

Flora Noonan's Recollections

Although I was born in the Glen at Corriefodly in 1929, we were not here very much until 1944, except for brief visits to my grandfather, Robert Constable. Until the war was over, we spent our school holidays at Corriefodly.

When my father returned from fighting in Burma, we rented, first the bungalow on the back road at Bridge of Cally, where I remember Rob having to climb up to the platform on the windmill and turn the sails by hand, in order to pump up water for the house when there was no wind. The other house we lived in was Mrs Panton's Dalnagairn at Kirkmichael. (Mrs Panton was a Blairgowrie solicitor's widow) It has a tower and a billiard room, with a beautiful carved mantelpiece. There was also a tennis court, as most of the older houses have. Lawn tennis parties were very popular in the Victorian/Edwardian times. We have many photos of groups of tennis players – the women in long skirts who served underarm.

In 1950, my father (Colonel W.G. Constable) inherited Balmyle from his cousin, Jane – artist and youngest daughter of George Constable - and we went to live there.

Returning to the 40's, the bicycle was the most common form of transport. My great-aunts at Lagan-dhu would turn up at Corriefodly to visit on their bicycles. They went to St. Michael's at Ballintuim where there is a rack in the porch, built specially for bicycles. I have heard of Lizzie Leyton and her sister from Ashintully bicycling, and Lizzie would hang her wig over the handlebars when she got too hot, but that was many years before the war.

We youngsters would bike to Blairgowrie to the Regal and Quinns' cinemas. I remember joining the Wilson family from Ashmore and calling at farms up Blackwater to buy honey – a great treat when sugar was rationed.

Dances at Bridge of Cally Hall were our initiation into Scottish dancing, with help from Jenny McLachlan.

Hugh McLachlan had a beautiful plush, red bus, with which he ran a regular service to Blairgowrie. Eddie Melville of the Aldchlappie, had a bus too, but it was a utility one, with hard, wooden benches. Willie Slitters drove the post van, and would take passengers too, telling stories of the glen to visitors, as he drove past each sight.

Just up river a short way from the Steps of Cally farm, there used to be a cradle bridge, used by the Cochrage shepherd (Rattray) (opposite the Steps). He would sit on a small, square platform suspended by two wires attached to posts on either bank, and haul himself across. At that time, the Cochrage was rented by old Hugh McLachlan of the hotel, who had been a butcher in Perth before he took on the hotel business from his wife's family, the Stalkers. The Cochrage is a ruin now, and there is no sign of the bridge, and the stepping stones beside the Steps farm have washed away.

There is a burial ground at the Steps beside the river, that once belonged to the monks whose farm house was Lagan-dhu. They were attached to the Abbey at Coupar Angus and they had a chapel called St. Mary's beside the burial ground.

A little further down river is the Mill, now converted into a chicken house. I remember going with my grandfather to open the sluice that took the water to turn the mill wheel, that, at that time, was used to charge the batteries at Corriefodly, which produced electricity for the house. It wasn't until the 1950's that the Hydro came into the Glen.

All the old gentlemen from Bridge of Cally would meet daily at the Post Office where Ruth Walker was the postmistress – a hunchback with such a cheerful, kindly personality. There the old men would hear the latest news and put the world to rights. Among them was Mr Prain of Inverardle, Inspector Cameron, Oakbrae, old Hugh McLachlan, Bridge of Cally Hotel, Durward Lely, Glenardle (D'Oyley Carte opera singer), Robert Constable from Corriefodly and Mr Brown of Strone.