Blackwater Hall and the Glen Orchestra

Maud Alice Dalrymple came to Bleaton Hallet (the main house, now a ruin) as Mrs James Marshall, in 1905. She was a trained musician, having studied piano in London and abroad. In due course, she found the opportunity to encourage music- making in the Glens. Accordian and fiddles were, of course, in common use at dances.

At first, practices were held in the laundry at Bleaton Hallet, the place the Duthies now describe as the Bothy. This laundry’s equipment included a grand piano. This served for Mrs. Marshall’s daily practice, as well as the communal musical efforts, although there was also a tastefully furnished music room up at the big house.

A hall was badly needed in this part of the Glen. The building and all its fittings were provided by Mr and Mrs Marshall. The piano was carefully chosen in Glasgow, but met with an accident at Auchterarder, and so another was delivered in its stead. A cupboard at the back of the hall was specially made- to- measure for the double bass.

The hall was opened on 16th December, 1927, and the first public performance of the local violins, six or seven of them, was with Miss McDiarmid at the piano. The fiddlers included Hugh McLachlan, Ian MacMillan, Keith Webster, Ian Fleming and Will Cameron.

Mr Marshall managed and financed the Hall. Who could complain if this entailed complying with ‘Marshall’s Law’? He was also treasurer of the Musical Festival, and provided tempting money prizes for the competitions.

Mrs Marshall, as conductor, kept a record of all practices and competitions, and concerts, which starts in 1929 and extends to 1966. On Mr Marshall’s death, Miss Cecil Constable of Lagan-dhu become chairman of the orchestra, and sometimes conducted until the war, when it went into abeyance until 1946.

Mrs Marshall resigned all her offices on her marriage to Dr McLintoch, but she soon re-appears in her old roles, as Mrs McLintoch, with F.K. Balfour in the chair after 1946.

Concerts were given over a wide area, from Aberdeen to Braemar, Tayport, Pitlochry, Amulree, Kirriemuir as well as locally, with the annual concert held at Blackwater Hall each September.

Some members of the orchestra –

Mrs McLintoch – conductor

Henry Drummond – violin

Mrs Ella Beaton – piano

Alec Duncan (Persie) – violin

Alistair Duncan (Persie) – violin

John Morrison (Kirkmichael) - violin

Cecil Constable – cello

John Lammond – bass

Hugh McLachlan – violin

James Howe

Angus Fitchitt

Ian Powrie

Jim Ritchie

Jim Petrie

Jock Blair – fiddle

Mrs McLintoch died, aged ninety-four, in the care of Hugh and Jenny McLachlan at Bridge of Cally Hotel.

Dr McLintoch was a curator of a museum in London, and a great friend of Mrs Marshall. During the war, Maudy used to send him a box of hard-boiled eggs regularly, from Bridge of Cally – boiling the eggs in case they should break!