

FOREWORD

Mr John A. Reid-Macdonald in 1899 published The History of Blairgowrie. He was also a regular contributor to the Blairgowrie Monthly from 1890 to 1892, and then, when the magazine became an annual, from 1893 to 1899. I assume that the author of Blairgowrie and Strathardle 1886, now printed for the first time, was the same Mr Macdonald.

This publication is a facsimile of the hand-written manuscript which I found by chance at the bottom of a box of books being offered for sale (and which I bought) at an auction in Perth.

There is, at the beginning of the book, a list of 73 illustrations which were to appear at intervals in the text, but, alas, only 8 are there. The gaps in the body of the text were, I suppose, for the others. Whether Mr Macdonald never completed these drawings or whether he had drawn them in a separate sketch book, intending to copy them into the text but not finishing the task, I do not know. I hope, however, that even without all the intended sketches, this little book will be a source of pleasure and interest, especially to those readers who live in Blairgowrie or in Strathardle.

Lorien, Kirkmichael  
Perthshire

Leslie Johnston  
1985

SCOTLAND



Reminiscences

Of  
The Travels and Exploits

of  
James A. Reid, of Sydney, Australia

ENGLAND



Being  
an account of a Voyage Round the World  
with descriptive notes  
of a Tour through England, Scotland,  
and particularly the Perthshire Highlands.

Constructed in Rhyme.

by  
John A. Macdonald, Blairgowrie.

Embellished  
with upwards of 70 illustrations.

To  
which is added, several select poems,  
by various authors, descriptive of places,  
visited etc.

From 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1883; to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1884



Constructed and Written by  
John A. Macdonald, Blairgowrie  
Scotland.

1<sup>st</sup> April 1886.



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On Monday morn we took guid care,  
to rise in time, as doon in Blaw,  
I had to be, twicen eight an' nine,  
if the day was fair, an' clear, an' fine,  
Baith gaed to bed, an' rose at three,  
syne bask't it rot an' had oor tea,  
An' on the green wi' hammer an' stane,  
we had a throw afore we'd gane.

Doon to Kirkmichael at five we went,  
along the road sae weel we kent,  
I landed home at breakfast time  
an' got some meat, an' filled my wame,  
As Jim gaed, danderin' yont the sod,  
for while, alone to sewin' the road.

The Glesca cousins had got their holiday,  
an' tae Ennoochduw, they gaed to play,  
Uncle Andrew cam; the lough o' Blaw,  
up to Granny's he paid, their fare,  
An' took his seat upon the brack,  
wi' a' his weight, it 'gan to quake.  
The springs got flattened mighty doon  
considerin' there was 17 stanes' aboon,  
o' solid flesh an' bone.  
When o'er the brig he siezed the whelp,  
an' ga'd the horses gallop up,  
An' made them pay their skinny games,  
tho' gracefully, he held the reins.

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An' drew up safely at the Inn,  
quid beast, they yur gay sairly done,  
The youngsters liked the graes to roam,  
free from restraint, o' skule an' home,  
By goon, Andrew's a' sonsie weight,  
as much in girths he is in height,  
An' fegs, ye'll no get mony men,  
to match him, sixteen stane, an' ten,  
He stayed nae lang to get some south,  
about the place, whar he spent his youth,  
But had to leave an' earn his roon'  
the various works in Glesca toon,  
Aft he left G. an' J. by themselves,  
tae wander mang the flowery dells,  
Until they had it come under rule,  
an' tak their place again in school.

I wrote to Jim that I o'er lang,  
wad tak holidays, if wank's nae thrang,  
An' proposed to start on Saturday night,  
if it was fair an' roads were light,  
I got a note before I went,  
a short reply, which he had sent,  
To say hoo glad he wis, Jim comin',  
he'd meet me at Dounie i' the gloamin'.  
Says he, "The weather is something grand,  
mong the hills o' this porridge land,  
An' goats are struttin' along the graes,  
decked up in fancy breeks an' clags,  
I wad sel tae lauchin' honest fowks,  
to see the peacocks struttin' gowks."  
"If we'd the kilt," he said, "we'd  
we'd put these bills in the shade."

"The Bridgend folk the ither day,  
 commenced to gather in their hay,  
 To help them at it, young Chie an' me,  
 shuff up wi' skunk an' muchle glee.  
 The Strathardle Games come off e'er lang,  
 are you, to try the catan or the stane?  
 I hae been practising for some time back,  
 but feint much progress I can make."

On Saturday night at half past twa,  
 John jurnays on to Ermochedhu,  
 on Dewar's coach, an' turs a traik,  
 gosh lad! I scarcely had a pate,  
 But after we left the Brig o' bally,  
 some folk gaed off, syne I did trawly,  
 there wis a young man brought his wife,  
 to see aboot here, the hidant life,  
 their manners mang the hills sae green,  
 they cam' doon sooth frae Aberdeen.  
 I w' mony cracks we had an' queer,  
 I didna like at tum to spier,  
 whar' he'd be takin' up his lodgin',  
 in whatna' glen he wad be dodgin',  
 e'er lang the ham cam' fettein' doun,  
 an' drenched us a' frae foot to crown,  
 an' made the coach maist dreich to draw,  
 the postie could hardly pu'd ava,  
 Oh! wis nae I surprised to then,  
 my Aberdeen fren' had ga'en up the glen,  
 to stop wi' granny, twar three days  
 an' seek some exercise mang the braes

I cuist my coat aboot my head,  
 shouldered my knapsack an' on I gaed,

Expectin' Jim at every turn to see,  
 yet naething but rain cam' in my ee,  
 When I landed yont by at the biggin,  
 I there spies Jimmy busy diggin'.

His fists among the peat an' glod,  
 happit up at Shonae dream's abode,  
 an' when he did come toddlin' in,  
 he wis near droopit to the skin,  
 we ga'd him shift his breeks an' sark,  
 but had it his aw for a lark,  
 He had tae put on a presk o' Sandy,  
 or any ither that cam' handy,  
 they fetteit fine, but hung gay loose,  
 as he cam' stoppin' but the hoose,  
 When I at the chanter then began,  
 he tolked ben for the melodian,  
 syne we had a consort by ourselves,  
 "whats a the steer, an' the bonnie blue bells."

On Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 1884,  
 we decked ourselves as we've we did afore,  
 an' hied us on wi' mony schemes,  
 to see the Strathardle Highland Game,  
 they're held ilka year, as far's I learn,  
 in a field yont by Balnagavin,  
 just opposite the black mill,  
 where flows the drole dark an' still  
 wi' mony gurgling rippling rill.

The field is close upon the road,  
 is pretty lang, no very broad,  
 And folks can see when passin' by,  
 as weels them that hand up high,  
 Lang years they held them on the knowe,  
 but in the hollow they're peep now.  
 The gallant yokels frae the fairms  
 bring lass or tude linked i' their arms,  
 The gent's come drivin' in their carriage,  
 the ladies dressed the twas a marriage,  
 There's belked knights frae Perth's fair ha'  
 an' kilted pipers frae Loch Awe.  
 The champion throwers o' the stane,  
 try the puttin' o' it ane by ane,  
 syne try the hammer an' the catan,  
 an' wind up wi' tae o' wan.  
 Between some child's selected frae,  
 Strathardle, Blackwater, an' Bouniejea,  
 The pipers fill their windy bags  
 an' tune them up like beldame hags

Others at the light fantastic toe,  
 upon the boards flit to an' fro,  
 The ladies sit weel in the tent,  
 enjoyin' the fun to heart's content,  
 to see the child's bare shanks an' thighs  
 bring tears o' joy into their eyes,  
 Dancin' an' pipin' baith they judge,  
 a job which nane o' them wud grudge.

The sports a' length grew guggin' thin,  
 an' sune they had to stop the fun,  
 As youngsters a' began to throw,  
 an' at the hammer has a go.  
 Along the road we held a race,  
 for hame, to hae a walking pace,  
 Iae see w' a wis the supplest man,  
 beat the rest, an' tak the wan,  
 Baith Jim an' me an' Cousin John  
 o' Tomchulan, fastened on,  
 we wur three child's wi' mighty legs,  
 an' stappit sot like yearling stags,  
 Keepit thegither for a while,  
 but e'er we reached the quarter mile  
 Jim fell behind, then Tomchulan, an' I,  
 along the road sot pace did try.  
 E'er lang we fand we wur weel met,  
 oor fins got stiff an' unce straight,  
 Then Tomchulan began to lose the wind,  
 I raxed a bit, an' left him itg behind,  
 That they wur beat, they fairly saw,  
 they eudna' keep pace wi' me ava.  
 We had got hame an' got oor meat,  
 when on the green we had a heat,  
 At vaulting in' the springy pole,  
 o'er balings, dykes, an' hay in ede,  
 When a stranger to the house had come,  
 among Strathardle's braes to roam,  
 Doon at Kirkmichael, she'd left her kist,  
 vel me'er by her was it e'er missed,  
 Until she'd come a mile or two,  
 an' landed in Granpans at Ermochedhu,  
 She asked if Jim an' I wad gang  
 tae bring the kist, the glen daro

For na care'n but off we went,  
on to Kirtmichall oor steps wur bent,  
But e'er we pass'd the Games' field by,  
at stane an' cairn we had a try,  
Then to the village, hastened on,  
nae box was there, yestreen twas gone,  
Up to Caennighline so said the fowks,  
it was nae 'dress'd unto these fowks.