

On August 28th 1988 the group gathered at the Johnston home in Glen Derby, Kirkmichael, to honour Leslie Johnston on his birthday and this time the six of us were joined by Peggy and Kathleen Cookson from Port Hope, Canada and the occasion was for Leslie now to record his memories of how he came to the Glen.

Leslie began:

In 1957 or 58 we bought our first Rolls Royce. This we did in a place near Cambridge (or was it near to Huntingdon?) and we decided that we would drive north in this new, old Rolls Royce to pick up two American friends who were spending a little while in Edinburgh. The husband of this couple is a psychiatrist and he was attending a conference in Edinburgh, so we decided that we'd pick them up and we'd give them a week or 10 days holiday driving around the British Isles going to places that some Americans at least might not normally visit.

We did pick them up in Edinburgh, and in that same year I had read for the first time about the Festival Theatre at Pitlochry and it seemed as though it was a most interesting place. So Valerie and I booked seats for the theatre on August Bank Holiday Monday and we also had booked seats at the Stratford Memorial Theatre because we had planned that on our way back south we would go to Stratford.

And so we arrived and picked them up and we drove from Edinburgh to Pitlochry and we arrived without having any reservations or accommodation but we got to the Tourist Office in Pitlochry and were sent to the Scotland Hotel where we were able to get two rooms and we went that evening to the Pitlochry Theatre and saw a play based on Chinese themes, which we enjoyed very much and we liked the experience a great deal.

Well, the trip continued of course and we eventually got them back to Suffolk, but that was our first introduction to Pitlochry and especially to the theatre. And so from then on we tended, not every year but very frequently, to come up to Pitlochry for a week's holiday. We did this especially after we had moved from Suffolk to Cheshire and were living in Cheadle Hulme. The school where I then was, took a week's holiday in the summer term at Whitsuntide. We came up to Pitlochry year after year and stayed in different guest houses and I played golf, Valerie walked, drove our daughter Meroe to Blair Atholl where she rode. We enjoyed these holidays very much indeed.

I think - Valerie might correct this - but I think on one occasion we did find ourselves in Kirkmichael and in fact went and had tea in a house which was then a bed and breakfast house, and which gave teas as well, called Redhu. However that is by the way. So we had got accustomed to coming to Pitlochry and we liked the area. There came a time when because we had been, for a long time, provided with school accommodation and therefore

did not own a house of our, we felt we had to look for something of our own. By about '67 or '68 we were looking for something to buy, either as a country cottage or even eventually somewhere to which we would retire; but we drew a blank here and there. Then one Sunday we saw in the Observer a note to the effect that, a "local laird", (which of course he is not) was building Norwegian log houses in a glen in the Kirkmichael area and this interested us very much. It especially interested Valerie apart from anything else, because years and years previously we had spent one year in Canada living in a log house which had been built originally by Indians. And my wife, being the romantic, sentimental type that she is, had always thought she would like to live in a log house. And so it came about that we were able on one of these Whitsun holidays to come up to Kirkmichael to see what was being planned, and indeed done, in the area known as Glen Derby.

The local laird, so called, a man named Reid, had bought 150 acres, not actually in Glen Derby but to the east, and he had got permission to erect 21 Norwegian log houses. By 1968 he already had built the Log Cabin Hotel; he had also built the showhouse, and one or two other houses were either completed or in the process of being completed. We came up and we were shown the showhouse and also we were told the price and we thought it was much too much. The basic house with two bedrooms was to cost something over £7,000 and we had thought we'd spend £3,000 to £4,000 on what we were looking for and so we thought, "No, this was far too much."

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Well, at this time we had put in an offer for a cottage in Yorkshire, that fell through, so we came back again to look again the the Glen Derby development and this time we decided we would have one of the houses. We saw the plots that were still available and decided on what we thought was Plot no. 13. We were later told we had looked at Plot no. 15 so we were going to have Plot no. 15. We agreed that we would have one of these Norwegian log houses built and we placed the order in, I think, October 1968 and we were told the house would be ready by the summer of 1969. In fact it was March 1970 before the house really was, well, not quite finished, but we did come up in March 1970 and we camped there.

From 1970 until the August of 1974 we came up for every school holiday and it was so arranged that the school I was at seemed to have a holiday every six weeks, so we came up fairly regularly to spend our time here in the house, but in 1974 I retired from Cheadle Hulme and we came to live in the house permanently at the beginning of August 1974.