CHAPTER XII — THE 20th CENTURY

With the start of the 20th century, agriculture was in decline, with serious competition from the lowlands and abroad. The population dropped a further 100 in the first 10 years, and then, with the outbreak of the first world war, many people joined 'Kitchener's Army', from which, tragically many never returned. The War Memorial stands as a reminder of the many men of the Glen who gave their lives in the terrible battles that took place.

In 1917, there was a terrible flood and the river rose right up to the top of the bridge, and a very valuable horse and cart were washed away off the road just below Dalnagairn. It also washed away the Croy or dam which fed the water to the Black Mill, thus putting that out of action for a bit. There was a further flood three years later, when the croy was washed away yet again. By that time, a new act of parliament had been passed which prevented the sale of brown or wholemeal flour. Now all flour had to be refined to a degree that the old mills found impossible. So in 1920, it finally went out of use. No doubt, with the change of emphasis back to health foods, it could have come back into use again had it still been kept in working condition. 'Meg's Mill' run by Maggie Gordon, at the Dounie, survived in spite of everything, and was still in regular use until the end of the second world war. She was a well known and formidable character.

By the 1930's agriculture had reached an all time low. Lambs were selling at only 20p, there was little or no cropping, and the few rather primitive implements were flung out and left to rust. Farmers were getting ever deeper into debt and the Glen into increasing disrepair. This was the time of economic slump everywhere, and nowhere was it more apparent than in the Glen.

For us, as children, it was all quite different. We knew nothing of depressions or slumps, and the Glen to me was all excitement and adventure. I have many very happy recollections of these pre-war years. I so well remember Lily and Flora McMillan who kept the general store, and seemed to stock everything. A 'bawbee' (or halfpenny) would buy a sherbert 'Lemon Fizz', a 'wee poke' of jelly babies or 'boilings' or a gob stopper that changed colour while you sucked it.

The McMillans were a well established and respected family, with a strong musical tradition. Lily was an expert piper, and also taught us all dancing. She must have been one of the very few lady pipers of that time, but she always took a lot of the prizes at the Games. Hugh was a Pipe Major in the Scots Guards, and Flora had a lovely singing voice and took a leading part in the church choir. She, sadly, died only this year, and was buried in the family plot in the churchyard. The youngest son Iain was a shepherd and was the last person to live in the Mains of Glenderby. A shepherd then, was paid only twice a year, but also received a bag of oatmeal and his fuel, as part of his wage and was allowed to keep a cow. He had one day off a year, New Year's day. Iain left for Rhodesia soon after the war where he became a very successful tobacco farmer. His one aim and ambition was to make enough money to return here and buy a farm, but when the time came, he was unable to get his money out of the country. He was a superb Scottish fiddler, and on his frequent stays in this country, he and I would have long musical sessions far into the night. He taught me a lot of Scottish fiddle and pipe music and will be remembered by all his many musical friends.

The Post Office was kept by Mrs. Smith, who also looked after the telephone exhange which had just been installed. This consisted of a single 'party' line up the Glen, which was anything but private. The telephone would ring in all the nine houses that were connected, and one had to count the rings to see who the call was intended for. Seven rings meant Balnakilly, two was for Dirnanean etc. It was never easy to be certain how many rings there had been, and frequently one answered other people's calls. In order to ring out, it was necessary to get Mrs. Smith's attention and co-operation, which was readily enough available through the day, but rather more difficult in the evenings or on Sundays and should you be foolish enough to try to phone between eleven and twelve in the morning all you would get would be a rather harassed voice saying, "I canna attend to you now, the mail's in"! There were compensations, though. You could always contact anyone you wished to speak to, as Mrs. Smith always knew where they were and would put you through. That was before the days of television!

The Mail consisted of a magnificent red Model 'T' Ford bus driven with great expertise by Willie Slidders. It resembled a huge inflated balloon on a rather narrow and rickety undercarriage. This came up the Glen every morning even under the worst conditions, arriving punctually at 11 o'clock, bringing the mail, the papers, parcels, luggage, supplies for the shop and hotels, tins of petrol at 3/- (15p) for 2 gallons and up to eight passengers. Then, while Mr. Smith delivered the letters on his

bicycle, Willie would take his bus round delivering the heavier parcels and supplies to houses, taking messages, doing shopping and errands for people and generally helping in a variety of ways. He would then go back down at precisely 3 o'clock with his load of cargo and passengers. Willie's arrival was the big event of the day and, as there were very few cars in those days, he was for most people, the only link with the outside world.

The Blacksmith shop, on the corner where the garage is now, was owned by Peter Crichton, who worked there with two full-time assistants and, in addition to shoeing horses and mending implements, did cycle repairs, sharpened knives, mended punctures and, if he had not got something you needed, would somehow make it. It was also a nice warm place if you just wanted 'a wee blether' and did not mind the smell of horses and burning hooves.

There were '3 pair of horse' at Balnakilly then for pulling implements, an old 'orra horse' for carting and odd jobs, and a hill pony called Paul. Four families were employed and lived on the place and three single men lived in the bothy in the steading. Up until 1934, when electricity was installed in the steading, the twice weekly corn thrash, bruising, grinding and sawmilling were all operated by a huge water wheel fed from the mill dam where the saw mill is now. I well remember the corn being thrashed, and there was always great concern as to whether the stack could be finished before the mill dam ran dry, and the operation had to the postponed until it had filled up again.

Electricity came to Balnakilly in 1931. A representative of the Grampian Electric Co. called on my father and asked if he would take a supply. They had just started generating the previous year using hydro power from Rannoch. Tummel Bridge power station came into operation in 1933. This power was all alternating current, as opposed to DC used in urban areas, and this enabled it to be carried over long distances at high voltage more cheaply and without any voltage drop. It is the system which is now used universally.

They proposed to bring a high tension line over the hill from Pitlochry, and they offered to bring this to the house and wire it for no capital cost whatever and were asking an annual guarantee payment of £40. My father thought this was somewhat excessive! He was finally persuaded, and we took full advantage of lights and heaters all over the house. There were few, if any other electrical appliances available at that time. Gramophones were still not electric, and a 'portable' wireless was like a rather large suitcase, powered by heavy accumulators.

The big highlight in the year was the Strathardle Gathering, held towards the end of August; on the field next to the Aldchlappie Hotel, which did a roaring trade as a result. I so well remember the excitement of watching Godfrey Evan's Fun Fair chugging up the glen at a steady 7 mph towed by magnificent steam Fodens, which would then puff and snort for the next few days, driving the generators, the steam organ and the many roundabouts and other exciting equipment. His son, Harry, still provides the fair, and although old Godfrey died a year or two back, well into his nineties, old Mrs. Evans still takes part in some of the stalls. The games, themselves, were very much as they are now, the only real difference being the addition of the agricultural show which started in the 50's.

With the outbreak of war a major revival was to take place in agriculture. The German blockade was cutting off imports, and as the pressure increased for food at any price, the glen once more came into its own. I well remember the cry going up from the left of the House of Commons, whose members are not renowned for much knowledge of agricultural affairs, to 'Plough up the Moors of Scotland'. While I am sure that this worthy member was quite sincere, he can have had very little idea of what was involved as was proved by his second demand to 'Introduce a subsidy for the breeding of grouse'. Grouse shooting has always been an exclusive and prestigious sport because the red grouse has persistently refused all attempts at rearing or breeding, and thrives only naturally in its own chosen habitat.

I was educated at Harrow, but with the Battle of Britain in progress, the bombings of London and the probability of a German invasion, my parents decided against sending me back there in the winter of 1940, so I missed that term, and spent that winter at Balnakilly getting tuition from a retired school master's son who was then living at Laggan Fasgach. Christmas was then a normal working day, and so no service was held in the Presbyterian Kirk unless it happened to fall on the Sabbath. Also, because several other families who would otherwise have been south at that time were also spending the winter in the Glen, my father arranged for the Episcopal Church at Ballintuim to be opened for the occasion, and, with paraffin heaters borrowed from all over the Glen, and the piano taken down from Balnakilly, a service was held to a packed church. This must surely have been the first Christmas Service ever held in the Glen.

CHAPTER XIII — THE POST WAR YEARS

The war years took all my family to different areas of duty and service, and with all of us away, Balnakilly was let, and I did not return until my first leave after the war. By that time, I had taken on a regular army commission, and it had been my intention to make a career in the army — that was until in 1947. I was posted to Chelsea Barracks where the battalion was doing its tour of guard and ceremonial duties. That was when I decided that the peace time army and I had really very little in common and that was when I decided that somehow I would return to the Glen at the very earliest opportunity. I applied for a place at Cambridge, where I had decided to study Agriculture and Estate Management. Happily, as it turned out, my School Certificate passes, taken several years previously were good enough to qualify me for entrance, and therefore, I decided on demobilisation when my 'group' came up in February 1948.

I was not due to start at Cambridge until the beginning of the academic year in October, and so I contacted our friend and neighbour, the laird of Dirnanean and Kindrogan, who kindly agreed to take me on as a student. So it was, that within two or three days of leaving the army, I arrived at twenty to six on a cold morning at the beginning of March, in the pitch dark, at Pitlochry Station, to be met by Arthur Walker and driven to Dirnanean. I was greeted warmly by F. K. Balfour, while at the same time being told that there was just time to change into working clothes before breakfast, if I was quick! Half an hour or so later, we were driving furiously round the Glen in a jeep, or a van, or a truck, changing frequently from one to the other, and visiting all the separate farms and all the many activities. It did not take me long to realise that I was to be a student of a very great deal more than just farming. The transformation that had taken place during the war years was almost unbelievable; the glen was now a hive of activity.

Francis Balfour was a laird of the old mould, a 20th century Baron Ruadh, with all the most up to date ideas on technology and progress, a strong personality and an amazing capacity for work, which he clearly loved. He had inherited a sizeable estate on his father's death in 1926, at the age of 21, and while still at Cambridge. Returning home before completing his course, he took over a somewhat run down property and considerable debts, no doubt aggravated by death duties. Pitcarmick was the first under the hammer. He survived mainly by the letting of shooting and shooting lodges, and Kindrogan was reputedly let for £1000 per year to Sir George Dolby at a time when the cost of an average house was only £250! Then in 1932 he married Katherine, Sir George's daughter, sold Dalreoch to him, which he then gave to his daughter as a wedding present, and continued letting it.*

At the outbreak of war he applied regularly to join the Air Force, where his ambition was to be an air gunner. He was always told that his present job was far more important and so was always refused. Instead, amongst all his other activities, he ran the Home Guard for the area.

Known respectfully by most of his employees as 'The Laird' and affectionately by everyone else as 'F. K.' he had taken full advantage of all the assistance available during the war years to build up what I believe to have been probably the finest and most productive hill farming unit ever. By now, he was farming Kindrogan, Dirnanean, The Davan, Dalreoch and Whitefield, and in addition was the tenant of Balnakilly and Balvarran, and employing over 30 men including foresters, lorry drivers and keepers.

He not only went 'flat out' at the job, but worked just as hard in building up the finest social community I have ever seen. With over 100 people directly involved with the estates and many others dependent on them, he had organised an amazing programme of social activities, with some event or other taking place six nights a week. This was organised by the 'Social Club' run with great energy and success by Mrs. Violet Walker. The programme included not only dances, concerts and ceilidhs, but whist drives, beetle drives, panel games, 'brainstrusts' and dramatic societies to mention just a few. Within days, I had got fully embroiled with these and found myself taking an active part in a lot of things I had never done before as well as some musical activities with which I was rather more familiar. The exception was Friday night when we would go round some of the dances held every week in the surrounding villages, well equipped with certain refreshments in the back of the car. This was made necessary by the fact that most of the village halls had been built by the Carnegie Trust, one of the conditions being that no drink could ever be served.

F. K. had two main hobbies other than his work, the first was Scottish music, which he loved, and Scottish dancing at which he was a great expert, dancing in the true highland tradition, rather than the pedantic and rather anaemic version being put out by the Scottish Country Dance Society, based in Edinburgh, whose dances frequently resembled a cross between a women's rural tea party and a keep fit class. I was shortly to find that this terrible influence had even spread to Cambridge, but thanks to F. K.s tuition was able to carry out certain remedial reforms.

* see appendix 3

His second love in life was vehicles of any kind, as long as they were fast and powerful. By the end of the war, he had acquired over 30 assorted machines, many ex-army, and his collection today could have rivalled anything seen at any of the D-Day celebrations. These he would drive at great speed and to their maximum limits with ever increasing challenges such as getting a lorry to the top of Ben Earb — the highest peak between Dirnanean and Glenshee. He was always a fast, but extremely skilful driver of anything.

One Saturday morning I was despatched to Blairgowrie with a lorry to pick up a new machine called a 'Weasel'. This was one of the few army vehicles of which I had had no previous experience as it had never been actually used. It resembled a Bren carrier, with very wide tracks and had been developed for snow warfare in Norway. Knowing his impatience, I drove this right to the front door of Kindrogan, where they lived during the summer months, and in spite of it being lunch time, F. K. had produced skids from somewhere and was driving it off the lorry before I had even stopped. Shouting at me to get in, we set off at great speed across the front lawn of Kindrogan, until it became increasingly obvious that we were making for the river. Then with a huge grin and a chuckle, he shouted to me 'I bet you did not realise it's amphibious'! There was no time to reply. even if I had had one, for by this time we were in the river and headed upstream. Within minutes, I was being sprayed by ever increasing amounts of water which I noticed was getting rapidly deeper in the bottom, of the vehicle while the 'freeboard' was rapidly diminishing. I signalled to F. K. urgently, and he headed for the bank, and we got out just before we sank. Only then did we notice that nobody had thought to put the bungs in, and while F. K. considered this was a huge joke he had become extremely perturbed at a fisherman on the opposite bank, not for anything he was doing wrong, but because instead of staring in amazement at this latest form of technology, he had just continued to fish! F. K. could never understand this, and continued to remark on it for many days to come.

Shortly after that, the ultimate machine arrived in the shape of an ex-U.S. army Mack. It was a huge thing, with many hundreds of horsepower and had obviously been designed by the Americans to pull something many times bigger and heavier than anything that existed at the time. It required a ladder to get to the engine, and its 200 gallon petrol tanks gave it a range of only 300 miles. I watched F. K.s expression of surprise and disappointment as I told him that I knew this machine quite well, having spent several hours one morning a few weeks earlier trying to get one like it into Paddington Station. I was, therefore, allowed to operate this in its first job of pulling out big old tree roots where a new sawmill was to be built. Its real vocation was revealed a few weeks later when it returned from Biggar one day with a huge 2 ton, 9 foot V type snowplough on the front. I think this machine gave F. K. more pleasure than anything else. He voluntarily undertook the clearing of the roads from Pitlochry to Glenshee, and for the next few years these were kept clear under all conditions, and it would be very easy to write another whole chapter on some of the exploits that happened while doing this. In 1951, F. K. gave up the tenancy of Balnakilly to allow me to take the place over myself.

It is difficult to imagine anyone of that energy and calibre ever running out of steam, and he was never one to compromise, but in due course, he sold Kindrogan to the Forestry Commission. The house became an hotel for a bit until it was sold again and became the Field Centre. This has proved to be a great asset to the Glen, for as well as being the only employer of any consequence at the upper end, it has brought in people who have carried out a lot of research, and so revealed a lot of otherwise unknown history. Having no children of his own, the rest of the estate was nearly all sold off. Sadly, most of the houses were bought up as holiday homes, occupied only for a week or two each year, so that the great Enochdhu community is now a ghost village, populated only on rare occasions.

In 1955, I got married. This proved to be rather a short termed venture, and four years later, I was back on my own in a very large house and with a very small son whose mother had returned to London. We grew up with a very close relationship, and I have many memories of being the only 'Dad' at several childrens parties.

One evening, in the winter of 1962, I had a phone call from an old girl friend, who was staying in Glenshee with her young daughter and some friends, ski-ing. Helen and I had been engaged some 15 years earlier while I was at Cambridge, and we spent a lot of time together during the rest of her stay, ski-ing in Glenshee. Clearly the fairies had made certain plans, as the following winter, Helen returned and stayed in Loch Cottage, the very first winter tenant. The fairies had now completed their task, and when she left for the south, I drove with her as far as Edinburgh, where I was bidden to meet her father, a formidable gentleman with a wonderful first world war record, in which he collected distinguished decorations, but lost a leg. Midnight did not seem to be the best time to call on my prospective father-in-law, but, nothing daunted, we went into his bedroom, where I was

immediately offered a drink. He then asked me what I wanted, and when I said I was going to marry his daughter, I got the immediate reply "You can't, she's married already". This was perfectly true, as after the death of her first husband, who had been a test pilot and had been killed at Farnborough, she had married again but the marriage had broken down. He then asked my name, and when I told him, he said "Reid, you are a bloody fool, she is impossible to live with, and anyway I'm not paying for a third wedding". And so it was: our wedding in Edinburgh was planned to be a quiet one, at least that was the way it started!

Helen set herself the task of doing up the cottages, and a year later, she was letting Loch and Mill Cottages for self-catering holidays, to be followed shortly by Tullochcurran. Quite a few people who stayed in the cottages enquired whether they could buy one of them, and it became apparent that there was an increasing demand for people wishing to own a second or 'country' home. As, by this time, the farm was becoming rapidly less profitable, we set out to cater for this market. Having looked all over the place, we settled on Glen Derby — the 'Sheltered Glen'. I was in the process of forming a company to import and construct Norwegian Log buildings in this country, and this seemed to be the ideal form of construction. So in 1966 the Glen Derby Development was formed to provide rather luxurious country homes, each with several acres of its own ground, which we offered for sale as 'Mini Estates'.

Planning permission was simple and automatic, taking only a matter of days to get. When, at a later date, in conversation with the planning officer, I asked how it had been so simple, I was told that 'We knew that even you were not mad enough to build houses on the top of a mountain, so we just gave you the go-ahead'! Even the advice from a leading Estate Agent was not very encouraging, which was that the scheme was unlikely to succeed, but might have a chance if they could be sold for less than £5000 each. We had already planned a minimum price of £8000, with a number of optional extras. Local opinions were mixed, but one opinion, which had gone the rounds was that I was ruining the village by "Putting up horrid wooden huts all over it". Others spoke of the 'desecration of Glen Derby', but these remarks came from people who did not even know of its existence before the development had been planned.

One thing was missing. We had met up and made friends with an Austrian called 'Seppy' who was teaching ski-ing in Glenshee. When we discussed the idea with him, he told us we needed a Bierkeller, such as they had in Kitzbuhel. The idea of a 'Club Centre' gradually took root. Glenshee was growing fast as a ski centre, and the area was attracting increasing numbers of tourists, but although there was plentiful accommodation of a kind, there was nowhere for people to go for a drink, a dance, any kind of entertainment, or even dinner. The hotels, then only served high teas, and the bars were strictly 'Men only'. We planned a place where people could take their wives or girl friends, dance, enjoy themselves, get dinners, grills, or snacks, and enjoy an Austrian atmosphere in a Norwegian building in the highlands of Scotland — an international establishment with all the best ideas of three small mountain countries. So the 'Edelweiss' Hotel was born, to cater for the Glen Derby residents, the village and the surrounding areas. Above all it was to be a meeting place for local people and visitors, with no 'Public' or 'Lounge Bars', or green baize door, but Viking and Tyrolean bars where all could go.

The licensing laws at the time decreed that all bars shut at 10 p.m. However a supper licence was available which allowed a drink to be taken with a meal until 11.30 provided that 'the drink was ancillary to a meal'. Noboby knew exactly what that meant, but by combining the bar with the dining area in one big room, and by providing 'suppers' we could keep the bar open until 11.30.

The village clubs, such as the bowlers, badminton and dramatic were having a very hard time trying to raise sufficient funds for their activities. The village hall was also struggling as by this time people would not attend a dance unless there was a bar, and the village hall, like most round about, had been built by the Carnegie Trust which specifically ruled out the sale of alcohol on the premises. Therefore they were dying for lack of funds.

The licensing laws allowed a late licence until 2 a.m. for any club functions, provided that the club applied for and obtained this licence in advance of each occasion. We therefore formed a roster of local clubs who would take it in turns to run a dance at the Edelweiss Hotel each Friday night, while we provided the band and made all the arrangements. The clubs collected, on average, £50 for each function, while we were able to run a dance every Friday until 2 a.m.

We acquired the reputation of being the first Night Club in Scotland, and people came from far and wide to attend these functions. We were obliged to shut the doors when the numbers had reached 400, which they nearly always did. On a Friday night between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m., we would take an average of £400 over the bar. Whisky was then 1/7d (7½p), so that we served on average nearly

3000 drinks, and were kept really very busy. The whole theme of the place was "Gemütlichkeit", which any German speaker will tell you cannot be effectively translated.

The Edelweiss was opened in December 1967 by John Cairney. We had, by this time, already four house owners, whose houses were under construction. On the previous day, we had held a press conference, and were astounded at the interest shown by newspapers, television, womens magazines and farming publications. In the light of this amazing publicity, we sold another six houses during the following week, and were wondering how we were going to build them, develop the site, run the hotel, as well as Balnakilly farm, and another fruit farm which I owned near Blairgowrie.

We had by now, brought to the glen several families who were to spend a large part of their lives there, provide a considerable increase in local trade, and so indirectly employment, and were to take an active part in the glen functions and social activities, and, in many cases bringing a new and much needed expertise. We had, therefore, temporarily, at least, reversed the process of depopulation. We had also set new standards in catering and entertainment, and I like to think that we made a contribution to the growth of tourism and to the social life of the glen. By now people would take their women folk out with them, some would eat out which they had seldom done before, and we provided twelve extra and much needed jobs. It did not, by any means, meet with universal approval. The Kirk was most upset because we sold drink on the Sabbath.

The Sunday licensing laws were quite extraordinary in those days. Drink could only be sold to residents or to 'Bona Fide travellers'. They were defined as people who had travelled a least three miles, and were to continue their journey afterwards. It dated back to the days when people travelled on foot or on horseback, and needed refreshment in order to survive. In practice, it meant that people had to drive to a different hotel, and drive back via somewhere else, rather than have a drink at their own local! It also stated that a bar, must, by law, be available for any passers-by from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday. Apart from encouraging people to drive, it made it very difficult for both the licensee and the police, as some were legally entitled to drink while others were not.

This law was changed a few years later. But, by now another law, with all the horrors of the breathaliser, was beginning to change habits. It altered the whole way of life on which Glenshee had built up, and quite naturally, people preferred to stay where they were drinking.

It now became obvious that we required good accommodation as well, so in 1972, we planned a bedroom extension. This was completed in 1974, again to the amazement of some of the authorities who told us that we should be providing one bathroom to every five bedrooms. We were mad enough to have planned private bathrooms to nearly all the bedrooms!

Seppy, who had run the place from its opening, clad in traditional Austrian clothes, and with the experience of his native Kitzbuhel, had retired due to ill health, and we had had a succession of managers, some of whom had not been very satisfactory. We had also overstretched ourselves financially, and were therefore looking out for partners who would invest in the company, take over the running of the hotel and also promote the new and rather more conventional image of a residential hotel. So, in 1975, Brian and Elizabeth Sandell joined the company, and for the next eight years we operated together, they running the hotel, with us providing the estate facilities, such as shooting, fishing, swimming pool and tennis court which were available to the guests. In 1983, we sold out our interest to them and turned our attention to other things. I think that others as well as us look back at these early happy days of the Edelweiss, and we still meet people from considerable distances who were regular visitors there, as well as many couples who had met at the dances and subsequently got married.

We were by this time planning a large time share operation round about Loch Tullochcurran. This was to consist of 50 Norwegian Log Houses, with a large sports complex including a swimming pool, tennis courts, pitch and putt golf course, and several other items. Local residents were to be invited to join the sports club, as well as the time share owners. While time share is now quite common place, it was an innovation at that time, with only one other complex in Scotland. This would have provided a number of badly needed local jobs, a considerable increase in trade in the shops within the complex that were to be franchised to existing shopkeepers, as well as providing sporting facilities for the school and any local residents who wished to join. There would have been a considerable 'spin off' in cottage industries, a revival in home made foods and produce and many of our traditional crafts.

The scheme appeared to have enthusiastic approval from many, tacit approval from most, and general acceptance from nearly all. Being a mile outside the village, it would not have affected it, but of course one has to expect at least some opposition. It came, sadly from a neighbouring landowner. The roads department had insisted that I provide access via a new bridge, rather than through the village and past the school. In view of the volume of traffic, we were prepared to do

this. However, opposition to this prevented the scheme going ahead.

We therefore turned our attention to expanding our self catering business by building four new Log Cabins overlooking the Tullochcurran burn, and adding Rowan Lodge to the list after the Sandells had given up their tenancy and built their own house. This time we seem to have met with universal approval, although, in due course, it seems that inevitably someone will eventually find some fault.

By this time, my son had left the police force and had taken over the farm, and my daughter had taken up residence at Strathview. So, Balnakilly is once more populated only by Reids, and the next chapter of history will be outwith our hands.

CHAPTER XIV

After we had finished the Glen Derby Development and were running the Edelweiss Hotel, we prepared a list of walks for the benefit of guests and included in it one or two points of historical interest. One of these was the grave of the unknown soldier who had died on his way home from the battle of Flodden, and who was buried near the top end of Glen Derby. This had been tended by the Rattray family for many generations and I thought it would be of interest to people, as well as ensuring its continued respect. I was promptly challenged by some of the houseowners who insisted on seeing chapter and verse in writing of this episode, accusing me in effect of inventing the story. As we have seen, there were no written records at the time, and in any case, such an event was all too common then. Much of our history has been passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth but is none the less authentic because of it.

I therefore place on record two strange events which have taken place during my lifetime, and for whose authenticity I can personally vouch.

The first concerns Woodhill, in Ballintuim. When my Grandparents were there at the beginning of the century, it was quite a large old mansion house, dating back to at least the 18th century, and at one end of it was a chapel. My mother would tell us, that on one of her visits there, as a young bride, she met a little old lady hurrying along the passage, dressed in an old fashioned long dress. She met her again on another occasion, and on asking who she was, was told that it was Mrs. Trotter who had been killed many years earlier, while trying to get to the chapel. My Grandmother had also met her. I do not remember the details of the story, but as children we were somewhat sceptical, and found it all rather amusing, occasionally making jokes about it when we were passing, but never really taking it seriously.

Woodhill before it was demolished in 1962

Then, in 1962, when Helen and I were engaged and about to get married, we learnt that the house was to be demolished, and that a sale was to be held of the contents. Helen went to the sale, as she is very knowledgeable about antiques, and I did not expect her back before evening. Instead, she returned after only an hour or so, quite unlike herself, visibly shaken and white in the face. The story gradually unfolded that while she was looking into a room at the far end of the house, everything had suddenly turned icy cold, and she had found herself face to face with a little old lady in a long flowing old fashioned dress. When Helen eventually told me about this incident, I immediately remembered the story which my mother had told us many years before, and which I had completely forgotten about. I had not, of course, even thought of mentioning it to Helen. While pondering this very strange episode, an even more extraordinary thought struck me. Helen's married name at that time was Mrs. Trotter!

Two or three winters later, in 1965, Loch Cottage was booked for a week's ski-ing by Bob Reeves and three fellow students from Loughborough College. They arrived, to our surprise, in a small, black 1932 Austin Seven, from which they had removed the front seat in order to accommodate the four of them and all their luggage and equipment. There was a lot of snow at the time and we thought that this rather unlikely vehicle would have little chance of getting to the cottage. However, this presented no problem as whenever they got stuck, they would just get out and carry it! Using this same technique, they drove daily to the chairlift and, because of the very heavy falls of snow, were sometimes the only car to get there. At the end of their holiday this brave little car got them all safely back to Loughborough, but on arrival, collapsed and died, never to go again. A year or two later, we watched a television programme about a 1932 black Austin Seven which had been seen on several occasions by many different local people going up Glenshee in the winter, sometimes in impossible conditions. It never actually arrived, carried nobody in it, and always seemed to disappear on the way. You must draw your own conclusions, but the facts are beyond dispute. Glenshee does mean quite literally, "The Glen of the Fairies", and it is said about this whole area that those whom the fairies like and who have found and given happiness will always return, but those whom the fairies do not like for any reason, leave, never to return. Through the years we have found this amazingly true, and every year we see very many familiar and friendly people who are drawn irresistibly back to the Glen, including, of course, Bob Reeves who returns regularly with a crowd of his own students. Every autumn, we look through the visitors' books in the cottages, and see all the way through "We shall return", which they always do. Perhaps one of the shortest and most poignant remarks was written by an eminent couple from London, who spent three weeks here this winter. It said, quite simply, "We have taken this place to our hearts."

So what of the Glen, as we approach the 21st century? Many of to-day's Glenners are retired from farm and estate work, when this provided the majority of the employment. It seems unlikely that, with over production of food throughout Europe, more than a very small number of these jobs will be available in the future, and the probability is that farms will be mainly run by the self-employed, or the family, or possible leased to lowland farmers for grazing. Therefore employment must be found from other types of industry.

By far the biggest employer in the Glen is D. S. Menzies, a firm of joiners and builders, whose activities extend all over Scotland, and which has an excellent reputation. Old Daniel Menzies took this business over from James Small in 1906, and it is now run by the third generation, with two members of the fourth generation actively participating. This provides much needed employment for married men as well as single men and school leavers.

The other industry, which is on the increase, is tourism, but apart from the hotels and ourselves, it tends to be part time, or an ancillary business, and even the hotel labour forces tend to be mainly part time. Although few full time jobs are created, other than those of the proprietors themselves, it does create trade for shops, garage, and post office, which helps to secure their survival. Tourism could not exist as an industry without a resident population to run it, as well as provide the ancillary services, and this is the all important requirement.

One gets increasingly concerned at the number of houses coming on to the market, which are now bought as holiday homes. While nobody would in any way complain about the families of professional people from the towns enjoying a few weeks in the Glen, one could be forgiven for resenting their absence, as by the very nature of this type of house ownership, it does ensure that such properties are empty for 40 or more weeks each year, and therefore their owners unable to take any active part in the community, provide much in the way of trade, populate the school or add to the church's congregation. The once happy and thriving Enochdhu community has totally disappeared and it is now really a ghost village. Should this trend be allowed to continue to any great extent, then

the holiday house owners would suffer as well as the residents, by finding no shop, garage, post office, school, van deliveries, or indeed any of the services which are so essential, and which we tend to take for granted. It is my belief that this wholly justifiable demand would be better served by new developments, such as Glen Derby, which provides houses suitable for the purpose, in areas of scenic beauty, and leaves the older traditional houses available for the residential married couples, who are finding that they cannot get a house because they have no job, and they cannot get a job because they cannot get a house — a catch 22 situation.

The problem is by no means unique. It occurred in the Channel Isles, where their own local government was able to introduce a "2-tier" system of property ownership, which strictly controls incoming purchasers. It happened in Wales, where action of a much more violent nature was taken. Hopefully, some answers can be found, such as, possibly, adjustments to the rating system which would fall more heavily on part time residents, and relieve the hard pressed residents of the extortionate sums which are now demanded for services which are not provided, and unless drastic action is taken immediately, can only bring about clearances of the highlands, which will make he 1790's look like a rehearsal.

It is disturbing, also, to see highland estates becoming the property of desk bound city gentlemen, many with a LTD. or PLC. after their names and whose sole intentions are to regard them as part of a portfolio of investments which can be manipulated through the stock exchange from an office in London. This is by no means a new problem; the absentee landowner was regarded as a problem as far back as Victorian times.

One problem, which is new, is the ever growing army of inspectors and officials, telling us what we can or must not do, and the ever bigger army of conservationists, preservationists, societies for the prevention of this, or "protection" of that, the banner wavers, protestors and 'do-gooders'! While their sincerity may not be in any doubt, their fervour is usually equalled only by their almost complete ignorance of rural affairs, or the nature or economics of the countryside. What is possibly not generally understood is that the average resident landowner is himself the greatest conservationist of the countryside and its wildlife, but being closely in contact with it must necessarily weigh up a number of different factors, including economics. There is no greater expert on wild life than the highland keeper, although some would see him as a professional destroyer of it, rather than the conservationist that his job demands and that he undoubtedly is. We do not really need foreign botanists to teach us our business or interfere in our affairs.

It is to be hoped that some future government will formulate a sound policy for the highlands which will encourage a resident population, allow for job creation and adequate housing for a resident population, while allowing a reasonable access to the land by outsiders, even if they have to pay a bit more for it. This should not really prove as difficult as it may sound, provided there is goodwill and the fanatics can be controlled, and this must surely be one of the biggest challenges for the future for governments, local authorities, and even for the Fairies, who one feels must surely triumph in the end.

F. K. Balfour and the writer, 1948