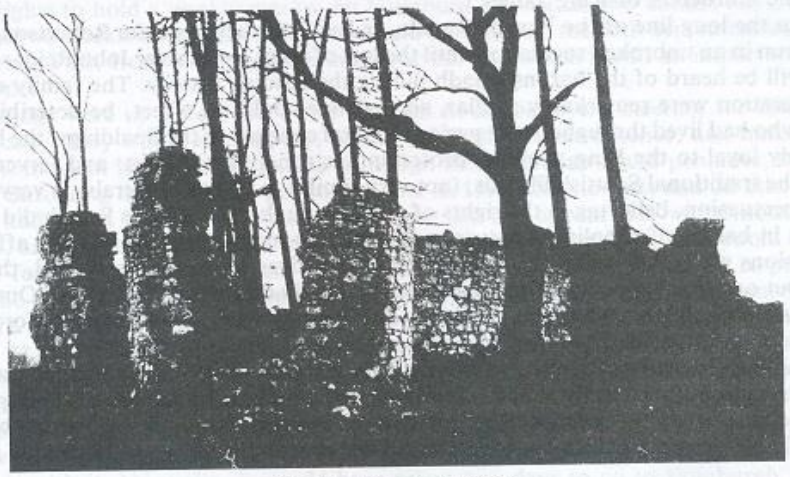
CHAPTER VI

The 15th century had generally been fairly quiet and peaceful, with a thriving agriculture, in contrast to other areas, and a well organised system of land rental was becoming established. The laird would rent out land in 'tacks'. The tenant or 'tacksman' would sublet the tack to sub-tenants, each of which would get his own area of land to grow food for his family, and in return, would pay a rent, mostly in kind, as well as making his services available in farming the land, and also to fight when called on to do so. As the years went on, the availability of fighting manpower became increasingly important, and it was essential for the laird to be able to call up his army in defence of property and livestock. Conditions of rent were strict. They included the keeping of wolfhounds, and also the obligation to plant trees, particularly ash, which was used for making bows and arrows. Consequently, the glen was comparatively well wooded, unlike other areas where trees had been cut and never replaced. The result of this was that as a general rule, any tenant taking over a sub-tenancy, would take over a house built of local dry stone, with the cracks filled with moss, but would have to provide his own roof timbers.

In addition to the sub-tenants, there was a certain nomadic population which would settle in the area, after making a deal with the tacksman, either temporarily, or possibly permanently. They might even adopt the clan name, and also become one of the 'sons of Robert'. There was, therefore, a series of close knit communities, all interdependent, and generally loyal to each other. The laird, unlike his English counterpart, was very much a part of the community, was concerned with everyone's welfare, and would lead them when they were required to go into battle. So the clan system built up, and although the numbers can never be accurately ascertained, the population of the Glen certainly exceeded 3000. We know for instance, that Spalding was, on occasions, able to field 150 fighting men, and Baron Ruadh considerably in excess of that.

In 1500 a terrible plague, the Galor Mor, or Black Death hit the Glen. This is thought to have started in the Black Castle of Moulin which had been built by the Earl of Atholl about 1330. Many people died from this, others took to the hills, but there was no escape from it even there. Some went to Dunkeld Abbey to seek help. Bishop Brown took the bones of St. Columba, which had been moved there after his death in Iona in 597, and gave them the water, in which he had washed the bones, to drink, and to take home for the other victims. This proved to be a miracle cure. Some,

who refused to drink the water died and were buried at Stylemouth, but all the other victims were buried at the east end of the churchyard. Bishop Brown warned that the plague would stick to the bones if ever the graves were opened up before they decayed, and that it would break out again. This plot was never touched again until 1984 when the road needed to be repaired and widened at that point. In the meantime, the Black Castle of Moulin was completely isolated until everyone inside had died. It was then battered down and burnt.



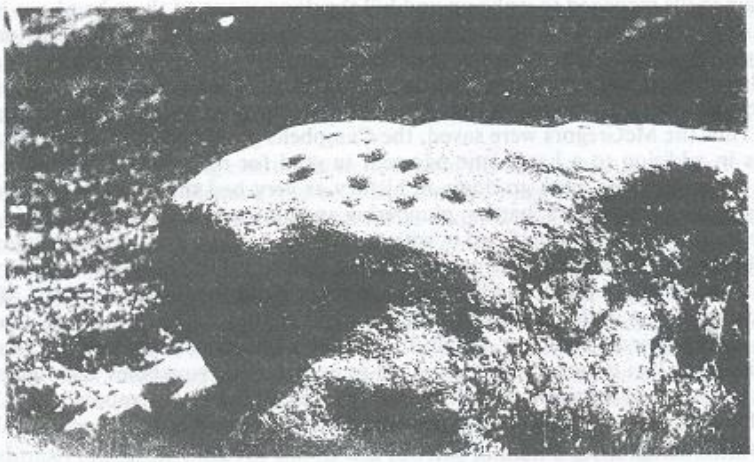
The Black Castle of Moulin

It was in 1504 that Baron John Ruadh married a daughter of Gordon of Abergeldie in Braemar. Dancing was an important social attribute at that time, and the bride's father was always boasting about their dancing ability in Braemar. Although John Ruadh was a good dancer, his best man was not, so he included in his party Domnhull Biorrach (Donald with the sharp face) who was reputed to be the finest dancer in Atholl. After biding his time and watching, Donald selected Kate, an Abergeldie dairy maid with a very big nose, as the best dancer, and took her onto the floor. Their dancing was so much admired, that one of the men of Mar determined to put a stop to it. He swung Donald onto the floor in a reel of Tulloch. Donald, not dismayed, dislocated the man's arm later during the dance. The man attacked Donald with his dirk, but Kate intervened, and the man, slashing at Donald, cut off Kate's nose instead! Donald tried his best to console Kate for the loss of her nose, saying that she would dance lighter without it! So impressed was Donald with Kate that he obtained the Baron's permission, recalled the priest, and they were married then and there as well.

Probably because Strathardle was well farmed, and had good crops and cattle, it was the envy of those round about, and frequently raiders or caterans would come over and steal them. On one such occasion in 1531 Baron Ruadh took an army of men over to Rannoch, captured these caterans and hanged them. He was rewarded by the Earl of Atholl with more land. Ruadh then acquired Easter Inverchroskie as a dowry in 1554, moved from Glenfernate and built a new house, which he called Balvarran — the Township of the Baron. Balvarran was then to remain the centre of the family, and the barons Reid of Straloch became the barons Reid of Balvarran. There is still the famous stone there with the cup marks in it — one made for each of the children's christening until the last baron. It is said that he died without a son because the stone was not used at his christening.

1560 was the year of the Reformation. The Roman church, originated by Queen Margaret had become very powerful and acquired a lot of wealth. There was a general decadence about it, and much of the wealth was being misappropriated, with children being made abbots in order to give them an income for life.

The church also served many purposes in addition to its religious activities. It was the only community centre, was meant to care for the poor and needy and provided the only form of education. The priest was one of the very few people with any form of education, or the ability to read or write. Whereas gaelic was universally spoken, writing was in Latin. There was, then a growing feeling that community affairs should be administered by a more local and democratic system instead of what was seen to be an outside dictatorship. The reformation was therefore welcomed almost universally. The movement, as is well known, started in Perth with John Knox.



Cup-marked Stone

The last abbot of Coupar Angus was Donald Campbell, the second son of Argyll. He was a crafty and unscrupulous man, and a good example of the decadence of his church at that time. He had five illegitimate sons, and proceeded to divide up the church lands between them. Thus, amongst other estates, Persie became Campbell property. Campbell could not get on with any of his neighbours, and was the cause of many feuds. When the reformation reached the Glen in 1562, the priest John Hammill whose house was on the site of the present manse, refused to leave, and no amount of persuasion would make him. Finally, it took Baron Ruadh, always a staunch protestant, to evict him. That was not the end of the problem. Ministers throughout Scotland were scarce, and replacements not easily found. After all, they had to be presbyterian in faith and also gaelic speakers. So it was 1576 before the next minister, Archibald Hering, was appointed. During the interval William Eviott, a reader, had stood in. Many other, more remote, places were unable to get a suitable minister, and have therefore remained Roman Catholic to this day. An example of this is featured in that amusing and true story, made into a film called "Whisky Galore" which depicts two neighbouring West coast islands, one Presbyterian, but the other still Roman Catholic.

So the Glen moved on from an era of comparative tranquillity, to one of increasing turbulence, animosity and lawlessness.

CHAPTER VII

From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, there was total disregard for the law, endless fighting and squabbling, raids and thefts. The Fergusons, Spaldings and Rattrays were held to blame, along with the McGregors. In 1563, the McGregors under their famous leader, Rob Roy, were declared outlaws, and virtually all the clans were at war with them. They always found shelter in the Glen, especially with Spalding at Ashintully. On one occasion, Campbell of Persie sent word to his clansmen in Argyll that there were McGregors in the Glen. The Campbells arrived with the dreaded black dogs who had been specially trained to hunt McGregors by feeding them, as puppies (so it is said) on the milk of McGregor women. However, warning was sent in time, and all the McGregors were carried to Kindrogan rock, so as to leave no scent for the black dogs.

Owing to the very severe weather, the Campbells decided to stay the night, and chose the house of Robertson of Straloch. Robertson decided to take revenge on the hated Campbells and their detestable black dogs. He therefore entertained them liberally to drink, until they all retired for the night very soporific and well contented. Robertson told them that as it was such a cold night, he would borrow extra blankets for them, but sent, instead, to Kindrogan rock and brought down all the McGregor plaids in which he wrapped the Campbells. He then suggested to the sentry that it was too cold outside for the dogs, and that the "bonnie beasties" should come inside for warmth, and so, to encourage them, put down the bones and other remnants of the supper. Once the dogs had finished these, they got the scent of the McGregor plaids and set about the occupants with great ferocity.

Before the Campbells managed to wake up and kill the dogs, many of them had been badly mauled. Then, old Robertson scared the Campbells even more by telling them that Baron Ruadh was after them with a goodly squad of men. At the mention of him, they asked Robertson for a hidden way out of the Glen. Robertson, explaining that they would have to leave their horses behind, led them up Kindrogan rock, much to the joy of the hidden McGregors who watched them disappear towards Glen Derby. Thus the McGregors were saved, the Campbells got rid of, and old Robertson acquired several horses in addition to a handsome payment in gold for his services!

The next 50 or 60 years must go down in history as very bad times in the Glen, with constant feuding, disputes with neighbours, battles, plundering and murders. Campbell of Persie was the cause of a lot of the trouble. He had never fitted in with the rest of the Glen and had made himself extremely unpopular. When the other lairds attempted to bring him into line, he would send for a squad of his own clan from Argyll to come and take revenge for him, as for instance in 1597 after Campbell had been thrown out of a wedding for stabbing some of the guests. That led to constant battles, and counter raids by Strathardle men into Argyll. In 1560, the Queen instructed Atholl to restore order. That was easier said than done, and of course led to even further squabbles and fights. The terrain and total lack of transport or communications made peace keeping a near impossibility. Baron Ruadh would go to church accompanied by his own personal piper and bodyguard to "quell tumults occasioned by Spalding and Rattray".

The situation was possibly eased a bit when Spalding went to Flanders to fight for the King of Spain. He returned seven years later and used the spoils and plunder which he had accumulated to build Ashintully Castle in 1583.

In 1597 there was a major feud with Atholl, and both Ashintully and Whitefield were besieged, and the lairds taken prisoner. The following years, things had got so bad that Andrew Spalding was taken prisoner by the Stewarts of Drumfork, and 27 other lairds. He was called to trial, but as usually happened, he failed to turn up and could not be found.

During all this time, there were other big problems. 1571 is on record as being an exceptionally severe winter, so bad, in fact that none of the mills could grind. This is the first mention of the Black Mill at Tullochcurran and it was described as being "blocked up with snow, and taken over by cows and goats". Even grouse were found nesting there. It is really quite surprising that water driven grinding mills were in operation at such an early date. This very bad winter was followed by a series of disastrous harvests, which left many people the choice of either stealing or starving.

There are numerous records of outside raiders stealing and pillaging. On one such occasion, in 1600, two raiders who had killed McCombie in Glenshee, went on to Enochdhu, stole a cow from a widow, roasted it and then went to sleep. The widow found them there, and alerted Baron Ruadh, who arrived with his piper, caught them and hanged them. One of the raiders, Finlay, asked for a last drink from the well, which then came to be called after him. The Baron rewarded the widow be giving her another cow.

The following year, there was a major raid by the Macdonells and Macintoshes, who succeeded in getting away with 2700 cattle and 100 horses. They did not get very far, however, as a major battle ensued at Enochdhu which resulted in the men being put to flight, and the animals being left behind.

Baron Ruadh VI was nicknamed Cutach — meaning short. But whatever he lacked in stature, he more than made up for in shrewdness and courage. Being continually troubled by caterans stealing cattle, he looked for ways of protecting them. On one occasion, he scared off a party of 18 men by concealing his piper behind trees and instructing him to advance on the party. Meanwhile, he was shouting "The thieves are here". The raiders assumed there was an army of armed men and fled.

When Baron Cutach died in 1626, his son Alexander took over. The cattle raiders were causing considerable problems, and he resolved to teach them a really hard lesson. Black cattle being virtually invisible on a dark night, it was a fairly simple matter to round them up and drive them off unseen. The Baron invoked the aid of his friend Cam Ruadh, who, although he only had one eye, was a crack marksman with a bow and arrow. The scheme that they worked out was simple, clever and very effective. They got a white cow, made her lame so that she could only hobble along slowly and put her with the herd of black cattle. When the raiders came along, Cam Ruadh was lying in wait for them. As the cattle were driven away, the white cow was left at the back, and one of the men was sent to drive her on. The white cow was clearly visible in the dark, and whenever Cam Ruadh heard her being hit with a stick, he would shoot an arrow just one yard behind her, effectively killing the drover. Another man was sent to take his place, and he also suffered the same fate. It was not until several men had been effectively but silently disposed of that the rest realised that something unusual was going on, and fled, leaving the cattle behind. But again, Cam Ruadh was one step ahead. He

guessed that they would try to make their escape down the Altchroskie burn, where they would be hidden, and so he lay in wait at the bottom of the gully, where it joins the river Ardle below Ardchroskie house, and where they would be silhouetted against the sky. Here, he picked them off one by one, and it is said that the burn was so red with blood that even the stones were stained. There have been many reports of the ghosts of these men being seen there, and even now, people will tell you that this is a bad place to be after dark.

All during this period, Spalding continued to behave in the same cruel and sadistic manner. We have already seen the stories of Fleming and of 'Fleet Davie', when the curse was put on all future lairds of Ashintully. There are a number of other stories about Ashintully, which is hardly surprising when you consider some of the known atrocities which went on, and mention is made from time to time of "Green Jean", although the story concerning her does not appear to be on record.

In 1618, the Scottish parliament passed an act forbidding the use or possession of firearms, or the shooting of wild fowl or venison. Like most laws, this was disregarded, although some of the lairds would leave their weapons hidden near Bridge of Cally on their journeys to the south retrieving them on their way back. Although one or two prosecutions, notably of Spalding, took place, this did not really change the situation in any way. In 1624 a "police force" was formed, consisting of a captain and twenty men. This also proved totally ineffective.

In the meantime, Alexander, the 7th Baron was proving himself a great agricultural pioneer. Up until 1626, the whole of the lower parts of the Glen had consisted of a dense and impenetrable undergrowth of hawthorn, alder, briar and hazel. This extended from the present village of Kirkmichael as far as Kindrogan, which means the 'End of the Thorns'. Because of all the thefts and fines, the estates were nearly bankrupt, and so the baron set about the massive task of cutting this undergrowth, reclaiming the land and making new fields from what was potentially the best land. He also reclaimed and cultivated some of the higher land and established some really excellent herds of cattle. When he died in 1636, he had succeeded in leaving the estates in profit. When the seventh baron moved to Inverchroskie, and set up house there, he built the water powered mill in 1629. This was in use also until the 1920's, and the buildings, lade and river dam are still quite intact. It was his son, the 8th baron who built the magnificent house on Inverchroskie land, which he called Balvarran — the place or township of the baron.

By this time, the Reids owned virtually all the Glen from the village to the Moulin Moor except for Dirnanean and Dalreoch which were the property of the Smalls. Kindrogan formed part of the Reid estates, and the Baron had given a piece of land for a house to Donal Mor, one of the McCoulls, who had rendered him a great service. Donal Mor had a fine house and 8 strapping daughters, and it had always been a mystery how they appeared to be so well fed. There was also the problem of sheep and cattle which were disappearing fairly regularly without trace. Both of these mysteries were solved one day when the Baron was passing by with Patrick Small of Dirnanean and George Small of Dalreoch. Seeing smoke coming out of the chimney, they decided to call, but could get no answer, and there appeared to be nobody in, and, even more mysteriously, there was no fire lit in the kitchen. Therefore, in order to discover the source of the smoke, they dropped a stone down the chimney to be greeted with a scream from one of the daughters. And so the mystery was solved. This cunning old rascal had built an underground kitchen with the flue from the fire fed into the main kitchen chimney above. The skins of many of the missing animals were also discovered there.

Donal went and hid in a cave in Kindrogan rock, but then when he found himself surrounded, hanged himself on 'Cnoc Dhimhnuill Mhor' — Donal Mhor's Knowe. His grave, just 50 yards west of the burn is still there. His family was banished, and his house burnt down. What remains of it is now covered by the front lawn of Kindrogan House.

The property was then bought by William Small, Patrick's brother, who married Margaret Keir, and combined their two names to become the first of the many Small-Keirs of Kindrogan. William built the back part of the present house (which was later added to) 100 yards away from the old ruin in 1700. He also bought Western Kindrogan from Baron Ruadh, which included the summer shieling at the head of Glenfernate which a previous barons wife had defended against the Earl of Atholl in 1560.

CHAPTER VIII

The years 1644-1646 brought trouble of a different kind; this was the period of the Montrose wars. The Marquis of Montrose, who was a Graham, raised an army of 2000 Atholl men and set off to do battle at Tippermuir. He was joined by Rattrays, Fergusons, and, of course Spaldings, but

not by any of the Strathardle Robertsons, who, as we have seen were by far the biggest clan. The reason was that Baron Ruadh was a whig and a staunch covenanter, and so declined to take part in this campaign, which had resulted from the Union of Crowns.

He and his clan paid dearly for this. One account tells us that Montrose marched south through Strathardle on his way to the borders, and burnt and plundered everything in the Glen, including Balvarran House, which was only three years old. Another account tells us that Montrose went south via Weem and Castle Menzies, and that this damage was done by the Macdonalds on their way to join Montrose. They were closely followed by the Campbells who put the finishing touches to the complete desolation. Baron Ruadh clearly held Montrose responsible, but whoever was to blame, the result was utter devastation, and the Glen was left totally destroyed, without a single crop standing, and with houses burnt and cattle taken.

There was obviously very considerable confusion, with no clear indication as to which clan sided with which army, and many others took advantage of the situation to settle old private scores. In this, the Campbells were so much in evidence that the next phase of the campaign was an army of Atholl men marching into Argyll, with a full contingent of Strathardle men, wreaking complete and total havoc in Argyll, thereby extracting the absolute maximum retribution.

Throughout this campaign, Montrose passed through the Glen on six different occasions, and each time carried out further destruction. In general, the Rattrays and Fergusons came off fairly lightly, the main target being the Reid properties and the covenanters. This was to cause a big problem for the Grahams some years later at the battle of Killiecrankie.

Montrose finally disbanded his army at Rattray. By this time the Glen was in a sorry state after all the destruction, with the land in a terrible state, the lairds impoverished, and with much of their hard work in ruins.

There exists, at this time, a copy of the Rental of the County of Perth showing ownership of the various properties, as well as the rents. This appears in full in the appendix.

By 1653, ecclesiastical affairs were in a very disturbed state throughout the country. The parish minister of Kirkmichael, Francis Piersone, had joined the protesters two year earlier, and united with them in forming a separate Presbytery, as had also the Rev. Robert Campbell of Moulin. English history had also gone through some stormy times which resulted in the strange era of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell's troops had invaded the General Assembly in Edinburgh, marched the assembled clergy a mile out of town, and forbidden any more than three of them to meet together at any one time.

Strathardle again came in for a full share of the disturbances with a large force of English soldiers stationed in the Glen, and the minister forbidden to preach. The following account is on record in the Fasti Eccl. Scot: and described by Charles Ferguson in one of his lectures to the Gaelic Society of Inverness. I cannot do better than quote his account of this episode which explains all too clearly the hatred that then existed of the English by the Glen folk.

> "There was no sermon in Kirkmichael from 18th December 1653 to 1st January 1654, in regard of the armies; and no sermon or collection on 8th January 1654, in regard that in the midst of the sermone, the haill people were raised, because that some countrymen and sojers had fallen in blood". The cause of this Sunday skirmish was that the officer in command of the English soldiers at Kirkmichael tried to carry off the bonniest young lassie in the strath, a daughter of the then tenant of the Davan farm. The Englishman had met her before, and tried to make love to her, but she would have nothing to do with him, so on this Sunday, happening to see her father and several grown-up brothers going to kirk, he thought it a good chance to carry her off. So calling several of his men, he mounted his horse and set off for the Davan. They found her milking the cows, and seizing her, they tried to lift her on the horse in front of their leader; but she struggled desperately and her screams soon brought her youngest brother, who was only a mere stripling, and some other young lads, who had been herding cattle, to assistance. These lads, having no arms, were of course no match for Cromwells Ironsides, but they were brave and fearless, and they at once took to the natural weapons of all boys, and began pelting the Englishmen with stones, and so true was their aim, and so nimble and active their movements, that the soldiers, who were only armed with swords, were forced to retreat. As the commander was struggling with the girl, her brother slipped up close in front, and striking the horse in the forehead with a stone, smashed its skull, and it fell dead. As the officer rolled over, his sword fell from his grasp, and before he could get disentangled, the boy seized the sword and slew him with one blow. The men at once fled, followed by

the boys, who were soon joined by their neighbours as they went along by Kindrogan, and one by one the soldiers were overtaken and slain, so that only one of them reached the camp at Kirkmichael, where he at once gave the alarm, and his comrades turned out and slew several of the pursuers. But the boys soon alarmed the worshippers in Kirkmichael Kirk, who poured out, and as there was a large congregation, and every man went fully armed then, and could use his weapons well, the fighting became desperate, and many were slain on both sides around Kirkmichael Kirk, and, as we are so quaintly told in the 'Fasti', "There was no collection in the Kirk that Sunday".

That night the Davan men buried the body of the English officer, in the very deep round hollow in the centre of the field east from the Davan farm-house, which hollow is still called to this day, "Lag an t'Sassunnich" — the Englishman's hollow; and I well remember, when a very small boy, hearing the harvesters, when cutting the corn in that hollow, tell the story of the Englishman who slept his long last sleep there, and it was always believed the corn grew greener and ranker above his grave. Next day the whole English force came to the Davan to carry away their commander's body for interment in Kirkmichael kirkyard, but so retired was this hollow, then in the midst of a thick wood, that they did not find the grave, and the good folks of the Davan did not wait to enlighten them, as they took to the hills, with all their cattle, on their approach. So, after burning all the houses, they returned to camp, leaving their commander to his quiet rest in "Lag an t'Sassunnich".

1662 — Our reverend friends, Francis Piersone, minister of Kirkmichael and Robert Campbell of Moulin, were again in trouble with the Government, and were deprived, by the Acts of Parliament of June 11th, and of the Privy Council of October 1st, 1662; and were accused in December of "still labouring to keep the hearts of the people from the present Government of Church and State". Piersone was summoned again next year before the Privy Council, for disregarding the Act of Glasgow, but conformed, and was allowed to preach again."

Fifty five years later, his son, John Piersone was also to be deposed, again for "Disaffection to the Government".

By 1663, all fortunes were at a very low ebb, mainly because of very heavy fines imposed by Charles II. The fines on Balvarran alone were £1000; more than four times the annual rental, and £600 on the Dounie, which was another Robertson property. In the same year, the baron's son married the daughter of Farquharson of Invercauld, and took up residence at Glenfernate, while his father continued to live in the now rebuilt Balvarran.

As if the Campbells were not hated enough, already, they had somehow been given the job of collecting ransoms in Glenshee. This they would do on horses which had bells on their heads to announce their presence. On one occasion, the Glenshee men were so incensed, that they set up an ambush, cut off the heads of the Campbells, attached the bells to them and rolled them all down the hill.

Trouble continued in the west, and in 1678, Atholl formed an army of 8000 highlanders to suppress it. This they successfully did, under the command of baron John Ruadh, and although they took much plunder, there was, on this occasion, no bloodshed.

There was by now, an increasing fear of a renewal of popery under King James VII, who was a catholic, but in 1689, King William of Orange who was a protestant, took over the throne. So started a series of what were basically religious wars of Protestants against Catholics which have bedevilled so many European countries for so many centuries. Most of the area were Jacobites, but others such as Baron John Ruadh were whigs, and strict covenanters. So, the clans divided up in accordance with their beliefs.

The first of these battles was the famous one at Killiecrankie, in which the Earl of Dundee, also a Graham, was killed. He was joined by the Rattrays and Fergusons, but the baron, ever mindful of what a Graham had done to his land and beautiful new house not long before, did not join him. Surprisingly, for once, neither did Spalding. There was a lot of confusion amongst the Atholl men who thought they were being called to fight for King James, but found out they were supposed to be fighting for King William, which many therefore refused to do.

The battle centred initially on Blair Castle, which Dundee's army had been ordered to take. Atholl had been ordered to take it back again, but after the defection of most of his army, the task fell to Baron Ruadh and his small band of faithful Strathardle followers who were loyal to King William. They managed to hold it until Lord Murray could get re-inforcements.

Having defied the might of Dundee's army, Baron Ruadh was not surprisingly worried about

the same kind of retribution which had been wrought by the Grahams some years earlier, and considered asking Lord Murray for protection. In the event this proved to be unnecessary, as his wife had a dream about a dragon that was held by a chain, and so could not get close enough to cause any damage. The next day, Dundee was killed at Killiecrankie. Had that chain been a bit longer, history might have been rather different.

As the century came to a close, the glen was in pretty poor shape, with constant battles, occupation by English troops, plundering and constant feuding, the lairds all got together and sent a petition for help to the Government. They might as well have saved themselves the trouble for all the good that it did. In fact, this was to be followed by a series of very bad years, harvests that never ripened, cattle dying, and farmers ruined. Wolves were still in abundance, witches were still being burnt, and even some of the old Druid rites had not completely died out.

CHAPTER IX

The 18th century must go down in history as the most dramatic and the most interesting of all, when many major changes took place, peace was finally declared, and the Glen became part of Britain. Let us start, therefore, by looking at life as it was in the early part of the century.

At this time, the population of Scotland was little over one million, with over 90% living in small rural communities such as Strathardle. None of the towns or cities as we know them today existed. Glasgow had a population of just over 12,000, Edinburgh consisted only of the Castle, Holyrood and the Royal Mile, with the population actually declining after the Act of Union of 1707 and Dundee, Aberdeen and Leith (now part of Edinburgh) were small trading ports, mainly to Scandinavia.

On the other hand the population of Strathardle was in the region of 3000, although the exact figure cannot be established. There was a certain nomadic element, and written records were few and far between. Whereas Gaelic was the universal spoken language, the written word had been in Latin, but was later in English, and so it involved learning a whole new language, as well as the skills of reading and writing. While this was necessary for parish records which were started in 1650, but were very sketchily kept, and frequently mislaid, this was the responsibility of the minister or the laird. The majority of the population did not posess such skills. There was, in any case, precious little to write about. A parochial school was in existence, which was only spasmodically attended, mainly during the winter months when time permitted. This was in what is now the vestry building and session house, next to the church. Latin and English were being taught.

As late as 1730, there were still no wheeled vehicles of any description north of the River Tay, as no roads of any description existed. Communication was entirely by the old drove roads which covered the countryside, and were, in fact, nothing more than ill defined footpaths. As we have seen, Strathardle is geographically in a most important position, and the drove roads passed through the Glen from the North, South, East and West, so that there were frequent visitors. Travel was usually on foot. A few people possessed a horse, but even they could only journey on foot in the winter months. The only means of conveying freight was on the back of a garron or highland pony, (which could only carry about 2 cwt. on short journeys, or about 1 cwt. on longer ones) or in a slipe. This was a long wooden box on iron runners, like a sledge, that would slide and bump its way over the heather and rocks pulled by a horse. The Glen was in fact completely cut off by our standards. It is difficult for us to envisage a situation where no roads or transport existed, let alone electricity, radio, newspapers or telephone, and this explains why the enforcement of law and order was virtually impossible.

The Landowners, or Lairds, were really the wardens of their own communities, as well as being their leaders and administrators. As we have seen, there were four principal lairds, the biggest by far was Baron Ruadh, whose Robertson clan were by far the most influential, then there were the Spaldings, Fergusons, Rattrays and several smaller ones. Dirnanean and Dalreoch were, by this time the property of the Smalls, and Kindrogan by 1700 was the property of the Small-Keirs.

The Laird would rent out his land in 'tacks'. The tacksman would agree a rent and be responsible for the administration of his tack. He would rent his tack in 'rigs' or 'ploughs' to crofters who would then have just enough land to grow food for his family. A Township was built on each tack, consisting of houses which were still basically the same, built of dry-stone construction, with moss to keep out the draughts, roofed with timbers and covered with thatch or heather. A hole would be left in the middle to allow the smoke from the fire to escape, which was the only source of heat or light during the winter. Timber was, surprisingly, in very short supply. All the available trees from the Caledonian forest had been cut long before, and transported by the only available means which was down the

rivers. What was left was therefore inaccessible, and tenants were expected to provide their own roof timbers, which they would take with them if they left.

Such a house consisted of one single room with the fire in the middle, and in it would live, not only the whole family, but also the cow or ox, during the winter, as well as a goat or any other livestock they might possess. It was really quite a cosy domestic scene!

The agriculture was largely on the "run-rig" system. This consisted of parallel strips of ground, ploughed upwards into the middle to increase the depth of soil, and the shallow valley on either side forming a natural surface drainage. These mostly went upwards from the township, most of them on what is now the heather covered hill land. Ploughing was done with a wooden framed plough which did little more than 'scratch the surface' (from which the saying arose) and required several oxen to pull. Hence all work was carried out on a co-operative basis, with several tenants working together to plough their own and each other's rigs. Only two crops were grown, the grey oat, a primitive wild oat, and bere, a type of wild barley. These were ground or milled with a mortar and pestel, and the staple diet was therefore "Knockit Bere", porridge, gruel and oatcakes. This was supplemented by kale from the communal kale yard, wild birds and animals, occasional fish from the river or an ox that had died of old age. When crops failed they would have no choice but to steal or starve. There were no poor laws or any form of social welfare, and every family had to fend for itself.

Rent would be paid to the tacksman, who would pass it on to the laird. Rent was paid in cash and in kind, with probably no more than 20% in cash. Coinage was, in any case, scarce, and the average tenant had little to sell, and very little opportunity of acquiring any. Therefore the bulk of the rent was in crops and services to the laird, such as looking after and feeding his herds of black cattle. The grey oat, which was the principal crop, was a notoriously bad yielder, producing only about three peas of corn to each head, so the saying used to be "one for the seed, one to eat, and one for the laird".

Another most important condition of rent was that every man had to be in readiness to turn out, and fight with the laird when required. As we have seen, there was plenty of demand for this, so it was, of course, in the laird's interest, as well as that of everyone else, that as many men as possible should be on the place standing by to defend it.

The population of the Glen at that time was still in the region of 3000, at least four times its present level, although the population of Scotland was then about one fifth of what it is now. These townships were scattered all over the Glen, and the map, made in 1783 shows the distribution of these. The densest population was on Balnakilly, Tullochcurran, Glenfernate, and Pitcarmick, although they existed all over. The present estate of Balnakilly, which now includes Tullochcurran and Over Balnald had eleven such townships, with a population in the region of 150. The same estate now supports just five! At that time, Balnakilly was the property of Donald Robertson, Tullochcurran was part of Atholl Estates, and Over Balnald, along with Glen Derby belonged to Lord Nairne, who was the son of the Duke of Atholl, but on marrying the Nairne daughter, took her name, and so inherited the estates. It was also shortly to become Reid property.

The history of the township is a fascinating one. It is obviously beyond the scope of this book to go into them in detail, even if the information were available, but I have covered the 11 townships on Balnakilly, as it was then, in Appendix II. This gives the translations of the gaelic names, which often tells us something about them, and the ordnance survey map gives their locations. Little is now left of them, but the outlines of most of them are clearly visible, as are some of the wells and watercourses. The stone was all used for other purposes at the end of the century.

The laird was never normally short of food. His granaries were well stocked from 'rent' received. He had a herd of cattle, which mostly went down to the Strathmore area for the winter, where their dung paid for their winter grazings. Winter feed, as such, was not known until near the end of the century. Those that stayed in the Glen had to survive on what was left on the rigs after harvest, any dried straw that had been gathered in, and anything they could find for themselves, which was next to nothing when there was snow on the ground. Not surprisingly, they lost condition fast and those that survived were sometimes too weak to go out to graze in the spring. Therefore, the winter meat supplies had to be killed off by Martinmas (or sold off at the Michaelmas fair), while they still had some flesh on them, and salted down for the winter.

There was usually a fairly plentiful supply of home made ale, so that the laird was well placed to entertain any guests that came to the Glen, and would no doubt welcome them as visitors, as a change from the rather lonely and isolated existence. No doubt, they would also catch up with news of the outside world. This is no doubt the origin of the world famous 'Highland Hospitality'.

But there were many other demands on the laird's granaries. He would frequently have to feed

the poor and starving, and would provide the food for the communion services that took place four times a year. People came to these from considerable distances, and stayed in the village from Thursday to Tuesday, staying wherever they could find shelter, and living on food provided by the lairds. They were, therefore not only religious, but also social events, and for many, the only square meals they ever got.

The Church, in fact, was the focal point of the whole community, and the only place where people could turn for any kind of help, whether legal, medical, educational or whatever. It was, therefore, the town hall, the civic centre, the citizen's advice bureau and served many other functions as well as its religious ones, and it was partly these many other aspects that brought about the reformation in the first place. There was the constant fear that control could revert from the community back to the Pope should Roman Catholicism ever again regain a foothold. This fear had been a great influence in the battles that had taken place, and was to be in the events that were to follow.

The union with England in 1707 was universally opposed. We have seen that the English were detested, and the thought of having the Glen, and, indeed, Scotland, run from there was the last straw. This is a feeling that has not entirely disappeared. It was this factor, as well as loyalty to the Stuarts, that triggered off the 1715 uprising.

The events of this are too well known to repeat, except insofar as they concern the Glen, which, as usual featured prominently. This is all too often thought of as a war between the Scots and the English, which in one sense it was. However, the Stuarts were Roman Catholics, and the fear of that had to be carefully weighed up against an English government and a German King. The Clans were therefore divided with some going into it whole heartedly, while others preferred to risk the consequences rather than the risk of popery. The Earl of Mar, who led the armies, was a Stewart, who had himself changed sides, and was only a recent convert to the Jacobite cause. The Shaws, whose son had married into the family, did not take part, for this reason although they were staunch Jacobites.

The Earl of Mar raised his banner in Bannerfield in Kirkmichael, where he recruited 500 Atholl men and 500 Strathardle men under Spalding and his brother, after canvassing Jacobites in Fife and Perthshire. He succeeded in recruiting some Robertsons, Fergusons and Rattrays, as well as Lord Nairne. Atholl sided with the government, but his son, the Marquis of Tullibardine, joined the Jacobites. Alexander Robertson did not join in at first, but he too changed sides in sympathy with Tullibardine. Baron Ruadh and most of his Strathardle men remained loyal to the government, and were not therefore 'out' with the rest. It must have been a confusing situation with many people changing sides, fathers on opposite sides to their sons and families split down the middle. It must also have been a disappointment for the Earl of Mar to recruit such limited numbers from an area that was largely strongly sympathetic to the Jacobite cause.

His army proceeded from Bannerfield via Tullochcurran, Kindrogan and Badvo to the disastrous battle of Sheriffmuir. The Earl of Mar's leadership is considered by many to be the principal cause of the disaster, but whatever the reason, most of those who were not killed in battle were executed or taken prisoner and sold as slaves. Lord Nairne was condemned to death.

After the battle, the Hanoverian Government sent a strong force to Strathardle to round up all those who had served under Mar. The Glen now closed ranks, and the men were hidden or took to the hills. None were ever found, and the soldiers returned to Perth empty handed. Atholl was then ordered to disarm everyone. No doubt he went through the motions, but no-one would have thought of surrendering his weapons at a time like that, and even the Rev. John Piersone continued to go around armed with both claymore and pistol. So the minister of Kirkmichael was again deposed for 'disaffection to the Government', as he had 'influenced his people to rebellion, prepared them to take up arms against the reigning family, and mounted his horse with that view'.

Gradually, people came out of hiding, and an uneasy peace of a kind was restored. Lord Nairne returned to Glen Derby, which was still his property until it was acquired by the Reids in 1744, there he built a mansion house in 1722, with a magnificent walled-in Orchard, the remains of which can still be seen. Glen Derby was originally called Glen Dion-aite, the sheltered glen, but was changed by Lord Nairne who called it after his brother-in-law's family, the Earls of Derby. His father was one of the judges of the court of Judiciary, but he himself was a staunch Jacobite.

One major result of the 1715 uprising was the obvious need for some form of transport and communication if an English army was to have any impact at all in the highlands. So in 1725, General Wade, an English engineer General, arrived on the scene, and over the next fifteen years, put in hand the building of a number of roads and bridges. He is often given credit for rather more than he actually did do, but in fact he constructed altogether 260 miles of road and a number of bridges, many of them still in use to-day. Most of the work was in the Great Glen, Aberfeldy and Crieff and the Dunkeld-

Inverness road. However his military successors did build the road from Blairgowrie, through Glenshee and over the Cairnwell to Braemar in 1750, and so the first start was made in a network of communications. This road is still often called "The Military Road" by many local people. It made no difference to the Glen communities who still continued using the old drove roads for the next 40-50 years.

Before that had been built, we had been through what is often thought of as one of the most famous events in all Scottish history — the uprising of 1745. Once again, we find a division of loyalties between clans and families. The Earl of Mar's sons all took up the Stuart cause, but others decided against it. Prince Charles Edward Stuart was undoubtedly the rightful King of Scotland, but he was Roman Catholic and had been brought up in Italy. Again, there had been a change of attitude in some families. A few years before, the Baron's son had joined a peace keeping army company, which was later to be amalgamated with others into the Black Watch. By now, he had changed the name from the Gaelic Ruadh to the anglicised Reid, (both meaning Red). He had dropped the Robertson part altogether, and did not normally use his title of Baron even after he had inherited it. The Spalding son had also joined the army, and in this generation, the Reids and Spaldings appeared to be friends in the same regiment. When the 1745 uprising started, each behaved quite predictably. John Reid remained with his regiment, but Spalding immediately left, returned to the Glen and joined the Jacobite uprising. This was to be his final act, and the complete end of the Spalding family.

The events of the '45' are too well known to repeat here. As we know it finished with appalling carnage on Culloden Moor, where the cold, tired and hungry highlanders were outnumbered, and outgunned but fought on with undaunted courage and very little else, until the few that remained began to drift home to face a terrible future. Again, Hanoverian troops were sent out to scour the countryside for all those that had taken part. They were hiding in the hills of Strathardle and Glenshee, being fed and looked after by the Glen folk until the heat was off.

This time, the English were determined to extract the maximum retribution. Any Jacobites that were caught were hanged, and whether caught or not were dispossessed of their lands and left to starve. Many fled from the country and went abroad. The next item on the agenda was the Disarmament Act of 1747, forbidding anyone to possess any kind of weapon of any sort. They were no longer allowed to fish, shoot or trap wild animals; the bagpipes were forbidden and they were no longer allowed to wear the kilt, the one garment which was so necessary for survival in our climate and terrain.

The Glen was like a ship without a rudder. With many of the lairds killed or banished, whole communities were left without land, food, guidance or help, and many of the women and children starved, unable to provide for themselves, and with no help whatever from the English. The Glen folk, now unable to protect themselves against their enemies were an easy prey to raiders, thieves and caterans. Happily, wolves were no longer a menace, the last one was killed in the Glen that year.

The confiscation of the bagpipes was claimed to be the removal of a warlike instrument, but was more likely an attempt to put a stop to our traditional culture, as well as to prevent dancing and entertainment. It had, in fact, exactly the opposite effect, as the events of this time have immortalized it and made it world famous. A form of Mouth Music was evolved, whereby the tunes were sung, and words put to them to emulate the 'grace notes' which are such an essential feature of pipe music. So all the music, songs, and pipe tunes were handed on from one generation to the next in this way. Even the wearing of the kilt did not prevent dancing. Obviously highland reels cannot be properly performed in any other costume, so dances were written such as 'Shean Truibhas', meaning 'With Trousers' which could still be performed.

With those that had been killed or banished, the population by 1750 had dropped to about 2600, and other changes were beginning to take place. The Turnpike Act of 1751 was the first of these. It required all members of the community to devote so many hours a week to road work. By 1770, a road up the Glen was well under construction, and seven years later, with the building of the bridge over the Ericht in Blairgowrie, the Glen was now linked for the very first time with the outside world. This brought along more new technologies and a number of farm improvements, principally the potato, which provided a far greater tonnage of food to the acre, and in 1780, the turnip which for the first time provided a winter vegetable for humans and an effective winter feed for cattle and sheep. Cattle no longer had to winter on the low-lying areas of Strathmore. Larch trees were also introduced at about this time from the Austrian Tyrol, and were planted extensively to replace the shortages of good timber.

This road was on the West, or opposite side of the river to the present one, through Pitcarmick, past the old Free Kirk Manse, and finishing up between Williamstown and Redhu, where the orginal coaching Inn was built. The green, which is there now, was the forecourt, and the Inn has since become

cottages. The village began to spring up in this area, the next buildings, probably, being Williamstown, where the bottom house became the first shop. The road would have been similar to the road that still exists to-day, and was described in the first of the Scottish Statistical Accounts, prepared in 1791 as a "Country Road in pretty Good Repair". This road would then have continued along the same side of the river, through Balnakilly, Tullochcurran and Dalreoch, the route which the Earl of Mar's army had taken. Nothing much existed on the East side of the river, where the village is now, except the Kirk which was rebuilt in 1792, replacing previous buildings which had been on the same site since 1184, and the parish school, which is now the session house. There had been a bridge across the river, but it had collapsed in 1750 and never rebuilt, so the river was spanned at this point only by wooden planks. *

1747 also marked the end of the Pictish sub-kingdoms with its hereditary jurisdiction and the baron courts. These courts, presided over by Baron Ruadh, had administered justice up until this time, although major criminal justice had been referred to the Privy Council. There were numerous disputes, frequently concerning tenancies, and these were all dealt with locally. Although this might have appeared to be a somewhat prejudiced form of justice, it was on the whole fair, and there were many instances where barons made decisions against themselves. All in all, in spite of the hardship, it does appear to have been a happy community, with strong family ties and loyalties, a strong code of honour within the community itself and a united approach to outsiders.

The Lairds had always been a part of the community, living and working with their clans, setting high standards, in most cases positive leadership and, in general, example. They expected, and received, in return, loyalty from their family and tenants, and generally speaking, clan pride was paramount. It emphasises the strong Scottish characteristic expressed by Robert Burns who wrote 'A man's a man for a' that' which so well describes the rights and dignity due to every individual, irrespective of their rank, trade or status. The feeling, which is still so prevalent in Scotland to-day, is in such marked contrast to the English rural constitution of Squire and servant which no doubt gave rise to the 'class system', of which the English seem to be so conscious.

Over the next twenty or thirty years, all this was to change. The Lairds were having a hard time, with wars and battles, their lands ravaged, and defenceless against raiders. Agriculture had been somewhat neglected, rents frequently overdue and a big backlog of financial and other problems existed. As we have seen, the Spaldings and Fergusons had by now been dispossessed.

In 1752, Alexander Robertson had his lands annexed for "Jacobite Treason", and John Robertson, whose family had been the Lairds of Cray and Dalnaglar in Glenshee from the very early days, died leaving his affairs in disorder, and his estates were sold to pay off the debts.

The year 1781 was a particularly sad one for the Reid family. Following the death of the 14th Baron — Alexander, the trustees sold up all the Reid estates. Inverchroskie and Wester Straloch were sold to Mr. Buttar of Pitlochry, Glenfernate to the Duke of Atholl and Balvarran to James Stormonth of Lednathie, in Angus, a branch of whose family have owned it ever since. Tarvie, Cultalonie, Glen Derby, and all the other properties were sold off, and the entire family split up and left the Glen. As we have seen, the eldest son, John Reid, the 15th Baron, was by this time in the army. He had, by now dropped the title baron, and also the alias of Robertson, and called himself simply John Reid. Born at Inverchroskie in 1721, he had been educated at Strathardle Parish School, later in Dundee, and finally at the University of Edinburgh. He then became an officer in Loudon's Highlanders, a regiment of 1250 men, raised by authority granted to the Earl of Loudon, and consisting of twelve companies, four of which were raised in Perthshire. With the outbreak of the '45', some of the officers, including Spalding left the regiment and joined the Jacobites. Some of these were killed, and the rest taken prisoner. After serving for a year in Flanders, the regiment returned home and John Reid joined the Black Watch, reaching the rank of Major. He subsequently became a General and died in 1807 at the age of 86.

Throughout his life, General Reid had kept up the family musical tradition, and was a well known expert performer. He published a set of pipe compositions in 1770, one of which was called the "Highland or 42nd Regiment's March", but his most famous composition was "The Garb of old Gaul" which was to become the slow march of the Scots Guards. He also published minuets dedicated to the Honourable Catherine Murray. His musical talents were not confined to highland or pipe music. He was also considered to be one of the best flute players of his age, and published solos for the flute or violin with "a thorough bass" for the harpsichord. This only goes to prove that to the musician, music is one language, rather than an assortment of different ones, and it is quite possible to perform and enjoy all different forms of music in their own different ways. Indeed most of our best jazz players of to-day started their careers with a thorough classical training.

* see appendix 3

General Reid had no male heir, just one daughter who could not inherit the title and at his death, he left £52,000 (quite a fortune for those days) in life rent to her, but subsequently to establish a professorship of music in Edinburgh University. He also directed that annually on his birthday, 13th February, "There shall be a concert of music held, including a full military band, to commence with some pieces of my own composition, to show the style of music that prevailed about the middle of the 18th Century, among the first of which is to be the "Garb of Old Gaul"."

The baron's daughter, Susannah, died young, and the Chair of Music was founded in 1839, by which time the fortune had grown to nearly £80,000. Each year this concert takes place, and perhaps I could quote an extract from the Daily Mail. "On November 6th 1930, the Reid Symphony Orchestra broadcast by wireless from Edinburgh a high class programme. This orchestra is named after the famous General John Reid, to whom Edinburgh owes its chair of music. General Reid was the last Baron of the Reid-Robertson family of Straloch."

That was not the end of the family, however. The rest of it split up and went all over the world. My own branch of it went to Tobago for about 50 years, where I believe they were involved in insurance. By the end of the 19th century, they were back in the Glen, at Woodhill, moving shortly afterwards back to Balnakilly.

The Laird of Balnakilly was the last to leave the Glen. The first recorded Laird was Donald Robertson in 1715 whose grandson Thomas survived until 1802. Then between 1802 and 1809 he sold the estate in three separate lots to Donald McDonald, described as "a merchant". The last part of the estate to go was Balnakilly itself.* So an era finally came to an end, with nearly all the original indigenous lairds away from the Glen. The Smalls and Keirs were to remain for some time yet, but of the four main families, there remained only a few Rattrays. Now the Glen was to take on an entirely different way of life. The population by this time had dropped to 2200.

Before continuing with the story, I would like to close this chapter by putting on record the strange story of Stuart Reid. While in my office one day recently, I was told that a Mr. Stuart Reid from Australia would like to see me. As that was the name of my recently deceased uncle, I was very interested to meet him. As he came in, I could hardly believe my eyes, and thought I had seen a ghost. He was identical in appearance to my late uncle, and apart from a slight Australian accent, could very well have been him. His family had left the Glen in the 1750's, and as we discussed our respective families, it was quite obvious that we must have been closely related 200 years earlier, each of our families pursuing parallel courses at opposite ends of the world. The intermittent red hair, the strong musical tradition, the peculiar finger shapes and numerous other family features were all there. In addition, the rather strange list of Christian names that runs through my family was similar to his, and indeed the number of similarities of all kinds was quite uncanny. My theory on the subject was recently confirmed by an eminent geneticist, who agreed with me that the close in-breeding which inevitably occurred in a small, isolated community would have the same effect as when it is used deliberately in pedigree livestock to build up a high proportion of both dominant and recessive genes, which then transmit these similarities very strongly over many generations regardless of the female. I would, indeed, be most surprised if a similar phenomenon had not occurred in all the families who left the Glen at this time, and perhaps, one day, more evidence of this phenomenon will come to light.

CHAPTER X — TRANSITION TO THE 19th CENTURY

As the 18th century draws to a close, we find a very different Glen emerging. Nearly all the traditional landowning families had left, the feuding mostly finished, and the Act of Union, however reluctantly, had been accepted as a fact of life. The Glen was now part of Britain. The new road was making a great difference. Apart from being able to travel with greater ease, speed and comfort, it was now possible to transport goods effectively. A horse can move about fifteen times as much in weight of materials in a cart as it can on its back. It was therefore possible to bring in goods and commodities from the outside world.

Many southerners were now attracted to the Glen, as the possibilities of extensive sheep farming were becoming apparent. Hitherto, sheep had been wintered inside and fed on the little dried fodder that was available. By chance, one farmer who had been forced to flee the district because of bad debts had left his flock of sheep behind. Returning the next year, he expected to find them all dead, but to his surprise, found them more or less intact, and it became apparent that sheep, left to their own devices outside in the winter, survived far better.

* see appendix 3

The result of this was that farm rents began to rise sharply as more and more from the south were bidding for land, and the agricultural revolution got under way. There was no place in this for all the tenants or sub-tenants, nor for the notoriously inefficient run-rig system of farming. The old tenants could not, in any case, have paid the greatly increased rents and survived. Very much needed to be done, and the new landowners required these increased rents in order to do it. They did not feel the traditional loyalty to the tenants, and in all probability the feeling was mutual. As the tenancies ran out, there began a steady drift of populataion from the old townships and the old traditional lifestyle. Over the 20 years from 1790 to 1810, the population dropped from about 2,200 to about 1,460. While figures are all recorded in the Statistical Account of 1791, they represent the parish of Kirkmichael which extended from Blairgowrie to Glenisla in the East and Braemar in the North, but stopped at Enochdhu. From there to Pitlochry was recorded as part of the parish of Moulin. Therefore, while it is not possible to get accurate figures for the Glen as we know it, the overall picture and trends are quite clear.

Further north, the Highland clearances were beginning. Much has been written about these, for while it is clear that the old subsistence farming could not continue to support the population that was trying to live off it, nor would people ever again accept the hardships and living conditions that existed at that time, it was the manner of the evictions that was so appalling. Whole settlements were forcibly evicted, mainly by the new landowners, or their factors, but some of the existing landowners also had a lot to answer for. With nowhere to go, and no-one to turn to, they hung on grimly to the little that they had, until they were forcibly driven away. Many went West to where a new industry was springing up, producing fertilizer for the new agriculture from Kelp or seaweed. This was to be a short termed industry, and it was not very many years before they, too, were evicted.

Most of these people had never been far beyond their Glens before, and being quite lost were forced to accept a passage on the government sponsored ships to 'a new and better life' in 'New Scotland', or Nova Scotia. Those that survived the ghastly conditions on these ships were to find conditions over there worse than anything they had imagined, and only quite a small population survived. The main point, as far as the government was concerned, was that they had been effectively got rid of. However, highland colonies were set up all over the world by this mass exodus, and there is no doubt that these hardy and industrious people carried a knowledge, an example and a culture to many countries who have benefited enormously from it.

Happily, the situation in Strathardle was not quite like that. Many people drifted away from the tough existence that they had lived, towards New Rattray where a new industry was springing up in jute which was being worked in the new water powered mills springing up on the shores of the river Ericht. Jute was shipped into Dundee and taken to where the power was then, in the rivers. There were also earlier water powered mills for flax which had become an important new crop at the turn of the century. At this time the population of Blairgowrie was only 400, but by 1880, the population had increased to 7,000, of which 2,500 were employed in the textile mills. Sadly none of these operate any more. †

In the Glen, other trades were springing up in the wake of the agricultural and transport revolution. Most numerous were the weavers, who now had an abundance of raw materials. There were also several tailors who would visit people in the area, staying as guests in their houses while doing their work. Shops were springing up and there were now blacksmiths, wheelwrights and squarewrights. By 1790, the market was held every week on a Friday, and barter, as well as purchase, took place of jam, tobacco, snuff, lamp oil and groceries. Fuel was still locally collected peat and turf.

The overwhelming majority of the population were still involved in agriculture. In the parish of Kirkmichael there were 226 farmers, and six small one-man farms. There were 2,000 black highland cattle, 9,000 sheep and 800 horses with 4,400 acres under cultivation and 44,000 acres of uncultivated grazing. During the summer, the women would go to the mountain shielings, taking with them their spinning wheels. It was the women then who did all the sheep clipping.

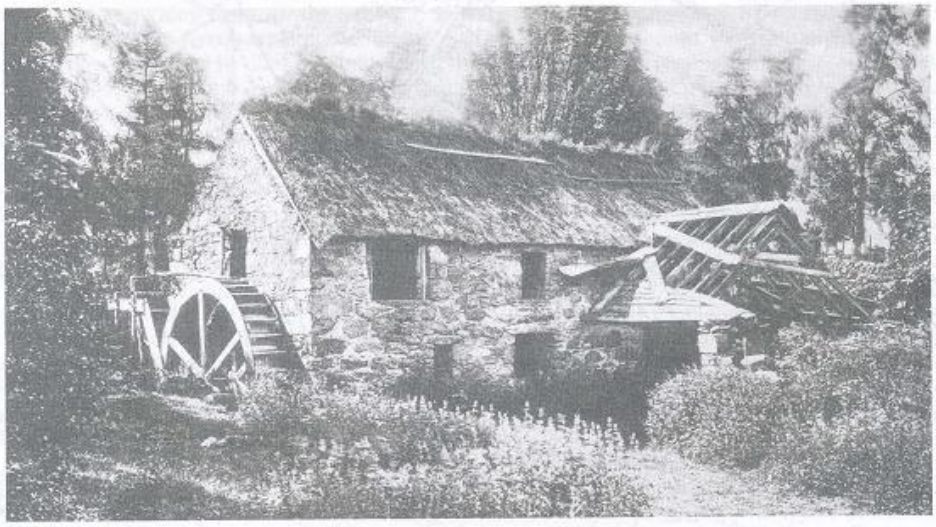
There was now a great need to improve the fertility of the land and reclaim some of the better low lying areas that were still bogs and swamps. Extensive drainage operations were carried out by building stone condies. A ditch was dug, about 2 feet square, and the sides lined with stones and big flat stones laid over the top. The soil was then replaced over it. These condies still form the basis of our field drainage systems, though a lot has been done more recently with clay tiles. The condies have stood up well through the years, but some have now collapsed under the weight of the heavy tractors and machinery used since the 1950's.

Once the land was drained, the next priority was to counteract the very high acidity of the ground which had been bog for so long. This was done by building lime kilns to burn limestone which was

† see appendix 4

extracted from seams between Kirkmichael and Dalrulzion. Here again, the new roads were an essential feature. The limestone was packed in layers with charcoal in between and fired from the entrance at the bottom. Carbon Dioxide was driven off, leaving the stone like sponges, which were then laid out on the ground to slake or break down with the rain. This, spread on the fields, corrected the acidity and made for vastly improved arable land. There are many lime kilns in existence all over the Glen. One of the best examples is just in front of Balnakilly house. It is in an excellent state of preservation, and is now a listed building.

The River Ardle, showing the Croy or Dam that fed water to the Black Mill at Tullochcurran



An old Water Mill similar to the Black Mill

Then the water mills were improved and modernised. Landowners were bound by law to provide grinding mills for oats and wheat for all their tenants, and mills such as Muileann Dubh — the Black Mill opposite Mill Cottage and the Mill at Balvarran, which had been in use for some centuries were brought more up to date and modernised. The grinding stones for the mills came mainly from Holland and Belgium, and could now be transported up the glen by road.

First survey map of 1830 showing part of the Glen very much as it is to-day.

Meanwhile, the old townships were dismantled, partly to avoid the risk of them ever being occupied again, but also because they were a ready source of stone for the condies, lime kilns and drystane dykes. After all, the new landowners no longer required large numbers of men on the place to fight battles any more, and sheep no doubt paid better than sub-tenants. The old townships were completely dismantled, and whereas most are still clearly visible, some have disappeared altogether leaving only memories of the amazing breed that lived in them. Could I refer you again to the appendix where the 11 townships of Balnakilly are described.

There was, also, a lot of disagreement and disruption going on in the church. There had been earlier splits and breakaways from the established church, and indeed, by the beginning of the 19th century, there were as many as five different churches. Some of these re-united, but other splinter groups arose. Whole books have been written on the subject and there is therefore no need to go deeply into it here. From 1839, a major split developed over the contentious point of patronage. This concerned the appointment of the minister by the kirk session and elders, rather than by the laird or anyone else who was a patron. After a stormy meeting of the general assembly, 474 ministers out of a total of 1,200 walked out and formed the 'Free Kirk'. The members, who are often referred to as the 'Wee Frees' disassociated themselves entirely from the state and set up their own church in 1843. This tended to be a more extreme version of presbyterianism, with particularly strict views on observance of the Sabbath. No activity of any kind was allowed, no work of any kind could be undertaken, and any form of entertainment or amusement was out of the question.

Originally, the 'wee frees' used to hold services on Bannerfield under a large ash tree, but in 1843 the Free Church was built, on its present site opposite Redhu. This was replaced in 1891 with the present building, known as the 'Duff Memorial Church' after Alexander Duff, the Free Church's first missionary to India, who had been educated in the village school in Kirkmichael. Thus the parish was divided between The Established Church, which had been rebuilt in 1791, and the Free Church, each having its own minister and its own manse, and so it was to remain until 1929 when the two churches were once again re-united. From then on, services were held alternately, although some people kept strictly to their own kirk, saying that it was wrong to cross the bridge to go to church. In 1955, the Duff Memorial Kirk was finally closed. The building then reverted to the feu superior, F. K. Balfour, and was sold off to be used for other purposes.

The 'Wee Free' convictions still exist in some of the Western Isles, where it is still considered wrong to do anything at all on the Sabbath. Ministers have been known to lie on the jetty on the Isle of Skye to stop ferries landing on Sunday. Self vending petrol pumps were disallowed on Lewis because they could still be used on Sundays. In the Glen, with an increasing number of visitors, this is no longer apparent, and a much more tolerant view is taken, although the tennis court and putting green which existed in the village until the 1950's could never be used on Sundays, and I well remember how the three kirk elders would stand on the bridge all Sunday. I was never quite sure what the reason was, but assume it was to ensure that no one went out or did anything.

At the turn of the century, the residents of the upper end of the Glen would walk to church at Moulin, in which parish they were situated. One Sunday a month, an open air service was held at Straloch, until 1846 when the chapel was built. In 1956 this became united with Kirkmichael, and in 1982 services were discontinued. The building is now up for sale.

The situation was similar in Glenshee. This became a parish in 1858. Prior to that, people would worship at the Chapel of Ease, next to the graveyard, attending Kirkmichael only at the summer communions which lasted from Thursday to Tuesday. A new church was planned on a different site, but Glenshee is the 'Glen of the Fairies' (the literal translation of 'Shee') and seemingly the fairies did not approve of this, and are said to have pulled down the building each night, until the decision was made for the new building to be re-built on the original site. There was no further interference after that in the building operations.

Throughout this period of religious conflict, there had existed a small Episcopalian church, whose affairs were run by bishops, in sharp contrast to the Presbyterian system. Episcopalians were disliked by local people, who thought of them as traitors, and too closely associated with popery, although they were as anti Rome as anyone. They were also outlawed by the authorities who equated them with the Jacobites. They therefore went 'underground' through the 18th century. The first American bishop was consecrated from the Scottish Episcopalian church, as none of the English bishops dared to do such a thing after the American war of Independence.

In 1792, the Episcopal church was made legal, and in 1860 an Episcopal church was built in Pitlochry. In 1899 the Episcopal church was built at Ballintuim, and is in regular use throughout the summer, as well as on special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. It is sometimes, quite wrongly,

referred to as the 'English church'. Although similar in many ways, it is quite a separate church. It is used by the many English visitors who find the services, creed and sacraments far more similar to their own than the Presbyterian services. Now, a far more liberal and ecumenical approach is growing up, with people attending either or both churches. One hopes this is a step towards uniting all of the Christian churches, although the bishops who trace their descent directly back to the apostles through the laying on of hands, and are an essential part of Episcopalian belief, still remain an anathema to all Presbyterians and this bone of contention is unlikely to be resolved for the time being.

CHAPTER XI — THE VICTORIAN ERA

As we approach the Victorian era, two important changes occur. The first of these was in 1830, when Thomas Telford began a government sponsored road building programme. In 17 years, he built 920 miles of road and 1,200 bridges. In 1830, the road was built from Pitlochry, through Strathardle and on to Blairgowrie on its present route. A bridge was built at Bridge of Cally, and the bridge in the village rebuilt. Four-in-hand coaches were now being run daily from Dunkeld to Braemar.

The second, in 1831 was the repeal of the Disarmament Act of 1747. The Highlands were once again 'respectable', and the wearing of kilts and the playing of the pipes were once again permitted. After all, after 84 years, none of those wicked, rebellious old highlanders could still be around any more.

Pipe music and its playing techniques had survived largely through the 'Mouth Music' or 'Diddling' which had necessarily had to replace the real thing after 1747. We also, by now had Scottish fiddle music, which was somewhat different. Whereas fiddle music is based on the diatonic scale, pipe music still is based on its own mode. Only an expert fiddler can play pipe music properly, and fiddle music, even where possible, sounds somewhat ponderous on the pipes.

Highland Games were soon re-introduced, and the official stamp of approval was put on the proceedings sixteen years later when Queen Victoria herself attended the Highland Gathering at Braemar.

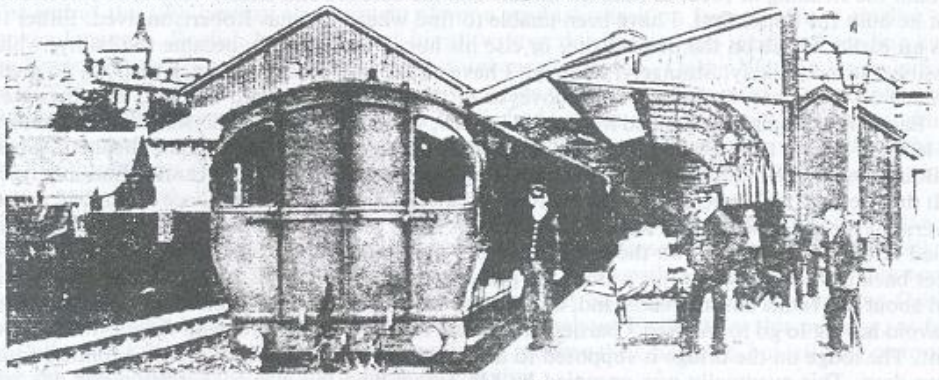
Queen Victoria loved Scotland and spent many holidays here before buying Balmoral from Invercauld in 1852. In the early days she would travel by ship to Aberdeen, then after the railway was completed, she would travel by train to Perth, and thence by stage coach through Glenshee and over the Cairnwell. She would stop and change horses at the various hospices, one of which was in Kirkmichael, now called the "Stables" and was part of the hotel. The next was in Glenshee at the 'hos-spital' of Glenshee whence the spittal gets its name. No doubt they (or at least possibly John Brown) would also take some appropriate refreshment before tackling what must have been a very formidable journey to Braemar in a horse drawn coach.

Queen Victoria was an intrepid traveller and she made many expeditions. She visited Blairgowrie in 1842 and 1857, and in 1844 she journeyed to Dunkeld and Pitlochry via Strathardle. Travelling by coach ('with Brown on the box') to Glenshee, she rode on horseback over the old drove road to Enochdhu, was met by the Keirs and escorted to Kindrogan. She continued her journey through Glen Derby to stay in Dunkeld. Then again, in 1866 she repeated the journey, this time visiting Pitlochry and staying at Blair Castle. This conferred the royal seal of approval on Pitlochry, which was now fast growing up as a spa and health centre, with hydropathic hotels to accommodate those who wished to 'take the waters'. At the turn of the century Pitlochry had a population of only 30 families, whereas Moulin still had 37. Over the next few years, the population was to increase dramatically.

Where the Queen went, so did 'society', and they were followed closely by other 'would be' members of it. So increasing numbers of wealthy people visited the highlands for holidays, for shooting, fishing and for health cures. There would not have been very much comings and goings to the Glen at this time, as the journey from Pitlochry in horse drawn vehicles, was still extremely formidable, but Cnoc Sualtach (on the left of the Glenshee road) was opened up as a sanatorium at about that time. The mountain air was then the only cure for tuberculosis.

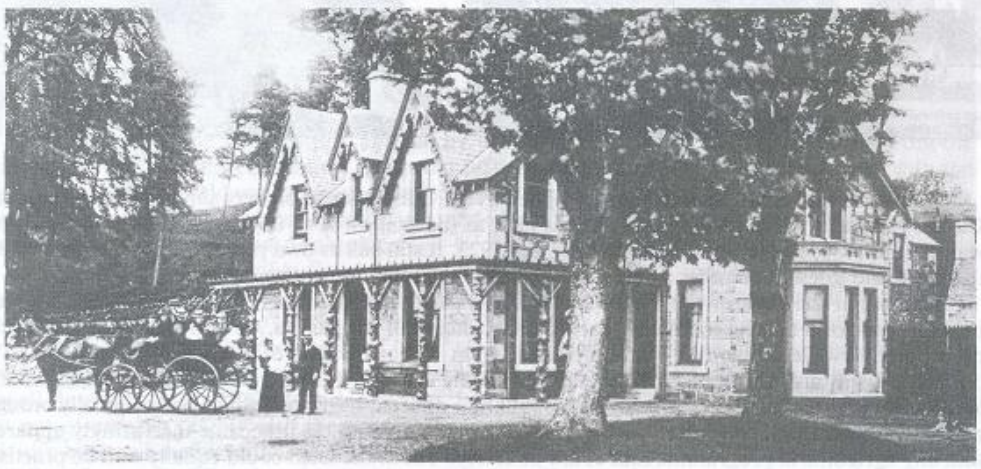
By now another major revolution was in progress. It is amazing just how quickly the railways grew up, and in little over 25 years, a network was established all over the country. In 1842 Glasgow was linked to Edinburgh and by 1848 there was a direct line from London to Perth. By 1850 this had reached Aberdeen, and only five years later the branch line opened from Coupar Angus to Blairgowrie. By 1863, a direct line had been taken to Pitlochry, and only two years later on to Inverness, via Forres, not on its present route, which was built quite a bit later. It must have seemed incredible to the early rail travellers. The journey to London that had taken seventeen days a hundred years earlier, or seventy-two hours fifty years earlier, could now be done in just twelve. Within a year or

two there were even to be sleeping cars and restaurants where you could have dinner while still travelling! The railway revolution, again, made enormous changes in only a very few years. Private lines were built all over the place, some of which were hardly ever used, and with some remaining in use for only a few years. Before the end of the century, a line was planned up the glen where it was to terminate at the old manse. A line was also surveyed from Braemar to Blairgowrie, where limestone from the Cairnwell was expected to provide a substantial revenue. In the event, neither of these lines was even started, as, by the end of the century, the roads were once again to start a takeover. Anyhow, Queen Victoria disapproved of the idea of a railway line past Balmoral, to complete the Deeside line from Aberdeen to Braemar and so on to Kirkmichael through Glen Lochsie. †



Blairgowrie Railway Station

The town of Blairgowrie was also growing up rapidly round the flax and jute mills. It also attracted some more wealthy residents when the newly opened railway offered daily commuters to Dundee a free 1st class season ticket, for life, if they built a house in Blairgowrie worth more than £400; which was getting near to double the average cost of a house at that time. The Glen was also attracting increasing numbers of visitors from Dundee on day excursions, weekends, and for a week's holiday. They would travel by train to Blairgowrie, and thence by horse drawn coach, and stay in one of the newly built hotels or guest houses. As the century progressed, increasing numbers of people came from the south for grouse shooting, and in a sense this was the earliest form of 'self catering'. A party would book a grouse moor and a shooting lodge, arrive with a complete domestic staff and take up residence for four or six weeks, fill the place with friends and enjoy the best of sport and comfort. So it was in the 1880's that many of the bigger houses were extended to cater for this trade, and houses such as Balnakilly, Kindrogan and Inverchroskie had large extensions built onto the front, while the original houses at the back were used to accommodate the staff.

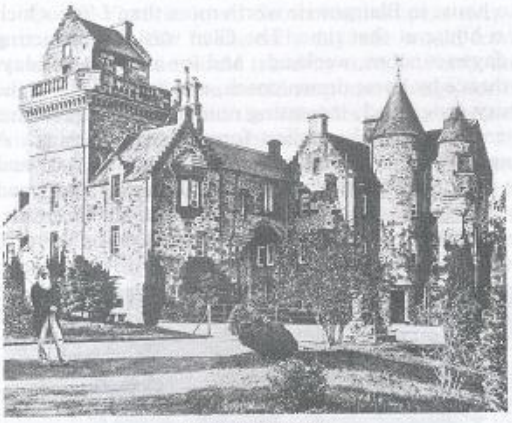


Aldchlappie Hotel at the turn of the century

† see appendix 4

While we know that the front extension was built on to Balnakilly in 1870, and a further extension built by my father in 1930, it has proved very difficult to establish the date of the original house. In all probability a date would have been carved on it, but this would have been covered up by later extensions. It is unlikely to have been built before 1791, as the statistical account mentions only two mansion houses in that year, Woodhill and Ashintully. But the present house is shown on the first ordnance survey map of 1867, so clearly it was between these two dates. It is possible that it was built by Thomas Robertson in the 1790's but in view of the financial problems they were encountering, it would seem more likely to have been built by Donald McDonald in about 1810. We know that he built the steading in 1816, as both his initials and the date are still clearly visible, so it seems likely that he built the house first. I have been unable to find where Thomas Robertson lived. Either there was an earlier house on the present site, or else his house subsequently became the bothy, which is possibly the more likely. Strangely, although I have all the title deeds right back to 1715, no mention is made of the house. Only land was conveyed at that time 'along with Houses, Byggings etc.' *

Balnakilly, acquired by Donald McDonald in 1809, was left in his will to his son William McDonald. He left it in his will to 'William McDonald Shepherd', the eldest son of John Grant Shepherd, a banker in Bournemouth. No doubt there is an interesting story behind that, but I cannot find any trace of it. It then became the property of Frank Balfour and after a short time became once again Reid property. Several of the other big houses were built about this time. Black Craig was built in 1830, by a painter called Patrick Alan Fraser, on the site of an older building on the 'Rock of the Black Nun' which dates back to the time when this was all the property of Coupar Angus Abbey. Many eerie tales are told about this rather sinister place, and, as children, we were terrified of it and went to extreme lengths to avoid having to go to children's parties which were regularly held there, with the inevitable treasure hunt. The lodge on the bridge is supposed to have cost £10,000 to build — an astronomical sum for those days. This eventually was occupied by Mr. Hogg, who fell into conversation one day with a stranger at the sundial. He finally recognised this person, from a description, as Patrick Fraser and got an awful shock when he saw his dog walk right through him!



Blackcraig Castle

Blackcraig Bridge Lodge

Dalnaglar Castle was built in 1864, designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, on very similar lines to Balmoral Castle. It means 'Place of the Ford', and is next to the shallow ford in the river. Dalmunzie House was built in 1880, and later extended in 1907 and 1922. It still has its own private railway, built between the wars and goes three miles up Glen Lochsie to transport the shooting parties.

And so, at the peak of the Victorian era, the visitors and shooting parties from the south were beginning to form an ever increasing part of the economy of the glen as, by now, farming had started on a long, slow decline which was to continue right up to the start of the second world war. The population was also dropping, and by the end of the century was only 920, just a third of what it had been a 100 years earlier. The irony of the situation was that transport, which had originally brought about the agricultural revolution was now to prove its downfall, as it became increasingly apparent that any agricultural programme that could be carried out in the Glen could equally well be practised further south and lower down with substantially lower costs, considerably bigger crops and consequentially higher returns. Cheap food from abroad was now available and with the railways

* see appendix 3

for distribution the Glen began to suffer very badly. Furthermore, the cottage industries were now suffering competition from powered mills and factories which aggravated this depopulation still further.

The shooting parties also provided good business for the railways. The two main railway companies — LMS & LNER — were in strict competition with each other and were always on the lookout for the publicity and prestige which resulted from conveying parties in great comfort. The station master would call personally on any gentleman in the south who might be planning to take a shooting party to Scotland. He would then make all arrangements, organise sleepers, dinners, transport across London, and transport at this end. He would, of course, personally conduct them to their apartments in full dress and top hat.

The end of the 19th century also brought about a gradual transition from Gaelic to English as the spoken language. English had been used for all written documents, and nearly all reading and writing for some time, but Gaelic was still almost universally spoken. Queen Victoria wrote in her diaries of 1867 that she was surprised to find on her visits to the Glen that most local people 'had no English at all, whereas a few were bilingual'. Gaelic had been in use for at least 1000 years, since it replaced the now lost language of the Picts. The oldest language which still exists is Welsh, which was spoken throughout the West, as far north as the Isle of Skye, while Pictish was spoken further north and east, in fact, in about two thirds of Scotland.

There had been an early form of writing called OGAM, which had probably originated in Ireland. This consisted of a line marked with groups of strokes that either crossed it or were incised on either side. Such writing could have been notched along a strip of wood with a knife, but surviving texts have mostly been found as inscriptions on stone. Inscriptions have been found in some pre-Celtic language that couldn't be deciphered and was adopted throughout Pictland for this purpose, as far south as Fife. The Picts did not use this form of writing to preserve their language, but left only pictorial carvings on stone, most of which are unclear in meaning.

Whereas Gaelic was used in written form further West, very little Gaelic writing is found in these parts, other than place names on maps. We owe a lot to these, as they give us a description of places and events, and much can be learned from them, such as Dalnacarn — the 'Field of the Cairns', Coupar Angus — 'Common Ground', Rattray — 'Fort of the Hunter', and Meikleour — 'Drab, Boggy place'! Then there is Dalnagairn, 'The Place of the Cairn' of the fairy lady. She was reputed to have been a very bad person and the cause of very much mischief. One year very many cattle died in the glen and this was attributed to her evil influence. Accordingly, she was hunted out and killed and a large cairn (called Carn-na-baiodh) built over her tomb. Many years later, this was dismantled by the then laird, who required stones for drainage of the land. No trace was ever found of the wicked lady, nor is there any record of retribution against the laird for the desecration of the tomb.

By 1891, only about 40% of people spoke Gaelic, and in 1895 the last communion service was held in this language. From then on it decreased in use, although it was kept alive well into the 20th century, mainly by people coming from further west, where it was still regularly spoken. I well remember, as a student in Aberfeldy in the 1950's, Gaelic being spoken to quite a considerable extent. On the west coast, it still survives as the first language in a few places.