to negotiate at the end of the bridge. This sense of colour she formerly employed in painting in oils but this she has transferred to tapestry, spending endless hours by her loom. This arose from her involvement with spinning in the glen and consorting with other spinners.

Her lifelong knowledge of German served well with the passage of foreign visitors when they stopped either to admire the falls or to ask plaintively "Where are we?" and "How do we get to Perth or Braemar or Pitlochry?" She used to practise graphology and still "reads" in the graphological sense the handwriting of correspondents and, according to the source, the state of health, the character and the tendencies shown. Friends love to hear her stories of life in Prosen and Glenesk.

IAIN SMART

A skier and a climber on rock and ice. He was a diligent mountaineer and added scuba diving and sailing to his activities. Then he learned at Riverside Airport, Dundee, to pilot light planes.

He and Margaret added Scottish country dancing to their pursuits.

MARGARET SMART

An expert spinner and founder-member of the Ericht Spinning Group and her main interest became the dyeing of wool with the beautiful colours she produces from natural plants which she grows in her own garden. She produced colourful knitted garments and woven rugs, made her own wine and acquired a deep knowledge of bee keeping. She grew most of her own vegetables, made delicious chutneys and pickles and established a most beautiful garden.

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LESLIE JOHNSTON... was a golf addict at the time he and Valerie bought their house in Glen Derby, and for a while was a member of both Pitlochry and Alyth Golf Clubs. He also did a little fishing but is now no longer either a golfer or an angler. Actually from that time the house in Glen Derby was ready (in 1970) for several years after, he and Valerie had a great deal of physical work to do: clearing up the mess left behind by the builders and in landscaping around the house. As it was a completely bare site many trees and shrubs were planted both for their appearance and as a shelter (which they now are) from the winds of all quarters. Early in their association with the Glen the Johnstons added a slight touch of eccentricity by travelling in a 1939 Rolls Royce, but this was sold in 1973 as being perhaps a little impractical for the life that was now to be led. Leslie had begun "playing" with bookselling before giving up his Cheshire Headmastership, but became more serious after 1974, putting out regular lists of books for sale, going fairly regularly to auctions in Edinburgh and elsewhere, and in 1978 beginning to go to Book Fairs in Scotland and in England. He opened a bookshop in July 1982 in Blairgowrie and sold books from there until November 1988. He is now back to selling through lists. He does a little writing. Is thought of either as Moses or Santa Claus by village children, and even by one of his grandsons he is known as "White Hair".

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VALERIE JOHNSTON directed a lot of the external work that was done at Lorien during the early days! This included having a man-made pond in front of the house where otherwise there might have been swamp. She joined the Kirkmichael and District S.W.R.I. to get to know folk in the village and area and has been a member ever since including acting as Treasurer for three years. Indirectly, through SWRI became interested in learning to spin, and subsequently with two or three others started the group now known as the 'Ericht Spinners' who meet regularly in Blairgowrie and in members' homes up and down the Glens. Also hearing of the hopes in Blairgowrie of the local branch of the Mentally Handicapped Society to open a hostel which badly needed money, started with a group of vounteers an agency-cum-thrift shop which opened as "Gear Change" in December 1976. This is now continuing to thrive under much more professional management than in the early days. The hostel was opened and is still guaranteed financial help from the shop.

To keep up the Johnston reputation for eccentricity (or should it merely be called individuality?) having parted with the 1939 Rolls, Valerie had brought up to Kirkmichael her 1934 Austin 10 two-seater and persuaded Jock Blair to help in its restoration. So, "Mum's Folly" with Ian Third's interest in old cars and his knowledge of the engines (he himself had a 1935 car once) was restored, passed M.O.T. and is on the road at least for the summer season, attracting much attention and admiration.

Valerie also persuaded the Games Committee of the Kirkmichael (Strathardle) Games that a Craft Fair in the Village Hall on Games Day would add to the day's attractions. So several have been held and also an Exhibition of examples of work done by local people. Also on one occasion there was a mini Folk Museum Exhibit showing articles once used in the houses and cottages of the area, together with many photographs ... all items generously loaned for the day. As we add years to our lives what next can we retrieve to add to the future?