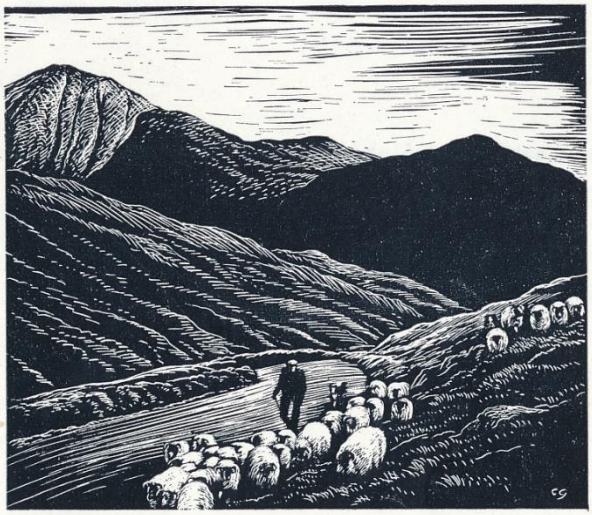
BONNIE GLENSHEE

by Colin Gibson

with an introduction by
JAMES B. CAIRD, MA, D de L'Univ.



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INTRODUCTION

by James B. Caird, M.A., D de L'Univ.

ONE of the striking facts about the relationship between the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland is that there are only seven routeways from the Lowlands into the Highlands. Access to the Western Highlands is limited to three routes; along the shores of the Gareloch, by the "Bonnie Banks" of Loch Lomond and through Glenogle from Crieff or Callander to the north and west. To the Eastern Highlands, one has a choice of four routes—the main Perth to Inverness routeway over Drumochter Pass; by way of Glenshee and the Devil's Elbow to Deeside, over the Fettercairn-Banchory route to Lower Deeside, and along the coast from Stonehaven to Aberdeen and westwards along Deeside.

All these routes are through-ways: since the earliest times they have been used. Glenshee is distinguished by the fact that it carries the highest of the passes—the summit of the road above the Devil's Elbow reaches 2,199 feet. Glenshee epitomises these routeways by its long use, by the cattle raiders who traversed it, by the building of a military road in the eighteenth century—still the basis of the modern routes, and by the evolution of the tourist industry from country cottages, hotels and winter sports activity.

From Blairgowrie, the route passes through the Highland edge following the gorge section of the River Ericht. The whole glen is a series of narrow passages and ample basins. Towards Bridge of Cally the valley opens out to close again at the divide of the main glen into the western Strathardle and the eastern Blackwater. At Persie the glen widens out at 700 feet, and again from Dalrulzion to Blacklunans, narrowing beyond The Lair but opening up at the last bifurcation at Spittal of Glenshee (1,100 feet) where the steep sided valley continuing the line of the main glen leads up to Dalmunzie and Glen Thaitneich and the road turns eastwards up Glen Beag in a flat floored valley towards the Cairnwell. From some 200 feet at Blairgowrie, the glen has reached about 2,200 feet at the Aberdeenshire boundary—the watershed of the Tay and Dee river systems.

The varied rock types of the eastern Grampians represented in Glenshee are largely responsible for the alternation of basin and narrow glen, the less resistant sandstone, schists and limestones corresponding to the more open areas. The surrounding hills are sculptured in the more resistant highly folded rocks; at the head of Glen Beag, Creag Leacach and the Cairnwell exceed 3,000 feet, and the Glas Maol exceeds 3,500 feet. The form of the glen has been largely due to movement of ice from the gathering ground of the Grampians, down the glen and its tributary valleys during the glacial period, movement which steepened the sides of pre-existing valleys and created flat and often marshy valley floors. Glen Thaitneich and Glen Beag are classic examples of glaciated valleys, with the tributary burns dropping steeply down to the main valleys. The natural lochs, Loch Bainie, Loch nan Eun, and Loch Mharaich occupy glacial hollows. Away from the main valley walking is firm on the slopes, but the level areas and parts of the higher hills are covered in peat, and hags can make walking difficult.

The openness and through-way character of Glenshee and the side glens have long been attractive for human settlement. The oldest evidences of settlement are to be found within a mile to the west of Craigton, near Dalrulzion, where there are many Bronze Age Cairns and Hut Circles. A standing stone beside the Spittal Kirk, and at the Tomb and Blacklunans also indicate early human settlement. It is not clear what settlement there was during the Middle Ages but in 1750 Roy's Map indicates numerous clusters of houses, some where the present farm houses are, and others, long abandoned, in the hills away from the present inhabited area (*Fig* 1). These abandoned sites are marked by low ruins of stone built houses, and their layout indicates that the barn and byre were under the same thatched roof. A hill path from the Lair to Ashintully passes several such sites; the place name Coire a Bhaile (the corrie of the township) on the upper part of the Ennoch Burn which joins the Blackwater near Dalrulzion indicates some of these abandoned settlements and there are old cultivation ridges beside the ruins. More accessible examples are to be found at Seanna Bhaile or Shenaval (the old township) on the eastern side of Glen Thaitneich opposite Dalmunzie, and in Glen Beag on Allt a' Choire Dhirich below the bridge. These ruins represent communities of joint tenants farming small areas of land in rigs or cultivation ridges, and grazing cattle on the green pastures. In the upper side glens, such as on the sides of Glen Beag, in Glen Thaitneich and especially in

the "Green Glen" (Allt nan Daimh) west of Loch Bainie, there are clusters of shielings, the temporary summer dwellings of the younger members of farming communities when the cattle were taken for summer grazing. Some of these pastures were at a considerable distance from the farm: a 13th century document relating to Finegand mentions that the shielings used were at Gormel, near the head of Glen Beag. The name Loch Bainie (rendered Shechernich on the Ordnance Survey Maps) is also suggestive—a Gaelic place name meaning milk—and butter and cheese were the main products of the shieling economy; Gaelic was the language of the inhabitants of the glen until the nineteenth century.

The good cattle pastures of upper Glenshee lay on a route used by the caterans or cattle thieves on the journeys from Lochaber and western Scotland. From Glentilt, their route passed down Glen Lochsie and up the Corrie Shith, side glen opening off Glen Thaitneich above the Lochsie-Thaitneich confluence. From Rhiddorach, the route crossed over the eastern ridge of Glen Beag to Glenisla. A notable "battle" took place near the site of the Devil's Elbow in 1602 when the Glenshee men attempted to recover some of the stolen cattle.

In the early nineteenth century, the Agricultural Revolution overtook Glenshee. The joint-farms were suppressed and their place taken by the present single farmstead standing in its enclosed fields. It is difficult to find ruins of the older settlements on the farms—the stones would be used for building farmhouses or dykes (stone walls), and the old rigs have been ploughed out. Glen Beag was "cleared" at this time, and converted to a sheep farm: The Rev. T. D. Miller, M.A., a former minister of Glenshee, relates in his book, *Tales of a Highland Parish*, how one of the former joint-tenants, a Ramsay of Glen Beag, went overseas and became a partner in a firm in British Guiana. Glen Thaitneich is also a sheep farm. The commercialisation of agriculture led to a decline in the population and number of settlements in the Glen, but growing grain at between 1,300 - 1,500 feet in eastern Scotland must have been hazardous when the joint-tenants depended on the produce of their land for their food. The rationalisation of agriculture has meant that the farms of Glenshee are mainly stock rearing farms, and as one proceeds up the glen the dependence on sheep becomes greater. On the lower ground the cropping pattern is oriented towards fodder crops of oats, hay and turnips.

In the nineteenth century, when the old landscape of joint-farms with their discontinuous patches of cultivation

was replaced by farms, attempts were made to beautify the landscape by tree planting. Many of the plantations were cut down during the two world wars, but new areas are now being planted. Trees were also planted near the houses of the small estates, and artificial lochs such as Dalnaglar, Drumfork, Drumore and Persie were created. Dalnaglar Castle and Dalmunzie were also built as country houses, and Glenshee Lodge as a shooting lodge. This may be a reflection of the mid-nineteenth century lead given by Queen Victoria in the building of Balmoral. Gamekeepers' cottages were added to the landscape—the former shieling grounds had become the province of grouse, sheep and deer. Grouse shooting and deer-stalking are still practised in Glenshee. As cottages have become empty in the twentieth century, families from the neighbouring Lowlands, mainly from Dundee and Perth, have converted these cottages as summer residences.

Some of the shooting lodges and country houses have in the twentieth century become hotels; the original Spittal of Glenshee Inn and Persie were change-houses in coaching days. Since the second World War the newest landscape elements have been added, the ski lifts.

Glenshee is still a through-way. From cattle raiders and soldiers, the roads are used increasingly by tourists and winter sports enthusiasts. The early nineteenth century layout of field, farmhouse and plantation, added to in the late nineteenth century by the lodges and estate residences, is now being diversified by modern twentieth century hotels and sporting facilities. The resident population of the glen is declining—the three ministers of the 1930's have been reduced to one. Recreation is gradually replacing the nineteenth century sports as a major form of land use.

BONNIE GLENSHEE

Travelling up the Glen

GLENSHEE lies in the extreme north-east corner of Perthshire, and is generally believed to take its name from the Gaelic word *sith*, signifying "fairies."

The word also denotes "peace," however, and applied to a river could mean "an onrush" or "forward dart." Normally, it should be added, a glen takes the name of its stream.

Glenshee has for centuries formed part of a route between Upper Deeside and the Lowlands. Ever since Malcolm Canmore built a hunting palace at Braemar in 1059, this pass over The Mounth (the Grampian Range) has been used by travellers of all degree from Kings and Queens to the humblest of their subjects.

Until the time of General Wade (early 18th century) the journey through Glenshee was made either on foot or on horseback. The road was a mere track, and down it great herds of black, horned cattle used to be driven to the "fairs" and "trysts" of the Lowlands.

In the 19th century, though the road was still narrow and steep, a daily service of four-in-hand coaches was maintained during summer between Dunkeld and Braemar.

Later, the road was widened and its gradients reduced. The Devil's Elbow — the double U-bend at the crux of the climb — was made less fearsome. Even yet, all the same, it is frequently blocked by snow drifts and closed to traffic from time to time.

Glenshee may be said to begin at Bridge of Cally, five miles north of Blairgowrie. Bridge of Cally, "the place of the hazel trees," has a notable hotel overlooking a deep

Kilry Brae in a good winter

wooded river-valley, and two roads branch here—one to the north-west into Strathardle, and the other northwards into Glenshee.

Taking the Glenshee road we soon pass Persie House, and in three miles or so reach Dalrulzion, "oakwood haugh," where there is an excellent hotel alongside the River Blackwater, and a branch road leading westwards to Kirkmichael.

Beyond Dalrulzion lies Glenkilrie House with its deep glen leading away into the hills. A little further on, at Blacklunans Post Office, a road goes right in the direction of Glenisla, holding to the lower slopes of massive Mount Blair (2441 feet). A mile and a half along this road stands Drumore Hotel with its pleasant lochan nearby. This is a hotel with many sporting attractions—angling, pony-trekking, water ski-ing, etc.

Continuing due north on the Glenshee road we now come to Dalnoid, "peat haugh," which caters for visitors in a modern and very charming way. Beyond this are The Lair and Cray. At Lair, "the slope of the pass," a hill track—once a drove road—branches over the moors to Ashintully Castle and Kirkmichael. A road on the east side at the foot of The Lair goes right, crosses the river, and climbs over the moory northern slopes of Mount Blair to Forter Castle in Glenisla.

The Glenshee road now begins to command superb vistas of the main Grampian chain, and alongside the River Shee the slopes steepen into crags and rocky outcrops. Dalnaglar Castle is admirably set in the heart of

the glen. The name signifies "haugh of the boards" in reference to planks used in olden times to facilitate river crossing.

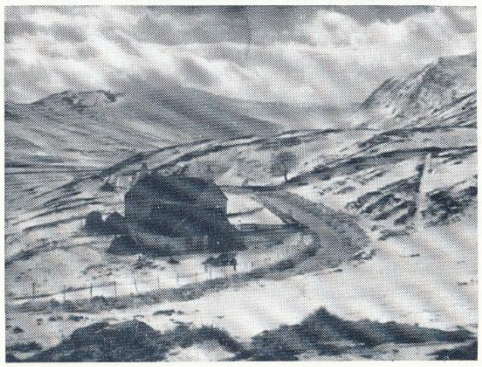
The land of Dalnaglar was bought by a Mr Robertson, a relation of the Cray family, and head of the Bank of London. He was a native of Glenshee, and shortly after buying the property he sent Sir Gilbert Scott, the foremost architect available to design a house to match. Sad to relate, however, he went north to view the building as it neared completion, caught a chill, and died in Edinburgh before it was completed.

Beyond Tigh na Coille, "house of the wood," lie the historic houses of Finegand and Broughdearg, the latter set right under the craggy heights of Craig na Bruaich.

We pass Corrydon, "deep corrie," and Tom an t'-Suidhe, "knoll of the sitting." Then, with a fine view of Ben Gulabin ahead of us we come to another of Glenshee's many "dal" names—Dalhinzion. "Dal" denotes a haugh or streamside meadow.

Glenshee School is by the roadside here, and Glenshee Lodge on the far side of the river. Continuing, we pass Slochnacraig, "defile of the crag," and the post office, soon

View of Glenshee from Glen Beg, including Rhidorrach



reaching the Spittal of Glenshee with its recently built Norwegian-style hotel. A little farther on is the Cairdsport Ski Shop.

The view from this point, looking beyond a fine old Wade bridge and the little Parish Church towards the upstanding shoulder of Ben Gulabin is very striking, and there is also a fine glimpse of the Cairnwell (a shapely summit) and Glas Maol at the head of the pass leading over into Glen Clunie.

Glenshee extends for several miles farther to Shenavel, and then divides into two valleys, Glenlochsie and Glen Taitneach. Near the junction of the streams issuing from these glens stands Dalmunzie Hotel—castellated and turreted in traditional Scots style. The original Castle of Dalmunzie was for long the residence of the MacIntoshes. The present building was built about 1880, and later in 1907 and 1922 extended by Sir Archie Birkmyre. This is a notable summer and winter sporting centre.

The main route to the north, however, does not lead this way. From the Spittal it crosses the Wade bridge (1100 feet above sea level) and enters Glen Beg. In this narrow glen the road begins to twist and climb, with mountains rising impressively on either side.

Glen Beg looks a bare and treeless glen, yet at one time it was well peopled with crofting families. Now, there is only one house in the whole glen. This is the stalker's house at the Rhidorrach, and beyond this lie the famous U-bends of the Devil's Elbow, where the road ultimately reaches its highest point (2199 feet) as it crosses the watershed and the march between Perthshire and Aberdeenshire, and begins its descent into Glen Clunie. From the summit of the Cairnwell Road it is ten miles to Braemar.

"May we ne'er want a freen' an' a drappie to gie him!"

"May the moose ne'er leave oor mealpoke wi' the tear in its e'e."

"The ingle-neuk wi' routh o' bannocks an' bairns!"

"Horn, corn, wool and yarn!" (a farmer's toast).

General Wade

AFTER the 1715 Rebellion there was considerable unrest in the Highlands, and the Dis-arming Act of 1719 only served to increase the bitterness of feeling amongst the Highland Clans.

Lord Lovat and other well-known Highland chiefs insisted that the Government should take immediate steps to arrest further disaffection and disloyalty.

In 1724 Major-General Wade received his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the forces in North Britain, and among his recommendations for "reducing the Highlands to obedience," he mentioned roads. These were, in his opinion, urgently required for the better communication of His Majesty's troops.

Wade must have stated his case well, for by the end of 1725 he was well begun with the construction of his great military highway through the Great Glen from Fort William to Inverness.

This was followed by the road running south from Inverness to Dunkeld. In 1731 he began the construction of a road from Fort Augustus over Corrieyairick (2507 feet at its highest point) to Dalwhinnie and thence to Aberfeldy and Crieff. On the difficult Corrieyairick stretch he had no less than five hundred men working.

These briefly are the three lines of communication built by General Wade between 1725 and 1733, during which eight years he built a total of 250 miles of roadway. With the construction of the bridge over the Tay at Aberfeldy in 1733—an ambitious undertaking—Wade's work was virtually complete.

He did plan other roads through the Highlands, however, and these projects were duly carried out before the middle of the 18th century by the military engineers.

The Cairnwell Road was one of these later projects. It diverged somewhat from the line of the ancient drove-road at the head of Glen Beg, but required a double U-bend in order to gain height at the steepest part, and this steep twisty section soon became known as the Devil's Elbow.

The hump-backed bridge at the Spittal of Glenshee was built at the same time as the military road, and given its high arch to allow plenty of scope for the autumn and winter spates.

The Auld Brig's Plea

Oh! I hae viewed the swollen flood,
And hear't the Boreal blast;
And I hae stay'd the summer trade
A hunner years by-past.
The lumb'rin' coach, the creakin' wain,
Hae crossed my humpit-back;
And mony royal retinues
Gaed princin' ower the track.

But noo thae cars an' charabancs
Come birlin' up the road;
And I am growin' auld an' frail,
An' canna thole their load.
Folk say I'm antiquated noo,
For fashions change wi' time:
And metal girders, laid in raws,
Tak' place o' stane an' lime.

It's no' for me to br'ak my he'rt,
Or raise an unco stoor;
They'll need a brig o' braider mak',
Wi' less o' curvature;
Sae, when they rule to tak' me doon,
And set the lattice trig,
I'm fain ye'll hae a kindly thocht
For Wade an' his Auld Brig !

Parish Church

THE present church was built in 1822, and Glenshee was erected into a parish, Quoad Sacra, in 1858. But long before that a building stood here called the Chapel of Ease. It was the meeting house of worshippers who dwelt too far away from the Parish Church of Kirkmichael to be able to attend it except in the summer at the Season of Communion, when services were held from Thursday to Monday. For the rest of the year the minister held only a monthly service in the Chapel at the Spittal.

James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, visited the Spittal of Glenshee early in the 19th century, and of his visit he wrote that he "never had seen a greater curiosity than the place of worship there. It is a Chapel of Ease belonging to a parish called Kirkmichael, is built with stone and lime, and the roof is flagged with slate. The door was locked, but both the windows were wide open, without either glass or frame, so that one stepped as easily in at the windows as at the door. There were no seats, but here and there a big stone placed, and as things of great luxury, there were two or three sticks laid from one to another . . . . When the service was ended the minister gathered the collection for the poor on the green, in the crown of his hat, and neither men nor women thought of dispersing, but stood in clubs about the chapel, conversing, some of them for upwards of an hour. I have seen many people who appeared to pay more attention to the service, but I never saw any who appeared to enjoy the crack after the sermon so much."

The new church was a great improvement. Actually, there had been a plan to build it at Rinavey, a mile and a half down the glen, this being considered a more central position. It was not built there, however, and the Rev. T. D. Miller (who wrote so pleasingly of Glenshee in his *Tales of a Highland Parish*) explains why.

Though a start had been made at Rinavey, "the fairies, who interested themselves then in local affairs more than they do now did not approve of the proposed change, and when the masons started building, they came by night and pulled down what had been built up; and this was continued night after night, until the committee realised the futility of opposing the wishes of the little folk, and the new building was accordingly erected in the neighbourhood of the old one."

When the church was finally completed it was described as "a holy and beautiful house." It was deemed wise, however, to initiate a fund straight away to maintain it in proper repair. In a glen where cottage roofs were commonly blown off or badly damaged by winter storms there was certainly good need of this. One of the ministers, in asking the heritors to provide the manse front door with a porch, supported his plea by the statement that "frequently the winds sweeping from Glen Taitneach and Glen Beg met at his door and howled like very devils." His application was granted.

Services at this church are at present conducted on alternate Sundays.

The Mountains

THE headwaters of the River Shee rise on the main chain of the Grampians, and the range is crossed by the Cairnwell Road, which reaches its highest level (2199 feet) just north of the Devil's Elbow.

There are many notable hills in this vicinity, and almost a score of these are "Munros"—that is, hills of over 3000 feet.

At Spittal of Glenshee, however, the most prominent mountain is undoubtedly Ben Gulabin (2641 feet)—"mountain of the hill-shoulder"—which is less lofty but no less imposing. Its craggy shoulder divides the main glen of the Shee into two smaller glens. Of these, the right hand branch, Glen Beg, leads north to the Cairnwell, while the left leads westwards and again divides into Glenlochsie and Glen Taitneach.

Viewed from The Spittal, the Cairnwell group of mountains look a very formidable barrier. It includes the Cairnwell summit (3059 feet), Meall Odhar (3019 feet), Glas Maol (3502 feet) and Creag Leacach (3238 feet). These hills, however, can be readily reached and climbed

from the Cairnwell Road. Indeed, the summit of the Cairnwell can be attained effortlessly, both in summer and winter, by chair-lift, and in clear weather the view is entrancing.

Meall Odhar is undistinguished in outline, but Glas Maol and Creag Leacach are fine hills, especially the latter which takes the form of a narrow ridge.

Three counties (Perth, Angus and Aberdeen) meet on Glas Maol, and a hill-track (the Monega Pass) crosses very near the summit-cairn at 3318 feet—the highest right-of-way path in this country.

Glas Maol's northern corrie often holds snow well into the summer months, and is worth seeing. It is also repaying to walk eastwards from the summit for some little distance to bring into view the magnificent Caenlochan crags at the head of Glenisla.

Farther to the north-west lie Tolmount (3143 feet), Cairn of Claise (3484 feet) and Carn an Tuirc (3340 feet)—windswept plateaux of moss and wind-clipped heather that surround the rocky corrie of Loch Kander. A wire fence runs for mile after mile along the county march, but on Cairn of Claise it assumes the status of a stone wall. This I once found useful during a violent hailstorm, and incidentally it must surely be the loftiest drystone dyke in these islands!

Glas Maol cornice

Apart from Carn Aosda (3003 feet) and the Cairnwell summit, the mountains to the west of the Cairnwell Road are best approached from Spittal of Glenshee by way of Dalmunzie and Glen Taitneach ("Tatnach"). This glen can be followed as far as Loch nan Eun, seven miles from the Spittal. Loch nan Eun means "the loch of the birds", and on my first visit I found the birds in residence to be blackheaded gulls. The present stalker (Finlay Cameron) tells me, however, that the gulls have not returned to the loch for a year or two. The loch, set in a moory hollow, lies on Invercauld ground, and its shores are often frequented by deer.

There are several fine hills up this way. Carn Bhinnean (3006 feet) overlooks the wild rocks of Craig Dallaid, and north of the loch are the Ben Uarns (3424 feet and 3121 feet). The ascent of these makes a first-rate climbing expedition from Dalmunzie. And so does Glas Tulaichean. This shapely peak (3445 feet) rises immediately to the west of Glen Taitneach, and has two fine corries. Its spiry summit is the highest top between Glas Maol and Beinn a'Ghlo, the famous "mountain of the mist" that overlooks Glen Tilt.

Farther down Glenshee the hill slopes soften, and rise to lesser heights. Mount Blair, nevertheless, is a massive upstanding hill of 2441 feet, and besides separating Glenshee from Glenisla it forms a notable landmark over a wide area. Its slopes break away into spurs of rock on the Glenisla side, and incidentally, the culminating event at the Glenisla Highland Games takes the form of a race to one of these rock spurs, prominent on the skyline as seen from the "jousting haugh" beside the river.

SAFETY FIRST. It cannot be too often stressed that dangers lurk in all hill country. Experienced climbers go well-equipped, and others cannot afford to do less. Common causes of difficulty include: failure to judge time required for expedition; unexpectedly difficult ground; mist, darkness, snow-storm; loss of way; members of party becoming separated; sudden spate rendering burns uncrossable; illness, sprained ankle. Any of these things may turn a simple walk into a serious undertaking.

With due care, however, there is much joy and recreation to be found among the Grampian Hills. Many revel in the glen itself, plodding through the heather, snuffing the scent of birchwoods and bog-myrtle. But the hills are certainly a world of their own. Even the sudden contrasts of weather are utterly fascinating—rainstorm and then the sun smiling again on the green turf; skies of

sombre grey giving way to a great unrolling wave of light, with a vision of distant peaks and lochans; hours of drizzling rain, and then an evening green and pure, when the colours of the sky seem to distil themselves on all things, and even the rocks of the corries seem to tremble like the surface of water.

One day it will be a wind like velvet from the west brushing against your cheek. Another day the hailstones will be louping in the heather, and jabbing at your face like pins. One morning the shooting parties will be held up by mist—everything sodden—the air like muslin shrouding the lost hills. And then you will see the sun's disc weaving its way through the low cloud, and all of a sudden sunlight will flood the Glenshee road like a burn flowing back along a dried-up channel.

It is all contrast, and part of the charm of the Scottish Highlands. Of that charm the Glenshee hills have their fair share. Climb Ben Gulabin and you will have the whole glen spread before you—a feast of moist sunlight and cloud-shadow, and after rain a dancing fairyland of hill-waters and birchwoods, which is as it should be, in a fairy glen such as this of the Shee!

A note on the hill-names.

Eastwards of the Cairnwell Road:

Meall Odhar—the round, dun-coloured hill.
Glas Maol—the grey bare mountain.
Creag Leacach—crag of the rock slabs.
Carn na Claise—cairn of the hollow.
Carn an Tuirc—cairn of the wild boar.
Tom Bhuidhe—yellow hillock.

Westwards of the Cairnwell Road:

The Cairnwell (earlier forms are Cairnwall and Cairnyvall)—may have been Carnmeall, meaning cairn of the round hill.
Carn Aosda—cairn of the slope.

Carn a'Gheoidh—cairn of the chasm.
Carn Bhinnean—cairn of the pinnacle.
An Socach—the sow (from its long-backed shape).
Carn an Righ—king's cairn.
Glas Tulaichean—grey heights.

South of Dalmunzie Hotel and Glenlochsie:

Ben Earb—the roe-deer hill.
An Lairig—the slope of the pass.
Meall a'Choire Bhuidhe—round hill of the yellow corrie.
Carn Tarmachan—cairn of the ptarmigan.

Around Spittal of Glenshee:

Ben Gulabin or Gulbein—the mountain with the hill-shoulder.
Bad an Loin—mossy spot.
Carn nan Daimh—Cairn of the stags.
Craig of Rinavey—Crag of the birchwood point.
Meall Uaine—round green hill.

In lower Glenshee:

Mount Blair—the moory upland hill.
Creag na Bruaich—crag of the hill-brink.

Drove Roads

IT was by "drove roads" that the cattle of the Highlands were brought on foot to the Lowland markets or "trysts."

Many of these roads led across the hills, and today some of them are not much different to what they were several centuries ago, less used certainly than they were, and partly obscured by grass and heather.

After 1707 and the Union of the Parliaments, the organised movement of livestock on foot to established markets and fairs became a feature of Scottish trading.

But the drove roads were in use very much earlier than the early 18th century. In very early times, the nomadic herdsmen who preceded the farmers and crofters, were moving continually from one grazing to another, and no doubt they used these same routes. Then again, the roads were not always used by drovers or herdsmen. Later on, harvesters used them over a long period, trudging southwards to find work at the Lowland "hairst," and then returning north in time for the later harvest of the Highland glens and the north-west.

No doubt, too, the output of many an illicit still, hidden away among the rocks and heather, went southwards by these hill-tracks, despite the vigilance of the Excisemen.

Besides which, the drove roads were greatly used, not only for lawful cattle droving, but for unlawful cattle driving.

Glenshee, like the Angus glens, was once a place of great lawlessness, and much of the traffic of livestock was the result of raiding between clan and clan, and between Highlands and Lowlands.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, cattle thieving was apparently a full-time occupation with many clansmen, and the chief as well as the humble crofter was not above casting an eye on his neighbour's beasts. The Highlanders of Badenoch and Lochaber, described at the time as a "wild scurrilous people," had a curious liking for the cattle of Glenshee, Isla and Clova, and frequently the raids were followed by fierce skirmishes.

Many of the raids were of a small scale, involving the theft of a few head of cattle and some household gear, and mostly they were made under "cloud and silence of nycht." But occasionally the caterans came boldly down from the hills. One outlaw gang came "with twa bagpypis blawand befoir thame"—an impertinence that seemed to be adding insult to injury!

And some of the cattle raiding was by no means on a small scale. In 1602, for instance, men of Glen Garry raided the haughs of Glenshee, Glenisla and Strathardle, and went off with no less than 2,700 beasts. No wonder the angry owners went after them! They caught up with them, too, and partially defeated them alongside the Cairnwell Road.

In the 17th century there were eleven routes in use over The Mounth. From upper Deeside the most important of these lay by Glen Clunie and the Cairnwell to Glenshee and Strathardle.

The name Spittal (or Spital) of Glenshee is a reminder of the "hospital" or hospice that once stood here and afforded food and shelter to those who travelled this arduous route. Another hospice ("Old Spittal") stood in the Clunie side of the pass.

There were two well-patronised subsidiary roads, however. One branched off the Glen Clunie section of the main road, and led by way of Glen Callater, Tolmount, "Jock's Road" and Glen Clova into Angus.

The second branched off nearer the summit of the Cairnwell Road, and crossed Glas Maol very near its summit-cairn before descending into Glenisla. This is the Monega Pass. Many black, horned cattle, not only from Deeside, but from as far away as Ross-shire and Skye, took these hill-roads southwards, and they can still be followed by hill-walkers and pony-trekkers.

Some of the herds of cattle brought over the Cairnwell to the Spittal of Glenshee crossed the hills again to Kirkmichael in Strathardle. In those days there were two fairs held annually at the Spittal and one (a very important one) at Kirkmichael.

This route from the Spittal crosses An Lairig, and after six miles of hill descends to Enochdu on the Strathardle side. This is another very popular pony-trekking route.

Another old drove road (more difficult to trace at parts) comes southwards into Glenshee by way of Glen Ey, Loch nan Eun and Glen Taitneach. Farther to the west a drove road connects upper Glen Tilt with Glen Fearnach and Strathardle.

Two interesting roads also cross right through the heart of the Forest of Alyth, one diverging from Glenshee at Blacklunans, the other at Milton. I should add that the Forest of Alyth is a moorland forest, not an arboreal one, and that again these are roads delightfully suited for pony-trekking.

As the auld cock craws the young cock learns.

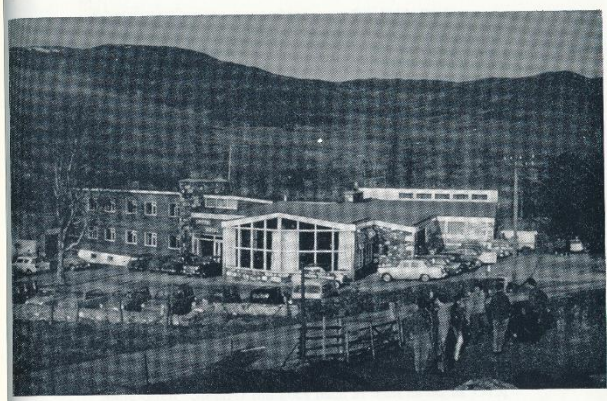
A ragged colt may prove a good gelding.

Corn him weel he'll work the better.

As guid may haud the stirrup as he who loups on.

There's nane sae blind as them that winna see.

It was ne'er for naithing that the gled whistled.



Spittal Hotel

Spittal

THE Spittal of Glenshee derives its name from the hospital or hospice which stood here centuries ago. The word in its Latin form signifies "apartments for strangers," and must have been a godsend to those travelling this arduous route between north and south. Its site was on the east side of the road just beyond the Manse.

Incidentally, the name Shanspittal or "Old Spittal" occurs on the Glen Clunie side of the pass, and evidently there was a hospice on that side as well. The Glenshee "Spittal" must have had many a notable visitor in its day, and there is a record of King Robert II having signed a charter there.

In 1959 the present hotel was completely rebuilt in the Scandinavian style, using local stone. Provision has been made for dancing and cine shows.

The Scandinavian atmosphere is very pleasant—the lounge with its huge log fire and comfortable low chairs, and the well set dining-room are very mindful of Bergen. Young people—skiers or pony-trekkers—are well catered for with special "bunk room" accommodation—this for a surprisingly moderate outlay. And everything is laid on for apres-ski entertainment.

Pony-trekking begins in April, and there are also excellent opportunities for mountaineering, trout fishing, and rambling in the hills. There are several first-class golf courses within twenty to thirty miles, and guests may also have the use of a nearby six-hole and very sporting course (and a tennis court) by arrangement.

Five miles from the hotel the skiers' Chair-lift enables summer guests to make an effortless ascent to the viewpoint on the Cairnwell Mountain (3000 feet).

Mountaineers should notice that the nearby hills include nearly twenty "Munros" (that is, hills of over 3000 feet), all of which can be reached by the hill walker. Superb rock-climbing can be had on Lochnagar, less than an hour away by car, and the Cairngorms are equally accessible, with no less than 65 tops over 3000 feet and some of the finest mountain scenery in Scotland.

Historical Note

THE name Spittal, or Spital, is the Scots equivalent of hospice (French), hospitium (Latin) and spideal (Gaelic).

There is no record of when the Spittal was founded, but in its earliest days it may well have been a monastic house which met the needs of travellers. Coupar Abbey, founded in 1164, spread its influence far into the Perthshire glens in the 13th and 14th centuries.

King Robert II was in Glenshee in 1376, and very likely stayed at the Spittal, but there are few authentic records of these times. In 1630, Sir James Balfour of Demmlyn enumerated eleven routes south from Deeside, but the route via the Spittal was not by any means the one most frequented.

In 1715 the Earl of Mar marched down the glen, as both Montrose and Atholl had done during Cromwell's supremacy, and the military reacted by stationing troops at the Spittal.

Even after the building of the military road the drovers appear to have kept to their old route from the Spittal by the present footpath to Enochdhu down to Kirkmichael,

and then across by Loch Broom to Dunkeld, Stirling and Falkirk. There were cattle sales and fairs at both the Spittal and Kirkmichael about a week before the Falkirk Tryst, and the comments of the parish minister upon their effects on his flock suggest that the inn at the Spittal was one of the principal beneficiaries !

The two Jacobite rebellions brought new life to the glen, although on both occasions both the Jacobites and the Whigs harangued the locals for their lack of participation.

At any rate the military road established the route as the access to the land between the Cairngorms and Buchan, even if it soon came to be used more for commercial than military purposes. About 1830 a stage route was established from Perth to Braemar, with the Spittal as the first stage past Blairgowrie, though of course it had been a changing post long before this. Before the Deeside railway was built, Victoria and Albert used the route, and in her diary the Queen records lunching and changing horses at the Spittal in 1848, where they were met by Invercauld and many others of the Deeside gentry.

The name Invercauld Arms seems to have been an innovation of the early 19th century, and the Spittal (or more often "Spital") Inn goes back at least as far as 1715, and probably very much further.

Dalmunzie

WESTWARDS of the Spittal of Glenshee lies Dalmunzie Hotel and Glenlochsie, a short glen but a very attractive one.

Dalmunzie—turreted and crowstepped in traditional Scots baronial style—was originally built as a shooting-lodge (Glenlochsie Lodge), and for many years formed the Highland home of Sir Archie and Lady Birkmyre. The original Dalmunzie Castle lies south of the Glenlochsie Burn.

As a hotel (which it has been since 1947) Dalmunzie can claim to be the highest in Scotland. It has a delightful setting on a little plateau between two hill waters, one of which comes hurrying down from Loch nan Eun, Loch of the Birds.

Many visitors, like myself, must have found it fascinating to stand on the lawn alongside there turreted walls, watching Ben Gulabin's craggy shoulder gleaming and glooming in sunshine and flurries of snow, or caught in a mesh of sunlight and cloud-shadow.

Since it was once a shooting-lodge it seems fitting that Dalmunzie Hotel can provide deerstalking and grouse-shooting, as well as fishing.

There is also a very sporting six-hole golf course (surely the smallest course affiliated to the Golfers' Union!) and an indoor golf school. Then there is a hard tennis court and a children's playground. The hotel is open all year round, and, for winter sports, has not only ski-tows and nursery slopes, but also a snow-making machine, which almost ensures ski-ing from November onwards.

But Dalmunzie has many surprises in store. There is even a light railway with engine and carriages, used to save shooting-guests the trouble of climbing to the heights of Glenlochsie Lodge under their own steam.

Steam is perhaps the wrong word, for the engine is oil-driven. It is still in good working order. The "First Class" carriage is something of an "observation car," and is fitted with hide-covered swivel seats. This railway is still used.

The name Dalmunzie means "the haugh or meadow of the moss," and historically, the earliest references to it go back to the 16th century.

Dalmunzie Hotel

But the whole setting is redolent of myth and legend. Ben Gulabin (or Bengulbein) is traditionally the scene of a great boar hunt which proved fatal to Diarmid, one of the Fingalian heroes. Here, too, are Tobar nam Fiann (the well of the Fingalians) and Loch an Tuirc (Loch of the wild boar), while Diarmid's grave lies on a hill called Tulach Diarmid.

Traces of an earlier building than the present one can still be discerned, and the earliest owner of this was probably Sir William Scott of Balweary, who received a Charter from James IV in 1510.

At that time Dalmunzie was spelt Dalmonge, and a century later it is given on Timothy Pont's map of Breadalbane as Dalmungie.

In the 16th century this was a very lawless district, and the fourth Earl of Athole was given commission of justiciary over all the lands within his earldom, including "the landis of Rannoch and Strathardill, Glensche, the landis and barony of Ratray," etc.

Dalmunzie was for many years the home of the MacIntoshes, whose progenitor in the mid-sixteenth century bore the name of MacRitchie, and was of kinship with the great Clan Chattan.

Early in the 17th century, the family assumed the name MacIntosh, derived from the Gaelic "toiseach," meaning "thane" or "steward," the overlord in this case being the Earl of Athole, who was then the superior of Glenshee.

The name MacRitchie soon disappears from the family deeds, and that of MacIntosh stands alone. Lachlan MacIntosh gave excellent service to Perthshire and the City of Perth. He was a Commissioner of Supply for Perthshire in 1696, and a burgess the following year. It is said of him that he made Perth a port, and laid the foundations of the prosperity of the modern city.

A grand-nephew of Lachlan, also named Lachlan, was elected Moderator of the General Assembly in 1736. He was often referred to as "the minister Laird." His younger son, Robert, was admitted to the Scottish Bar in 1751, and made an early reputation for himself by his speech for the defence in the trial at Inveraray in 1752 of James Stewart of Acharn, for the murder of Colin Campbell of Glenure. The incidents leading to the trial and its issue were put to good use by R. L. Stevenson in his well-known stories—*Kidnapped* and *Catriona*.

In the 17th century the great Marquis of Montrose passed this way when on the run after his defeat at Philiphaugh. "I am advanced this length," he wrote from Castleton of Braemar, "and am God willing to be this night in Glenshee."

At the 1745 Rebellion young Ogilvie of Rinavey raised two officers and thirty-two Glenshee men for Prince Charles Edward's army, but no great enthusiasm for the cause was shown, and orders for the arrest of Patrick Small of Dalmunzie were given, because of his leanings towards the Government side. He had a strong supporter, however, in the Duke of Athole.

About the middle of the 18th century the superiority of Dalmunzie seems to have passed to Farquharson of Invercauld. On August 10, 1761, a James Menzies writes of receiving "liberty from Invercauld to shoot in his Forrest of Glenlochsie for 8 days."

In 1855 the "grazings of Dalmunzie and Leanochmore" are mentioned in the Valuation Rolls as being occupied by Patrick Small, Esq. of Dirnanean" and Farquharson of Invercauld is the superior. But even at that time there is obviously no house worth mentioning on the property.

In the Valuation Rolls for 1880-1, however, we find "lodge and shootings of Dalmunzie," and in 1884-5 "House, Glenlochsie."

In 1885-6 there is entered "the Estate of Dalmunzie," the owner being Dr Charles Mackintosh, and the superior Invercauld.

Early Versions of Glenshee place-names.

On 6th May, 1510, Sir William Scott granted the lands of Dalmunzie (Dalmonge) to John Fergusson of Dunfallandy. His charter is or was in the Baledmund charter-chest, and the Crown charter confirming it is on record in the Register of the Great Seal.

The lands are thus described: "The lands of the barony of Douny in the sheriffdom of Perth, *viz*. Over Douny, Middil Douny, *Bordland*, Edynarnochty, *Culcolany*, Stronymuk, *Fanzeand*, *Invereddre* with its mill, *Bynnanmore; Bynnanbeg*, *Randeweyoch*, *Kerauch*, Couthill, and *Dalmonge*, with parts of Pitbrane, Glengaisnot, and *Glenbeg*."

The names in italics can all be identified in the neighbourhood of the Spittal of Glenshee.

Drumore Hotel

Drumore

IN a belt of woodland under the steep southern slopes of Mount Blair lies the Country House Hotel of Drumore, with its pleasant loch it makes a notable feature in the Highland landscape between Blacklunans (Glenshee) and Bridge of Brewlands (Glenisla).

The Estate of "Drumour" (as it is still often called) was historically part of the Lands of Colracks—quaintly called the "Suny Third" because of its southern aspect—and of old it belonged to Andrew Spalding of Ashintully.

Later, Drumore came into the ownership of the Webster family, but in 1863 a member of this family disposed of the Estate to Robert Thomas of Noranside.

It was probably about 1864 that the loch was enlarged to its present size, as that date is shown on the boathouse at the side of the loch.

In 1881 the Estate was sold to Andrew Usher of Edinburgh, then to George Gilbert Ramsay, Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow.

There is no record of the date when the original small shooting-lodge was built, but it was Professor Ramsay who added to the original lodge, and built the house in its present form. The new and larger part is dated 1898.

A point of interest: some of the furniture from the Old Lodge is still in use, and the Professor's Library of classical books is in the possession of the present owners.

Dalnoid

DALNOID has a fine roadside position in the glen, looking over the river towards the lofty slopes of Mount Blair. And if visitors to these parts cannot always depend on receiving the sort of weather they want, they can at least depend on obtaining good accommodation and good homely fare at this farmstead-guesthouse.

In fact, with home-baking, homemade jams and jellies, heather-honey, and fresh cream from the Dalnoid dairy cows, the farmhouse-teas served here have become famous.

With the ever-increasing popularity of Glenshee as a Winter Sports Centre, accommodation became the vital problem at Dalnoid, but this difficulty was solved in recent years with a tearoom extension.

This—a contemporary structure attractively designed on Swedish lines—catches the eye from the main road of the glen, and it can seat more than forty additional visitors—whether they be hungry hikers, scone-loving skiers or famished families!

So it looks as if Dalnoid's "guid Scots fare" is likely to become more widely acclaimed than ever in the years to come!

Gulabin Lodge

THE site on which the Church of Scotland at Glenshee was built had been a traditional meeting place from time immemorial, and the "standing stone" from the Druidical Age which is close to the church was probably the mark of a place of convention and judgment.

The "Chapel of Ease" mentioned elsewhere in this book was built sometime in the 18th century. It was a very makeshift affair, and was replaced by another chapel early in the 19th century.

The manse was probably built about 1846, and in 1858 the parish was created "quod sacra"—that is, for religious, not political purposes.

The manse is believed to have been built upon the site of the grave of Donald Mor Campbell of Lochaber, one of the most feared of the cattle thieves. Donald Mor was shot by Ogilvies of Glenshee in 1665, and his funeral seems to have been paid for by the wife of the tenant of Spittal Hotel. For reasons of her own she took his silver buttons in return.

The separate parish of Glenshee could not justify a minister in the 20th century, and in 1941 it was united with Cray. In 1953, with further parish changes, the manse at Glenshee was let, and the minister then stayed at Cray the most central of his three churches, Glenshee, Cray and Netherton. In 1963 the manse was renovated as a comfortable boarding house.

Hang a thief when he's young, an' he'll no steal when he's auld.

Gulabin Lodge

Cairdsport

A HIGHLY attractive shop in a highly attractive setting! Indeed, visitors to this Scandinavian-styled timber building often say it has the best view in the whole glen!

Cairdsport-Glenshee (opened in 1964) was an immediate extension of Cairdsport-Dundee—itself a Whitehall Street development of the long-established, but always forward-looking, firm of A. Caird & Sons Ltd.

In the glen, Cairdsport is imaginatively designed and sited near the old Bridge at the Spittal, in the heart of this up-and-coming Scottish sports centre.

To have a sporting outpost right on the spot to deal with the hire and sale of ski-ing equipment and clothing is a great boon to winter sports enthusiasts, and the premises also form the headquarters of the well-known and enterprising Glenshee International Ski School.

In the summer months Cairdsport caters equally well for summer visitors and tourists, and has proved a real acquisition to the glen.

It is fitting that Messrs Caird & Sons Ltd. should extend in this direction, for ever since 1879, when the Caird business was founded in Dundee, the firm has had a strong connection with the Highlands as outfitters and specialists in Highland Dress.

The founder of the firm ("Grandfather Caird" to the present Directors) travelled the glens and made many friends and business contacts there. He was especially well-known and always welcome in Bonnie Glenshee.

Dalrulzion

UNTIL the Reformation (1560) the superiority of the Dalrulzion estate (and most of the lands south of the Spittal) was held by Coupar Abbey, and thereafter by the Stewarts of Blair Atholl. But the history of the estate much more concerns the Rattray family, who were feuars from both the Abbey and the Duke of Atholl until the late 19th century.

Until 1513 the Rattrays of Rattray used the estate mainly as summer pastures for their cattle. But about this time John Rattray died (or was killed at Flodden) and the estate was divided between four dependents. One of them—Grizel, the eldest grand-daughter—married the eldest son of the Duke of Atholl. Later, portions of the Dalrulzion estate were sold to John Ferguson of Dourny (1511), Alexander Lindsay (1516) and David Wood (1541).

However, by 1564, the whole estate (house and lands) was back in the hands of another branch of the Rattray family, known thereafter as "the Rattrays of Dalrulzion."

The terms of their feu from the Duke of Atholl were less attractive than the monks had given, for there was no right of hunting, and feudal services (seldom asked for by the monks) were now demanded. Rattray was required to bring two men (and himself) to join the Duke's hunting parties, and eleven men in case of war. It may be added that these services were given with a grudge, and evaded when possible.

In 1620 we hear of Rattray and his two brothers being fined by Atholl for hunting on their own. Then, in 1641, the Committee of War censured Dalrulzion, along with others in the glen, and gave them orders to see that recruitment was improved. It would appear that in both the '15 and the '45 rebellions "the gentlemen and commons of Glenshee" satisfied neither side, and were extremely good at sitting on the fence ! Their masterly inactivity in public affairs is always noticeable.