

*Rambling about
Dundurn Parish*



foot bridge 1860s

*From articles first published
In the Villagers 2018-2023
By
The Old Crock*

Part 1

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The Clachan of Morel in Upper Strathearn

Contrary to popular belief, the Clachan of Morel was not situated in Glen Tarken; it was in fact a settlement in its own right on the hillside between Tynreoch and Dundurn Mill. AS shown on Pont's map dated 1590, and Stobie's map dated 1783.

According to the Dunblane Commissary records for 1663-77 it was being framed by Alexander Comrie and his wife Janet Drummond along with William, Alexander's brother.

An extract from the reports of the Annexed Estates dated 11th November 1729 tell us there were 8 families living there at a rent of £6 6s 6p They would appear to have been reasonably well-off, with 4 horses – 16black cattle – 100 sheep – 24 goats and growing 1-acre flax seed and 4 acre potatoes. The 1755 records show 8 families comprising James Drummond's heirs and 7 Cotters working there.

It was later occupied by a Duncan McNaughton who, according to the old Kirk Session records was made an Elder, along with William Stewart of Ardvorlich on the 5th August 1798. Duncan McNaughton was born at Morel in 1747 and farmed there until his death in 1799. He may have been one of James Drummond's heirs. His daughter Catherine married Robert Stewart, who was thought to have been related to the Stewart's of Ardvorlich. Robert died about 1830 and the family gave up or were put off the feu.

His son Robert, along with his mother Catherine and other family members, emigrated to Wellington, Ontario.

It would appear that Morel then became part of the Littleport feu and the lands were enclosed by Thomas McWhannell of Port and Morel, with the crofts subsequently cleared to make way for sheep.

The McWhannell's had farmed Littleport since 1688. When Duncan (*known locally as the Baron*) gave up the feu in 1854 he moved to Tullybanocher and also built Victoria Cottage, now the Achray House Hotel, in the village.

Littleport was then taken over by William McIntyre who appears to have lived and farmed at Easter Glentarken prior to this, and according to the valuation roll for 1857, Easter Glentarken – Morel and Littleport were now all part of the same Feu.

So please the next time you take a trip to the old settlements in Glentarken, don't confuse them with Morel.

The Old Crock – December 2018

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## *A tale of Assault and Slander in rural Perthshire*

### *Woman gets £50 Damages from the Colonel*

For many years the villagers had led a quiet and peaceful life but the events that occurred on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 1907 in the post office would soon become the talking point in every household. The news spread like wildfire throughout the area. The talk was that the much respected Mrs Margaret Scott, daughter of Peter Ferguson the local roadman, and wife of James Scott had been horse whipped by Colonel Stewart, the new tenant of Heathcote!

Brevet-Colonel Charles John Butler Stewart, late of the Seaforth Highlanders, born 7<sup>th</sup> June 1846 in Madras, as a Captain had served in Halifax Nova Scotia (9/5/1869 – 25/11/1871) where he met and married Florence Simpson. He later served on the North West Frontier and was involved in the Hazara campaigns of 1881 and 1891. His last posting prior to his arrival in the village was as Commanding Officer at Fort George, Inverness-shire.

The Scott's had themselves only recently returned to the area where her husband had been appointed Post Master, she herself having previously been the Postmistress. On her marriage to James Scott in 1902 she gave up the post in favour of her sister Jessie.



*Post Office 1911*

The dispute arose over a dog fight which took place in the kitchen attached to the Post Office. It would appear that on the day in question Colonel Stewart along with his Terrier had called at the Post Office on business. (Where, previously he had been annoyed by two large dogs lying about the premises). After being in the Post Office only a minute he heard the dogs fighting, and saw his own terrier being bitten by a larger dog. He said he did not want to see the dogs fight but knew that if his dog was attacked it would fight. After the dogs had been separated, they again commenced fighting. As Mrs Scott's dog would not let go of his own terrier the Colonel struck it several times on the head with his riding crop. Mrs Scott intervened and was accidentally struck, or so he said, and called him a brute for hitting the dog. He however, refused to apologise for his behaviour and left. He then made a complaint to the Postmaster at Crieff, who interviewed him, and thereafter saw Mrs Scott and her husband. The reply he got from the Postmaster did not satisfy him, so he reported the matter to the Secretary of the General Post Office for Scotland. He received a letter from the secretary to the effect that Mrs Scott was not to be allowed to enter the post office portion

of the premises, and also that he was satisfied that there was no foundation at all for the statement of Mrs Scott, that the defendant had struck her with a riding whip.

Armed with this letter he then began to call on several members of the community, and at the manse at St. Fillans, falsely and calumniously stated to Mrs Armstrong and others that Mrs Scott was a liar, and that she was well known to the police. He further stated that she was of such bad character that he would not touch her with a barge pole, or wards to that effect, meaning thereby that she was of a disreputable and immoral character, and an undesirable person to hold the position of sub-postmistress, and as being of such a character as not to be fit to associate with honourable and respectable people. He, it was alleged repeated these slanders in a letter to Mrs McIntosh (Neish House) in which he accused the pursuer of making a malicious and lying charge against him, and described her as a "low common creature".

Mr. Alexander Porteous, (Ancaster House) said that shortly after the occurrence at the Post Office. Colonel Stewart called at his residence, and when Mr Porteous went to the door, he told the Colonel that he was not at home – meaning that he was not at home for visitors. The Colonel, he said, spat on the doorstep as he walked away. He also considered that Colonel Stewart was an objectionable character and that he would like to see him out of sat Fillans as he was not an acquisition.

In the Annals of St Fillans, Alexander Porteous makes no mention of this incident, but could this be the reason for the inclusion of a photograph of the old post office showing both Mr and Mrs Scott and one of their Collie dogs in that 1912 publication?

Mrs Scott had originally claimed compensation of £1000 for Assault and Slander. The colonel was cleared of the assault charge, but the charge of slander was upheld, and compensation was fixed at £50 plus expenses, for his unworthy tirade.

In November 1908 Colonel Stewart and his wife gave up the tenancy of Heathcote (now known as Clachnaba and home to the Moncrieff family) eventually settling at Inverlounin, Lochgoilhead. He died there in 1918 It was indeed fortunate that sheriff Sym only set the sum awarded at £50, as it transpired that on his death his estate was valued at £480.

Margaret Ferguson was a native of St Fillans, born in 1873 at Cairndhu Cottage where she died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1928. Her husband James Scott predeceased her, he died 14<sup>th</sup> June 1915. **Both** are interred in the Dundurn Burial Ground. Along with her sister Jessie, they ran the village laundry from premises near-by Ancaster House (now the Four Seasons)

***The Old Crock – February 2019***

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Mill of Dundurn

Set on the banks of the river Earn about half a mile east of the village: William Strathearn, mentions in 1497 the Meal Mill as being newly built and let to Finlayso Phylopsoune for three years at a rent of £22 (*Finlay's original name had been McNab alias Philipson*). A later sasine from 5th April 1552 shows that the lands of Dundurn, with the mill, and excepting the lands of Easter Dundurn was given to Jacob Chesholme, afterwards known as Sir James Chisholm of Dundurn.

During the next three hundred years, the mill passed through a number of tenants, the last Meal miller being Duncan McIntyre.

In 1861 the tenancy was taken by Alexander Menzies, from Fortingall, who transformed it into a sawmill. Sadly his grandson Duncan, aged 4, was drowned in 1873, it was supposed that while crossing the lade to the garden behind the mill; he lost his footing, stumbled off the planks composing the rough bridge and fell into the water, the river being swollen with heavy rain his body was carried downriver to the pool at Kindrochat Bridge. The Mill was occupied by Alexander's descendants, until shortly before the death of Charles Stewart Menzies in 1969. This family have an unmarked lair in the old Kirk yard.



Dundurn Mill

John Hall of Stirling composed the following lines in 1943. Alas I have no knowledge of his connection to the Mill, but it would appear he knew the area well

Dundurn Mill

There's a soma snood Perthshire homestead,

That has stood the stress o' years,

It has heard the lilt o' laughter,

An' has felt the saut o' tears.

Juist a humble hammily house,

'Amongst the toorie stots an' sheep,

Keep 'in guard owe that we kirk yards,

Whaur the old folk lie asleep.

Burdens drape, sound they slumber

In gods acre in the strath;

An' I dander in the gloaming'

West the byre an' doon the path

Tae the dry stance dyke, like sheep auld,

That the rifles kirk surrounds.

An' I feel in tune we' Nature,

As I drink in a' her sounds.

Nook, I harken to the laughter

O the burnie on the hill,

As it louns just like a laddie,

At the sailing o' the Schule:

An' I watch the creeping' shadows,

In the slowly devein' Licht,

An' my soul is awed Wi' wonder

At the miracle o' night.

I can hear the wheelie' peaseweeps,

As they pipe each, to its mate;

An' I lean, engrossed in fancies,

On the old ramshackle gate.

Hoof, I love each he ich an hollow!

Fine I ken each ditch an' stance,

An' my love could be nae warmer,

*Were the hale domain my ain:
Ye main ken I'm free to wander
Owed the knows an' by the lade:
An' the image o' that milkhouse
Will frae memory never fade.
An' then whiles, as if to cheer me.
Hoof that creaking' wheel will turn,
Singin' Wi' its splashing' water
Heist ye back tae "Auld Dundurn."
Nook, I fettle, yet a when times,
Guan tea that houses 'mang the broom.
But when I sleep my last lang sleep
In my ain we narrow room,
I'd like, when life's chapter's ended,
An' vie heard that grand 'Amen,'
To rest just yont the old mill wheel,
In the shadow o' the Ben.*

JOHN HALL.

The Old Crock – March 2019

Serious Motor Accident at St Fillans

Boy rendered unconscious

On Friday 26th July 1907 a rather serious motor accident took place on the outskirts of St Fillans, whereby a young local boy was run down by a motor car and seriously injured, it appears that the boy, John Duncan McFarlane, 14 years of age, of Corranour, was transporting some luggage in his barrow from the village to Wester Dundurn Farmhouse, when just at the

east end of the village a motorcar travelling westward at a rapid rate, dashed into the barrow and ran down the lad, who sustained severe concussion of the brain, besides several serious bruises to other parts of his body, he has since been under constant medical attention, remaining unconscious for the better part of two weeks.

It transpired that the car, the property of Mr Dewhurst of Aberuchill Castle, was being driven by his chauffeur Mr Winstanley. He was later convicted at Perth Sherriff Court, and small payments made to the owners of the barrow and luggage. However given the serious nature of her son's injuries, Mrs Jane McFarlane decided to raise an action in court against the owners of Aberuchill, seeking compensation for both herself and her son, claiming £500 on her own behalf and £750 as tutrix for her pupil son.



cart at braehead

Local Widow takes on Landed Gentry and wins

Lord Guthrie in the Court of Session on 6th January 1908 heard council on the adjournment of issues in the action by Mrs Jane McFarlane against Mrs Annie Maud Dewhurst, and others the trustees of George L Dewhurst of Blakemere, Cheshire, a Cotton Magnate, who died 26th July 1907 leaving £300.000

His Lordship dismissed the action brought by the pursuer as an individual. However, as tutrix for her son he sustained the relevancy, but, instead of a jury trial, ordered the case to be tried before himself.

The defenders claimed that Mr Dewhurst's estate was not liable because (1) Winstanley had taken out the car contrary to express orders and on business of his own. (2) at the time of the accident he was not in the employ of Mr Dewhurst, the latter having died between 4 and 5pm, while the accident took place at 7pm: and (3) the accident was the fault of the boy himself, or at any rate he materially contributed to it.

On these three points his Lordship found as follows:- First, his Lordship did not think that Winstanley was acting out-with his employment and on his own business. Winstanley said – "on the day of the accident I went to Comrie. I had nothing really to go for; I was just taking a run". Accepting this evidence (although with some difficulty), and assuming that his actions were in no way connected with testing the new chains on the car, as the pursuers alleged, and were not only without orders, but were contrary to Mr Dewhurst's express instructions

given at Comrie station three or four months prior to the accident, it did not follow that he was on his own business. By that time he had learned by a wire addressed to Macintosh the news of his masters death and was proceeding to make the death known to Ferguson the Lochearnside head keeper, the content of the wire had not been disclosed, nor had Macintosh or Ferguson been examined, but it seemed clear that it was proper and important that heads of departments should know at the earliest possible moment their masters death, so that they might not undertake fresh responsibilities until the defenders were in the saddle.

Second, could the estate be affected with liabilities for Winstanley's fault at the time of the accident not having yet been engaged or taken over by anyone representing the estate? The defenders did not deny that the effect of Mr Dewhurst's mandate might survive at the time of the accident, and at least until the end of the day after, up to which time Winstanley was entitled to wages from the estate; but they maintained that they could only be rendered liable for fault committed in connection with acts reasonably necessary for the preservation of the deceased's estate. His Lordship agreed with this view, but he thought Winstanley was at the time of the accident engaged on business reasonably necessary for that purpose.

Third, his Lordship after examining the circumstances held that the boy did not materially contribute to the accident by turning the barrow outwards to draw it onto the footpath, instead of turning it inwards and pushing the whole barrow onto the footpath, a movement that might have been wiser, although it was not clear that the accident would have thereby been avoided. Professor Littlejohn admitted that he had noticed a failure of memory in the boy and his Lordship could not doubt that as an applicant for a situation involving physical and mental strain a boy who was known to have received an injury involving a fracture of the skull would be handicapped in competition with others. In summing up he found for the pursuer and assessed the damages at £200 with expenses, which he estimated at from £50 to £100

Prior to enlisting in the Black Watch in 1916, John was in the employment of Messrs Harley & Watt Chemists, Crieff. He received his training at Ripon, and when completed was sent to India, being for a time stationed at Bangalore. He then proceeded to Mesopotamia, where he remained for over a year, and went to Palestine in April 1918, where he, after the results of shrapnel wounds, died on 3rd June 1918.

He was educated at Morrison's Academy, Crieff, and was described as a young man of much promise.

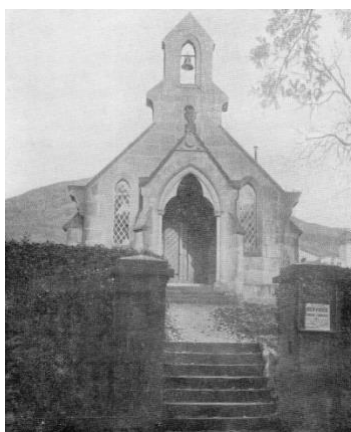
The Old Crock – April 2019

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## WHATS IN A NAME?

I was recently asked about the origins of the Bluestone Church which prompted some research into the buildings history.

The Rev William McKenzie writing on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1838 in his report to the commissioners of religious instructions, indicated that there were only about thirty dissenters living in the parish; however, following the disruption of 1843, the numbers greatly increased. By the early 1850s it had become apparent to the parishioners that a new place of worship was required. The Free Church opened in 1856; it was endowed and erected by Peter Drummond of Drumearn, and possibly designed by Andrew Heaton senior, who was at that time engaged in alterations to Drumearn House. The church was served by the Free/United Church minister of Comrie who took an afternoon service there on the first and third Sunday each month. Church records show that in 1878 improvements were carried out to the building; this may have included a new porch entranceway which looks like a later addition. In 1890, Peter Drummond left a bequest of £500 to be invested, with the proceeds to be applied in the upholding of the fabric of the Church at St Fillans, and in 1906, Mrs Edmonston, (*Beaconsfield*) who had previously donated a new pulpit light and six handsome lights gifted a beautiful new window.



*United Free Church*

According to the Courier, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1913, on the Saturday afternoon and evening a sale of work was held in the St Fillans schoolroom, the proceeds of which were devoted towards the improvement of the heating arrangements and other improvements in the local U. F. Church. There was a very large assemblage present at the opening ceremony, which was performed by Lady Dundas of Dunira. The Rev A C Watt of the West UF Church Comrie, presided, and gave an interesting account of the church.

There were six stalls, on which were arranged, provisions, etc, the office bearers representative stall was presided over by Mrs Elder and Mrs Mills. The congregational stall – Miss Carmichael, *Ivecote* and Mrs Carmichael *Oakbank*; The Edinburgh Stall – Mrs and Miss Currie; The Provision Stall – Mrs Nicholson *Ardrostan* – Mrs P Mills *Rose Cottage* – Mr George

Elder *School House* and Mr L Ellis; The Cake, Candy & flower Stall – Miss Comrie; The Refreshment Stall – Mrs Sharp *Dunira*, Miss M and Miss K Carmichael; etc. During the afternoon many visitors from a distance patronised the sale, and a substantial sum was realised.

In 1929 the St Fillans UF congregation united with the established Church of Scotland. The building was then deemed surplus to requirements and remained unoccupied until it was acquired by the Scottish Episcopal Church. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1937 the Bishop of St Andrews officiated at the consecration of the renamed 'Church of the Holy Spirit'

The service was preceded by a procession along the loch side from the old wooden Episcopal Church, situated behind the Achray House Hotel to the new church.



*church procession*

Followed, by luncheon at the Drummond Arms Hotel.

Due to the lack of electric light and water supply, services were held only during the summer months. The last service was conducted in 1989 by the Rev Robin Patterson, *Lake Cottage*. The alter cloth and tapestry from the church were removed to St Serfs in Comrie; the church was deconsecrated and converted for residential use; renamed the Blue Stone Church

In 1991 the building, including the steps and boundary wall, became a Grade C listed property.

***The Old Crock – May 2019***

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The Rise of the Tourist Boom

In the early 1800s Alexander Stewart and his wife opened an hostelry on Lochearnside which they named the Star Inn, and in 1819 the St Fillans Highland Society built a meeting room and banqueting hall adjacent to it. Mr Brown the village schoolmaster described the hall as a well planned, commodious building, with a flat projecting roof, after the French fashion; and when the ground surrounding it is railed in, and otherwise tastefully disposed of, it will be a useful ornament to the village and district at large. The large room, properly styled the hall, will dine one hundred and forty gentlemen.



The Star Inn

In a letter to Lady Perth dated September 1821, Alexander Baxley referring to that years Highland Games, noted that upwards of 3000 people had already arrived and most refreshed themselves at the Inn, with the mountain dew and bottled porter now a common drink in Scotland. However at the October meeting of the Justices of the Peace at Crieff in 1827 Mrs Stewart of the Inn at St Fillans was refused the licence to sell spirits and ale. The reason for their refusing the licence in this case, as in some others, was their knowledge of the fact that the stock permitted by the excise officers was not at all adequate to supply the customers who resorted to the house. The Crieff Justices were therefore convinced that in granting licences to such persons, they were in effect licensing smugglers.

Following the death of Alexander Stewart, the Inn was put up for sale by Public Roup in November 1838, and it would appear that the purchasers were the Drummond Estates who then offered it for let describing it as beautifully situated at the lower end of Loch Earn and situated about halfway betwixt Crieff and Lochearnhead, - it contains an excellent Ballroom or Hall, 3 parlours, and a number of excellent Bed-rooms, with kitchen, Bar- room, and other conveniences; together with Stable, Barn, Cow Byre, and other Offices; attached to the Inn there is an excellent Walled Garden, fully stocked with Fruit Trees, Gooseberry and Currant Bushes; and there will also be let along with these premises from 6 to 8 acres of excellent Arable Land, along with Summer Pasture for two or three cows.

Mr David Walker and his Wife Margaret took over the lease of the Inn at Martinmas, 1839, renaming it Walkers Inn, and incorporated the Society Hall into the Inn.



society hall 1839

In an advert dated 11th June 1840 he states that 'having taken the above Inn on lease, with the right of fishing with a boat on that part of Loch Earn belonging to Lady Willoughby, and to which he entered at Martinmas last – begs to return his best thanks to his Friends and the Public for the Patronage with which they have honoured him; and begs to assure them that he will do all in his power to merit a continuance of their Patronage and Favour. The Inn has been neatly furnished and put in complete repair, and as David Walker keeps two Pleasure-Boats on the Loch, it is admirably adapted for a family wishing to enjoy the sport of Fishing-recreation in the country during the summer months; and to the Valetudinarian it would be a pleasant resort, being only a few yards from Loch Earn. Ample accommodation will be provided for a carriage and horses, and every requisite will be supplied at the Inn.' At that years Highland Gathering it was reported that no fewer than 5000 were in attendance, including visitors from England, Ireland, Germany and even America. After the delivery of prizes, the members adjourned to Mr Walkers Inn where a sumptuous dinner was prepared; and at night the dance was kept up with Great Spirit, to the soul stirring music of the highland bagpipe, played by the successful pipers of the day.

1842 – Queen Victoria did not stop here!

A report from one of our first tourists

On the 10th of September 1842 in typical Scottish weather, 'according to her highland journals' Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their escort, set forth from Auchmore on Loch Tay, at twenty past three precisely, in their carriage, passing through Killin and amidst the wildest and finest scenery she had yet seen, Glen Ogle reminded her of prints of the Khyber Pass. At Lochearnhead they changed horses. Lord Breadalbane and his party left them at this point, having put up his factor in full highland dress behind the carriage; it started to rain and rained almost the whole of the rest of the time. She also comments that as they turned and went by St Fillans the view of the loch was very fine.

Another account from August 1853, describes the grouse shootings, as the best for many years past. 'The birds are numerous and strong and most excellent sport is being enjoyed. The weather upon the hills has been splendid though a little showery. Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Bart, Mr Heathcote and Mr Batson, arrived at Walker's Inn, St Fillans, on Saturday 13th inst, went out on Lord Willoughby's moors at Lochearnside on Monday 15th killing 144 brace of Grouse. On the 16th Mr Batson killed two royal stags in Glenartney forest; Mr Heathcote shot 40 brace of Grouse. On the 17th the three guns killed 152 brace; on the 18th Mr Batson bagged 60 brace, besides hares and

snipe; on the 20th they went white hare shooting, and killed in six hours 578 Hares and 70 Grouse; they were out again on the 22nd and killed 150 brace. In six days they killed 2 Stags, 600 Hares, 1311 Grouse, 10 Snipe, a total of 1923 head of game.

David Walker died on 22nd May 1863 and at the October meeting of the Crieff Licensing Court John George Bishop was granted a licence for the Inn at St Fillans. An article in the Strathearn Herald dated 1865 reported yet another unhappy tourist's comments of the summer prospects –

*The rain has hitherto completely spoiled the Harvest here of tourists,
And others who generally throng northward By Loch Earn 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 of Loch Earn
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 hills.
It is supposed that he was a "Sassenach"
And that he has retired to a milder clime,
With the firm belief that one must go to the north with an umbrella*

In February 1866 John George Bishop went into sequestration, and at Whitsunday the tenancy was taken over by Andrew and Ann Davie and renamed the St Fillans Hotel. And in August 1868 the Courier announced the arrival of Earl and Lady Russell and family, stating that it was the noble lord's intention to reside in St Fillans for the coming month.

Between 1872-5 Mr Davie extensively remodelled the Hotel, demolishing the centre section and replacing it with a three-story building. The architect was Andrew Heiton Junior, who was influenced by the Greek Thompson style and was also involved with the remodelling of the Dreadnaught Hotel in Callander.

The Old Crock – June 2019

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## *The Halcyon Days of Tourism*

From 1850 until the arrival of the railway, a mail coach ran daily between Crieff and Killin, stopping for an hour at St Fillans to rest the horses and refresh the passengers. The Coach left Crieff at 6.30am on its outward journey arriving at Killin at 10.30am and leaving there again at 12.15, at Lochearnhead it connected with coaches bound to Callander and Loch Lomond.



*St Fillans Hotel 1873*

In 1866, Andrew Davie announced in the Perthshire Advertiser that ‘he bags respectfully to call the attention of his friends and the public to this house upon a lease of which he has entered. St Fillans is well known to be one of the most beautiful places in the highlands of Scotland and is situated amidst scenery of the most picturesque kind. The St Fillans Hotel is close to the Loch and has good boats from which excellent trout fishing is to be had.

### ***A boatman’s tale***

For over 40 years William McKay was chief boatman for the hotel beats on the Loch, he had his favourites – what highland boatman has not! – and with them, his quaint, pawky stories of auld lang syne, made hours which would otherwise have proved wearisome for the want of a nibble, pass pleasantly away. A story about William is told in connection with his favourite beverage. One day a Free Church clergyman, a pledged teetotaler, arrived at St Fillans to spend a day on the loch and William was told to act as his boatman. At the close of the day William was accosted, “well Willie, how got ye on the day?” “No ava.” Said Willie, “The old beggar had nae whusky, so I took him whaur there was nae fush.” This story was perfectly true; he had taken the teetotal clergyman to places he had as much chance to catch trout as if he had been on the top of Ben Vorlich. For this offence he was suspended by Mr Davie as chief boatman for one month.

Mr Davie was an astutely popular innkeeper and hill farmer, who from his base at the hotel operated over several hirsels, including as they became vacant. the farmlands of Findoglen, Ardrostan, and the pendicles of Tynreoch and Cachladow. In addition to this he acted as a letting agent for a number of absentee property owners wishing to ‘*cash in and make hay while the sun shone*’ on what was becoming an extremely lucrative and much sought-after holiday destination.



### ***An experienced cook***

In 1878, according to an article in the Evening Telegraph – a case was heard at the instance of Isabel Smith, cook, formerly at St Fillans Hotel, then residing at 2. West Bothwell Street, Glasgow, who sued Andrew Davie of the St Fillans Hotel, for £12 of wage and board wages, owing to her having been unwarrantedly dismissed on 1<sup>st</sup> august last, the engagement between parties not terminating until 11<sup>th</sup> November next. It was admitted by Mr Davie that she was engaged for five months commencing 11<sup>th</sup> June at £2 10s her conduct however was so bad, and being besides an inefficient cook, that the defender considered he was justified in dismissing her. He paid her £5 15s the amount of wages she had earned – and 10s to pay her fare to Glasgow. He stated she cooked so badly that the soup she prepared was frequently rejected by the guests and that her conduct to her fellow workers was tyrannical, indeed so much so that she drew a hatchet and threatened to take “boots” life. This frightened the lad so much that he left the service. (But was induced a few days later to return). Smith constantly complained about the inadequacies of the kitchen and cooking apparatus; but her predecessors, it was claimed, had always been satisfied with these. At the time of her dismissal she had behaved in such outrageous manner towards her mistress that the lady hastened from the kitchen to the bar where she fainted.

Mrs Smith was the only witness summoned in support of her claim. She stated that she had been in some first-class hotels, where between eighty to ninety guests would sometimes dine in the day and had always given satisfaction. She had never been dismissed before but had always borne a good character for “punctuality, sobriety, and civility.” As she had been engaged as an “experienced cook” she therefore expected to find a suitable kitchen and cooking appliances at St Fillans, which to her disappointment, were not supplied. Her predecessors lacking in experience, might have worked on without saying anything of the insufficient culinary equipment of the establishment, because they did not know of anything better.

The Sheriff said that a judge must decide a case on the evidence produced, and as proof brought forward was sufficient to prove that the dismissal was justified, the case was closed.

### ***Riding to a fall***

An Edinburgh Gentleman in 1895, made the alarming discovery that the new woman actually exists in picturesque Perthshire, and, evidently thinking it a grievance, he has written to the newspapers about it. “While on his way to Edinburgh the other day,” he says, “when passing along the banks of the River Earn, outside of that charming little hamlet of St Fillans, Perthshire. Lo! To my astonishment even here I find her ‘riding astride’ a handsome charger, much to the apparent delight of her groom, who evidently had this fair maid of over twenty summers under training,” and he winds up his opinion that “the new woman is riding to a fall.”

### ***The Old Crock – July 2019***

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The last trouble they had there was a massacre

An agent at the Central Perthshire Licensing court in Crieff on 18th March 1958 delved into Scottish History to support his claim that the village of St Fillans (population about 200), on the shores of Loch Earn, should have a third licence.

Mr Thomas Bolton, a Crieff solicitor, was appearing for Mr Graham Hamilton, who asked for a six day licence for the Ancaster House Hotel.

Chief Constable G. R. Glendenning had stated in a letter there were two licences in the village and maintained there was no need for a third.

Mr Bolton said the Chief Constable could only have meant a third licence would cause difficulty in control. That could be rejected right away, for St Fillans was a quiet little place. "The last trouble they had" said Mr Bolton "was when the Clan McNab came down through Glentarken and fought the Clan Neish. St Fillans has been a quiet place ever since." He also pointed out Loch Earn's popularity with yachtsman and water-skiing enthusiasts.

Previous Licence

Mr and Mrs Hamilton were in the Colleopard Hotel, St Fillans from 1951 and the court would also recall that Mr Hamilton applied for a licence for that hotel in March 1951. The court granted the licence, but the confirmation court turned it down because of the rather difficult traffic entrance to the hotel. Mr and Mrs Hamilton carried on Colleopard as a private hotel. When the North of Scotland Hydro-electric Board came to St Fillans their work centred on the hotel and surrounding environs, resulting in the business being closed by arrangement with the board.

Excellent Accommodation

Mr Bolton said that the Ancaster Hotel had excellent public room accommodation. There were bedrooms for 14 guests and there was a dining room that would seat 32 people. The car park was a suitable one and at the rear of the house there were lock ups. Referring to the Chief Constables point that there were already two licenses in the village, Mr Bolton intimated that Mr Hamilton did not have in mind the needs of the inhabitants when he applied for the licence. He wanted to attract tourists. He went on to say that with the tourist trade traffic in mind, the number of licences in the village should never be limited because of the low population. This would make the opportunities of making a living in St Fillans unreasonably limited. The Loch Earn district had made excellent endeavours to increase the tourist traffic. This was one of the industries of Scotland they could do a lot about. St Fillans might not have been able to take its full part in providing for tourists because of the Hydro-electric Board workings, but there were signs that this work was being completed, and the Board would leave the district as they found it – unspoiled!

Playing its full part

Mr Alex Thompson, a member of the board, said “he did not think there was a need for a third licence.” Mr H. D. Halley, another member, said “it was not so long ago that the court had granted a licence to the same applicant. He did not think the position had altered. There had been a great surge of interest in St Fillans and district recently and it ought to be encouraged.” Provost John Paterson, chairman, recalled the only reason the application by Mr Henderson had been turned down by the confirmation court was that the entrance to Colleonard presented a traffic problem. His new property was in a good position. If St Fillans was able to support another licence, then they should not change now. They had to be consistent. Mr Thompson however felt that the Drummond Arms hotel in the village could contain all the traffic that entered St Fillans in the summer. On a vote the licence was granted by three votes to one.



Four seasons 1961

It was described in *The Sphere* 21st October 1961, as follows:

“This small hotel, so charmingly poised with an uninterrupted view of Loch Earn, has already acquired a reputation for individuality and good taste. Much imaginative thought has been exercised within, in the discreet use of stone, wrought iron, copper and pine. In a cocktail lounge of contemporary design, we sipped our drinks, our eyes constantly focused on the picture window views of loch and mountains. Above stairs are five bedrooms – some with similar views – all expressive of modern bedroom thought. Even more attractive to us were the Scandinavian pine chalets (six in all) discreetly built in the shade of the trees on the hillside above the hotel. Each is a self contained unit; embracing one twin bedded room (converted into a sitting room by day) a smaller room designed for two small children or a third adult, a three piece bathroom: all facilities for making one’s early morning tea and the latest type of self-operating central heating. While the whole decor is in good taste, this will be experienced even more so in the intimate candlelit restaurant, where in all seasons enticing table d’hôte and a’la carte menus are much sought after and – quite exceptional in the Scottish Countryside – are served until 10pm throughout the year.

The Old Crock – August 2019

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## *The Pre-Reformation R C Chapel and Burial Ground at Dundurn*



*Dundurn Burial Ground 2017*

It is thought that the Chapel of Dundurn was built in the late 1400s and dedicated to St Fillan the Leper. Abandoned after the reformation, in 1586 the Chapel became, and remains to this day, the burial ground of the Stewart's of Ardvorlich.

In 1770 a Chapel of Ease was built on the site now occupied by The Oaks, and dedicated to St Fillans of Rathearn, known variously as the Leper or Stammerer. It was described as being of the old barn-like type of parish church, with narrow, uncomfortable pews, and a small gallery or loft. Services were conducted at stated intervals by the parish minister of Comrie; it appears that the Kirk Session claimed the right to burials for the residents of the district in the grounds surrounding the old R. C. Chapel. They may have inherited this right from a chapel predating it, and thought to have been situated on the south side of Dundurn Bridge; Kirk Session records show that on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1702 the collection taken during a service at Dundurn amounted to 16 shillings.

By the mid 1870s, with the influx of the 'great and the good' to the village, it was decided by some that this building was no longer fit for purpose and approaches were made to Drummond Estates, to find a more suitable site in the centre of the village. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1879 a new Chapel of Ease was opened. This building was designed by Mr G. T. Ewing, with seating for 250 persons. The Rev James William Blake was appointed minister.

In a letter to her nephew in New Zealand, Mrs Jane Menzies of Lake Cottage, described him as '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!'

It appears that prior to 1879 no records had been kept concerning the burials at Dundurn, so it was decided that a Lair book was required.

## Dundurn Lair Book

### *Extract from first page*

*"It is now nearly twenty years since the keeping of a record of those interred in the Dundurn Graveyard was suggested as being necessary and this book presented to those interested in this purpose. The want of such a record is becoming more and more felt, and it has been thought advisable to enter as many, as those still alive can remember, as being interred and names and dates that have been forgotten will be entered thereafter if correct information can be got and a blank space will be left where names and dates are wanted."*

A public meeting was held in the village on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1890, at which measures were taken to have the old chapel and surrounding burial ground, carefully cared for in the future. Up until this period the building retained its roof, but the interior being "dank and nose-some," the roof was removed.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1895 there was a decree of disjunction and erection, whereby the surrounding district was ecclesiastically disjointed from the parish of Comrie, and erected into a parish *quoad sacra*, under the old name of the Parish of Dundurn. The Rev Thomas Armstrong was admitted as first minister of the new parish on 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

The Lair Book continued to be held by the Kirk Session of Dundurn Parish Church until 1986, when it was decided by the Kirk session that they no longer felt they had the resources for the upkeep and maintenance of the burial ground. They approached Perth & Kinross Council who agreed to the transfer of the Lair Book and took over the administration & maintenance of what had become a Grade 2 listed site.

As a community we are deeply indebted to David Birkmyre who, as part of the St Fillans 2017 project, undertook a detailed survey of the burial ground, and along with sketches and inscriptions, plotted the position, condition and type of material used in each stones construction. He then, with the aid of Fraser Ballantyne, managed to procure for us a copy of the Lair Book. This book indicates that at least 435 people were interred. However, the monumental inscriptions list shows only 224 names on stones. A number of families; Drummond, King, McAllum, McIntyre, McNaughton, McWhannel, and Murray – have no markers.

Sadly, the churches' faith in the council's ability to maintain the burial ground was misplaced. In recent times what was once a tranquil spot has now been reduced to a nettle and weed infested wilderness. While our rates go up, and our services go down, the maintenance has been reduced to a new plaque, proudly intimating that the site contains a Commonwealth war grave. Personally speaking, I feel the wording should read: "the worst kept Commonwealth war grave" ... and the gate now sports a bright shiny chain and padlock – probably put there to keep the 'resurrectionists' out. Or perhaps, 'on the day of judgement' to keep the slumbering incumbents in – until they pay a toll to access the combination number!



*Dundurn Burial Ground 2019*

Is this what our Council calls 'Taking a pride in Perthshire'? Without notification or consultation! They would have us believe that the burial ground is now closed, requiring only an occasional inspection. However, this cannot be the case. In the time leading up to its handover they were clearly informed that, while no new lairs were available, 'it has long 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 in it.' This leads me to the conclusion that this is a 'right in perpetuity'.

Why not unlock the gates and let the good shepherd's flock graze on the grass? Call me a cynic or a C.O.B – but I would far rather step around the resulting 'biodegradable' sharn, than plowter through the myre of never-ending bureaucratic B.S. issuing from our council offices in Perth.

#### ***The Old Crock – September 2019***

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Operation Pied Piper – 1939

With war clouds gathering and the threat of mass destruction of our cities from the air, parents were so terrified of the imminent war that they agreed to pack their children off to the countryside to live with strangers, in the space of three days; thousands of kids from Glasgow were herded on trains and taken miles away from home, away from the bombers and their families. It is unimaginable to today's parents, 'who can't let their children out of their sight' that nearly 170,000 Scottish schoolchildren were evacuated from their homes in towns and cities considered to be likely German targets.

A meeting was held in the Sandison hall on Friday 19th July 1939 to hear from Mrs Mitchell, St. Serfs, an outline of the arrangements to be made for the reception of children to be evacuated from Glasgow in the event of a national emergency. It was anticipated that about three hundred children would be allotted to Dundurn Parish. By the time Neville Chamberlain officially declared war on Nazi Germany on 3rd September many children, who had barely been further than the end of their street, were starting new lives in the countryside.

On the 2nd September a train arrived at St Fillans loaded with approximately 100 evacuee children, some accompanied by their mothers. The village schoolmistress Miss McKinnon was given the

responsibility of placing them in homes. In her logbook she was somewhat scathing about those who refused to assist. Given the numbers involved, schooling was reduced to half day sessions – younger kids attended in the morning and older ones in the afternoon.

Leap for Life from Blazing Cottage

The cries of a baby gave the alarm of a disastrous fire which broke out in Neish Cottage, St Fillans, in the early hours of Thursday morning. Two Glasgow evacuee families had to leap for their lives when they were trapped in the upper storey. One of the evacuees, Dorothy Reidford aged 9, 74 Earlston Avenue, Glasgow, was badly burned about the face, and sustained cuts to her hand and face. She was detained in Perth Royal Infirmary.

Mrs Paterson and Mrs Nicholson of Earlston Avenue had retired for the night with their families when fire broke out in the kitchen and spread to the staircase. Mrs Paterson was wakened by the crying of her baby daughter and found signs of smoke. She informed her neighbour, and on investigating they found the staircase a mass of flames, effectively cutting off their means of retreat. The window of the room was 15 feet from the ground, and Mrs Paterson, grasped her infant in her arms, jumped to safety. She then assisted Mrs Nicholson, who handed down the younger members of the group. There were four children in the Nicholson family, and two Reidford girls, nieces of Mrs Nicholson.



fire at Neish 1939

Dorothy Reidford became terrified and hysterical, and refused to make the attempt. Eventually Mrs Nicholson seized the girl, forced her through the window and dropped her to safety. Within a few minutes of their escape the roof collapsed, and by the time Perth Fire Brigade, under Captain W J Paterson arrived on the scene the house was blazing furiously. Though the firemen had made the 28-mile journey in just less than 45 minutes in black out conditions, there was little they could do but keep the fire from spreading. At the end of four hours the blaze was completely under control, but by then the cottage was completely gutted. The cottage adjoins Neish House where Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana of Holland spent a holiday in 1935.

By January 1940 the school roll was reduced to 24 as many of the evacuees had returned home being homesick and unable to bear the silence of village life. Those mothers and children who chose to stay integrated well into village life

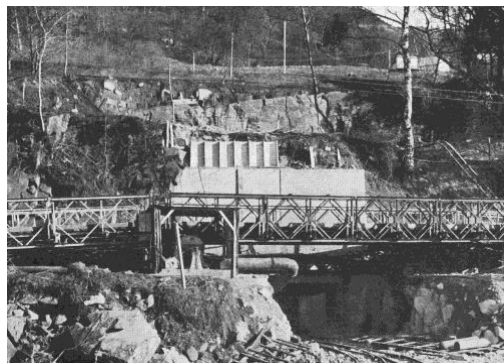
The Old Crock – October 2019

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### ***St Fillans Hydro-Electric Scheme***

Production began today 25<sup>th</sup> December 1957 at the new power station in St Fillans, part of the Breadalbane project. The general manager of the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board Mr A. A. Fulton explained to a party of journalists who visited the Breadalbane scheme in Perthshire – the board are faced with a demand for electricity which is growing by 10 per cent each year. Any augmentation of output is therefore extremely welcome. This new station will add nearly 76 million units of electricity to the boards annual output.

The Mitchell Construction Company engineers concealed the power plant underground within a 60ft high domed cavern in the hillside to the west of the Four Seasons Hotel. Several hundred tons of rock removed were offered to the roads department and used to straighten out the old meandering road along the loch side – and a temporary Bailey bridge was installed to carry the main road over the tail race from the power station.



*St Fillans Tail race bridge*

A three-mile tunnel and pipe work were constructed to convey water from the newly built Lednock reservoir to St Fillans, where it is passed to the generating station at a pressure of 830 feet. On its way to the power station the water is supplemented by water collected from the hills above the northern shore of Loch Earn. A new method of blasting, pioneered in Sweden, was used in sinking a vertical shaft through which the water passed on almost its final journey to the power station. 'sinking' is perhaps a misnomer, for what happened was that two men in a cage started at what was to be the bottom of the shaft and blasted their way upwards. From the turbine the discharge water goes straight into Loch Earn. With the loch's natural catchment it is afterwards used in a further stage of development downstream. The outlet of the loch was dredged and deepened. Opposite Oakbank, a weir incorporating a fish pass and pumping station was



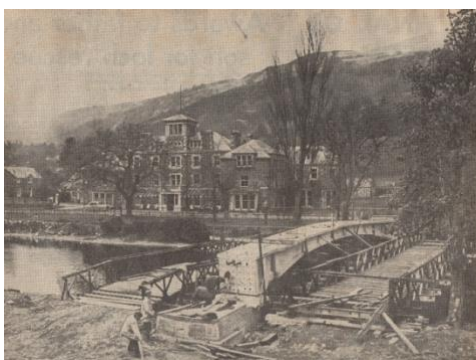
constructed, from which a tunnel 11 feet 6 inches in diameter and three and a half miles long leads to a further 4000-kilowatt power station at Dalchonzie.



*The Weir & White Cottage*

The water then goes back into the river through a short tailrace tunnel. The electricity produced at both stations is carried by 13000-volt overhead lines along Loch Earn and up Glen Ogle to join the Highland Grid system at Killin.

The Dundurn Bridge was thought unsuitable for the building works traffic required on the south side of the loch, so it was decided that the 140 year old wooden bridge opposite the Drummond Arms should be demolished and a temporary bridge constructed to allow access to the south side of the loch.



*new foot bridge*

Looking round the parish today, it is almost impossible for today's residents to comprehend the scale of disruption to village life during the building of the power station- like the arrival of the railway before it – there were mixed feelings amongst the inhabitants, regarding the benefits such a scheme would bring to the local amenities. One of the main concerns was the possibility of the board lowering the level of the loch by as much as five feet in times of drought. Donald McGillivray of the (*Achray*) was quite definite that lowering the level exposing about 100 yards of mud and silt would put off visitors. Mary Crosthwaite (*Robinhill*) thought they would not lower the level for fun but was concerned that the ugly line of sewage pipes would have to be extended and suitably covered over. Catherine McNaughton (*Oakbank*) commented that no one who had not experienced it has any idea what this scheme has meant to us in noise and disturbance over the last four years. William Hunter (*Lake Cottage*) stated that the residents and others in the neighbourhood took the

strongest possible objections to the levels being lowered, and to other matters relating to this scheme '***And in true village fashion!***' was later appointed to chair a village committee to take up these points with the appropriate authorities.

Thanks to the 'tunnel tigers' this remarkable feat of engineering, was brought in on time and on cost. More than can be said for many of today's engineering projects.

On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June 1958, at a ceremony in St Fillans attended by 'the great and the good' Lord Bilsland of Kinrara officially opened the scheme. Many locals refused an invite – perhaps if they were around today, they would see that their misgivings were unfounded.

### ***The Old Crock – November 2019***

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The Royal Visit 7th August – 6th September 1935

Her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina of Holland arrived at Crieff by train from Kings Cross Station at 10 o'clock, where her party were met by the Provost and members of the town council – prior to proceeding by motor to her destination at St Fillans. She was accompanied by the heir to the throne, the Princess Juliana.



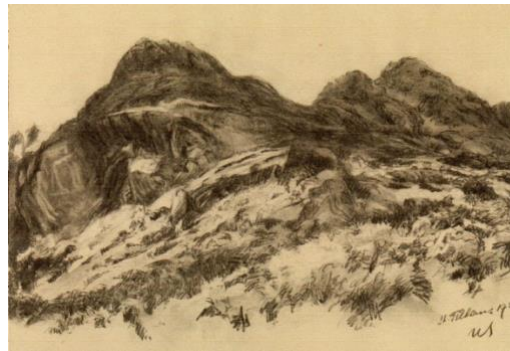
The Queen's arrival at St.Fillans

The headquarters for the Queen and her party was Neish House and the Drummond Arm Hotel, where a dozen rooms had been reserved as the royal suite. It was stated at the hotel by the manageress Miss May Urquhart that it was the Queens express wish that her visit should be regarded as strictly private. No special flag will be hoisted, and the hotel has not been specially decorated, as it is already the centre of a remarkable display of flowers. Spare accommodation at the hotel has already been booked. It is expected that Princess Juliana and other members of the royal party will go in for a mild form of mountaineering in the district, which contains some of the finest scenery in the lower highlands. The weather continues ideal for holidays. There has been very little rain for several weeks.

To Paint Local Scenery

During her holiday Queen Wilhelmina spent much of her leisure time painting the local scenery. Miss Helen Campbell, Woodhouse, St Fillans who conducted Her Majesty over the hills on an

exploring trip, later received a beautifully framed enlargement of the Royal Party along with a letter conveying the Queens thanks for the kindness she received during that “pleasant day on the beautiful moors”.



St Fillans 1935 by Queen Wilhelmina

Comrie Pipe band at the request of Queen Wilhelmina visited St Fillans and played a programme of Strathspeys and Reels, on the lawn in front of Neish House. One of the pieces played was a tune specially composed by Pipe Major Thomas Clark, with the title, “Queen Wilhelmina welcome to St Fillans”. At the direction of the Queen the men were hospitably entertained in the hotel at the conclusion of their programme.



The Queen and Princess Juliana in the Gardens of Neish

Captain Lewis Archibald Gibson (1919-2005) – bother of Eva Gibson the Oaks. At the tender age of fourteen, Archie played his pipes for the Queen on her arrival, and outside her dining room in the evenings; he also accompanied her to the loch side carrying her painting equipment. When she departed her ADC Colonel De Jonge Van-Ellemeet, gave Archie an ornate envelope, ‘Oh good’ he thought ... ‘money’. However, after he had ‘piped her awa’ he found in his envelope a certificate confirming him Official Piper to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, but alas, no money!

The Old Crock – December 2019

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