

*Rambling about
Dundurn Parish*



*From articles first published
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*By
The Old Crock*

Part 5

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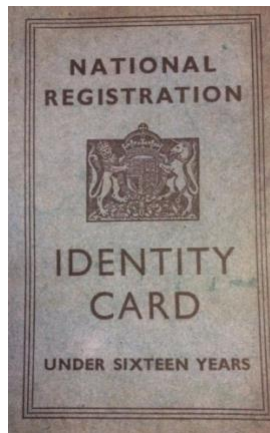
A Practical Joke

Some that got away.

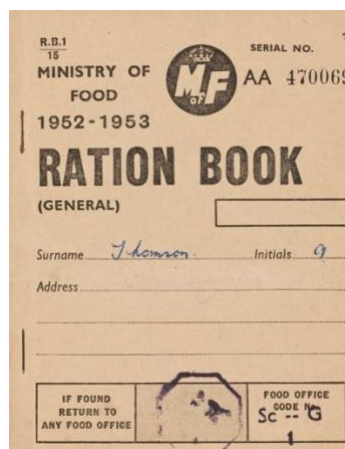
Shortages are nothing new.

In 1939 Britain was importing twenty million tons of food a year, including about 70% of its cheese and sugar, almost 80% of fruit and about 70% of cereals and fats. It also imported more than half its meat and relied on imported feed to support its domestic meat production. To deal with sometimes extreme shortages the Ministry of food (1939-1958) was established.

Today when we talk of shortages, the cost of petrol or the price of coal, we should be grateful that we are not required to register and obtain ration books as our parents or grandparents had to throughout the second world war years. Rationing started on the 8th of January 1940 and didn't end completely until 1954. It started out firstly with Identity Cards, one for every member of the family,



followed by ration books. The householder, normally the mother as her spouse was off serving his country, had to gather all the family birth & marriage certificates and take them to be registered at the local hall or church. She would then be issued with ration books one for each member of the family, *green for under fives, blue for children 6 to 16 years and buff for adults.*



She then had to register at one particular shop for basic foodstuffs like her local grocers or butchers and could only use her ration books there. No rushing between supermarkets to check out prices, to see which was offering the cheapest deal. The Ministry decreed that identical items must cost the same wherever they were purchased. This was known as retail price maintenance (*the little gray book was still in use right up until the 1970s*). The ration book contained coupons, which were very small squares, one for each week. These were for what the ministry of food decreed to be basic needs, such as tea, cheese, butter, margarine, bacon, porridge, lard, sugar & eggs. Milk, jam, cheese, canned and dried fruit were subsequently added. Although fish was not rationed, prices increased considerably as time went on.

My mother-in-law who worked for the Ministry of Food at the time, recalled that each adult was allowed on average only one egg a week, 2 oz of bacon, 2 oz margarine and 2 oz of tea, although the actual amount varied week by week according to availability. Butter was reserved for children under five and pregnant and nursing woman. Everyone else had margarine, the hard baking type not the soft spread of today.

Each week the householder went to the appointed grocer's shop, handed over their books, and received whatever the grocer had on offer that week. There was very little choice, everyone got what was available. The grocer would then cut out the coupons and return them to the ministry to be counted so that they could calculate his future needs.

Similarly, once householders had registered with a butcher, they would wait in queues to collect their meat ration, again there was little choice, meat was sold by price not weight, and again the coupons would be cut out and returned for processing.

Non food rations were soon put in place including such things as soap, clothing, coal, even central heating was prohibited during the summer months, and newspapers were restricted to 25% of their pre-war consumption. What newspapers there were, once read, were cut up, hung on a hook, and used as toilet paper. (*No rushing to the supermarket and stockpiling vast quantities of toilet rolls.*)

In towns and cities allotment schemes were created (*some still exist today*) and people were encouraged by the campaign to dig for victory and grow their own vegetables and potatoes.

At the war's end rationing continued for several years afterwards. Some aspects became stricter than during the war. For the first time from July 1946 to July 1948 bread was restricted. Again in 1948 the basic petrol ration for civilians was eased and owners received enough fuel for about eighty miles a month – that *wouldn't get you far in today's gas guzzling city tractors* - and while meat rationing ended in 1954, coal rationing continued until 1958.

Living in a rural setting had its advantages as there was a plentiful supply of rabbit, pheasant and pigeon (*during this period many children were introduced to the chicken with four legs*) hares were also in plentiful supply, as was milk, eggs and cheese and if you knew how and where to catch them, even trout and the occasional salmon.

1951 Glentarken

Venison for the Scottish Larder



Stalkers on the Hillside

Andrew Allan and Tom Band the local gamekeepers returning from Glentarken with two hinds to help supplement the 8p meat ration.

So, in future when you are thinking of moaning about the cost-of-living crisis remember the sacrifices our parents and grandparents endured.

Today data for the first post-brexit calendar year shows that the UK import value of four key food commodities (fruit & vegetables, meat, cereals, dairy and eggs) accounted for £24.5 billion worth of imports between March 2021 and Feb 2022. Since then, the cost of basic foodstuffs has soared. Figures from the Office of National Statistics showed annual food inflation at 16.8% in December. The price of milk topped the list at 46 per cent for low fat and 38.5 for whole milk, bread went up by 20.5 per cent, cheese by 32.6 per cent, eggs by 28.9 per cent and tinned vegetables by 20.4 per cent.

So, it would appear that we never learn and are no better off today than we were 70 years ago.

The Old Crock– February 2023

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## **The Upper Strathearn Highland Society (part 1)**

In May 1870, an attempt was made to resurrect the St Fillans Highland Games, and with this in mind a meeting was held in Comrie to form a Society for this purpose.

### ***Perthshire Constitutional & Journal 28<sup>th</sup> May***

A number of gentlemen from the neighbourhood of upper Strathearn along with some from a great distance were present a meeting in the Royal Hotel, Comrie, on Tuesday afternoon. And the meeting was considerably enlivened by the presence of a few of the late "St Fillans Highland Society." Amongst those present were Sir Malcolm McGregor, Bart. Of McGregor – David R Williamson Esq., of Lawers; - Lieut. Murray R.N. Ochtertyre; - Alexander Laing Esq., Comrie house; - Mr. Thomas Boston, Balmuick; - Mr. Miller, Broadley; - Mr McLaren, Ross Farm; - Mr D Ferguson, Miggar; - Mr. Taylor, Dalginross; - Mr. Mitchell, Milton; - and Messrs J Cameron, Crerar, McCowan, Gray, Dewar, McEwan, Stirling, Drummond, Haggart, Cullen, McNeil and McNaughton, Comrie.

Mr J Cameron, Comrie proposed that David R Williamson take the chair, which was carried by acclamation. Mr Williamson accordingly took the chair.



*'Major Williamson of Lawers'*

The Chairman previous to stating the object of the meeting, intimated that T. J. G. Sterling, Esq., of Strowan, was to have been present, but was prevented through unforeseen circumstances, and then read letters of apology from Capt. Colquhoun of Clathick; Rev Dr McDonald, Comrie; Mr Donald McLaren of Ardveich; and Mr. Donald Dayton from the Lochearnhead Hotel, expressing their regret at being unavoidably absent, wishing the Society every success, and enclosing handsome subscriptions.

The chairman then commenced to state the object of the meeting.

He said we have met for the purpose of reviving the St Fillans Celtic Society; and we have been urged to move to this matter by a number of gentlemen, who, I may describe as the most thoughtful veterans of the district. They often tell us of the chivalrous bearing, and brave deeds of past generations; and we know that this noble conduct was not more the offspring of well-educated minds, than of their muscular bodies. While we do everything to make our children more learned than ourselves let us also remember that it is possible this country may owe a large portion of her prosperity to the sports and pastimes of her people. Our old Celtic Society did much for those who have passed away; and it may do good to those who follow us; our highland gathering will at least secure a holiday for the manly spirits of our district. It was then unanimously agreed that the proposed society shall be called the "Upper Strathearn Highland Society."

The following ladies have already kindly consented to become patronesses, viz;- Lady Helen McGregor of McGregor; Lady Lucy Dundas of Dunira; Hon Mrs. Williamson of Lawers; Misses Murray of Ochertyre; Mrs. Stirling of Strowan; Mrs. Colquhoun of Clathick; and Mrs. Laing of Comrie House; and the following gentlemen patrons; Sir Malcolm McGregor of McGregor; Sir J Dundas of Dunira; David R Williamson of Lawers; Thomas Stirling of Strowan; Capt Colquhoun of Clathick; Lieu Murray R. N. Of Ochertyre; Alexander Laing, Esq., of Comrie House; and Horatio Bebb. Esq., Strathallan Castle.

Sir Malcolm McGregor proposed that the Rev Dr McDonald of Comrie be appointed Chaplain of the Society, for the object of the Society was to do good amongst our young, and in his (Sir Malcolm's) opinion no society could prosper without a clergyman. The Rev Doctor was unanimously elected, and Mr. Mitchell, directed to communicate with him.

The chairman intimated that those who wished to become members by paying half a crown entry money and thereafter half a crown as an annual subscription, would now have an opportunity of having their names recorded. Amidst cheers the whole meeting became members.

Sir Malcolm McGregor proposed that David R Williamson Esq., be chieftain this year.

The Chairman then proposed Lieutenant Murray, as President of the Society, with Mr Thomas Boston, Balmuick as Vice President. Mr Mitchell, Milton, was appointed Secretary & Treasurer, and he sincerely hoped that the society would go on as prosperously as it had begun. He then announced that subscriptions to date amounted to £50 10s 6d.

A large and influential committee was then appointed, with power to add to their number, to draw out Rules for the Society and regulations for the games. Mr Comrie, Lawers, was unanimously appointed Henchman.

It was agreed that the games come off this year early in August near the village of Comrie; St Fillans the following year and Crieff the year after. The date of the games was fixed for Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> August in the Laggan Park.

### ***The Rivalry Begins***

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, a meeting was held in the town hall, Crieff, for the forming of a highland society. Dr G. M. Porteous, chief magistrate presiding, and called on all present to give their opinion on the subject. Lieutenant Murray considered that as a highland society had been formed the other day in Comrie, no rivalry should exist, and it would perhaps be better to unite with the Comrie folk. However, as the vast majority expressed a desire to set up a society of their own it was agreed to proceed forthwith. As on observation they noted that Comrie had at their meeting the previous week fixed that games would take place in Comrie this year, then St Fillans the following year followed by Crieff.

The magistrates pointed out that it was very imprudent for our Comrie friends to fix the games without consulting their neighbours in Crieff first. To 'Cock-a-snoot' The magistrates then set the date for the first Crieff games to take place on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August the week before the first Comrie games.

The rivalry continued for a number of years. But by the 1880s Comrie had conceded to Crieff, and their games took precedence.

### ***extract from the minutes of Upper Strathearn Highland Society***

30<sup>th</sup> June: A few of our members of committee have been busy canvassing the village for subscriptions, and we are glad to hear that they have been most welcome visitors and have received subscriptions according to circumstances. The secretary has received a very handsome donation of £5 from J Neile Plumb Esq., Lochearnhead, a gentleman who has entered into the movement with full hand and heart; and also £2 two shillings from Alexander Lee, Braco Castle. The following ladies have been added to the list of patronesses:- Mrs Plumb, Lochearnhead; Mrs Drummond, 49 Charring Cross, London; and Mrs Lee, Braco Castle; and the following gentlemen, patrons:- Mr. J. Neale Plumb Esq., Lochearnhead; Robert Drummond Esq., 49 Charring Cross, London; Alexander Horatio Lee, Braco Castle; and Hendry Walker Esq., Calderstone, Liverpool. The games which are to take place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August next, are restricted for local competition this year to the parishes of Comrie, Crieff, Monzievaird and Strowan, Muthill and Balquhiddy, competitors must have resided in the respective parishes for two months prior to entry. Several prizes are to be given to all comers. As there is every probability of the games taking place at Lochearnhead next year, the parishes of Callander and Killin are to be then included, from which the secretary has been promised liberal support.

## **Upper Strathearn Highland Society (part 2)**

### ***'Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> August - Laggan Park'***

The second annual celebration of these games took place under the most auspicious circumstances, this was the last of three gala days held in rapid succession within a short period of eight days, local spirits and enterprise should have successfully stood the strain of three separate shocks, and warrants us to entertain the hope that Comrie is yet destined to become famous for something more than earthquakes.

Melville Square was the meeting place, and as 11 o'clock drew nigh, the village streets began to assume a holiday appearance. Business was suspended; carriages, brakes, and vehicles of every description – some from great distances – came pouring in laden with visitors. Among the many holiday costumes "The Garb of old Gail" was favourite; and the general hilarity was ever and anon being augmented when the sound of the slogan announced the arrival of another piper.



*'Donald Dinnie – (1837-1916)'*

*'The self-proclaimed Champion of Champions 1856 to 1876. From the 1860s onwards his growing status and ability to dominate other competitors, brought its problems, with many games' committees trying to engineer "fairness" into their meetings by introducing handicapping or restricting some events to local competitors only'.*

Donald Dinnie on his appearance attracted much notice, and though some failed to see in him the gristly giant of their imagination, still in the tall form and wiry, if not bulky, build of the man, there were indications of that strength of muscle whose fame is now world-wide.

The Numbers attending was estimated as between two to three thousand. Dinnie wins three events; putting 22lb heavy ball – 37ft; 20lb heavy hammer – 95ft 2inch; and tossing the caber.

### ***The Old Crock - March 2023***

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Upper Strathearn Highland Games

& Grand Regatta on Loch Earn - August 1872

After a lapse of 40 years, this lovely spot has again been the scene of a Highland Gathering. In former times none but those dressed in the “Garb of Old Gaul” were permitted to take any part in competitions, or seat themselves on the benches around the ring, and ladies vied with each other in appearing duly bedecked in the tartans of the various clans to whom they claimed kindred. The chiefs at the head of their followers marched to the field of conflict “all plaided and plumed in their tartan array,” and armed with broadsword, targe, pistols, dirk, &co., in some years it has been computed that some three to four thousand men marched in procession to the strains of twenty bagpipes. Generally, a high-born Lady presented the prizes to the champions. The traditions regarding these things decided the committee to resuscitate the ancient games this year at St Fillans instead of Comrie.

By early morning on the appointed Wednesday the countryside was alive with people hurrying to the spot. The weather looked threatening, but the various coaches connected with the railways, both at Crieff and Lochearnhead were crowded to excess. The weather looked anything but propitious. The rain and wind continued almost without intermission all day. The games took place in a field behind the hotel and the various competitions were done under the most unfavourable circumstances, and in some instances could scarcely be proceeded with. Notwithstanding the disagreeable state of things, there was a great concourse of people in attendance. Among whom were; Sir Malcolm & Lady McGregor; Sir David & Lady Dundas; Lord Aveland and party; the Earl of Selkirk; Hon Mrs. Capt Grant; Hon Major & Mrs Williamson of Lawers; Mrs Graham Stirling of Strowan; Mrs. Theodore Stewart & Mrs. Stewart of Ardvorlich; Mrs. Colquhoun of Clathick; Mrs. Nason, Isle of Wight; &co., The Chieftain this year was T. G. Stirling, Esq., of Strowan.

The regatta consisted of two races – one for four-oared jolly boats, a distance of three miles, and another for local two-oared boats for two miles. These distances due to the rough state of the water had to be restricted; the course was reset to from just opposite the hotel entrance round the island and back, a distance of about one mile; two jolly-boats from Perth, named the

“Hal o’ the Wynd” and the “Fair Maid,” competed in the open competition, the former of which took first prize. The local race was won by two of Sir Malcolm McGregor’s gamekeepers.

As a matter of course there were additional attractions added to the festivities, such as Nut Barrows, Shooting Salons, Sweetie Stands, games of a pugilistic character etc.

The following year (1873) the games were again held at St Fillans on 23rd August. Only this time, *‘they took place on the old St Fillans Society games field,’* with Lord Aveland acting as Chieftain. A very neat and handsome *‘heather house’* was erected for the use of the chieftain and his friends, where luncheon was served to a select company; as had been the want in days gone by.

On the evening of the games Mr McLaren, farmer at Derry, sustained a serious injury while attempting to put the collar round the neck of his horse, the animal suddenly reared and knocked him down, kicking him severally on the breast, after a short time Mr McLaren was able to be conveyed home, where his wounds were attended to.

In 1874 the games returned to the Laggan Park on the 26th of August. Led by the chieftain Mr T. J. Stirling of Strowan. The day being fine, about two thousand were in attendance. Nearly all the competitors were dressed in the ‘Garb of the Gail,’ each no doubt felt him-self the observed of all the observers. The competitions were mainly confined to the locality, with little professional talent to be witnessed. During the progress of the games, Messrs Lindsay & Sturrock, gymnasts, performed a number of daring and successful feats on the trapeze and horizontal bar with great dexterity.

In 1875 the games were to have taken place at Edinample with the regatta at Lochearnhead the chieftain for the year being the Earl of Breadalbane; they did in fact take place in a field adjoining the Lochearnhead Hotel, granted for the day by Mr. Dayton. The day was observed as a public holiday in Callander and surrounding district, with about two thousand attending on the day. The Earl of Breadalbane was in attendance but had to leave, his place was then filled by T. J. Stirling of Strowan.

Among these competing were Donald Dinnie and James Fleming. In one of the competitions Dinnie was handicapped by one foot and lost by one inch. Dinnie won the heavy hammer (20lb) with a throw of 97ft 5 inch. Fleming was second with a throw of 85ft 6inch. Fleming won the heavy ball (22lb) by 1inch against Dinnie’s throw of 38ft 3inch.



'Fleming and Dinnie'

'They were close friends and rivals, touring the Highland games circuit together, where they often competed against one another. In the off season they organised demonstrations and exhibitions in Town Halls and auditoriums, charging admission and sharing the profits, in addition they toured abroad both in the U S A and Australia.'

A special feature that year was the presentation of silver medals by gentlemen of Upper Strathearn Messrs Mortimer, gun-makers, Edinburgh; and Mr Hay, Jeweller, Edinburgh, for the best player of marches; best putter of the heavy ball; and best thrower of the heavy hammer. Two massive cups and a silver medal were presented by the gentlemen of Dundee, for the natives of Comrie who won the prizes for throwing the heavy hammer; best putter of the heavy ball; and for dancing.

P McEwan won the local Comrie events and medals for both the Heavy Hammer and Heavy Ball along with the trophy for light hammer.

The Regatta Open competition; for four oared jolly-boats course three miles; first *'Highland Chieftain'* Perth Rowing Club. Second *'Roderick Dhu'* Oatlands crew, Glasgow. Third *'Lady of the Lake'* Perth Rowing Club. Local Competition for two-oared boats, course, two miles first *'McPherson'* Killin, second *'Kate of Derry'* Derry, third *'McPherson'* Killin.

In 1876 in delightful weather the gathering returned to the Laggan Park, with Lord Aveland acting chieftain; the numbers were down on previous years, with about two thousand in attendance. The local media put this down to the committee having curtailed the open section of the competition and suggesting that they might like to take that into consideration for future years. A large proportion of the prizes presented that year were in cash!

There were reports of drunkenness and pugilism occurring in the evening following the games.

The 1877 games were held on the 30th of August in highly auspicious circumstances at the Laggan Park. The correspondent noted however that for the past two years the numbers had been on the decline. This arises he feared from too many such gatherings now taking place, and that Comrie was too far from railway communications. Despite this there was a large turnout of the local high society; the chieftain that year was T. J. Stirling of Strowan.

The 1878 games again took place at the Laggan Park on the 23rd of August. The day was dull and chilly but about 12 o'clock a procession was formed in Melville Square, consisting of the chieftain Captain Dundas of Dunira; the committee; and others; headed by the village flute band, and three pipers marched to the Laggan Park, where shortly afterwards the games commenced. It should be noted that a bicycle race had been included in the program to be run round the ring or across the field, three competitors came forward to state they would be prepared to race on the public road but thought that the ring or field would prove positively too dangerous for the riders. To this some members of the management committee replied that in that case the race would be cancelled. Now either the committee should have taken advice prior to advertising the race, or been convinced by these competitors, who after all knew something of cycling, that the race could not be run in a field of long grass, and not displayed their ignorance, besides disappointing the spectators of what would otherwise have been a new and interesting addition to the program.

In 1879 the games yet again were held in the Laggan Park. With the weather proving unfavourable, rain fell heavily throughout the day's proceedings, marring the enjoyment of the sports. The day being observed as a general holiday in the local area there was a large turnout of spectators, about one thousand being present, showing a slight downturn on the previous year. Captain Dundas of Dunira acted as Chieftain, and a number of the nobility residing in the area were in attendance.

One complaint consistently raised by the newspapers was the lack of information made available to them from the organizers of the games. In fact, one paper went as far as to state that they felt they had been shabbily treated. The reporter said he had asked the secretary Mr Mitchell for a copy of the prize list and program, only to be told he was very busy, and unable to comply, but would furnish it later, this did not happen despite the reporter writing for a copy.

This might account for the poor coverage of the games in the latter half of the 1870s. One way or another, I have been unable to find any reference to the Society after 1879. Perhaps someone locally might unknowingly have a medal or trophy given to an ancestor sitting on a shelf or gathering dust in the Attic.

The Old Crock – April 2023

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## **Alexander Sandison**

### *The Man behind the Name*

Born in Arbroath, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1836, the eldest son of the Rev John Sandison, High Street, Free Church, and Eliza Grigor, having received his school education at Arbroath Educational Institution where he gained a 1st in Latin – Greek - English & Religious Instruction a 2nd in Arithmetic a 4th in Geography and a prize for general proficiency; He left home in 1850 aged 14 to become a clerk in Liverpool in the house of Messrs Fletcher, Williamson & Co., merchants. Where he gave so much satisfaction to his principals that, when only sixteen years of age, he was sent out to Arequipa, Peru, to occupy a responsible position, ultimately, he was to become a partner of the firm. It is thought that the company dealt mainly in Guano (Bat pool!) and Angora wool.

He was at home in Arbroath at the time of the great earthquake of 1868 at Arequipa when his place of business was totally submerged. He was never to return to Peru. After this he resided chiefly in this country but travelled a great deal in Europe. He never married and died aged 55 years at his residence in St Fillans, on Thursday 19th September 1889.

Our story begins in 1875 when Alexander arrived in the village and settled into his new Villa Earnholm now known as Ard Choille, built to a design by the estate architect George T Ewing, on the smiths Feu, (the estate having moved John Dewar the village blacksmith out to a new purpose-built property at the east end of the village, again, designed by Mr Ewing).

### *The Depth of Loch Earn*

In 1879 he published his findings in the Scotsman, regarding the depth of Loch Earn - He stated that much curiosity, and not a little exaggerated statement, is afloat regarding the depth of the loch amongst tourists and visitors to these parts; To set the matter at rest, he had spent several days in taking soundings, and gave below the results in fathoms.

The soundings were taken at intervals of twenty strokes of the oars. The bed of the loch almost everywhere is a soft brownish black mud. The temperature at the bottom at 48 fathoms – 18<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1pm. – was 43½ deg; of the air at the same place and time 56 deg. in the shade. Again on 27th Sept. – 2pm – at 34 fathoms also 43½ deg; that of the air being 49 deg.

### *Between Neish Island and the outfall of the River Earn*

2 to 6 fathoms in middle

### *From the Milestone across to Ardrostan*

5, 10, 14, 20, 23, 27, 25, 21, 21, 20, 18, 15, 5.

*From the Second Milestone - Glentarken across to Findoglen*

8, 21, 30, 35, 37, 36, 35, 35, 33, 24, 16, 12, 5.

*Third Milestone - across to gallows tree*

10, 17, 20, 33, 42, 43, 43, 43, 42, 42, 25, 16, 10

*Fourth Milestone - Derry Farm across to Ardvorlich House*

5, 12, 18, 28, 34, 39, 46, 48, 48, 49, 49, 49, 49, 49, 49, 45, 36, 19.

*Fifth Milestone - Ardveich across to Ardvorlich Cottage*

6, 12, 23, 30, 41, 48, 48, 48, 48, 49, 47, 47, 44, 33, 21, 12, 7.

*Sixth Milestone - Lime Quarry to Edinample Castle*

8, 17, 24, 27, 27, 33, 35, 34, 31, 30, 25, 21, 12.

*Seventh Milestone - Lochearnhead Harbour to west Isle & Glen ample farm*

8, 12, 15, 15, 16, 13, 13, 10, 5.

Given his interest in the arts and books, it's no wonder that he eventually decided he wanted to share these interests with his fellow villagers, and to this end, decided to set up a small library for their use – quite a remarkable thing to do in those days when books were expensive and not generally to be found in peoples' homes.

The library was housed at the village schoolhouse, in what was to become Station Road. He looked after it personally, keeping a record of how the books were used, disposing of those which were not popular, and replacing them with new ones from time to time. Up to a maximum of three books could be borrowed for a week by summer visitors.

Shortly after his death it was announced that he had expressed a wish that a Trust be set up to continue the library and made this possible by leaving a bequest of £500 to be used by the Trustees for that purpose. The trust deed specified that £100 should be invested and the income used to pay 'a small boy' six pence a week to look after the library and from time to time, prepare a catalogue of books. It also gave the Trustees authority to erect or purchase a suitable building at a cost of no more than £200 to house the library should they think it appropriate. The remainder of the money to be invested and the income used to purchase new books from time to time.

Incidentally, his Will also contained bequests of £10 to each of his young St Fillans friends, ten in all, each of them girls, who presumably were regular users of the library.

Of the original Curators – only the minister the Rev Thomas Armstrong was a full time resident of the village – the other five David Balsillie (2 Osborne terrace, Edinburgh) Alexander Buchan (Dr of Laws, Edinburgh) Walter Scott Dalgleish M. A., (25 Maryfield Terrace, Edinburgh) Miss E.M. Macintosh (37 Heriot Row, Edinburgh) and Robert Augustus Robertson, S.S.C., (Edinburgh) all had second summer residencies in the village. In 1894 Sheriff Erskine Murray was added to that list. The minutes of October 1897 records the death of Dr Dalgleish and the resignation of Sheriff Erskine Murray owing to his having given up his house at St Fillans. The Rev Dr Begg of Foxknowe was appointed in his place. The Rev Dr Buchan died at the beginning of 1907 and the Rev Thomas Armstrong died in September of the same year.

For a few years, the curators appointed by the trustees continued to use the schoolhouse to hold the library but when a new school mistress a Miss Margaret Neilson was appointed, there was disagreement with this. The curators felt that in modern parlance, she had ‘an attitude problem’ and decided that it was time to invoke the clause in the Trust deed to re-house the books.

At a meeting of the curators in October 1894 it was recorded that Mr Armstrong, Sheriff Murray and Miss Mackintosh act as a committee, to carry out the work in connection with erection of the Iron Building, including the acceptance of Messrs Spears & Co’s estimate, It was also remitted to the same committee to add two additional persons to their number to take steps for raising funds for providing the furnishings and any additional fittings, required for the library.



*Sandison Hall*

Given the sum of money available, they had to choose a cheap form of building and eventually decided on an iron construction of the type that was becoming popular at that time; (known as

a tin Tabernacle) A contract was agreed with Spiers & Co of Glasgow, and the outcome was the Sandison Library Hall, constructed in 1895 where it still stands today on a parcel of land known as 'Bulls Feu' leased from the Earl of Ancaster at a peppercorn rent of one shilling (5pence) per annum.

The building cost just £157-10s! There was an additional cost of approximately £3 to take down shelving and make good the walls in the schoolhouse after the books were removed. Not a bad investment considering it's still standing after 128 years!

### ***The Old Crock – May 2023***

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Charges against the local schoolmaster (part 1)

Parochial School Board Meeting at St. Fillans 2nd December 1882

After their meeting at Comrie, the board adjourned to St. Fillans, as previously arranged, for the purpose of holding an enquiry into certain alleged charges of cruelty to a boy by Mr Silver the teacher there. The proceedings took place within the Drummond Arms Hotel – Mr Carr presiding.

Peter Carmichael, St. Fillans (father of the boy) was present, and previous to the enquiry starting he asked why it was that he had been called to appear at Comrie the day before the last meeting, instead of the day the board met, and asked to leave a written statement of his complaint? It seemed to him as if there was something intended against him by such a proceeding on the part of the Clerk. The Chairman said it was simply a mistake of the Clerk regarding the date of the meeting. Mr Carmichael then said he would like to know what right the Rev. Mr McPherson, when in St. Fillans recently, had to go into his (Carmichael's) house and say to his wife that in making this charge against the teacher they were "maliciously injuring Mr Silver's character." Mr McPherson replied to the effect that while he was one day passing Carmichael's door, his daughter called on him to come in – (Carmichael "you went in before she called to you") – and said her mother wanted to see him, and on going in, she went on about the case against Mr Silver striking her boy; but he (Mr McPherson) did not use the language attributed to him. Carmichael said that he did do so, for his wife took a statement at the time of what was said. The chairman having disallowed any further statement from Carmichael

remarked that it was a pity Mr McPherson had gone into the house. Mr McPherson - But I was asked to come in. The matter afterwards dropped.

The Clerk then read over Carmichael's statement, dated 8th November, to him, which set forth his reasons for not sending his children to school. He stated that after the teacher had got notice from the Board at a previous meeting not to strike his pupils as he had been doing, he had repeatedly struck his boy and had seized him by the hair of his head, knocked him down, and abused him in the presence of several other pupils, the reason being that he had not done some questions of arithmetic.

In reply to the Chairman, Carmichael said that the statement was correct. On being asked to produce evidence in support of his charge against the schoolmaster, he called Donald Dow (son of James Dow, former shepherd to Mr Campbell, Tullybanocher.) Being cautioned to tell the truth, he deponed, in answer to the Chairman, that he saw the schoolmaster strike John Carmichael. (Q.) What was it for? - I don't mind. (Q.) Where did he strike him? - On the head with his "nev." (Q.) Was the blow a hard one? - Not very hard. (Q.) What day was that? - I don't know what day it was. It was in April last, I think. Mr McPherson here interposed by saying he thought the teacher should be present at the examination of the witnesses, but the Chairman said he would call him afterwards. Examination continued - witness - I don't know what part of the head Carmichael was struck on (Q.) Have you seen Mr Silver strike John Carmichael at any other time? - Yes. (Q.) What with? - His "Nevs" (Q.) Has Mr Silver been in the habit of striking other boy with his fist? - Yes, he struck me on the head. (Q.) With his open or shut hand? - Shut, I can't mention a date when he struck me. (Q.) What was it for? - Because I "hadna" my lessons. (Q.) was it always because you had not your lessons prepared? - Yes. (O.) Has he struck you more than once? - Yes.

Rev Mr McPherson - "I think we should only hear the charge as to the Carmichael boy, and not charges proffered by this boy who left the school at Whitsunday last, when his father left the district. (Q.) I would like to know what John Carmichael was doing when Mr Silver struck him - was it for misbehaving. - I don't know, it was when he was at his arithmetic. (Q.) was he able to do his arithmetic? - Rev Mr Kay - I think that is more a question of opinion than fact. - Donald Dow (in answer to the question) I think he was wrong with his count. (Q.) By the Chairman, did you see Mr Silver strike any other boy in addition to John Carmichael and yourself? - Yes.

Mr McPherson did not think that question should be asked, they were met there for a certain purpose to enquire into this particular charge made by Carmichael, and not other charges; and thought it would put the teacher into a false position to investigate into any other charge than the one libelled. He might mention that Mr George McFarlane had also made a charge against the teacher, but it had been withdrawn.

The chairman said Mr McPherson had wanted a full and public investigation, and he (the chairman) thought that this charge and any other charges ought to be brought up now since they had met to investigate into the matter, so that the board might know the cause of the complaints made against the teacher. (Mr McPherson) - You are not entitled to do anything of the kind. (Chairman) – We are entitled to do anything we like in the matter. (Mr McPherson) – I don't see that these questions about the other boys are at all relevant to this charge. (Mr McLaren) – When did George McFarlane withdraw his complaint? (Mr McPherson) – was understood to reply that it had been done recently. (The chairman) – I think as public servants, it is our duty to make the fullest investigation into this or any other charges against the teacher. What we are met here for is to ascertain if this man's charge is sufficiently clear to excuse him for keeping his children from school: and also, to investigate if these charges of cruelty are well founded. (Mr McPherson) – But where is the matter to end if you are to take up every charge made?

Editorial Comment December 1882:

Since the passing of the Educational Act, every year had brought educational affairs more and more into public notice. The doings of School Boards and the doings of teachers are an every-day piece of news. The one time it is some eccentric performance on the part of a School Board, and the next the severity of a "dominie" on the "pow" of some wayward pupil, or the dissatisfaction of some parents toward a teacher. Even the quiet parish of Comrie is not exempt from this peculiar order of things. On Monday last the School Board of that parish met and had a field day "Redding" up matter in the directions referred to. In the far-famed "lone Glenartney," which is now more to the rearing of deer than human beings, the few inhabitants there are dissatisfied with their teacher. It is somewhat difficult to understand the real cause of dissatisfaction. Certainly, the statements given in the petition submitted to the Board are not satisfactory reasons for the teacher's dismissal. There may, however, be other reasons under the head of want of confidence which may be just ground for such dismissal; and the majority of the Board who have decided to dismiss her are likely to be the best judges. At the same time, we think a less severe decision might have been come to for any offence or error committed, especially in the case of a lady long been acknowledged a good teacher.

Looks like nothing ever changes.



The Old Crock – June 2023

Continued next Month.

Charges against the local schoolmaster (part 2)

Parochial School Board Meeting at St. Fillans

It being remarked that the board could end the matter when it thought fit, the examination of the boy Dow was proceeded with. He further stated that he had seen a boy named John McFarlane struck more than once by the teacher with his fist. He was struck for making mistakes in his reading. He did not see him strike any other boy.

John McFarlane aged nine, (son of George McFarlane, grocer, St. Fillans), corroborated generally the evidence of the previous witness as to the boy Carmichael being struck by the schoolmaster for not doing his “coonts” correctly. Witness also stated that he himself had also been struck “a good lot o’ times” because he “couldna say his spelling, and sometimes for misbehaving,” and not been able to do his “coonts.” Witness further stated that Carmichael fell when he was struck, and that the teacher pulled him by the hair of the head. His father had told him to come here that day, but no one had told him what to say. There were other boys who were punished for not having their lessons Donald Dow and Robert McLaren. (Q.) The master seemed to strike you all when you had not your lessons. (A.) Yes. (Q.) Whether would you rather have the tawse or the fist? (A’) Tawse. He recollected of John Carmichaels nose bleeding in school. The master had struck him on the cheek but did not see him struck on the nose. Carmichael, senior here stated that his boy had bled from the “licking” he had received on the head, and his shirt was all splattered with blood.

The boy Carmichael, aged 9 years, was then examined, and stated that he had been struck more than once on the head and knocked down by the teacher with his shut fist, the last time being two days before he left school. The reason was he could not do his “coonts” The teacher also pulled some of his hair and threw it in the fire.

Carmichael senior stated that John Graham the Officer had been up from Comrie and seen the state the boy was in and had "run away home with the fright he got" which he could tell the board. The whole of his (Carmichael's) children were abused by the teacher. (Mr McPherson) – How has he abused your children more than any others? (Carmichael) – There were others abused as well. (Mr McPherson) – During the time of former teachers here, did you not make complaints against them as well? (Carmichael) – No, never.

The Chairman – Mr McLaren you should know something about the school. Tell us what you know. (Mr McLaren) – was understood to say that he knew little or nothing about it. (Chairman) – You are on the spot, and you know what was going on. (Mr McLaren) – made no distinct answer. (Mr McPherson) – It will be merely by hearsay evidence we will get from Mr McLaren.

Mr Kay said that some time ago when he was at St. Fillans at a funeral, he was told that Peter Carmichael and George McFarlane had made up their minds not to send their children any more to the school there, owing to the harshness of the teacher. He (Mr Kay) told them that he could not take up their complaint in this informal way; that it must come before the Board in a proper form. They then said they would not send their children to school, which would cause the Board to summon them, and thus bring up their complaints as well. Mr Roberson also referred to complaints made to him by McFarlane. (Chairman) – I have heard it said that some pressure has been brought to bear on McFarlane to withdraw his charges.

Mr McLaren said that from what he had heard six months ago, he thought the teacher was rather severe, and he spoke to Mr McPherson to use his influence with him against his severity. He also spoke to the Rev Mr Armstrong (who was present), but he said he was not a member of the Board and had therefore nothing to do with the matter. (Mr McPherson) – If he had kept to the tawse the chastisement would not have been severe. (Mr McLaren) – thought that, considering the small number of children, Mr Silver ought to have no difficulty in keeping them in order with less severe chastisement than he had been using. (The Chairman) – said that formerly the teacher had received strict injunctions not to use the rod, but the tawse, in punishing the children.

Mr Silver was then called in, and the evidence having been read to him, he said that in several particulars, which he pointed out, it was not true, and that some of the statements referred to part of the period before he received the instructions of the Board only to use the tawse, and that he had never used his clenched fist, but simply his open hand; and further he was unable to get the tawse for a fortnight after he received the Board's letter. Since then, however, he had used nothing but the tawse.

In the course of some discussion on the use of the tawse, it was pointed out that it was perfectly possible to be unduly harsh with the use of the tawse on the hand. Seeing that was so,

a member asked, where were they to draw the line? For it was necessary to keep up the discipline of the school. Then again if boys refused to hold up their hands to be punished, what was a teacher to do? To which one of the members replied – “take down their breeks” – (laughter) – an operation which he recommended should be adopted by the teacher. After some further remarks, the Board agreed to take no further proceedings in the case but enjoined the teacher not to be unduly severe in his discipline, and only use the tawse.

At the close of the meeting the mother of the boy Carmichael entered the room and made a violent harangue against Mr McPherson for his interference in the case.

Could it be that Boards will shortly insist that we provide funds for “sweeties” and “candy” to be used by teachers to coax the unruly children into better behaviour?

(Peter Carmichael was a ‘Carter and local Post Man’ who lived in Ivecote, beside the new church, with his wife Catherine McDonald and their family Annie, Morrow, Findlay, Catherine & John. Peter Carmichael had a reputation for being bad tempered having fallen out with the minister Mr Armstrong on a number of occasions including destroying several of his bee hives, and his vegetable patch while under the influence of drink, he was also charged with causing his horse undue suffering by beating it on a number of occasions.) David Silver was the local schoolmaster from 4th September 1874 until 9th August 1888, he was responsible for the move to the new school in station road in 1876, during his time in St Fillans there were on average thirty-two children in attendance.

The Old Crock – July 2023

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### ***Fire at Ault-an-Fhionn***

#### ***Crieff Woman’s Suffrage Society – Non-Party – Non-Militant***

Letter to the Editor – Strathearn Herald

Sir – In view of the recent outrages in this district, I beg in the name of the above society, to repudiate all connection with the tactics of the Militant Suffragettes, and to draw attention to the purely constitutional methods by which we seek to attain our end. We regret these outrages, perhaps more keenly than anyone else, as they so seriously injure our cause among those who do not distinguish between the few militants and the many non-militant Suffragettes. I may add that there is no cause, not even Christianity itself, which misguided zealots have not sought to propagate by violence. – I am, etc.

C. J. Kinghorn – Hon. Secretary – C. W. S. S. February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914

## ***Strathearn Mansions set on Fire by Suffragettes***

### ***House of Ross – Allt-an-Fhionn – Totally destroyed – Aberuchill Castle – fired.***

A great sensation and widespread consternation were created in Crieff, Comrie, St Fillans and other districts of Strathearn on Wednesday last, when it became known that three mansions had been set on fire, and that two had been completely destroyed. While the historic old Castle of Aberuchill was saved from sharing a similar fate. There can be little doubt that the wholesale fire-raising is the work of the militant Suffragettes; indeed, all the circumstances attending the fires point to the fact that the outrages are the work of these misguided women, who adopt such startling methods to advance their claims to the suffrage. Any dubiety to this point seems dispelled by the fact that compromising literature was discovered around each of the buildings, while there was found at one of these a piece of paper with the words written there-on – “a warm welcome to Lloyd George.”

The damage done included the total destruction of the House of Ross, a large mansion erected a few years ago, and belonging to Mrs Douglas MacLagan, Eaton Terrace, Edinburgh, and another large villa residence at the west end of St Fillans, the property of Mr. & Mrs. P. J. Stirling Boyd, Magdala Place, Edinburgh, and the damage done to Aberuchill Castle, belonging to Mr. G. L. C. Dewhurst, all of which will involve a sum of £10.000 to £12.000.



*Ault-an-Fhionn*

At St Fillans, Ault-an-Fhionn (*Gaelic for “the murmuring burn”*) the beautifully situated mansion house built in 1904, was totally destroyed and not a stick of furniture saved. Mrs. Stirling Boyd had been for a number of years Chair of the Edinburgh anti-suffrage league; she was also the secretary of the Edinburgh children’s holiday fund and during her term in office was responsible for sending upwards of 60,000 children for a holiday in the countryside. She was also founder of the Tired Mothers Home.



*Mrs. Stirling Boyd*

The outbreak here was first discovered by Mr. Murdoch Nicholson, Tenant of Ardrostan Farm on the opposite side of the loch, who at about five o'clock in the morning, noticed flames leaping from the roof of the house, and casting weird shadows across the turgid waters. He immediately gave the alarm to his daughter, who, hastily dressed, mounted a bicycle and hastened round the shores of Loch Earn to St Fillans, and there aroused Mr Walter Duff, the gardener and caretaker of the house, who resided about a mile from the property, the village police officer was also made acquainted with the situation. Mr Duff before leaving for the property sent information to the Crieff fire-brigade but for some reason or other his request was declined, and the brigade only made an appearance on the scene at 11.10 am. Having, with fire-engine and two horses, been conveyed to the village by train, and arriving too late to be of any practical assistance. It was here that several items of literature were found including references to the 'Cat and Mouse' act. Damage was estimated at between £3.000 and £4.000.

### ***Strange Women at St Fillans***

It may furnish a clue to the miscreants that four women; apparently strangers arrived by the mid-day train at St Fillans on Tuesday. On emerging from the station on to the main road, the women parted company, two going eastward whilst the other two turned westward proceeding through the village.

In connection with the three fires, a woman was arrested in Glasgow on Thursday on suspicion of being implicated in the outbreaks. At the Central Police Court, the same day, a middle-aged woman, of respectable appearance, giving the name of Rhoda Robertson, was remitted to the Sheriff Court at Dunblane charged with wilful fire-raising. She was held in custody at Perth General Prison for seven days before being released on bail of £800 lodged by a firm of Solicitors from Glasgow. Her release was carried out very discreetly when her solicitor accompanied by Mr. William McGillivray, Sheriff Clerk, for Dunblane, proceeded to the prison and lodged the necessary paperwork. A few minutes after two ladies drove up in a cab and were admitted and met Miss. Robertson who appeared in excellent spirits and good health. The three ladies entered the cab and drove to the residence of a friend in the city, where a short

stay was made. Miss Robertson then proceeded to the station and travelled; it was understood to Glasgow.

In another instance various combustibles were found at Dalveich, a residence about five miles to the west of St Fillans, apparently, however this attempt at arson had either failed, or the miscreants had been disturbed in their operation.

### ***The Old Crock – August 2023***

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Memories linger on

In September 1977 the St Fillans residents association, handed over its papers and duties to the newly created Community Council. After fifty years work, the members saw little point in running alongside the new body and bowed out gracefully, at the same time handing over its funds to the Sandison Library Hall.

It had led a busy life. Created on 29th September 1929, it undertook the important task of protecting the interests of the villagers – and even led the way in securing a Community Council after the reorganization of local government.

It was the amenities committee of the Sandison Hall, under the chairmanship of Mr James Burtinshaw, the hall curator that called the meeting, during which a committee of three ladies and four gentlemen was formed. The first chairman was Mr Russell of the local Post Office.

They held their first meeting on 3rd October in the Sandison Library, the hall curators started their funds with a £5 donation.

The records kept faithfully throughout the years by the committee and subsequent association read almost like a recent history of the village itself. For example:

In April, the following year a car park was opened in Station Road, motorists paying one shilling a day. A local received 4p commission; the bus company paid £3 a year subscription. In the same month, the amenities committee wound up and handed their funds £76 11s 1d – to the village committee. From the funds they contributed ten bob a year towards the twice weekly emptying of the litter bins. The committee also paid £50 towards the cost of the new toilets situated at the corner of the loch on the south side road.

The Earl of Ancaster agreed to replant trees on Neish Island to replace those burnt by lightning in 1931. The Crocodile was kept spic and span by the Gibson family; records over the years indicate that the paint was supplied by a company from Perth.

In May thirty-four the scavenging arrangements were altered but only after vigorous protests that the old system was perfectly adequate; and the new arrangements meant another sixpence on the rates.

The following year the community celebrated the Kings Silver Jubilee, the children enjoying a grand tea; each one receiving a Jubilee mug; there were sports in the field behind the war memorial, fireworks, and a bonfire on the south side of the loch, a fancy dress and dance in the hall.

And just two years later to the month the local authorities gave each scholar a box of chocolates or fountain pen to celebrate the coronation on the 12th. One resident gave each child under school age a box of chocolates, while another gave each child in the parish a Coronation Mug, yet another entertained all the children to afternoon tea, and the Village Committee gave them brooches or medals. Again, there was a fancy dress dance in the hall.

VJ day was celebrated in no uncertain manner, with a bonfire, sports and tea and a dance in the evening. That same year 1945, the villagers held a service of thanksgiving in the Parish Church, followed by a whist drive and dance in the Hall.

In November two years later the memorial plate to the war dead was unveiled by Mrs McIntosh, the service being conducted by the Rev D McLaren, Major Stewart of Ardvorlich addressed the gathering. The plate was a gift from the residents, but in 1948 the memorial was damaged by vandals.

In 1950 electric lights came to the village; fourteen in all, although not everyone was in favour of them. In fact, a vote was taken forty were in favour and sixteen against. The lights put another sixpence on the rates. (Nine years later another fourteen were added)

In 1953 Queen Elizabeth's coronation was celebrated in June, with sports on the golf course, along with a special tea, and again a bonfire on the south side of the loch, there were mugs filled with sweets for the children & fancy dress parade and dance in the hall.

In 1959 the same year as the start of the Hydro Scheme it was noted that there had been no water available at the war memorial since 1949, and the committee took this up with the county council. *(Like so many other issues we are still awaiting a reply)*

Four years later after much deliberation a new site for the public toilets was agreed upon by the local residents. *(It wasn't until 1970 that this work was eventually completed)*

By 1965 the committee were ready to hand over to the new St Fillans Residents Association, and duly handed over all their records and funds.

In May 1966, the travelling county library took over the library duties and the residents got together to show appreciation to Miss Menzies who had been librarian for many years, presenting her with a transistor radio.

The next year saw a footpath laid from Littleport to Dundurn Bridge, and the village was surveyed for a new sewage scheme, the first phase was completed in 1971.

The first concessionary bus tickets were distributed in the village in 1974, then of course came the reorganisation of local authorities. In January of that year a meeting was held by the association in the Hall to look into the formation of our own Community Council. By February of the following year the villagers had formed a steering committee to negotiate with the new local authorities. Two months later the villagers approved the committee's community council application, and it went to the District Council of 24th May: In February 1977 they finally got what they wanted - their own Community council: elections were duly held, and the first council elected. There were thirteen nominations for the six seats. The successful candidates were Mrs Shepherd, Mrs Vance, and Messrs Baxter, McIntyre, and McNaughton.

On August 29th, a special general meeting was held in the Hall to wind up the association and hand over to The Community Council.

The last official entry in the association minutes after that meeting, read: The committee of Mr W J McIntyre (chairman) Mr D Thomson (secretary) and Mr A Turnbull (treasurer) standing down to make way for the new representatives of the village.

(One of the last items discussed by the association was the ongoing problem with speeding in the village. And one of the first items carried forward by the then community council was speeding. And 46 years later at every Council meeting I have attended we are still discussing speeding! It's nothing but promises, promises, promises, from both the police and local authorities, but sadly no action). While I am aware that local government is sometimes slow to act or are they just trying to take the 'P' out of St Fillans.

Legs crossed in anticipation.



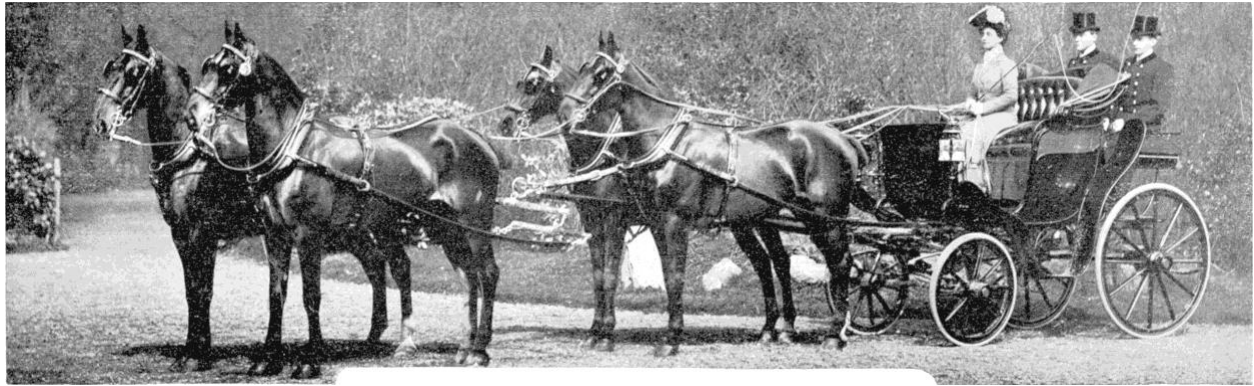
Legs crossed

The Old Crock – September - 2023

A practical joke Wednesday 7th July 1897

The annual drive of the members of the Crieff four in hand club took place today to St Fillans, where, in view of the circumstances, rather an amusing joke was perpetrated. The company having provided themselves with a barrow and spade, proceeded to the field behind the St Fillans Hotel, where the Lochearnhead, St Fillans and Comrie railway is to pass, and there went through the ceremony of “cutting the first sod” of the railway. Amid general laughter one of the orators of the Club previous to the turf being cut expatiated on the great benefits and blessings which the new railway would confer upon the inhabitants and district. The leader of the company thereafter proceeded in genuine navy fashion to cut the first sod, place it in the barrow, and, hurling it along a short distance, emptied it over amid much merriment and cheering, the company afterwards singing the National Anthem and “Rule Britannia”. The spade used on the occasion was draped in the national colours and the Union Jack floated over the spot where the ceremony took place. Meanwhile a telegram was dispatched to Colonel Williamson of Lawers in the House of Commons Committee-room, where the evidence in connection with the railway bill was being heard, announcing that the first turf of the proposed railway had been cut amid great rejoicing. A return was thereafter made to the hotel, and there the ceremony of presenting “the Freedom of the City” of St Fillans, amidst further amusement was conferred on the distinguished gentleman who had performed the cutting of the sod, the

“keys of the city” being duly placed in a “casket” and handed over to him amid great merriment. Next morning a telegraphic reply was received from Colonel Williamson by the President of the club (Mr. Scott) stating that the club’s telegram had greatly cheered and amused them, and that they hoped to win their case. On Thursday night the Colonel again wired that the Bill had passed.



Sadly, this will be my last rambling from Dundurn; and while I have greatly enjoyed researching my monthly contributions it would now appear that St Fillans no longer has an appetite to share stories with our neighbours. I personally regret this but as you will gather from my picture while you can lead a horse to water you can’t make it drink.

The Old Crock – October 2023

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### ***Some that Got Away***

#### **The Punishment Fits the Crime**

Over a hundred years ago in the days when we had an effective police force, it would appear that not only were Officers able to apprehend offenders but also have them prosecuted swiftly. None of today’s soft touch approach; it was - ‘pay the fine or do the time.’ Below are just a few examples from the Old Sheriff Court Records.

#### Day Poaching - 1882

In the Sheriff Court, Dunblane, on Wednesday, before Sheriff Grahame, John McGregor, a young lad residing at Tynadallach, in the parish of Comrie, was charged with having on 3rd January last (1882) trespassed in pursuit of game on Stronengerich Hill, forming part of the farm of Glenbeich, the property of the Earl of Breadalbane. He pleaded guilty and was fined 10/- with £1 16s 6d of expenses, or fourteen days imprisonment.

#### Tap Room Brawl - 1883

Frank M'Kendrick, labourer, residing at St Fillans, was charged before Sheriff Grahame at the Perth Criminal Court, with on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 1883 having created a disturbance in the taproom of the St Fillans Hotel by quarrelling and fighting with three other men. M'Kendrick who had been four times previously convicted, was ordered to pay 30/- or suffer a month's imprisonment. Hugh Hastie and Teddy Crow, labourers, were charged with having on Monday, maliciously thrown a water jug and a tumbler through the window of the taproom at the St Fillans Hotel, whereby three panes of glass in the window and a tumbler were broken. They were also charged with breach of the piece. Hastie had been previously convicted of malicious mischief and breach of the piece, and Crow of malicious mischief. After evidence, the charge was found proved, and they were each ordered to pay a fine of £2 or suffer a month's imprisonment.

#### Illegal Grouse Shooting near St Fillans - 1887

On Monday, at Dunblane Sheriff Court, Sheriff Substitute Thomson on the bench, Peter McPherson, Tailor, Dalveich, near Comrie, pleaded to the charge of having on the eleventh day of August, contravened section 1 of the act 13 George 111. , chapter 54 by having in his possession on the public road leading from St Fillans to Lochearnhead, near to Ardveich farm buildings, 18 ½ brace of muirfowl, whereby he became liable to a penalty of £5 for each bird, or suffer imprisonment for two months for each £5 sterling of penalty. The Sheriff Substitute in passing sentence said the offence to which the prisoner had pleaded guilty was at the time the act was passed regarded as a very grave one. Since the act was passed the property in Grouse had become more valuable than ever before, far larger sums were now paid for the privilege of shooting and greater prices were got when birds were sent to market. Luckily for the prisoner the court now had the powers under the Act of 1881 to restrict the penalty. The fine would be limited to £18 10s being ten shillings for each bird, or one tenth of the whole statutory penalty, or, failing payment within 10 days, to imprisonment of two months. The grouse were handed back to the prisoner.

#### Cruelty to a Mare - 1892

At Perth yesterday – before Sheriff Grahame – Peter Carmichael, Contractor, Ivy Cote, St. Fillans, was charged at the instance of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals with having on the road at St Fillans, parish of Comrie, on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1892, cruelly ill-treated a mare by causing it to draw a cart loaded with stones while the animal was suffering from lameness in both fore-feet, Carmichael pled guilty, remarking that he was ignorant of the law. Mr. Boyes, Deputy-procurator-fiscal, said this was a very bad case. The mare was so lame that it had to stop every few yards, Carmichael – that’s going to far, Sir. Mr. Boyes said that Carmichael after being cautioned by a Constable continued to work the mare. The Sheriff said this seemed to be a deliberate act of cruelty, as the mare was suffering from chronic disease. Carmichael remarked that it was very hard for a poor man who was trying to bring up a family to be brought into Court in a case of this kind. A fine of 30/- was imposed, with the option of one month’s imprisonment. Carmichael (addressing the court) – “Good-bye and thank you all” turning to Mr. Mitchell an officer of the society, he added – “but I don’t thank you.”

Carmichael was to appear before the court again several years later, when he was accused of maliciously kicking over a Beehive in his neighbour the Rev Thomas Armstrong’s Garden. On this occasion a fine of 10/- was imposed.

#### Housebreaking – 1893

10<sup>th</sup> June – The police have apprehended a stone-breaker Robert Stewart, who it is alleged broke into Ancaster Villa, the shooting lodge of Mr. Radcliffe, and removed eighteen bottles of wine. The lodge is not occupied during the winter months, and the theft had been going on for some time.

#### Disorderliness – 1895

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September – John Gibson, vagrant, and John Rafferty, labourer, pleaded guilty – before Sheriff Grahame at Perth today, to having created a disturbance at St Fillans on Saturday. Ten previous convictions were libelled against Gibson, who is a decrepit old man, while Rafferty has been six times before various Courts on similar charges. Mr. Melville Jameson the Procurator Fiscal said that small fines seemed to have almost no effect, whereas sixty day’s imprisonment seems to have improved them. A fine of thirtyshillings was imposed with the alternative of a month’s imprisonment was imposed on each.

#### Breach of the Peace - 1897

On Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January 1897, at the Sheriff Court yesterday – Hon Sheriff Substitute Souter on the bench, Thomas Leonard and Wm. Fernie, labourers, were charged with committing a breach of the peace at West Lodge, Dunira and at the farm steading of Kindrochat, St Fillans on

Tuesday. They pleaded guilty, and were each fined fifteenshillings, with the option of ten days imprisonment.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1897, Catherine Maconachie or Young, outworker, was charged before Sheriff Grahame at Perth, with having, on the public road near the Drummond Arms Hotel, St Fillans, occupied by James Carmichael, committed a breach of the peace on 28th October, she pleaded guilty, and was fined 15/- with the option of ten days imprisonment.

#### Theft of Gold Watch - 1899

9<sup>th</sup> June 1899, at Perth Sheriff Court, Sheriff Grahame on the bench, Margaret Robertson, or McDonald, was charged with having on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May from the house at St Fillans belonging to Peter McIntyre, retired Grocer, stolen a gold watch with silver chain. There were six previous convictions against her, and she was sentenced to four months imprisonment.

#### *The Old Crock*

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Counterfeit Coins

April 1877, as two little girls belonging to St Fillans were amusing themselves near the village by the side of Loch Earn one day, they found a few shillings in loose silver lying amongst the grass. In the scramble for the possession of the coins more was discovered in a hole in the ground where it had evidently been hidden. In all £3 fourteen shillings was found. The joy of the girls at their newfound wealth was, however, short-lived, for on examination by grownups, the money was found to be counterfeit. The explanation of the discovery appeared to be that a number of years previous a husband and wife were arrested at Lochearnhead for passing bad money at St Fillans, and were sentenced to transportation, and it was thought this was where here had hidden a number of their coins.

In September 1866, James Wilson, an old white-haired man and Elizabeth Roy his wife from the prison in Perth were charged with 'uttering base coin' in premises at St Fillans, occupied by John Jaffrey, senior grocer, on 29th March, that they wickedly and feloniously tendered, uttered, or put of a false or counterfeit coin, resembling or apparently intended to resemble, or pass for a shilling piece of the Queens silver coin, that knowing the same to be false or counterfeit, by tendering it as genuine to Margaret Harrower or Jaffrey in payment for half-a-pound of sugar, they received the balance in change; also on the same date, in the Drummond Arms Hotel, St

Fillans, occupied by John George Bishop, tendered a counterfeit coin resembling a shilling in payment for a gill of whisky. The charge was aggravated against the male prisoner by his having been five times previously convicted of a similar offence.

Mr Campbell speaking in defence, made various objections to the relevance of the indictment, one of which was, that the latter section appeared to embrace what was contained in the former section, and looked like charging a man with murder and then with culpable homicide.

The court however, overruled the objections. The prisoners both pleaded not guilty, and the case went to trial.

Margaret Jaffrey stated that “she remembered that on 29th March of a hawker woman coming into my shop (*Earn Grove*) and asking for half-a-pound of sugar. She was supplied. The price of the sugar was 3d. She gave me a shilling, and I returned the change. I put the money into a cap in which I usually keep my money. After I gave her the change there were a sixpence and four pence piece left in the cap. Shortly after the woman had gone, I remembered of seeing her with a handful of silver money, and I thought it was curious, which led me to go and look at the shilling I had got from her. No person had seen or touched the shilling during the interval. The time that elapsed was between ten and fifteen minutes. I thought the coin was suspicious like, and sent my boy with it to his father, to ask if it was a good one. I met the boy coming back, and he told me that his father said it was a bad shilling. I then went to my husband myself and asked him about it he said it was a bad piece.” She then stated that she had then met Mr Bishop and told him about the shilling, and he told me that something remarkably similar had happened to him; that he had followed the woman and got a good shilling for the bad one. I then overtook the woman on the road. The male prisoner was with her. I asked what she meant by giving people bad money? She said it might have been bad and offered me a good shilling for it. I would not take the shilling and said I would see about it. The man then offered me twoshillings if I would say no more about it; but I refused this also. The police officer was sent for, and the prisoners taken into custody.

John Jeffrey, son of the first witness spoke to carrying a ‘bad shilling’ to his father, and as to the whereabouts of the prisoners. This witness who was only ten years of age, gave his evidence with much distinctness, and was highly complimented by Lord Cowan in the course of his charge.

John Jeffrey, grocer, stated that the male prisoner first offered him five shillings to say no more about the matter, and then two sovereigns as a sort of guarantee that if he went away, he would not come back again. When they came back to the inn, the female prisoner sang a song. They had some drink – witness took a glass, and the male prisoner paid for it.

(John Jeffrey had retired to St Fillans in 1862 from Lochearnhead where he had been a Sergeant in the Police force. Shortly after this incident the family returned to Lochearnhead where he became a Toll keeper.)

John George Bishop lately innkeeper at St Fillans, now residing at 264 Oxford Street, London, stated that “he went in search of the male prisoner on discovering that the shilling he had paid his wife was bad. He overtook him on the road and told him that he had given him a bad shilling. The prisoner said he would give him a good one. Witness then broke the bad shilling in two and through it on the road and said he could do anything he liked with it. He thought it had been innocently done and allowed the man to go. He afterwards went to search for the broken pieces of money he had thrown on the road but could not find them.”

His Wife Catherine Adie was called next and corroborated her husband’s evidence.

(John Bishop and his wife Catherine were working for Lord Gwydyr at Grimsthorpe Castle in 1861 they married at Westminster in 1862, John’s father was an innkeeper in Isleworth, and may have financed their Scottish adventure, they took over the Inn at St Fillans in 1864 but their ambitions were short lived they went into sequestration in February 1866 and returned south. Catherine Adie his wife was born in Muthill where her father was gatekeeper at the west Lodge, Drummond Castle, where she was a domestic servant in 1851.)

Regarding the fate of John Wilson, and Elizabeth Roy: After an absence of only a quarter of an hour, the jury returned a verdict of guilty by a majority of 9 to 6, but strongly recommended them to the leniency of the court.

After a few remarks in mitigation of sentence, Lord Cowan (addressing the male prisoner) said – You are a very old offender in reference to uttering of base and counterfeit coin, I am sure that everyone must feel the heartless character of this offence, since there are means by it of getting the good property of shopkeepers in villages, for coins given in exchange for the small things you have purchased. But unhappily for you, besides the charged in this indictment I hold in my hand a conviction in April 1852, under which you suffered 12 months, and one in 1856 for eight months imprisonment. Then, in November 1861, you are again charged and get 12 months imprisonment; and then again you turn up at the Circuit Court and there get 18 months. You are no sooner out than you commit these offences again, and in April 1862 you get three years penal servitude. Therefore you are grown old in crime, I am very sorry for you, I am very sorry to see an old man like you placed in the position you are in; but more than respect for your age we cannot give – that is a consideration the government alone can give. We as a court sitting there, must pronounce such a sentence as will deter others, of whatever age, from committing such offences – and the sentence of this court is that you suffer penal servitude for ten years. Addressing the female prisoner, his Lordship said, that though she had been found

guilty, still, this being her first offence, the sentence did not require to be so heavy, and as she had already been imprisoned for six months, the sentence of the court was that she be further subject to prison for a further nine months.

The Old Crock

1953 - £93,829 pools winner vanishes



Soon after learning that he had won £93,829 on the football pools, the cocktail bartender at the Drummond Arms Hotel, St Fillans, vanished early yesterday. The Manager at the Hotel, Mr Peters, said that the bartender Mr John Abernethy, a 29-year-old bachelor, was “trying to hide” A seat was booked for Mr Abernethy on the midday plane from Glasgow to London yesterday, but was cancelled half-an-hour before the plane was due to take off.

The Manager said that at 1am a car called at the hotel and Mr Abernethy went off in it. “When he heard the news of his fortune, there was only one thing for him to do ~ to vanish, he told me he was going, but I don’t know where.” Apart from a first dividend of £75,000; and a second of £18,347; – both for 6d – Mr Abernethy got third and forth dividends; totalling £482 - His total stake

was 7s 6d.

John the plump jolly bartender was well liked in the village but could not sleep a wink after checking his pools on Saturday night. But over the weekend it was ‘business as usual’ despite his win. He was originally from Fort Augustus, near Inverness. And prior to arriving at St Fillans, had been employed by the Forestry Commission.

1995 - St Fillans Primary School

St Fillans Duo win award for video diary



Alistair Spearing and Alistair Milne who are both in Primary seven are to have their video diary which they made last September shown on the STV's programme 'Skoosh' on Sunday 8th May.

They won the award jointly with another school for the best Video Diary in the present series.

For winning the award they will both receive an all-expenses weekend at Aviemore with their families

Dundurn Walk Development –

Work stopped temporarily for fear of disturbing the fairies!

Fairies stop developers' bulldozers – November 2005



The Fairy Stone

Villagers living in St Fillans, Perthshire, have halted a new housing development because it would harm a small colony of fairies, believed to live beneath a rock in the middle of the affected field, Marcus Salter, head of Genesis Properties, told the newspaper that when his diggers moved to a site on the outskirts of the village, on the eastern shore of Loch Earn, a neighbour came over shouting, don't move that rock, you'll kill the fairies.

Mr Salter assumed he was dealing with a small minority of villagers opposed to the development, but we got a series of phone calls, saying we were disturbing the fairies. I thought they were joking. That didn't go down very well, Mr Salter said. He then went to a meeting of the Community Council, and it was clear that concern for the fairies was widespread and serious enough to halt the development. Jeanie Fox, council chairman, said, I do believe in

fairies, but I can't be sure they live under that rock. I have been told that the rock has historic importance, that kings were crowned upon it. Her main objection to moving the rock was based on the fact that it had stood on the hillside for so long. There are a lot of superstitions going about up here and people do believe that things like standing stones and large rocks should never be moved, she said. Apparently, the significance of the rock as a home of the fairies had been handed down by word of mouth for centuries: A lot of people think the rock had some Pictish meaning,

Mrs Fox said it would be extremely unlucky to move it.

The planning inspectorate has no specific guidelines on fairies, but a spokesman said: Planning guidance states that local customs and beliefs must be taken into account when a developer applies for planning permission. Mr Salter, the developer, has now agreed to redesign the housing estate, to leave the rock in its original location.

The Old Crock – December 2023