

16 *Some Notes from the Game Book*



Although we know much of the history of the Mackenzies we would know even more were it not for Uncle Mac's fondness for cigars and after dinner 'toddy'.

One evening he was studying a box of papers which lay open on his knee. He dozed off, the lighted cigar fell from his lips into the box and it was only the smell of the burning papers which woke him.

However, to make up in some measure for this accident, he kept, from 1869 till his death, a fascinating and detailed Game Book which was continued into a second volume by his nephew Billy. Together, these two books cover nearly one hundred years of life and sport at Finegand.

Most of the entries will be of interest only to the family, but here are just a few little cameos of life at Finegand a hundred years ago.

Game was plentiful, the weather for the most part appalling, and the family quite astonishingly hardy and fit. Which of our feeble generation would contemplate catching a hundred trout in the pouring rain or walking seventeen miles over the Cairnwell on a Sunday afternoon to have tea in Braemar? But then, would we, could we, drink 72 bottles of whisky and sherry and 96 pints of champagne in a month?

1871

This year J. W. Jeffcock on Glenquach killed to his own gun and over one brace of dogs, running them singly, on 12th August 114 Brace Grouse, on 14th August 112 Brace Grouse.

1872

August 27th Colin and Kirke walked to Dirnanean to dine [six miles each way over a hill track].

Some Notes from the Game Book

August 28th Wet day. Kirke killed 4 dozen trout in the Shee.

August 29th Wet day. Colin, Kirke and Capt Clark fished Loch Baine. Rained most of the day. Killed 8 dozen and 7 trout.

1876

August 21st Kirke and Charlie fished from 10 to 12 in the loch and killed 28 fine trout, after which with M'Donald they killed 33 brace grouse.

1877

August 11th This being Minnie's first visit to the Glen, Colin drove us up in an open carriage and four through pouring rain which prevented her from seeing the beauties of the Glen.

August 13th Fine Mor'g. Started 9 am. Minnie started like a four-year-old, full of vigour and pluck and walked the whole day step by step with the guns, and returned at 6pm nearly as fresh as when she started. She consumed half a bottle of champagne and an immense number of nips of mountain dew and an enormous dinner at night, winding up at 10 pm with a stiff tumbler of toddy.

1881

August 12th Fine day but bitterly cold with a strong north wind blowing all day. Mac and Harry on Finegand, Colin and Kirke on Corrydon. Bag 65 brace and some extras. Minnie and Emma walked the hill all day and took very kindly to the whisky.

1883

August 12th The parcel post has commenced and will carry two brace of grouse to any destination for 1/- and a man to Blairgowrie for 3/- !

1885

August 13th This morning opened with a gale of wind and the hills thick with snow.

1888

August 12th All went to the Spital Kirk where for the first time a harmonium (the gift of Mr and Mrs Alexander Mackenzie Smith) was used in the service. Mr Crawford preached a very appropriate sermon on the use of instrumental music in public places of worship of all ages, and the people seemed well pleased with the addition to the Kirk.

1892

Wine ordered - Champagne 3 doz quarts and 2 doz pints, 3 doz whisky and 2 bottles brandy, 3 doz sherry and 1 hamper pollonaris.

Glen of the Fairies

1910

August 29th Found the river in flood and over its banks. Higher than even Sandy can remember. Polgorm cottage surrounded and had to pull down the stye to rescue the pig.

September 4th Mabel, Susan and Victoria Hicks Beach and Gilbert went to the Kirk and then walked over the hill to Braemar for tea at the Fife Arms.

1911

August 11th Party met at Blairgowrie and motored up in Philip's Panhard car which he had sent up by sea to Dundee and intends to leave for annual use at Finegand.

August 25th All went to Glenisla Games in Philip's Panhard motor. Gearbox broke down coming home. Passengers walked home and the car was driven home backwards.

1932

September 4th A motor bus ran away at the Lair Brae and leapt 20 feet into a field. No-one much hurt.

1933

August 19th Record Bag 425 grouse.

1944

August 4th [Extracts from the *Blairgowrie Advertiser*] On 4th August Mrs Robertson, Corrydon Lodge, Glenshee, reached her 100th birthday. At the request of Colonel Mackenzie Smith, a flagpole was erected and a Union Jack unfurled at 6 am, the beginning of a memorable day ... Like other aged persons, Mrs Robertson likes to recall the days that are gone. She remembers the first minister of Cray, the Rev. William Brown, who loved to be out in a thunderstorm at night. He would walk up and down one of the fields near his house, listening to the crack and rumble of the thunder. Asked why he indulged in this practice, he said he liked to listen to the voice of God in the thunder. She also remembers the second minister, the Rev. James Robertson, and how he divided his sermon every Sunday into two parts - one addressed to the saved and the other to the unsaved, and how his address to the latter was so affecting in its pleading appeal for repentance that many of the people wept.