

‘Correspondence from the Past’



In an age of instant messaging and ephemeral communication, there is something profoundly moving about words that travel not just across distance, but through time itself. Around the world, letters written decades ago continue to emerge from forgotten attics, sealed walls, recovered shipwrecks, and renovated homes—finding their way to astonished recipients who never expected to receive them. These time-travelling messages create unique bridges between past and present, offering intimate glimpses into history and generating powerful emotional connections across generations.

From wartime correspondence delivered 70 years late to childhood time capsules unearthed during construction projects, these unexpected discoveries remind us of the enduring power of written words and the remarkable journeys they sometimes take to reach their intended destinations.

Extract from Miss Margaret Wright's Journal:

Wednesday, - All active soon after seven. Aghast to find it a wet day. It, however, cleared up. Nine was the hour we were to meet at the M'Comish's, (The Distillery) to set out. All punctual but our conveyance. He (the driver) had to go back and put the saddle on for himself to ride, which hindered us sadly. However, at last we did set off, the gig party off long before. J. Gowans and W. M'Comish hung about our coach expecting to be taken in. Had been disappointed in a cart. It ended at last in our taking W. M'Comish. Two or three little showers on the road, but altogether a delightful ride, and such another gay lively road as it was; am sure we passed 100 carts, all filled with people dressed in their best, besides other conveyances. Had a delightful ride. Arrived at last at the foot of Loch Earn. A new village built since I was there before, called St Fillans. The houses all have neat little flower plots before the doors. A decent-like Inn. Tents covered with blanket meant for the members of the said Highland Society to dine in. We were a good while there before anything was done, till the different chiefs arrived. The first was the Ardvorlich family in a boat down the lake. Received with plenty of piping. Abercairney came then, and Lord Molyneux, the eldest son of Earl Sefton. He is just now at Drummond Castle. He represents Lord Gwydyr. The competition for the best pipe playing commenced then. A kind of stage was erected for the dancers, and forms round for the ladies to sit. We accordingly all got places, and were about deafened with the pipes. Terrible showers of rain came, which made us run to the covered tents. In that way lost our places, which we could not regain. At last all our party got on the head of the noddy beside Mrs. Tainsh. Heard the singing of the Gaelic songs, not by any means good. Her, Mrs. T., on great restraint on being so near Sir P and Lady Mary Murray's carriage. What lovely girls their daughters. Is a very great display of genteel people there. They all went to another place to throw the putting-stone. In coming down off the noddy my petticoats caught it, and had it not been W M'Comish, I might have been killed. Tore my good bombazine petticoat. Joined by another party. Went into a cottage and drank wine and ate biscuit. Our coachman had by this time drawn our carriage up to the stage, and we all got on the dicky and top to see the dancing. Sp – e shut the coach-door on my hand. Bled my fingers sadly. He was so distressed about it, poor thing. Sat in agony, not so much from that as from fear of falling, it being so much to one side-the coach. Did not see the dancing well. Donald M'Comish exhibited. Jessie in such a state at him for doing so. He is a bad dancer. But otherwise looked very well, and his dress fully as handsome as any there. I was glad enough when it was over. Came all down safe. Went in search of a place to dine in. Invited into a house by a maid of Mrs. Barlas to her house, and took our dinner much more comfortable there than on the wet grass, and had plenty of everything. Twelve of us altogether. Wished D M'O in too, and the young man that was with him, but they would not come. After, went out to look at the company at dinner in the tent. Walked round them. Young Stewart of Ardvorlich, at the head, supported by Abercairney on one hand and Lord Molyneux on the other. Young Drummond of Strageath, at the bottom of the table. After seeing all this we went in search of our conveyance. However, found Mr. Turnbull was to go to Lochearnhead with M'C---ts, and take the gig, so there would be a pretty set to go home in the coach. Put Jessie in such a state about getting Christy home with Dannie in the gig. Flew up the side of the lake seeking him. Met him and his companion coming down in the gig. Each had his lass on his knee. Dannie had Miss Guild, so mortifying for them to have to dismount. It was changed after. Willy went in the gig and Christy to go with us in the coach. After a great deal of discussion we did get off. Christy and me on the Dicky. Mrs. Murray, Miss Mackenzie, Jessie M'O., and my two sisters of course, it was well filled. Just dark before we arrived. All down to Mrs. Murray's to tea. Nine o'clock. Miss Can had it so comfortable. So glad of my feet warming. Very cold up on the Dicky. Those inside in such a heat. Mr. Turnbull rode west on Mrs.

Murray's horse and lamed it. Could carry nobody home. Glad enough after all our hair-breadth escapades to be safe in our own house. Played at whist after.

Miss Wright. King Street, Crieff

(Margaret Wright's grandfather James Wright was a Smith who built the house which adjoined the Smithy. It had a block of stone bearing the emblems of the smith's trade – viz, a hammer, horse shoe and pincers. It bears the date 1736. The initials J.W., a scotch thistle, and a royal crown. This smithy and house were acquired by the local authorities in 1898, and the Crieff police station was built on the site – the stone being built into them above the private entrance.)

The Wright family were related to the Porteous family of Crieff.

Transcript of a letter to the honourable (Clementine Elphinstone) Lady Perth from Alexander Baxley; Dated *Monzieveird 14th September 1821*

Madam,

I have been prevented from obeying your ladyships commands till now by several circumstances which required my attention since I arrived here – Indeed being absent from the St. Fillans meeting, I could not write on the subject at all, till I got from those who were present at the meeting, an account not merely descriptive of the exhibition itself, but of the spirit which animated it. For this purpose I went soon after my arrival to the castle, to consult my good acquaintance Peter McArthur and obtain from him a minute & technical detail of the various joining's of the platform prepared for the dancers, 35feet x 20 – and of the wooden bridge of 65feet, both of which had with a an alacrity unprecedented, been erected by him in the course of two days. The bridge is thrown over the Earn exactly at the place it opens from its present lake: the platform Peter represents, to have been an uncommonly springy one; and he infers that the superiority of the dancing this season compared with the last was principally owing to his skill in constructing such a strong item. Whether it wd have met with the approbation of ‘The divine bigatini or sweet fanny bias’ is a question which would come more accurately to be described by Albert Des-Hayes or my Lord Fife than by Peter: it is certain however, that the highlanders were thoroughly pleased with it, and that it asked in no small degree the attention of their bronzed and muscular limbs.

At an early hour, the roads leading to St.Fillans were crowded, the toll roads as they are called with articles of all sorts, - from the gently barouche filled with ladies fair down to the humble farm cart. The gigs and shandrydams were engaged for weeks before by the genteeler sort of chaps from Crieff and the surrounds, and I am told that many an old article, that had served as a roosting place to several generations of chickens, was taken out of its dark shed and furbished up for the occasion, as it was necessary they said, to appear purpose like, as my lord was to be present.

Most of the men of mountain blood, disdaining all manner of conveyances, appeared from their glens on foot, each clan proceeded by a piper; and by their pairs in martial air, with their claymores drawn, formed a strong contrast to the lowlanders who were seen, plodding there weary way, by the more regular turnpikes.

Upwards of three thousand people had already arrived; some of whom had come from a great distance, and were refreshing themselves at the Inn with mountain dew and bottled porter (now a common drink in Scotland).

The various groups of lowlanders and highlanders would have formed admirable subjects for our immortal Wilkie – between 12 and 1 o'clock they proceeded along the wooden bridge to the scene of action, around which several parties had already stationed themselves.

The platform was situated in the hollow of a natural amphitheatre of fine old turf, and was surrounded by an outer roped ring, an improvement no doubt borrowed from the pugilistic exhibitions in England, which not only had the effect of preventing the pressures of the crowd on the competitors for the prizes, but offered room for the pedestrians, to seat themselves near it, while those in the back ground, easily overlooked them from their carriages.

The uncommon beauty and sublimity of the scenery around the spot where so many had met, to celebrate the manly sports of this country, gave to the whole, a most imposing effect.

On the west, lay a noble lake of seven miles in length, and upwards of one in breadth, skirted with copswood and surrounded by lofty mountains, some of which fall into the lake by an abrupt, others by a gentle declivity. On the east was seen nearly the same range, and a similar outline of mountains; only, instead of a lake we trace the river which has just left it, running in a quiet, tho clean alpine stream through a beautiful meadow, until it loses itself among isolated hills, which start up from the plain, in rugged and perpendicular splendour. Copse and creeping plants, still find in the crevices of the rocks, a little earth for their support. And adorn with their verdure, the scathed and barren rocks of these fantastic hills.

But, however much those objects of natural beauty might have disposed one to contemplation – the competition which now commenced, with shooting at a target, soon attracted the attention of everyone.

Lord Gnydir's silver cup value five guineas, was won by Donald McComish, younger son of McComish, distiller in Crieff. Donald is an enthusiastic highlander and may be distinguished by the passing traveller by the Rob-Roy-bonnet of prodigies' size. The wits of Crieff call him "the lad wi the bred bonnit": in the same way they may after the manner of Homer, give epithets to the rest of the successful competitors. Thus as well as Achilles, McNicol the shepherd of Ducheran in Glenorchy who gained the prize at the footrace may be styled the fleet footed Ducheran.

It would seem that there was a keen contest for the prize piper; value eight Guinness, which were awarded to William McFarlane, Glenartney.

It would appear that Pipers like poets, are rather of an irritable disposition, by them grumbling sadly at the performance given by successful candidate. The cognisant after hearing all the pipers with a gravity and importance fully equal to the Lord Chancellor gave their decision, after weighing their performances meticulously and dispassionately! – braving the bagpipes, despite any pretensions to comparison, with any musical instrument in Europe, it is still entitled to our highest regard. It is an instalment with which magnificent and patriotic ideas are allied, it is the medium by which the hearts of the finest people in the world, are warmed to deeds ----- and melted into affections, the most tender and refined.

The 2nd and 3rd prizes of a dirk and sporran Mollach -- ---- were awarded to Donald Gun & Alex Denar.

The footrace took place along the road on the north bank of the lake; and although seven runners started, it was won in grand style by McNicol a shepherd of Mr Peter McIntyre of Achinnara, he ran the mile in four minutes with the greatest apparent ease, and danced a reel immediately after, to the great amusement of the spectators. The prize was a sporran Mollach given by Lord Gnydir value £3. 3s Brown and Erskine gained the second and third prizes.

There were three prizes also awarded to the best thrower of the putting stone John Brown who gained first prize (Lord Gwydir's also) of a Snuff Mull, value three Guinness, although a man of low station, threw a stone 22 pound weight to a very uncommon distance. John McDonald and Donald Stuart took 2nd and 3rd prizes.

A Gaelic Bible was given to Hugh McQueen for a Gaelic song of his own composition. The same McNicol, who had gained the prize for running, gained the second prize for an original song also, N McDonald the 3rd.

Comrie the innkeeper at Comrie gained Lord Gwydir's Silver (prize) Buckles for dancing, and the whole of the day of entertainment was wound up by several reels, in which a great many joined.

The whole exhibition was wound up with a boat race on the lake, for Lord Gwydir's silver cup, value ten Guinness and was won after a hard struggle by Mr Peter McIntyre's boat. The spectator's, betted half musbkins of whiskey, as freely on the race as those who sport thousands at lawnmarket. Mr McIntyre's boat was brought from Greenock; the unsuccessful one was built by Captain McRae and was manned by island-bred highlanders. I had the pleasure of seeing the beautiful prize for the boat race, exhibited in a cupboard at Achinnara, among various tokens of Lord & Lady Gwydir's munificence.

The dinner provided for the society displayed the old baronial style of entertainment: everything plain and plenty of it: four magnificent haunches two of the red – 2 “shot in Glenartney's hazel shade” and two of the fallow species, together with game of every description, from the extensive lakes and moors and grounds of Perth estate – were presented by Lord Gwydir. – Dinner being delayed this late hour, it may be easily conceived, that the party, who sat down to it, were pretty well appetized, and that they had little desire to enter conversation “until the stage of eating was appeased”; as soon however as they were fairly brought to a standstill, and when, the frequent applications of mountain dew in its unsophisticated state had lost its power in wetting the appetite to a renewal of alacrity, the expediency of introducing toddy, was suggested by some of the trenchermen and sundry highland stragglers, were in consequence of their tried skill and great experience, elected to those honourable and ambitious situations and in a few minutes reeking bowls of toddy, enriched with numerous glasses adorned the board, now cleared of its finest cloth.

Miserable Cockneys! Can your adulterated bowls of Punchy (* is made of brandy and rum with lemon, sugar and hot water. I must own it is not all together to be sneezed at.) made by the inexperienced hand of some bar-maid, or your gin or brandy and water hot-with sugar be compared for a single moment, with the pure libations of highland whiskey toddy? No! You might as well compare your tiny pint, to our pint stoup that holds three times as much as yours.*

But I am afraid I have exhausted your Ladyships patience with the length of my descriptions. It will suffice for the present to say that after the usual toasts were given, and Lord & Lady Gwydir's health drunk, with three times three and all the honours of the table, that the utmost hilarity prevailed, till the parties returned to their respective homes, rejoicing no doubt in their hearts, that their Lord, although an Englishman, was pleased to encourage the favourite amusements of their country.

I should justly add that his Lordships condescending and tender conduct to his tenants ----- since, has not merely increased by far ----- proprietors, as he is also the ----- proprietor in the country: - but has set a salutary lesson to many, who have been of late disposed to withhold, that return of regard, which is due to those who pay them both their rents and their homage.

I have the honour to be Madam, your ladyships much obliged and grateful humble servant
Alex Bakley

The Honourable: Lady Perth, 126 Park Hill, Hyde Park, London
(This letter was readdressed and delivered to Brighton)

Glentarken, June 1, 1831 - to John Carmichael. New London

Dear Brother,

This will inform you that we are all in good health at present thank God hoping these few lines will find you the same. Your brother Peter and family are in good health your sister Margaret is very poorly more especially in the winter seasons she can hardly move, but as she is lifted. As to the news of the country you can have them more particular from Malcolm than I can state them to you in so limited a letter, you have gotten a good possession of the good (?)...better particular which will never be taken from you as your Father set before you a good example I trust you will follow his footsteps that you will give them a good education as far as your circumstance will allow and keep them in the fear of God for a good example will have more effect than anything else that you will pray with them morning and evening and teach them to pray and teach them to Remember the Sabbath day when the day come when the dead small and great must appear before God that you will be...The seas divide us from seeing one another in the face yet you are often in my thoughts and may the Lord Grant that we meet at his right hand, you will let me hear from you as often as you have an opportunity I have sent you by Malcolm McNaughton some Books. I and my family join me in compliment to you and yours

Dear Brother

I am yours truly Medear

**Archibald Carmichael*

**Archibald was the 3rd Son of John Carmichael & Janet Ogilvie born 22nd Jun 1776 – he died at the Ross 14th Jan 1865 aged 88 years*

His brother John 6th Son born 12th Jun 1783 – died 1868 London Township, Ontario, aged 84 years

Comrie, March 24th, 1834

Dear brother, Wife and children

We received your letter about the 15 December which gave us no small pleasure to learn that you were all alive and in health for which there is ground for thankfulness to the good of all our mercies and although you are in abundance of the necessary's of life it appears that you maintain already that you have banished yourselves from gods ordinances and as you expressed yourself no doubt nor is it a want which the things of time will not make up. but upon the other hand you showed cause to recognize that you are nor banished from your...(missing), John McLarens son in Carroglen is going away one Peter and there was two of the sons away before...(illegible) of theirs a son of John Stuarts it was at Lochearnside & James Carmichael Lochearnside who learned the shoemaking.

Donald Carmichaels son & one Peter McIntyre from Lochearnside who learned the shoe making with James Mingas a son of Alex Stirling and it is reported a son of Donald Cowan I think all bound for Canada. As for the book you wanted it has not been printed as no man could make out the writings you may mention in your next letter what kind

of house you have and if you had furniture as good as...had in the Ross what kind of Market you get for your crops and if you have any.

(Although parts of the letter are missing it shows that folk from the Comrie area were receiving and sending information back and forth ...although it was a very slow, and expensive, process. It also shows that others were contemplating moving across the "Pond." Carroglen today is a quiet and lonely place. It, and its neighbours of Balmuick, the Lurg and Tynashee, once boasted more than one hundred families. It was, as in all these small communities and pockets where people eaked out a living in Upper Strathearn, an area of weaving and sheep-rearing. Today the only sound heard on the hillside is that of bleating sheep and curlews! At times the silence is deafening! As an observation it is rather ironic that the name of the vessel which took many of the people away in 1818 was called the "Curlew.")

March 25, 1834

Dear Brother,

I take this opportunity of writing to you per Mrs. Thomson who is going out from this place to the District of Gore (Ontario) and who has taken in hand to forward this to you. We are all well at present, and we were very glad from my brother Archibald that you and your Family are well. Our trade (and every other trade) is very bad here at present, and we can see no prospect of it being any better, and I hope you will have the goodness on the receipt of this of writing us and informing us what prospects we would have in coming over to Canada, and if you would favor us with an particular account of all the Advantages and Disadvantages of the places. I hope you have not forgotten your promise when you went away, of writing me a concise account of your circumstances and of the nature of the country. We never could get a proper direction (neither have we got it yet) to write to you or we would have written long ago. We only knew that you were within eight miles of London, but whether East, West, North or South, we could not tell. We wish to know if you are near any river and if so, what is the name of the river, and what Distance you are from it. Also let us know about trade, and how the Flesher (Butcher) trade would do about London or any other town, and how land can be purchased, and what money would be requisite to buy an Hundred Acres (or less) with as much of it leased as would keep a Family a year. We hope you would send us particular word about all these things. We know already what expense we would incur in going the length Niagara, but if you know how far it is to Niagara to where you are, give us a statement of the land travelling expense. Now I shall give you an account of my Family. My eldest Daughter Janet is married to a Mason and she has been in England these 9 years, she has four of a Family. John, Died in Glasgow about a year ago, he left four Children and we have two of them keeping they are both boys, the one is five years of age, and the other three. Peter Died in Larbert about ten years ago. Margaret is to be married in about a fortnight to a Wright, Rebecca was married about a year ago to a Weaver, Andrew is at home working at thy own trade he is about 22 years of age and unmarried. Archibald is about 19 years of age and is an apprentice to a ship Carpenter at Alva, he has 2 years to serve yet, Alexander is about 14 years of age and at home. Mary is 8 years of age and is at school (she is the youngest). From your long residence in the place you will most likely have some knowledge of the different Branches of Business as well as the Farming we wish you would send us some account of that. We see from information that can be got here that something may be done in Canada, In the way of General Merchandise, and we would be glad to try any way that would be best, and I think we would be most likely to succeed in that, from our knowledge in cattle and being in a trading way here. We know that there is a great many difficulties at first in Canada, but here there is nothing else but difficulties all the year round and they are always increasing, besides I do not know what to put any of my Family to as every trade is worse than another. Dear Brother I hope you will send me a post letter directly on receiving this, if you think there is any danger of a letter miscarrying send two. I remain your affect brother

P.S. be so good as tell me how a steady Wright would do in London District, Peter Carmichael

16th June 1860

Summer Prospects

*The rain has hitherto completely spoiled the harvest here of tourists and others who generally throng northwards to Lochearn long ere this time. Mine host of the Inn at St Fillans walketh to his door, and looketh to the south. But lo! Nobody cometh. The boats are moored on the swollen brown tide in Lochearn, but the oars lie idle on the thwarts. Along the plashing roads, the brave coach of Colin McCall daily wends, but alas! * * * * A tourist was reported last week as being seen somewhere between St Fillans and Lochearnhead. This solitary figure, dejected, draggled and disgusted, has vanished from our highland hill. It is supposed that he was a 'Sassenach,' and that he has retired to a milder clime; per train with firm believe that one must go to the north with an umbrella.*

Unhappy Tourist

31st August 1872

Day out to the games at St Fillans

*It was with fear and trembling that we set out on Wednesday last to view the *Upper Strathearn Highland games at St Fillans, arising, not from any superstitious fear that the patron saint for these parts would be moved with righteous anger at such a gathering for sport near his ancient abode as to call down the watery elements upon the sporting crew, but from the report that a trader in stalks of brimstone and black sugar, had been the night before to Crieff games, more than ordinary earnest that the Crieffites might get a deluge of rain at their gathering. We had the presumption that such a prayer would, like the two-edged sword, cut both ways, and that 'Upon the own head his mischief shall be returned home;' and so we had no desire to share the curse and be subjected to a bath of a very uncomfortable kind if it could be avoided. However, come weal or come woe, it was evident that the Crieffites did not desire the same results for their Comrie friends, as they from early morning made the streets rattle with carts and carriages, machines of great pretensions and of no pretensions, horses with almost three legs, and respectable ones of four legs, without an exception, were called into requisition to do service in conveying their full load to the east banks of the romantic loch.*

Warning after warning came from above in sharp pelting showers, the heavens hung heavy and looked black towards the west, yet, notwithstanding, one machine after another rolled off, the occupants as intent upon seeing the games as ever poor pilgrim was in days of yore to see the face of the saintly St Fillan, or drink of his healing well. The enterprising proprietor of the Comrie Coach extended his journey for the day to St Fillans, and he was rewarded with a noble freight of passengers; and the Lochearnhead coaches were likewise packed full with passengers from far and near, some kilted and plumed, ready to do battle for the honours of the day, in a more peaceful strife than the Neishes and the McNabs did close by in years long ago. For once at least, and for the first time, a railway to St Fillans was sorely felt to be necessary, as not a few looked rather forlorn-like when they found themselves without a conveyance to run them to the banks of Lochearn. Apart from the enjoyment of the games, the sights and scenery of the way, and the romantic beauty and loveliness of the spot where the games were held, were enough to make one hold high-holiday, and for a few hours sport their toil-worn frame on the hill sides, and have their eyesight ravished with one of the sweetest spots that nature has produced.

To recount the sights and scenes on the way would be a work of supererogation, as the quiet lovely scenery of Ochertyre; the attractive beauty of Lawers; Comrie with its wild mountain scenery in the background; and the still grander and more wild scenery of Dunira and Aberuchill, have been written and rewritten over and over again. It is such a drive, that when one has once seen it they afterwards desire to repeat their visit 'ad infinitum' that is if it is not in winter, or under such drenching rain as over-took the St Fillans visitor at the games.

I rather think that the pious old Saint Fillan, had a love of the sublime and beautiful in nature, as well as the solitary, when he pitched his pilgrim tent at the east end of Lochearn; for however wild his flock were, and wild they certainly were even long after his death, he had at least a sweet spot of it to revel in. But the saint is long since dead, and even his bones, which did good service in the field of Bannockburn, have, for aught we know, mouldered into dust many centuries since; pilgrimages to his seat have ceased, and the present day world only thinks of a day's enjoyment where St Fillan used to enjoy himself, without troubling their heads whether the saint ever lived or cured a sinner either in body or soul.

In such a spirit were the hundreds who drove past Dunfillan Hill, and stepped from the machines of all sorts at the pretty little village of St Fillans. There might have been a larger gathering; there might have been more of the pure Highland Clans gathered near to the old spot where, years ago, the kilted highlanders of the last generation fought peacefully for the honours of the highland Games, but never was there such an array of grandeur and gaiety from all quarters, to do honour to the games of old Scotland, on a spot long consecrated to the sport. Unfortunately the Comrie merchant's prayer was really like a two-edged sword which cuts two ways; for, while the Crieff people were, on this occasion, enjoying comparatively a good day, rain latterly fell down in torrents; yet, for all that, the multitude, gathered from the east and west, north and south, could not have been much less than what attended the Crieff games a few days before.

The games, which were held a little to the north of where the old games were held, on a field behind the Drummond Arms Hotel, sustained their reputation of the two former years, for good sport and management, always excepting what is thereafter referred to. The Chieftain this year was T. G. Stirling Esq. of Strowan, who, curiously enough, I believe was the chieftain of the last St Fillans games in 1839. As already hinted there was much to damp the spirits, but, throughout the whole day the games were gone into with heart and will, and from the Chieftain downwards, the whole was conducted, as the contractors would say, in a 'tradesman like manner.' The regatta was a new performance this year, but it was decidedly not out of place; indeed it was looked upon by many as quite an acquisition, and although from boisterous state of the loch they did not come off to so great an advantage as they might otherwise have done.

As a matter of course there were additional incidents connected with the day, such as nut barrows, shooting saloons, sweetie stands, and games of a pugilistic character were duly represented; and on the road going and especially coming home, some butchers and carters tried their hands at a 'Derby' to the no small annoyance and danger of more sensible and quietly disposed persons.

(The Upper Strathearn games resurrected in 1870 were short lived lasting for just 10 years. The original concept was to share the games between Crieff, Comrie and St Fillans; a meeting by the local gentry was set up in Comrie at the Royal Hotel to organize the event. When they took the proposal to Crieff the following day the local magistrates rejected this plan, stating they should have been consulted before any decisions were made, and under the orders of the

local provost, deciding to set up their own Games Committee. The Upper Strathearn committee then decided to include Lochearnhead. The games took place at Comrie on a number of occasions at the Laggan Park, once at Lochearnhead in a park opposite the old Lochearnhead hotel, probably on the old swimming pool site, and at St Fillans twice, on both occasions on ground behind the DA hotel)

Edinburgh 17th October 1874 - in response to letter from the Crieff Board of Supervision regarding the removal of a fever patient to St Fillans

Sir, - yours of the 16th inst, - duly to hand.

I think you are really begging the question, and becoming the apologist for Mr Ingles. You state that you have made inquiry into the circumstances. Now sir, I am in daily communication with St. Fillans, and I am not yet advised that you have made any inquiry there. I think you ought to have heard the grandmother's version before exonerating Mr Ingles. My objection to him is, why did he not send this girl to her proper relations? And why did he not let them know she was ill?

I assert that Mrs McGregor, St. Fillans, refused point blank to have anything to do with her granddaughter, as she saw that she was dangerously ill with fever; but Mr Ingles, by force carried her into the house against the protests of the grandmother. And more in support of my complaint immediately on Ingles taking the girl into the house, Mrs McGregor went to consult the Rev D.T.K. Drummond, who was then residing at St. Fillans, and he strongly advised her to send the girl back with Ingles, requesting her at the same time to use his name as her advisor. You state that the girl expressed a desire to go to St. Fillans. I can prove that when she saw the state her grandmother was in, pleaded with Mr Ingles to take her back, and whenever he saw the grandmother go away to see Mr Drummond, he immediately made tracks for Crieff.

As to the doctor not knowing what trouble the girl was labouring under, I decline at present to express my candid opinion, but this must also be investigated.

From the tenor of your letter, I have little hopes of anything being done. I shall give you time to reply to this merely as a matter of courtesy, but the matter cannot remain in this state. –

I am yours truly – Peter McIntyre

(Elizabeth McGregor - Ms. Carmichael – born 15th January 1802 at Wester Glentarken – Died 6th Oct 1888 at her daughter Janet's home in Cockenzie – lived in a cottage in front of what is now Corranour – she was described in the 1861 and 1871c as a Grocer – (Widow of Duncan McGregor – born 1 sept 1793 Portmore – Died 28 May 1834 St Fillans; Ann McGregor her granddaughter – Born 9th Dec 1856 in Edinburgh – Father – Daniel McGregor – her son, Born 10th Sep 1930 – St Fillans – (a Hotel Waiter) who died in 1898 at Traquair, Peeblesshire. Ann's mother Rebecca Robertson died at Glasgow in 1863 and her father remarried in 1869.)

Peter McIntyre – Born 15th Feb 1838 in St. Fillans – (Grocer) he was Elizabeth's nephew. His father the local shoemaker lived in a cottage at the corner of shoemaker's lane. John McIntyre a Tea Merchant in London inherited the property after his brother Peters death; he demolished it in 1904 to build Inverearn.

James McRostie was the Provost of Crieff between 1866 and 1878

John Swanston Inglis - Licensee Royal Hotel, Crieff – 1871 -1886 – The Hotel ‘Boots’ or night porter sued him for loss of commissions amounting to £41.14s3d in 1886 and won his case. Mr Inglis left the area shortly afterwards.

Dundurn Parish Church

Dated 10th August 1880 – Lake Cottage – St Fillans

**Fragment of letter donated by J W Stewart, Oakleigh, the Ross, Comrie. From his great-aunt to her son in New Zealand –*

*1880 - A new church has been built, and is a striking edifice beautifying the village. Uncle Bob presented the bell – to a belfry like a Chinese Cupola. A permanent minister has been appointed, a *Mr Blake, a young man of advanced notions and of considerable refinement. We call him the High Church curate. He wears a long black coat and a low crowned crushable wideawake. He fishes, plays lawn tennis, performs feats of pedestrianism, skates, curls, and even dances! By reason of which awfully sinful pastimes, two members of his congregation prefer to walk every Sunday to Comrie Church, rather than attend the ministrations of so unholy a man.*

Rev James William Blake born 1854 at Stobo, died 1943 Currie, Midlothian, lived at Lake Cottage during his time at St Fillans.24th April 1879 – April 1881

September 1915 - James Thomas Carmichael wrote.

It is more than fifty years ago since the writer first stayed by the side of Loch Earn, and knew Ardrotan, Glentarken and St. Fillans. But though long periods have passed between different visits since then, yet the visits have been paid, seven of them , and the last only five years ago. Whether from Canada or South Africa, if one goes home, he likes to visit the old places and revive old acquaintances. And he likes to find out about his ancestors. I am minded to write this because I have just seen the death in the Strathearn Herald of Mrs Elizabeth Carmichael of St. Fillans aged 85. When I was at St. Fillans seeing some of my old friends and asking about others, she heard of me, and sent for me: “I will tell you what you want to know”. And she told me that somewhere about 1720, a certain Donald Carmichael, from a farm, Lechden Seritan, Balquhidder, came to relative names Comrie, near Woodend at Tynreoch, a mile or two east of St. Fillans. Then he went to Crappich, and married there Katrina Stalker. They had seven sons and one daughter. The daughter married the Laird of Cowden (McInnes). There were three farms at Crappich, and Duncan put a son in each. Their names were Duncan in (Easter Crappich) Peter and John. Of the other sons or their descendants “some were soldiers, some died young, some went south, and one went to the highlands”. Of the above three Duncan, who was born in 1736 and died 1819, moved to St. Fillans, and had children, of whom I heard as follows:- Helen “was good, went on crutches, gave good advice,” died at 18. Donald died May 9th 1836, aged, 70. Margaret, married Mr Clark; they had a son Duncan Clark, who was a teacher at Portmoak, Kinross, and a daughter, who married Malcolm Drummond, they went to America, and another who married Peter Drummond, a gamekeeper, in Glentarken. Robert died 1814. Duncan had children 1) Helen, died at St.Fillans aged 55. 2) Elizabeth about whose death I am just writing. 3) Duncan at Middle Creek, Victoria, 4) Andrew who went to Australia to his brother Duncan. So Mrs Elizabeth Carmichael, who has just died at 85, was the great granddaughter of the young

Donald, who came from Balquhider in the beginning of the eighteenth century, and found a wife, and a farm, and whose descendants are still living by Lochearnside, though some are further afield also.

Now, this original Donald's other son, Peter, had descendants also, and they are still in Comrie and further afield. Peter, had sons, Donald, Peter, John, and William, and daughters, Betsy, Janet and Katrina. Donald's descendants got to Port of Menteith; Peter's settled in Dalginross; John went to Alloa; William settled at Glasdale; Betsy married at Glentarken, and thence came with her husband Archibald Carmichael to the Ross, where he died, aged 95 (see Crieff Journal Jan 21 1855, where there is an account of him); Janet also married at Glentarken, but went to America; and Katrina married at Balnacuil. William, who settled at Glasdale, where I have stayed with him, was my grandfather. His grandsons are still in Comrie, and I, another in South Africa Mrs Elizabeth, who has died, was fourth in decent from Donald; we are sixth.

James Thomas Carmichael. September 1915

1916 he again writes from Mohales Hoek, Basutoland.

*As you kindly (Sept 25th 1915) printed my little account of the information I received from the aged *Elizabeth Carmichael, of St Fillans. I am inclined to send you a little more. She told me how the first of her (and my own) family came down from Balquhider in the person of a certain Donald. There was a tradition in the family that originally they came from Appin, and that their proper name was Stewart, and there are, and were, Carmichael's in Appin. A genealogical friend told me "there was a probability that ancestor's of these Carmichael's possessed the Brewstead of Annat and the croft thereof in Appin." This croft possessed "pasture for six great cows and their followers, three cows of one year and two years, and one horse and mare for the labours of the crop and the necessities of the said house." Its boundaries were the "rivulet of Achnagon and Annat." Elizabeth Carmichael mentioned this Stewart connection to me, and so I allude to it, if only to justify the saying that individuals as well as nations surround there early annals with an atmosphere of romance. Certainly a Donald Carmichael was elected an elder in the parish of Balquhider 20th June 1720 (parochial records). Possibly the Donald who came to St Fillans about the same time was a relation. Mrs Elizabeth told me that her uncle Duncan – born 1766 died 1836, visited Balquhider, but found no Carmichaels there, only their burying-place. Their farm Lechdan Seritan lies on the north side of Loch Voil. It has now become part of the farm of Tulloch. The home farm of Mr Carnegie of Stronvar, but the residents still speak of that part of Tulloch as Lechdan Seritan. There is another sort of Carmichael about Comrie who came from Breadalbane, to Glenlednock. The original Donald, about whom I write, lived on the farm he had obtained at the Crappich. This is a hill on the Dunira Estate, as previously stated Duncan, Peter & John were put into three farms on Crappich. I stood at the foot of the Crappich and looked around but could see no sign of the three farms of two centuries ago. They were run into one – Tullybanocher – and a Mr Campbell was tenant for fifty years. My own father, the great-grandson of the Balquhider Donald, was born at Tullybanocher in 1815, and his older brother Peter, was born in 1811, the year in which the Melville Monument was erected, their father being employed on the Dunira estate, as was also my other grandfather, James Cossar, who died in 1832. Both are buried in Comrie Churchyard. Peter's grandson Peter, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders has been killed in this war. Now for the last of my dear relatives information, all of which I treasured, but did not know, until I saw of her death, that I was going to write about it is this way. Her own branch of the family under Duncan, son of the original Donald, had gone to St*

Fillans, Lochearnside and especially Glentarken. Glentarken the "remote and rugged glen" which Archibald Carmichael who died at the Ross in 1855 had previously farmed for fifty years, having succeeded his father therein, was then a Clachan. "There were once 24 families in Wester Glentarken and 12 in Easter; there was no ward but that they were comfortable." And this was on the authority, I was told, of Kate McNabb, who had a "good memory" and was said to "know everybody south of Stirling."

**Elizabeth Carmichael, born 1831 2nd daughter of Duncan Carmichael & Ann McWhannel of Hawthorn Cottage died there in 1915 aged 84 years*

1918 – Further correspondence from James Thomas Carmichael, Mohales Hoek, Basutoland.

We began these papers with the original Donald Carmichael who found a farm at Crappich about 1820. His son Peter remained there. His children began to scatter. Donald the eldest first married Christina Campbell, and had four children – Alexander, Elizabeth, Christina and Peter, Elizabeth married Peter Comrie and their descendants are in Comrie still. From them we get the Crerars, MacMasters Grays, Laings and Malcolms. They were to be found at St Fillans, India, Sudbury Manchester, Glasgow, and Bulawayo. James Crerar was killed at Loos, Lieutenant James Laing 3rd Border Regiment and Private John Laing R.N.A.S. are in France and John Crearer is in the Ayrshire Yeomanry. Christina married Macrorie a millwright went to Canada. Peter married Helen Stirling and lived in Port of Menteith. He had two sons – John and Peter, John was an architect, and died in Glasgow in 1880, leaving two children. Peter went to South Africa and died there. His son Peter Stirling Carmichael is now at Kenilworth, Cape Town. When I last saw him he showed me his father's album. In it were portraits he did not know. I was able to tell him that won was his father's cousin and my grandfather. His father was in Maritzburg, Transvaal, at Potchefstroom, in the first Boer War of 1881. In the war of 1899 he was a member of the 1st City Volunteers, Grahamstown, and received the Kings and Queens Medals. He then farmed in the Orange Free State, and died of Phthisis in Johannesburg tended at last by the Salvation Army. Donald with whom we began this paper, married a second time, Janet Carmichael, probably a cousin, and went to live at Glenquhalk, Doune, then to Port of Menteath. He was buried at Buchlyvie. By his second marriage he had six children. Two died unmarried; Margaret 3) married Duncan McKerracher, Whitehill Farm, Port of Menteath, they celebrated a golden wedding in 1910. Duncan lived with his brother Dan, commonly called 'Colleymore' who succeeded his father and grandfather on the same farm. He died in 1916. Mary 4) married James Macgregor, Forrester, Cardross, and had two children. One married R Stewart, Kippen; Isabella 5) married John Macgregor of Stirling. Their son Gregor is or was master of Vionforth School, Sinclairtown. Another son William is a gunner RN; John 6) married Ellen McLaren of Blair Drummond and had three children, Daniel, Jessie who married A Macgregor from Stirling and another. In all Donald who went to Port of Menteith had 10 Children, 16 grandchildren and 30 great, grandchildren.

The Dalginross Carmichaels' also found their way to Port of Menteith. Peter the head of this family and brother of Donald, married Margaret Stalker, see memorial stone in Comrie White Church Yard. They had six children, Margaret, Betsy, Janet, Mary, Duncan and Peter. Peter born 1821 lived at Coilmore on South Lochearn, and in 1911 was living at Drumquhalk, Doune, aged 90. He had a son Peter a Slater. The daughters married Robertson, Miller, Davidson and Drumquhalk. These 6 children had 15 children. One of them Jessie who married Andrew

Moir of Muthill was dumb. These 15 had 22 they appear to have been mostly daughters, and by their marriages brought new names into the family. Don of St Ninians, Stirling; Summers from Port of Menteith; Cameron, Glasgow; MacArthur, Bramshogel Mills, Killearn; Scott, Lebnabra Farm, Drymen; of the sons Peter Davidson went to Pine Grove, Washdyke, Timaru, New Zealand, where he married and has children. He imports herds of horses. James Davidson my informant on these matters married Catherine Buchanan, a descendant of George Buchanan and lives at Meikle Drumquhain, Balfon.

James Thomas Carmichael

(Son of William Carmichael and Mary Ann Cossar. Enrolled at Magdalene Collage 1868 matriculated 1872 B.A. Was assistant Master at a preparatory School on Leamington, ordained Deacon 1875; Priest at Whitechurch Dorset 1876 – 1881; Missionary in Zululand and South Africa: 1881-1939 at Modderpoort, 1887-1903 – and again 1928-39; Basutoland 1903-27- died at Ardrostan, Ayrshire 3rd July 1946)

To the Editor Strathearn Herald

Comrie 4th March, 1930.

*Sir.—**St Fillans is in the limelight.** The inhabitants of that lovely hamlet on the shores of Loch Earn are meantime at loggerheads as to whether the Golf Course is meant for the villagers or for the summer visitors who dwell for a time in their midst.*

Quite a number of letters have appeared in a Dundee contemporary during the past week. Mainly slinging mud on the management, who evidently have adopted the role of Mussolini, and are indifferent to the various attacks that have been levelled at their devoted heads. The writer is indifferent as to the origin of this mud-slinging competition, and is quite willing to leave the decision in the hands of the old men and young maidens who pleasure in the Royal game.

Gowfing a' the day,

Daein' na work ava'

Rinnin aboot wi' a bag o' sticks,

Efter a wi' bit ba'.

*My object in entering the lists is to call attention to an advertisement which appeared in a recent issue re fishing on the Loch and River Earn. We are gravely informed by a gentleman named Russell (**who, I have no doubt, is acting on instructions**) that the St Fillans Angling Association will not allow fishing on the River Earn or on Loch Earn before the first day of April and not later than the 30th September. **What consummate impertinence.** Are this gentleman and the Club he represents aware that no law exists in Scotland to prohibit the fishing for brown trout in any river or loch in Scotland between the 15th day of February and the 31st day of October? The members of the St Fillans Angling Association have no doubt in their minds' eye (**the advent of the grimy toilers underground who visit their lovely hamlet annually to get a breath of God's pure air**),*

and, as a pastime, to lure the wily trout from the depths of Loch Earn. **No, no, Mr Russell**, you and your Committee have bitten off more than you can chew.

Another item of importance; which the newly-formed **Amenity Company** have adopted is to place notice-boards along the shores of Loch Earn, warning motorists that "**No parking is allowed here.**" Again, what consummate impertinence!" The village of St Fillans still occupies the humble position of being a tail feather of Comrie, and as Comrie has not yet adopted the Burgh Act, **no, no power on earth can prohibit cars from parking there.** "To my mind, the "**heid yins**" of St Fillans are suffering from rnegalomania. Known in common English as "**swelled head.**"

I am, &co

Craig More

(the above letter resulted in a number of responses; including a reply from Mr James Burtinslaw representing the Amenities Committee; & Major Lewis Gibson President of the Angling Club and the following from a resident of the village)

18th March.

Sir, - I read "Craig More's" letter in your last issue, and so far have not discovered what benefit or pleasure he derives from his attack on the Golf Club, the Angling Association, and the Amenities Committee. The committees of these three bodies have done much for the village, and should be encouraged and not attacked by their "**big brothers**" in Comrie. Perhaps "**Craig More**" has forgotten a very regrettable incident which took place with the salmon watchers on the Ruchil a few years ago – otherwise he would not have flown into print and opened up old memories, - I am &co **A. Sportsman**

The sportsman may have been referring to an incident that occurred on the Ruchil in December 1922 - When three Comrie men were discharged, the complaint against them of having illegally fished in the Ruchill River being found not proven.

The accused .were:—Henry M'Kinstry, watchmaker, Drummond Street, Comrie; Peter McPherson, draper, Chatten, Comrie; and David McLaren, railway Surfaceman, Dundas Street, Comrie, they were all charged with having on Tuesday, 17th October last, on the River Ruchill, between the pool immediately below Dalness Falls and point opposite Millerbeg Farm, fished for or assisted in fishing for, salmon during the annual close time by throwing a hook attached to a rod or line into the river, across where fish were lying, and thereafter jerking the hook upwards and towards them, and had in their possession gaff or cleek with intent to catch salmon by means contrary to the Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act, 1808. The three accused pleaded not guilty,

Evidence for the prosecution was given by William McDonald, river watcher, Crieff. Who stated that the water was low at the time, and he saw M'Kinstry casting his line into the pool. He had a heavy sinker attached to tho line, with the result that it sunk very quickly, and the fisher jerked it violently upwards and towards him. McKinstry did not get any fish, and he handed the rod to McPherson, who went further up and started to fish the same way as McKinstry. Later, the rod was handed to McLaren, and the three men went about 200 yards above the pool where they had been fishing. McKinstry started to fish again and the cast was broken, with the result that another was put in its place. McLaren stepped on to a rock in the middle of the stream, and was handed a stick by McPherson, and to it he

fastened a gaff, and started to rake the pool for about ten minutes. The operations of the three men on the river continued from about twelve o'clock, so far as the witness could tell, till about 2.20 p.m.

The witness went over to McKinsty and McPherson, and asked them to produce their tackle McKinsty took a number of envelopes containing salmon hooks and castings from his pocket, while, on searching him, he found little pieces of lead in his pocket similar to that used on the line. McPherson said he was sure that the witness would not search him. The river watcher McDonald stated he understood that he had a right to search the accused. However McPherson in turn accused McDonald of knocking him down and subsequently raised an action against the water bailiff. Regarding the use of a gaff McLaren stated that it was only used to release the trapped fishing line, and that at all times they were fishing legally. After a six hour trial at Perth Sherriff Court, the charge of illegal fishing was found to be not proven.

8th November 1932 Ivy Cot, St Fillans Annie Carmichael

Dear *Peter William

I hope you can make all this out, and write it out better yourself and give a copy to the cousins, they might like these few news of our fore folk.

My great grandfather Finlay Carmichael came from Ardtalnaig, Lochtayside, and took the farm of Glenmaik in Glen Lednock in company with a man named Cameron (the Carmichaels he belonged to were a sept of the Stewarts of Appin, where he was born) he took contracts for building dry stone dykes for all around the district and employed several men with him, he married three times, his second wife my grandfather's (John) mother, she was Christina Cameron, one of the Cameron's who were at Glenmaik, the third wife Katie McLaren was a widow with one son James McWhannel, she was our Grand Uncle Finlay's mother. Who went to Australia and died there some years after. My uncle Finlay also went there to the gold digging. My Grandfather John only had one sister Christina, who married Ferguson of Conichan Farm in Glen Almond. The Fergusons were tenants of that farm, from father to son for 500 years. The last of them went out to the United States; their descendants are somewhere there yet. My Great-Great Grandfather was called Gilbert and my Great Grandfather Finlay

My Grandfather John Carmichael's Great Uncle on his mother's side (Christian Cameron) was the Hugh Cameron who invented the spinning wheel; he was a famous millwright in his day. Hugh Cameron died in 1817 at the age of 112, he was known as a builder of mills in the area. Grandfather John worked with him at the time when there was such a scarcity of food in this country that they had to bleed the living cattle and cook the blood for food. He lived at Lawers on Lochtayside, and died at the age of 111. My grandfather John had Wester Dundurn farm along with his cousins Hugh and John Cameron and their sisters Betty and Kate, they lived where the gamekeeper's house now stands and my grandfather had the present old farmhouse. He looked after the sheep and they did the field work, but they lost on it as the Cameron's had not pushed enough on working the land and also at this election time Hugh Cameron was told by the factor to vote on the Tory side and refused to do so as he was a Whig, so they were put out of the farm on the first opportunity.

My Grandmother's (Ann Comrie) Great Uncle was a Dr. Robert Comrie, he was a Doctor in the navy, and practised in Comrie after his retiral, he had a daughter Lydia and our Grandmother's brother William married her.

That was how they got his house property. Dr Comrie married his housekeeper and died soon after, leaving her property in Spain he had got during the Peninsula Wars (1808-14) and shares in the Arizona Copper Mines, as they failed to see about them at her death it was all lost to them.

The following extract is from a memoir of the late Robert Findlater who was minister at Ardeonaig, Lochtayside, ordained there 16th April 1800. It was said that his ministry was blessed from the beginning. A remarkable instance of God's love was manifested in the conversion of Mrs Carmichael from Glenlednock in the Parish of Comrie, who was by divine providence brought in the following manner to hear the truth as it is in Jesus. Her husband's first wife had been buried in Ardeonaig churchyard, by his second wife he had several children, a favourite child died and the father was for burying her in the first wife's grave, the mother was for burying her with her own kindred in the Parish of Comrie. The husband however prevailed and the girl was buried at Ardeonaig. The first Sabbath after the funeral the mother resolved to visit the grave of her beloved daughter, left early in the morning without (unreadable) of her design, she walked alone over the hill, arriving at her journey's end sometime before the people assembled to hear the sermon, and lay for a long time on her dear daughters grave watering it with her tears before she was aware however being absorbed by grief, the people began to assemble for public worship which was at that time performed in the churchyard, against her inclination and intention she had to sit down with the rest of the people. The minister entered the tent and before he had got half through his discourse Mrs Carmichael's attention was so much arrested by his manner and doctrine that for a time she forgot the object of her visit and before he was done she was so overcome by a conviction her own condition as a lost sinner, that sorrow for her daughter gave way to concern for the salvation of her own soul, she came to weep over the grave of her beloved child but ere she returned, she heard of a living Saviour who is the Resurrection and the Life and her heart was opened to hear glad tidings of great joy. He who began the good work in her soul carried it on, she was not only reprov'd of sin but also of rightfulness, the above interesting circumstances occurred before I became acquainted either with Mr Findlater or Mrs Carmichael, yet I heard of it from both, Mrs Carmichael uniformly maintained a holy and consistent profession and was distinguished as one of the most pious and zealous for the glory of God in that part of the country. For Mr Findlater she ever felt if I so may express her feelings a truly filial affection, she would never speak of him by his proper name, but always himself, I always called on her when passing that way and was honoured, as she considered it by drinking out of the cup from which Himself drank. 'Olidh sibh deoch as an t-Soitheach as an d'ol e fein' (You will drink a drink from the vessel from which he himself drank) this 'Soitheach' she kept as a token as a remembrance of his visit till the day of her death.

*I copied the above extract from a memoir of the Rev. Robert Findlater which was sent to me to read by his grand nieces Misses *Mary and *Jane Findlater whose father was Free Church Minister at Locbearnhead when I was a girl*

My Grandfather John Carmichael and his father Finlay got the Feu at Oakbank and where our house is here, because he had been a tenant of Wester Dundurn when Lady Willoughby de Eresby had the village laid out. He joined the Perthshire Fencibles as a young lad at the time of the Napoleonic Wars and later when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were at Drummond Castle (1847) he was a member of the tenantry in uniform of Drummond tartan who attended as body guard.

My Grandmother's (Anne Comrie) Great Grandfather was out in the 1715 rebellion under the Earl of Perth of that time and fought in the battle of Sheriffmuir and later on in 1745, after Prince Charlie was defeated he had to hide in the Dunira woods till there was peace again, he had a croft behind Tynreoch at this end of Dunira woods and was called John o' Woodend, after he was converted, he led a very pious life and it was a great grief to him to have been out

in battles and taken other men's lives. He used to be sent for, to pray besides the dying all around the district. His musket used to be in the old house at Oakbank but when they got the house built up Uncle Archie broke it up and burned it.

My grandfather on my mother's side was named Robert MacDonald. He belonged to Dale near Aberfeldy and was a real kindly man; your father was real like him in his way as I can remember him. He and his father and grandfather were employed as overseers with Sir Robert Menzies and his fore folk at Castle Menzies. My grandmother's father John McNab was a rich sheep farmer in a place called Lochs at the head of Glen Lyon, he had planned a marriage for her with a great friend of his who was very rich but she made a runaway marriage with my grandfather when she was 17 and her father disowned her, but he made friends with them later on and set them up in a farm near Killin, but he lost all his money through going surety for a friend and died soon after. So they had to give up the farm he had put them in and they took a croft at Lochearnhead, they had a very hard struggle as they had 14 of a family. My granny's father was named John MacNab. She thought there was no clan like the McNabs, her father's people were in a farm named Innishewan, in Glen Dochart for 500 years from father to son, but he was the last of them. An uncle of his was out in Prince Charlie's rebellion and had to fly to France after Culloden he married a French woman and joined the French army and rose to high rank. One of his descendants was an officer in the Louaves during the last war, they were called the Tigers of the French Army and he was called the Tiger of the Tigers because he was so brave.

John MacNab of the lochs was near related to the Chief of the McNabs who lived at Kinnel house outside Killin. He got so deep in debt that he had to sell his estate to the Marquis of Breadalbane and went out to Western Canada with his family, they got on very well where they settled there and called their house Dundurn Castle. One of them was Sir Allan MacNab who helped put down a rebellion at the beginning of the last century. He was made Premier of Canada. I am afraid I made a mistake there he was not of the chief's family but of a branch of them who had lived at Easter Dundurn here at one time, he and his family went out to Canada about the same time as the chief's family.'

Your Aunt, Annie Carmichael

(Peter William Carmichael born 26th July 1909 Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada only son of the late Findlay Carmichael born 1st July 1867 – Died 11th November 1918 - Saskatchewan - Annie's younger brother. Annie Carmichael died at Ivecot 13th September 1943

Mary and Jane Findlater were Victorian novelists, Jane died in 1946 and Mary in 1963. They were buried in Comrie.

28th October, 1947 - to the Editor of the Dundee Courier

St Serfs, St Fillans

Sir – your correspondent “Ham & Eggs” naturally comments strongly on the bacon ration and refers to pork, saying in Perth fresh pork is practically never seen. Actually the only pork I have tasted in Scotland, even pre-war, was such that I do not wonder little is sold fresh. The reason is that for pork a different type of pig is required, and the remainder of a bacon carcase is probably used for sausage & co.

For the benefit of both farmers and consumers may I give my experience when farming in Kent, when I believe I was the first woman in the County to be a member of the executive committee of a county branch of the National Farmers' Union. I was a member of the Kent branch for over ten years, until I retired from dairy farming

I also went in for breeding pedigree Middle White pigs, which, with Berkshire pigs, are the best breeds for fresh pork, as they are compact pigs, and when killed really young make first-rate pork. At that time (about 1920, I think) there was a correspondence in the agricultural papers inquiring into the reason for Danish fresh pork being imported when British pork was available. I went into the reason with a well-known pork butcher, and he gave me as the reason that British farmers refused to kill their pig's young enough for fresh pork to be in demand. He told me that he would give 2d a pound more for my pork if I would guarantee that it did not weigh above 60 lb dead weight. This I did. He also stipulated for the proper breed of pig.

At the beginning of the war I was in correspondence with Lord Woolton on the subject, as to kill young Middle White or Berkshire pigs at the weight of 60lb. dead weight meant the consumption of infinitely less food, as pigs of that age consume very little food other than their mother's milk. Unfortunately, Lord Woolton sent my letter to the Ministry of Agriculture, and their verdict was that it was a waste of human food, which I emphatically deny from personal knowledge and experience, as the food consumed per head amounted to very little. I regret that I have not my farm books here, so cannot give exact figures, but as to the advantages both to farmers and consumers there is no doubt.

Having small pork of this kind meant that small families could buy a joint of pork – the size of a leg being about that of a Black- faces sheep. The pork is digestible and of very good quality and would give more food at less cost than any other.

Trusting this method may be brought into use in Scotland, as I am sure it would be most successful.

I am &c

E. D. Coats

Miss Evelyn Dudley Coats was a prolific letter writer. A friend wrote this tribute to her in the Herald

St Fillans 1950

Sir – *may I be allowed through the courtesy of your columns, to pay a tribute to my friend the late Miss E. D. Coats who died in a nursing home in Edinburgh on May 27th and was buried in Comrie last week.*

She was the last surviving child of the late Archibald Coats of Woodside, Paisley. She had very great ability. Besides being an excellent business woman, she was a violinist of merit, and a great expert on dairy farming. In fact in 1923, shortly before she sold her property in Kent and returned to Scotland, she was described to me in South Africa, as being the first authority on dairy farming in England.

She was the first woman to be elected to the Executive Committee (Kent) of the National Farmers Union, but was more pleased at being elected President of the local Agricultural Workers Union. All her life she fought the cause of those unable to fight for themselves, and the one person for whom she had no consideration was herself. She wore out

her typewriter as she wore herself out, whether in charitable causes or in politics, or wherever she felt a wrong was done, she worked with all her strength to right it, in small things as in great.

In 1920, she built a Convent and Chapel for the Sisters of Mercy at Tomintoul in Banffshire, and this was followed later by further charitable benefactions. No worthy person or cause ever appealed to her in vain, and to the end she gave to the utmost for others, impoverishing herself to do so. She had become a Catholic in 1907. Her faith and love of God lay very deep, and they were the inspiration and strength of her life, as they were of the last years of her illness. She was indeed faithful unto death.

Yours etc.,

H. Armitage – St Fillans – 6th June 1950

3^d March 1953 - to the Editor of the Scotsman

Ardchoille, St Fillans - Officers' Pensions

Sir- *in reference to your excellent leading article to which you gave the totally unjustified title of "Pensions Cuts Restored," may I point out that the 1931 cuts have not been restored except in what must be the warped thinking of the Government?*

This is what has taken place, and in actual fact they have done exactly nothing by their sudden and unaccountable reversible of the decision they made on November 24th of last year to right the wrong done in the past and continuing right to the present and apparently to go on into the future:-

In 1931, as most of us now know, the Government of the day cut all pensions by 9 and a half or 10 per cent., stabilised the pension at the new figure in 1935. In 1944 they increased the stabilised pension, not the original one, by 10 per cent, towards meeting the higher cost of living in those days. In 1947, a few more officers were granted small increments to bring their pensions up to the all-round 10 per cent. This was not, and was not intended to be, a restoration of the 1931 cuts. To-day this Government lays down that this increase is the restoration of the 10 per cent cut!

The result is that of the 16,550 retired officers affecting 8250 of the rank Lieu-Colonel to brigadier who drew £400 or above gets an additional sum varying from £9 to £130 so as to bring them into line with those who received the 10 per cent increase in 1944 and which has been denied them up till today. The remaining 8300 of the rank major and below whose pensions were less than £400 get absolutely no addition whatever! Because says this Government, they have now had the 1931 cuts restored! Can anyone beat that for sheer dishonesty?

I and thousands of others have been drawing less pensions, even after the addition of the 10 per cent made in 1944 than when I retired in 1935, and according to the decision we are to receive indefinitely to draw no more. Why? Because states this Government we have had our 1931 cut restored.

May I take this opportunity of thanking all those members of Parliament in both houses who so determinedly and graciously fought for our cause and assure them that their efforts on our behalf have been noted, applauded, and

intensely appreciated by all officers serving or retired, and by their dependants. We beg them to continue with unabated ardour and vigour –

I am &co,

A. E. H. MacGregor-Whitton. Major'

11th December 1954 to the Editor of the Strathearn Herald

Clachbheo, St Fillans

Sir, - *in your report recently of the meeting of the Central District you gave deserved prominence to the curtailment of the railway facilities enjoyed by the people of St Fillans. Perhaps I might be allowed to make this matter more clear to your readers?*

Travellers to and from St Fillans have always been allowed to use the Crieff or the Balquhiddy route as they preferred. They could go to the south by Comrie and return by Balquhiddy with their return tickets or vice versa. A very convenient arrangement and one that was not unnatural as the service was limited.

When in 1949, cheap day tickets were started to Stirling, the same arrangement held, and we could travel one way on the outward journey and return in the evening by the other. Then the railway line between Comrie and Balquhiddy was closed some three years ago. It was then understood that buses would replace the trains and in their new timetable an evening bus was put on to meet the evening train from the south at Balquhiddy, and an early morning bus left at 7.10 to connect with the south train at Comrie. For this reason no local objections were offered by the St Fillans community. They could still have six or seven hours in Edinburgh or Glasgow each day.

However this was not to be permanent, apparently. This year the use of tickets issued at Comrie and used in the evening to Balquhiddy were queried by the conductors on the train.

Representations were made to the authorities in Glasgow and considerable correspondence resulted. The Public Relations Officer in Howard Street, Glasgow, was interviewed. He was helpful and promised an impartial enquiry. When its findings came out they took the blunt statement that this inter-availability of tickets must cease at once. It was against all railway regulations. That, travellers for St Fillans would now have to wait in the street at Comrie for a bus home for two hours and a half did not appear to influence these railway magnates at all. A suggestion that an extra bus might be put on naturally came to nothing. It would never have paid a bus company to run a special bus where so few passengers were concerned. It would have cost nothing to sanction the continuation of the former facilities as the difference between the fares to the two stations referred to was only a few pence.

Now, Sir, can you not use your recognised influence to induce British Railways to reconsider this harsh decision? We ask no new favour – only the continuance of an old and valued concession.

It is undoubtedly the responsibility of everyone to encourage the use of railway trains. Are not they as much the property of the public as the Postal Services? The limitations of people's resources may drive them to use cheap-day tickets whenever they can, but surely trains filled with holders of cheap tickets is better than empty carriages? Railway

regulations must lose some of their cast-iron rigidity, and be replaced by something very much more flexible or British Railways may yet become the laughing stock of future generations – when it will be too late to woo back the trade they have thrown away.

Yours, Etc.

H. F. Wilson

4th December 1956 to the Editor of the Strathearn Herald

Balhaldie, Dunblane,

Sir – *According to a recent report in the “Herald” the Central District Council has discussed the erection of a lamp standard on the road to old St Fillans village.*

I wish to point out to the members of the St Fillans sub-committee in particular and to all concerned that there is no old St Fillans village. The road in question leads to what is and what has always been known as Glentarken. To prove my statement to the members of the St Fillans sub-committee, who seem to know so little of the history of the village and district they represent, I would be grateful if you would allow me some of your valuable space to quote some extracts from the book “Donald Carmichael and his descendants,” printed in 1924. Glentarken was a clachan. There were once twenty four families in Wester Glentarken and twelve in Easter, and “there was no word but that they were comfortable.” On the authority of one, Kate McNab who had a “good memory and was said to know everybody south of Stirling,” it belonged to the Dukes of Perth, and many from there followed their chief to the ’45. After that it was confiscated and now belongs to the Earl of Ancaster

Two Carmichaels of Glentarken, Archibald and Donald married two Carmichael sisters of the Crappich. When Archibald died the following appeared in a local paper about 100 years ago: - “Archibald Carmichael, who died in the Ross, Comrie, at the age of 95, was born in Glentarken. At his father’s death he became tenant and farmed the remote and rugged glen for 50 years. He had a numerous family. He was a staunch member of the U. P. Church, a good neighbour, faithful son and a true friend to all. His beloved wife predeceased him 15 years ago.”

This Archibald, born 1770, was the son of John born 1730, son of Peter born 1702.

Mr Peter Carmichael of Dunfermline, in 1897, arranged five generations of his family in one picture. These were: the above Archibald born 1770; John his son, born at Glentarken, 1804; Janet Gibson, his wife; their children, Archibald (now in Australia), Mrs Fraser, Mrs Wilson (New Zealand), Mrs Hamilton, her son James and his wife, their son Patrick, then a little boy now a Doctor of Medicine. He has also written on the picture the names and dates.

A copy of this picture is in the possession of Mrs Sutherland of Newington, Edinburgh, and of Mrs McDuff, St Fillans, given by Mrs John Carmichael to her father, John Kay, in 1898. It is recorded on the picture that “Peter Carmichael and his brother came from Balquhiddy to Crappich and (here the name and reading is difficult to trace) married a daughter of the Cowden.”

This tradition goes further back than the Crappich tradition, with which these papers began, and they are not easy to reconcile. But it traces the Glentarken Carmichaels back to Balquhider also, and seems to establish them at Glentarken for over 200 years.

Yours etc. – a Carmichael Descendant.

John K. McDuff.

Oakbank, St Fillans June 26th 1958 - to the Editor of the 'Scotsman'

Dear Sir,

On the eve of the opening of the Hydro Electric Boards Scheme at St Fillans may I request the courtesy of your columns to issue a warning to any who may live on the fringe of such a future scheme?

I should like to make it clear to them that the published plan of any such scheme which goes before the Government, and is approved by the Secretary of State for Scotland, appears to be correct only in so far as it defines and lays down the limits of deviations. Although in the plan, all the works may be sited as being specifically in one position or another, the Hydro-Electric Board apparently has the power to move them around at will within these limits.

To my mind, a much better procedure would be to simply provide a map showing the limits of deviation and a list of the works to be undertaken within the area.

Let me tell you of what has happened in the village of St Fillans. Some considerable distance down the River Earn, from Loch Earn, there has been built a weir and the opening into a tunnel to carry water to Dalchonzie. To give some idea of the size, this part has taken 4 years to complete. It lies only the breadth of the public road and the river bank from my home. Yet, in the plan, it was sited away from the village at the south-east end of the loch, about 300 yards west of this point. This change of plan was made without (1) any public notice been given; or (2) any public meeting of the villagers being called to make known the change, or (3) any notification being sent privately to ratepayers who would be adversely affected by such a change. Furthermore, the waters of the River Earn are not listed among the waters being used in the plan, yet, from the weir to the loch the river has been deepened and is now an ugly-looking stretch of water. But, because this still lies within the limits of deviation, the original plan can now be scrapped.

No more, we fear, will St Fillans be famed for its beauty. The latest fear to us who live in it is that the loch is to be lowered 5 feet, thus exposing, at the eastern end of it, an ugly line of sewage pipes stretching in front of each house for some 100-150 yards from the shore.

It would be interesting to learn what qualified one for an invitation to the official opening, which takes place on Saturday, June 28. It was not residence in the village, for one of the oldest residents has not been invited, while one of the latest-comers has been included. It was not living near the works and suffering four gruelling years of noise, for many in this category have been passed over. Nor was it admiration of how the work was executed, nor the boards treatment of the villager's, for the writer of this protest has herself received an invitation. Surly it would have been an easy matter to issue invitations to such a function to all the residents of the village. The board could have counted on many like myself who would not accept.

To all whom it may concern, I say, take warning and probe well into any such scheme before it gets underway, for no one who has not experienced it has any idea what this scheme has meant to us in noise and disturbance over the last four years – I am &c

Catherine McNaughton.

June 30th 1958 - to the Editor of the 'Scotsman'

Lake Cottage, St Fillans,

Sir – I refer to Miss Catherine McNaughton's letter on this matter which appeared in your issue of June 26, and which gives a very reasonable and certainly not exaggerated picture of what has already taken place in our – or what was our lovely village

I would like the public to know that Miss McNaughton is not alone in her anxiety. The residents and others in the neighbourhood take the strongest objection to the level of the loch being lowering 5 feet below the lowest recorded drought level, and to other matters in this scheme. This was made very apparent at a public meeting held in the village hall on May 30th. At that meeting a committee was appointed of which I am chairman, to take up this matter with the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, and any other matters in connection with this scheme which might adversely affect the village and/or the surrounding district. This committee is empowered to take such action as may be appropriate. –

I am &c W. N. G. Hunter.

May 15th 1976 - to the Editor of the Strathearn Herald

Locheearnhead Hotel, Perthshire FK19 8PS

Sir – I note that finally the Perth District Council has prepared their draft scheme for submission to the Secretary of State.

As a former Perth County Councillor for Comrie and St Fillans, I also noted that these two communities are to have separate councils; this is sensible if so desired by St Fillans. But what I do not understand is that the St Fillans Community Council is for St Fillans and Locheearnhead. Some senior and well-paid official should get his Wheatley Community Boundary Map out and see that Locheearnhead is in the Central Region and Stirling District, and is going to be in a Community Council for four villages, i.e., Trossachs, Strathgryre, Balquhidder and Locheearnhead.

One wonders how the unfortunate public can understand what is going on, when it is obvious that the Perth Senior Officials at the top don't.

Yours etc., Ewan W Cameron – Stirling District Councillor

9th November 1985 – to the Editor of the Scotsman

Foxknowe – St Fillans

Sir – Mr Ian S. Wood in his letter today about Army Chaplains fails to answer my question. What does he mean by doubting the value of the chaplains who attended Haig's HQ to the men in the trenches? If he can't answer would he admit that it is one of those loose statements which have the effect of damming with no real knowledge?

Brigadier Sir John Smyth in his book on Army Chaplains, in, *This sign Conquer*, quotes a farewell message Haig sent those who ran the Scottish Churches Hut at his H.Q. at Montreuil – “if, as I confidently believe, there will be few men stationed in Montreuil who will not carry away with them, as one of their most pleasant recollections, the memory of the Scottish Churches Hut on the ramparts, I feel that I too owe it a debt of gratitude. The influence for good exercised by it during the past few years has been immense.

Good. They were Chaplains doing their job where they were posted; doubtless some of them were posted in due course to units in the trenches. It is very unlikely that they spent the “past few years” in the one posting.

Perhaps, I am wrong in thinking that Mr. Wood has a poor opinion of Chaplains. He does admit that many did face their share of danger in the trenches and under fire. In 1916 a couple were awarded the VC and they weren't the only chaplains to be recognised.

It would be very interesting to hear what the men in the trenches, or in the jungle, desert, Normandy of the late war, and subsequent confrontations, have thought of their chaplains, good or bad. Such first-hand opinions would be of more worth than Mr. Wood's speculations.

(Rev) Tom Nicol

Rev Tomas. James. Taylor. Nicol M.C., M.B.E., M.A., C.F., was the Assistant Chaplain General to the Army in Scotland and the Queens Chaplain at Crathie Parish Church & former Padre of the 5th Battalion Black Watch. The fighting padre survived a heart attack in 1984 and along with his wife Mary moved to a smaller house in Comrie where he died on 28th July 1998.

9th December 1985 – to the Chief Executive, Perth & Kinross District Council

The Manse, Comrie

Dear Sir,

Following a recent telephone conversation with Mr. Wood, Director of Leisure & Recreation, and on his advice, I am writing to you in connection with the Dundurn Burial Ground, St Fillans.

The Kirk Session of Dundurn Parish Church is the body which at present cares for and administers the Burial Ground. It is the wish of the Kirk Session that this responsibility should be transferred to the District Council, as the appropriate local authority.

We are grateful to the District Council for the assistance which has been given in the past, namely, an annual grant towards the maintenance of the Burial Ground and, approximately two years ago, the help of Council employees to tackle tasks which were beyond the Kirk Session to cope with.

One concern which we have is that the person who has cut the grass for us in the Burial Ground, being now retired and widowed, may not be in a position to continue this work indefinitely. Should he wish to give it up, it is not clear to whom the Kirk Session might turn for a successor.

A less practical and more fundamental question is to what extent it is appropriate in this day and age for a Kirk Session such as ours to have the responsibility such as this. The Register of the Burial Ground reveals that in the past the records of burials have been kept with varying degrees of accuracy, which suggests that a Kirk Session (or, more probably, the minister for the time being) may not be the ideal body for this purpose.

It may be of interest to you to be aware of the following matters in connection with the Burial Ground.

First, it has been the understood policy of the Kirk Session for a good many years now that the only burials to be permitted in the Burial Ground should be for those persons whose families already possess lairs init.

Second, standing in the middle of the Burial Ground is what is left of the pre-reformation chapel of Dundurn. Since 1586 the family of Stewart of Ardvorlich have used this chapel as their burial place, the most recent burial having taken place earlier this year.

Third, so far as I am aware, ownership of the Burial Ground is a matter of conjecture. The ground immediately surrounding the Burial Ground belongs to the Ancaster, or Drummond, Estate but I have no way of knowing whether the estate would claim ownership of the Burial Ground too. So far as I am aware, the Church of Scotland would not lay claim to ownership.

Before contacting Mr. Wood, I spoke to our local councillor Ewan Cameron, and it is with his knowledge that this approach to the District Council is being made.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. P. D. Thomson, M.A., B.D.,

In a follow up letter from the District Council Leisure and Recreational Committee dated 2nd April 1986, agreeing to assume responsibility for the Dundurn Burial Ground, they state 'inter-ala' that having consulted the Factor for the Drummond Estate they were informed that the Estate would not lay claim to this Burial Ground, and similarly the Church of Scotland General Trustees stated that the property was not contained in any of their titles.

1st May 1996 – to the Editor Scots Magazine

Easter Glentarken

*Where once the trains from Lochearnhead
Streamed proudly down to Comrie,
The rails have gone, the sleepers too,
And harebells bloom where cinders flew,
And goldcrests call where whistles blew,
Along the line to Comrie.*

~~~~~

*The economic facts of life  
Mean progress can't be halted.  
They closed the line from Lochearnhead  
"No time for sentiment they said,"  
"The audit shows it's in the red"  
And progress can't be halted."*

~~~~~

*And high above I found the place
That once was East Glentarken
The crofts that echoed to the sound
Of earnest labour all around
Now lie in ruins on the ground
Of what was East Glentarken.*

~~~~~

*The economic facts of life  
Mean progress can't be halted.  
The flames from thatch to thatch did creep,  
And womenfolk could only weep,  
As all the crofts were cleared for sheep,  
For progress can't be halted.*

~~~~~

W. Shepberd. - 149 Valley Drive, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7SE

(To the west of St Fillans and higher up Glen Tarken lie the remains of Easter Glen Tarken. Before the clearances twelve families lived there growing flax and potatoes and rearing black cattle. Some emigrated to Canada, South Africa and Australia; whilst a few others settled by the loch side.)