

*Rambling about
Dundurn Parish*



*From articles first published
In the Villagers 2018-2023*

*By
The Old Crook*

Part 4

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The Canal that never was.

Caledonian Mercury Monday 3rd November 1806

The proposed Canal is for boat navigation, to convey produce and manufactures to the shipping at Perth. The canal will extend inland forty miles to Loch Earn. This Lake is eleven miles in length. It contains on its bank's inexhaustible quarries of limestone, (belonging to the Earl of Breadalbane) which is not found in the immediate country. Coals are brought from England and various parts of the Firth of Forth to Perth at a reasonable rate, from which and the limestone found on the lakeside, it has been estimated, that lime for agriculture and building can be produced on the line of this canal, at one half the price at which lime is at present imported from the lime works on the coast of Fife, an object of vast importance to the cultivation of the adjacent country, and even to distant parts of the highlands.

This canal will also extend through a country abounding in streams fit for all kinds of machinery; extensive manufactures in cotton, linen, and wool can thereby be established at a moderate expense, to the great advancement of the wealth of the empire and the employment of the people. It will also facilitate the carrying the produce of the lead and other mines in the highlands, which can be brought to the head of Loch Earn and save thereby a land carriage of forty miles.

It is therefore from these and many other circumstances, with great deference humbly submitted, that Government will be pleased to grant a liberal aid, out of the balances remaining from the forfeited estates to assist such subscriptions as may be entered into by individuals, the more particularly as this canal has been formerly projected by the late board for managing the forfeited estates. It must also be considered, that although this canal will benefit a great district of the county, yet from the infancy of trade and manufactures in that part of the kingdom, and there being no considerable town except Perth on the line, the return for the money raised will be slow and gradual, so as not to afford that object for the inducing rich capitalists to make this cut, from the expectation of the returns of the lockage dues. But it is presumed that hardly any undertaking can be proposed that, in candid consideration and wise policy, can be considered as more fully entitled to the aid of public money.

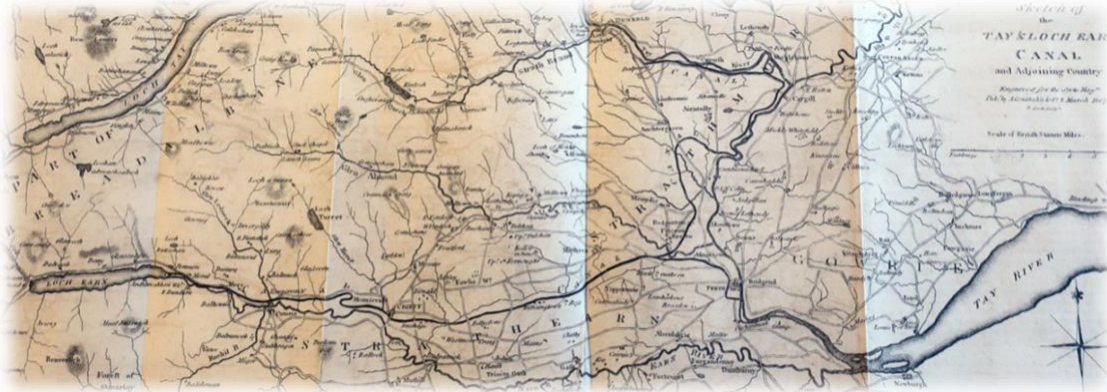
It is therefore humbly requested that Government will consent to grant one moiety, or other proportion of the expense of such undertaking, providing that the principal landed proprietors and others, will undertake to advance the rest of the money that may be estimated to complete this communication so very important to a large district of the county, and to the agricultural trade, and manufacture of the kingdom.

An account of the proposed Canal from Perth to Loch Earn

The Scots Magazine February 1807

Writing to the editor James Headrick, a friend of Captain Fraser, makes out a long impassionate presentation, regarding the proposed canal, it would appear that the canal between Perth and Loch Earn was only the start of the good Captains intentions.

What he envisaged was a string of interconnecting canals from Perth to Dunkeld, and Kenmore, through Loch Tay, joining up with a canal from Killin and Strathfillan to Crainlarich then on as far as Tyndrum to connect with the lead mines there (belonging to the Earl of Breadalbane) back down through Glen Falloch involving constructing a series of locks to raise the canal to the summit of 598ft. Into Loch Lomond and onwards to the Clyde and eventually Glasgow. (This may account for the failure of this venture, as it was seen as a step too far, or even in the end a flight of fantasy.)



Tay Canal

Tay Canal Bill 26th March 1807

Mr Thomas Graham presented a bill to the house for making and maintaining a navigable canal from the river Tay, near to and on the south side of the town of Perth to Loch Earn, in the county of Perth; and the same was read for the first time; and ordered to be read a second time.

The Burgesses of Perth appear to have had reservations regarding the plans before Parliament; they were concerned that it showed land previously designated for Docks incorporated into the canal project by Rennie. They were adamant that the canal proposition should not detract from their own aims to develop this area and claim revenue from the shore dues, and instructed the local M.P. Sir David Wedderburn, to ensure that Perth's interests were duly acknowledged.

'Extract' from Cants History of Perth.

('The Last Word')

'Thanks to the Burgesses, it is not a little remarkable, that in surveying the country for the Canal which was projected to run from the bottom of the South Inch to Loch Earn, like most other Perth improvements, it was never put into execution.'

The Old Crock – February 2022

Killer dogs operating in Strathearn.

Strathearn Herald 10th January 1953

Sheep death roll mounts. Thirty tired shepherds, farmers, and police officers came off the hills between St Fillans and Comrie on Thursday evening to report no trace of two dogs which have been worrying sheep since January 2nd.

Over a score of sheep have fallen victim to the raids made by the canine marauders in the course of a week, and up to the time of going to press the killers were still at large.

First Sight

Search parties have been going out every day since the news came on Friday of last week that six sheep had been worried at Wester Dundurn, occupied by Mr H. Kay. Other killings were reported daily, but it was not until Wednesday that watchers reported the first sighting of the dogs suspected of the worrying.

Farmers and their shepherds combined to make the search and daily the number of guns trying to force the dogs into a spot where they could be shot, has mounted. There were fourteen guns on Wednesday, twenty-five on Thursday morning and by the same afternoon the number had reached 30 – almost everyone who could handle a gun in the immediate area.

“Serious Business”

Searchers began in an area south of the St Fillans Golf Club and within the week had combed the whole of the area of hills between St Fillans & Comrie.

Police said the dogs were quick to escape the encircling movements of the searchers, “it is a most serious business,” said a constable. “Who knows how many sheep lie dead in these hills?”

Evidence showed that the dogs had driven sheep into bogs and ponds, attacked them and left the animals to either bleed or freeze to death.

Hardest hit of the farmers is the St Fillans District Councillor Mr D. W. Robertson, Easter Dundurn; on 3rd January he lost ten sheep to the killer dogs.

It is thought the dogs escaped from their enclosure on Thursday 1st January, Friday 2nd 6 sheep killed at Wester Dundurn, Saturday 3rd 5 sheep killed at Kindrochat occupied by Mr McIntyre, Sunday & Monday 10 sheep killed at Easter Dundurn, Tuesday 6th 2 sheep killed at Ardrostan occupied by Mr Doig,

On Saturday 10th January Mr James Shaw, a Crieff builder shooting over Easter Dundurn saw the dogs and fired at them. They parted, and later Mrs James Grewar, wife of the shepherd at Tomanour, saw two-year-old Ben standing near the house, she coaxed the dog into a shed, and later Mr Grewar destroyed it.

On Sunday Mr Grewar saw eight-month-old Glen on the hillside a few hundred yards from the house and killed it with his gun.

Fifty guns had been used in the search for the dogs, and over the weekend they were hunted by experienced stalkers.

This was Perthshire's most serious outbreak of sheep worrying since 1927 when a dog called 'De Wet', killed 140 lambs in 14 days.

It must have seemed incredulous to outsiders that it took 250 guns to track down and eventually kill 'De Wet', a Black Collie Dog. There was something of the ridiculous about the affair, one local was heard to remark, and "It was enough to make a horse laugh, if it had been a gang of desperado's people at a distance might understand, but a collie dog, well! Well!"



1927 De Wit Hunt

A party of sixty strong guns eventually cornered him on Dunranchan Hill, between Comrie & Muthill, and 'De Wet' fell to the gun of Mr Duncan McCall, gamekeeper at Strowan.

A postcard was received in Crieff, from an apparently amused Irishman, dated 25th April 1927, it was addressed to, All Keepers, shepherds and farmers, and the 250-armed men and guns, on the six square miles of Perthshire. “If you are all such bad shots that you cannot bag that Collie dog that killed the 140 lambs – hunt him with dogs. A fast one to overtake him and a big strong one to bite him when overtaken by the strong one, also a dog with a good nose to smell him and point him out to the other two dogs. This is the way we always do it in Ireland.

Another Incident Reported in May 1934

For some days serious depredations have been done to sheep stock by a dog, which appeared to be out to break the “record” of the notorious ‘De Wet,’ which ravaged the area several years ago, and eluded retribution for several days. Last Tuesday evening its destructive career in the Comrie district was cut short by a rifle bullet on the slopes of Dundurn Hill, where it had taken shelter from the organised pursuit of armed parties. The place where it was shot is about four miles from where the first traces of worrying was found on Sunday. In the three days it was at large, the dog – a fine tan and white Collie – had destroyed about twenty lambs in four flocks over the surrounding districts, the shot which ended its depredations was fired by Mr Fisher Ferguson, son of the overseer at Glenartney, on the Drummond Estates.

Something had to Change.

‘It’s your dog – so it’s your problem if it attacks livestock.’



Lambing Season

During lockdown there was a marked increase in members of the public escaping to the country to exercise their dogs. With lambing season about to start, now is the time to remind dog owners that they now risk facing fines of up to £40,000 and/or imprisonment if they let their pets off the lead when walking in fields with livestock.

Legally your dog must wear a collar with an ID tag while outdoors. The tag must display the name and address, including postcode, of the owner. As a dog owner you are responsible for ensuring your dog is kept under proper control at all times.

Across the U K it is against the law for dogs to worry livestock by chasing or attacking them, this includes cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, or even domestic poultry. In Scotland as well as increasing the maximum fine and punishment, the Bill was extended to include modern day farmed animals such as Alpacas, Llamas, Ostriches, farmed Deer and water Buffalo.

I would advise Owners to keep their dogs on a lead no matter how well behaved their pets usually appear. Worrying can be fatal to farmer's animals; it can also cause miscarriages or cause an animal to become injured during its panic.

The new rules give Police the powers to investigate and enforce a livestock worrying offence, they can go on to land to identify a dog, seize it and collect evidence from it.

If an owner is convicted of letting their dog off the lead within a field, they could be banned from owning a dog in the future. The bill also allows for the dog's removal from a person's ownership.

You legally must have your dog on a lead no more than two metres long on open access land, even if there are no livestock around, between 1st March and 31st July, and at other times it is recommended you keep your dog on a lead around any livestock.

Unlike sheep that will normally move aside, livestock are more inquisitive and will generally move towards members of the public and can be extra protective and potentially aggressive if dogs are let off around their young.

The countryside code states.

'If you feel threatened or are chased by livestock, then let go of the lead for your own safety. It's usually the dog they see as the threat rather than you, and most dogs can easily outrun a cow.'

If your dog is particularly skittish around sheep, or loves to chase other animals, they should be kept far away from all livestock. Please remember that farmers still have the right to shoot dogs they find worrying their animals.

Lastly, I would ask that all dog owners carry a 'poo' bag, make use of it, and take the contents home or to the nearest bin. Please do not leave the bag hanging from trees as ornaments or as roadside decorations.

The Old Crock – March 2022

Census and other Records

Census records provide a snapshot of the people at a particular address on a given night. This information can be used to further your research for direct ancestors, or to broaden our knowledge of the local community and act as a link between statutory records and parish records. Having just filled in the latest census return, I thought it appropriate to compare its contents with some previous records. An official census has taken place every ten years since 1801, however little information survives for 1801 to 1831 and the 1841 records don't show a place of birth. Prior to 1801 we rely on a number of other sources, and I have included some examples which I hope will be of interest.

In 1801: the government needed census information to help plan the corn crop. They also wanted to establish the number of seamen available to fight in the Napoleonic wars.

1810 - Glentarken: - Survey conducted by James Knox for Drummond Estate

'Plan of the farms of Easter and Wester Glentarken with the Pendicle of House of Wood'

Wester Glentarken

<u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Bog</u>	<u>Muir</u>	<u>Wood</u>	<u>Total</u>
70.75	111.43		1216.63	22.14	
Cluster A.	25 Buildings & 6 Yards				1.16
Cluster B.	10 Buildings, & Yard				0.83
					1422.94

Easter Glentarken

<u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Bog</u>	<u>Muir</u>	<u>Wood</u>	<u>Total</u>
52.70	119.29	7.64	1610.91	45.46	
Cluster A.	6 Buildings, 1 Mill & 3 Yards				0.46
Cluster B.	4 Buildings & 2 Yards				0.40
Cluster C.	5 Buildings & 2 Yards				0.32
					1829.18

Pendicle of House of Wood

<u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Bog</u>	<u>Muir</u>	<u>Wood</u>	<u>Total</u>
0.15	7.67	0.21		8.03	

Notes - The clusters shown may be because Knox listed under arable the 'houses Yards and Area.

It's difficult to explain the large density of settlement on Wester Glentarken, just across the burn from the three smallish clusters on Easter Glentarken. Perhaps it was a 'cottery; or cotter- town where all the crofters or cotters from Glentarken lived?

1832 - Electoral Roll for Comrie

Donald Campbell -	<i><u>Glenbeich</u>, joint-tenant, lands, houses & farm.</i>
John Robertson -	<i><u>Glenbeich</u>, joint-tenant, lands, houses & farm</i>
Alexander Ferguson -	<i><u>Easter Dundurn</u>, farmer, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
John McLaren -	<i><u>Ardeich</u>, farmer, joint tenant, lands & houses</i>
Duncan McLaren -	<i><u>Ardeich</u>, farmer, joint tenant, lands & houses</i>
Duncan McLaren -	<i><u>Derry</u>, farmer, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
Donald McIntyre -	<i><u>Wester Dundurn</u>, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
James McFarlane -	<i><u>Ardrostan</u>, farmer, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
Thomas McWhannel -	<i><u>Port & Morel</u>, farmer, tenant lands & Farm.</i>
Alexander McLaren -	<i><u>Glentarken</u>, farmer, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
Donald Robertson -	<i><u>Easter Glentarken</u>, farmer, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
John Stewart -	<i><u>Findoglen</u>, farmer, tenant, lands & houses.</i>
Alexander Stewart -	<i><u>St Fillans</u>, vintner, proprietor, houses & land.</i>

1837 - *Pigot & Co's - National Directory of Scotland - Some of the St Fillans Residents*

Rev Donald McKenzie - *Minister Established Church*

Samuel McLaren - *School Master*

Andrew Crerar - *Blacksmith*

Andrew Stewart - *Innkeeper (Star)*

Robert Ferguson - *Grocer*

John Carmichael - *Boot & Shoemakers:*

Peter McIntyre -

John McLaren -

Hugh Cameron - *Lime Burner*

Lieut. Duncan Fletcher - *Gentry*

Lieut. John McNab -

1841 - **Dundurn Parish** was split into three areas for the Census

A) - Kindrocket to Ardvorlich

B) – The village from the toll house to the lime kilns

C) – The Derry to Ardveich

Totals - 85 properties – 522 residents – 253 males – 275 females – including eighty-one children under the age of ten.

The local School Master Samuel McLaren, acting as enumerator for this census commented that.

'As I am not furnished with any data to compare the increase or decrease of the districts with the population of former times. All I can say is that there is a reduction of rather more than 60% on the whole as compared with that of 1831. Since then, a considerable number have immigrated both to the Canada's and Australia – within the last six months however only one family has gone to America, and one individual (a mason) to Australia – another cause of the decrease in the rural population is the enlargement of the farms. The ejected tenants generally go abroad. Also, from the low wages of the cotton hand loom weavers, a number of them with their families left within the last three years southward where there is a greater demand for woollen hand loom weavers.'

Note -This was the first time the census consistently recorded names and ages, people's occupations were also included, but place of birth was normally recorded as Scotland.

1851 - Dundurn Parish again split into three areas for the Census similar to that of 1841

Note - John McDonald, Minister of Comrie. The manse 10th April 1851 'the village of St. Fillans lies at the east end of Loch Earn. In a very pleasant and romantic setting. The inhabitants consist mostly of retired officers of the present army and labourers. The village is a clean and inviting place. The people live in sociably comfortable circumstances.

The census records show that there were thirty-seven properties situated between Little Port Farm and the Lime Kilns, *four* of which were unoccupied. There was a total of 131 residents recorded comprising sixty-four males and thirty-seven females.

This shows a reduction of six properties and forty-one residents compared to the 1841 returns. It would appear that Hand loom Weaving had also ceased.

Note – For the first-time people were also asked if they were “Deaf, Blind or dumb.”

By **1871** the census included a new question about unemployment, and a new change regarding the way school children were recorded, in 1861 school information was captured from 5 to 15 years. This was lowered in 1871 to 13 years after the Scottish Education Commissioners observed that in Scotland few children remain at school beyond 12 years of age, and the question arises as to whether school attendance can be prolonged beyond that point.

In **1881** the census started to collect data on how many people could speak Gaelic, over the last 140 years it has charted the decline of its use in Scotland. But has also provided a useful tool in efforts to grow the language.

1891 – The census included a definition of a household. (1) Every dwelling with a distinct outside entrance from a street, court, lane, or road - or (2) with a door opening from a common stair; but any such dwelling if subdivided and occupied by different families, is reckoned as only one house.

1901 – People born abroad were asked to indicate if they were 'foreign subjects', and the term 'idiot' was omitted leaving the categories deaf and dumb, blind, lunatic and imbecile, feeble-minded.

1911 – From a researcher's point of view this was the best census as it records not only the marital status but also shows length of marriage, total number of offspring, and also number of offspring still surviving.

1921 – The census for the first time collected information on divorce rates

I hope this gives you a taste of our rich and varied past and might encourage some to search for them-selves.

Sadly in 2022 there was no sign of the articulated lorry with a school attached trundling through the rural countryside, offering it to unsuspecting 'Retirees' with the incentive of a climbing wall if they took it of their hands. Having been told, that by filling in all the questions, on the form, the administrators, would be better placed to work out our future needs. Try explaining to a 96-year-old why they are required to fill out the questions asking if they had been offered or were actively seeking employment during the past seven days!

Unfortunately, nowhere did it promise to reinstate our already lost services. Bus – School – Post Office etc, are all now things of the past.

Indeed, even the 1921 census records are still not available, and it looks like they won't be until later this year, we are told this is due to Covid, but given that they have now had eleven years to prepare and produce them one wonders - Is anyone in charge?

The Old Crock –April 2022

Local Taxes & Local Elections

Nothing ever changes.

The collector of the statute Labour service Money, in the Crieff District intimated that he would collect for the year 1842, as follows; and that unless the various assessments are paid on the day of collection, a decree will thereafter be issued, by which double the assessment will assuredly be levied, in terms of the Statute Labour Act.

The Western part of the Parish of Comrie and Balquhiddar, to the west end of Lochearn, will be collected at St Fillans Inn on Tuesday 19th July next.

The Rates Charged are as Follows.

1.	Persons inhabiting a lodging or boarder	£0.1 6
2.	Do. A house without a garden under £10 annual rent	£0.2 0
3.	Do. A house with a garden and piece of land, under One Acre In Extent, and under the yearly rental of £10	£0.3 0

4.	Do. A house with or without a garden and piece of land under One Acre in extent, of the yearly rent of £10 and under £20	£0.3 0
5.	Do. Do. £20 and under £30	£0.4 0
6.	Do. Do. £30 and under £40	£0.5 0
7.	Do. Do. £40 and upwards	£0.6 0
8.	Tenants who have only one horse, and who work exclusively With it on their own possession, - rent not exceeding £24	£0.5 0
9.	Do. Having two Do – rent not exceeding £36	£0.7 6
10.	Tenants and others having one or more horses, and who work For hire, each horse	£0.76
11.	And every tenant of land whose yearly rent amounts to £36 Upwards, per pound	£0.02

All who mean to appeal on account of poverty, require to produce certificates of their inability to pay , and their being on the poor roll or entitled to be so, signed by a Justice of the Peace, the Minister of the Parish and Two Farmers, each possessing lands to the extent of £100 yearly rent.

John McWhannell., collector.

Perth 1st June 1842

Comrie Parish Council – May 1885

The first meeting of the newly formed C.P.C. took place in the office of the Clerk to the council Mr Peter Brough, *(he held the office of clerk for some 12 years.)*

Comrie Parish Council – July 1885

At the second meeting of the Comrie Parish Council, Colonel Williamson of Lawers, presiding, Mr Maisey from Lochearnhead moved – “that the meetings in future be alternatively held in Comrie, St Fillans and Lochearnhead” on a division the chairman gave his casting vote in favour of the motion.

The Council then imposed the rates as follows: - Poor rate assessment, 6d per £1: Cemetery rate, 1d per £1; Water, 1s 3d per £1. In connection with the water assessment, it was stated that the repairs to burst water pipes in Comrie last winter cost £252 1s 11d. This work, it was stated, was done at the instance of the County Council officials. On the suggestion of the chairman, the clerk was instructed to intimate to Mr Finlayson the representative of the C.C. that in future in the event of pipes needing repair, the P.C. intend to employ their own plumber. The other business was routine.

Comrie Parish Council – August 1885

The Clerk read correspondence from the Local Government Board regarding the P.C. holding its meetings at Lochearnhead. Informing him that it would be illegal for them to hold meetings out-with the parish of Comrie and indicating that all future meetings be held in Comrie. However, it was resolved that the February meeting is held at Lochearnhead and thereafter in Comrie.

Comrie Parish Council – November 1898

St Fillans Ward.

The two Gentlemen; Nominated are Mr Edwin Maisey, Lochearnhead and Mr Duncan McIntyre, Kindrochat. As the required number only has been nominated there will be no contest in the St Fillans Ward.

Perth County Council – January 1899

A Lochearnhead Road

A letter was read from Comrie Parish Council stating that the council was dissatisfied with the report of the surveyor on Auchraw Road, with reference to adding it to the list of highways within the district, and asked that a small committee be appointed to inspect the road and report, but the meeting resolved to sustain the report of their Surveyor.

The story of the Hearse

The chairman explained that the committee appointed in connection with the Hearse had recommended the purchase of a second hand one belonging to the proprietor of the Royal Hotel Crieff. The old Hearse committee had agreed to hand over the old hearse along with £20 they had in their possession. Mr Edwin Maisey objected on behalf of the people of Lochearnhead, he stated that it would be extremely hard on the ratepayers of that district to pay their share of the cost as they would have little opportunity to use it. He also questioned the legality of taxing the

people of Lochearnhead for the Hearse, for if they were to use it, they would also have to pay the cost of thirteen miles of a hire. The people of Lochearnhead would refuse to pay this tax and would fight it to the death. Mr Maisey further remarked that this old Hearse was not deemed fit for the people of Crieff but was good enough for Comrie!

Comrie Parish Council – March 1926

The Clerk submitted a return showing the total cost of the recent election to be £13 13 8d.

Comrie Parish Council – May 1930

The final meeting of Comrie Parish Council took place with Mr Macbeth of Dunira presiding, the chairman and Clerk gave a detailed statement regarding the operation of the new Act and explained that they were still in the dark as to the future management of the various offices associated with the community. Nothing Ever Changes.



Alec Douglas-Home 1964

Alec Douglas-Home – outside the Drummond Arms touting for votes the old-fashioned way.

May 2022

We are about to undergo yet another round of voting for the local elections, all the party manifestos have been flooding through our letterboxes – promises – promises – promises! Vote for me and I guarantee to take care of all your problems, put your tick in my party's box and all your woes will be over.

Nine times out of ten it's the same people standing who have represented us in the past, making all the same promises, now if they were unable to sort things out last time round how can we be expected to believe that things will be any different in the future.

No one is promising that in rural areas they will sort out the litter problems - the anti social camping - the speeding - the drainage - the road repairs. No In rural communities we are being pressed to assist our councils by cutting our grass verges and clearing our own community graveyards.

Perhaps the only saving grace is that our Community Halls will benefit from the revenue generated by the polling stations.

The old Crock – May 2022

Problems with Speeding

Ever since the first motor car rolled off the assembly line there has been a problem with speeding throughout the village and surrounding district.

A report in the Strathearn Herald dated 20th September 1902 was but the first of many I have come across in my research - The Scottish Chamber of Agriculture did good service (says the "N. B. Agriculturist") by dealing in a business-like way with the question of speed for motor cars. As a matter of fact, the "scorching" motorist like the scorching bicyclist has become not only a nuisance, but a positive terror as a source of danger on the public roads. Of course, the motorist is bound by law to keep his rate of speed within twelve miles an hour, but this legislative regulation is much more honoured in the breach than in the observance. There are few, if any, motorists, who, when they are "out for the day," do not much exceed the legal limit of speed, and only a few weeks ago one of the most prominent legislators in the land was collared by a constable for breaking the law as to the speed of motor cars, but the constable soon agreed to take no notice of the offence when he knew that the law-breaker was himself a law-maker. Of course, when there is a clear road ahead – when the signal is down to use a railway phrase – there is no danger, except to the occupants of the car, in racing like a deer before the hounds. But where the road is more or less taken up with traffic the speed of the motorist must be kept within due limits and the scorcher must be made to understand that the public roads were not built expressly for him and his Juggernaut car. Of course, also, the motorist who exceeds the legal limit of speed, or causes damage to life or limb, or to property through recklessness' in driving,

may be convicted and punished. But in most cases the difficulty is to identify him, so that he can be laid by the heels. This difficulty would be got over in large measure if the motor cars had to be all numbered, and have their distinctive numbers painted prominently upon them. This would involve a system of registration, and it is hoped that a registration fee of an equally prominent figure be insisted upon at the same time. A similar system of registration, with registration fees as well, is equally desirable in the case of bicycles.

One of the First Speed Traps October 1905

A Dash near Comrie

Before Sheriff Syme at Perth on Tuesday last, Arthur Jenkins, motor car driver in the employment of Mr J. C. Wallace, Glassingall, Dunblane, was charged with having, on 16th September, on the public road between Comrie and St Fillans, and particularly between the 4 ½ and 5 ½ mile-stones, driven a motor car at a speed over twenty miles an hour. Accused who pleaded not guilty was represented by Mr R. M. Mitchell, Solicitor, Perth.

Constable Duff, Comrie, said that on 16th September he and Constable Wilson, of St Fillans, arranged to watch a part of the road in consequence of complaints regarding the speed of motor cars. The car No E. S 152 driven by the accused was going at an excessive speed. It passed the four ½ miles-stone at 4.16. Duff was standing inside the gate behind a dyke, and immediately opposite the milestone. He did not mark down the time the car passed but took his bicycle and cycled to Constable Wilson and intimated the time the car passed his milestone. Wilson stated that the car passed him at 4h 17m and 40 sec. The car was stopped at some considerable distance past the milestone. In answer to Mr R. M. Mitchell, witness said his watch was not a stop one, but he was satisfied that he could not have made a mistake of a minute.

Constable Wilson, St Fillans, in answer to Mr Mitchell, said the only practice of timekeeping he had had was the timing of two cars that passed previous to the accused. Witness did not think he had made a mistake. The distance worked out at 36 miles per hour.

John Wilson, for the defence, said that his car was sixteen feet long, and owing to there being so many sharp turns on the road there would have been a tremendous swing on the car, and it would have been liable to throw someone out. With seven people in the car, it was not possible for it to go at 36 miles an hour.

Mrs Wallace, one of the occupants, said that they left Glassingall and had a run via Lochearnhead. They left Glassingall at 3.15, and they arrived at 6.30, a distance of about fifty miles having been

covered in 3 hours 15 minutes. That was considerable under the speed limit. She was sure they did not cover the mile in 1 minute 40 seconds.

After further evidence the sheriff said very often, he had found out that people in a motor car did not know the pace at which they were going, and this case was an excellent illustration. He was able to say that the car proceeded at a speed exceeding twenty miles an hour. A fine of two guineas, with an alternative of one day's imprisonment, was imposed.



Outside Earnbank

In 1907 a serious motor accident occurred at St Fillans in which a young local boy was rendered unconscious. *This was previously reported in the Villagers April 2019.*

1913 - Motorists exceed the speed limit at St Fillans

Several motorists who exceeded the ten-mile speed limit at St Fillans on different dates between the end of June and beginning of July were severely dealt with by Sheriff Sym at Perth yesterday.

Laidlaw admitted having on 1st July, driven a motor car at a speed of over sixteen miles per hour. The accused explained that his speedometer was not working properly, and that he did not know what speed he was travelling. A fine of £2.2s with the alternative of seven days imprisonment was imposed.

McArthur was charged with having driven at a speed of over twenty miles per hour. The accused failed to put in an appearance, and after hearing evidence the charge was found proven, and a fine of £4.4s with the option of eight days imprisonment was imposed.

Brown who also failed to appear in court was charged with having driven at a speed of nineteen miles on the 29th of June. He was further charged with having failed to produce his licence when

requested by the police. After evidence, the accused was found guilty on both charges, and the Sheriff imposed fines of £4 and £1 on the respective charges.

McGregor admitted having driven a car at a speed of seventeen miles per hour and was fined £4. 10shillings with the alternative of 7 days imprisonment.

Cato for travelling at a speed of seventeen miles per hour on a motor bike was fined £2. 10s or 7 days.

Alarming collision at Dundurn Bridge

In 1925 two motor cars were involved in an alarming collision at the east end of the village where the public road leading up the south of Loch Earn branches of the main road at Dundurn Bridge. One of the cars was driven by Mr Doran, Findoglen, St Fillans; the other car was driven by a Stirling man. The cars collided with considerable force, the Stirling car being severely damaged. Both cars were full of passengers, but fortunately no one was seriously injured, although one of Mr Doran's sons sustained a cut to the forehead, he having been thrown through the windscreen. An elderly lady in the other car suffered considerably from shock.

Not all offenders were outsiders.

In 1925 the Rev Arthur Crawford-Watt, of Oakbank, St Fillans was one of a number of motorists fined 30/ or 10 days for driving at 22 mile an hour in a 10mile speed zone, and in the following year John Mills, Rose Cottage, St Fillans was fined for driving at 23 miles an hour at Methven - In 1931 George Carstairs, of Oakbank was fined £2 for allowing his son, George of the same address, to ride his motor cycle without having an insurance policy in respect of 3rd party insurance.

1952 - Chief Constable for trial

Chief Constable Andrew Meldrum, Lyndhurst, Taylor Street, Forfar, will appear on trial at Perth Sheriff Court on October 2nd. Yesterday through an agent he denied a charge of carelessly driving a car and colliding with a bus on the St Fillans to Lochearnhead road on June 21st. The complaint stated that he and his wife Mrs Janet Meldrum; Chief Constable James C Paterson and Mrs Eleanor Paterson, 27 Blackness Avenue, Dundee, passengers in the car and two bus passengers were injured.

Perhaps it's time to bring back a local Bobby.

In more recent times there have been several accidents and at least two fatalities involving motor bikes, but despite repeated appeals from our community council it would appear that the powers that be are not listening - We have recently been informed that average speed cameras (*after consultation with the Community*) are to be installed on the A85 between Crieff and the village, I

for one have no recollection of this so called consultation and would like to know who was consulted? While this may help to improve things, it will not stop speeding in the village.

Community Council Minutes

When the St Fillans Community Council was formed in 1977 one of the topics discussed at the first meeting was the excessive speeding through the village, since then this subject has been raised innumerable times, and despite promises from both the local police and County Council representatives, nothing has ever been done to resolve this problem. Now according to Traffic Scotland the village does not meet their criteria's, I have tried researching their website but have been unable to obtain any further information - A representative has refused to attend a Community Council meeting as it was out-with his normal working hours, and would necessitate him driving back to Edinburgh late at night.

20 Mile speed zones

Last year after extensive road surveys in both Crieff and Comrie it was deemed that speed restrictions should be put in place on sections of the A85, resulting in 20 mile an hour zones, while this is highly commendable, we the residents of St Fillans deserve similar consideration, and at the very least a local road survey should be carried out. Failing that, a more proactive approach from Tayside Police or speed cameras could be a solution.

The Old Crock – June 2022

Comrie to Lochearnhead Turnpike Road

How the road evolved



Turnpike road 1860s

The first roads in the area were no more than tracts through the heather along the valley floor or the Loch side, mainly used by Drovers taking their cattle to market, or for locals on foot, it was not until much later that it became necessary for a more formal highway system to be put in place. In 1669 an act was passed empowering the justices of the shire to meet once a year to form groups of parishes and appoint overseers to undertake and account for road repairs. They were empowered to call and convene all tenants, cottars and their servants by public intimation at the parish church, on the Sunday after the first intimation, to have in readiness, horses, carts, spades, mattocks, picks etc, as required for repairing the highways and byways, at places and times deemed necessary.

The obligation for roadwork or 'statute labour' was fixed at no more than six days a year. Failure to attend would attract a fine of 20shillings Scots daily for each man and 30shillings for each man and horse.

Even then it very soon became apparent that this was insufficient to maintain the roads and another act was passed requiring that all freeholders and heritors be assessed and provide 10/- Scots for each £100 value of rent. The act also allowed for moderate customs to be charged for building and maintaining them.

The Jacobite rebellions of 1715 & 1745 resulted in a new urgency in building new roads to accommodate the swift movement of military troops, between 1724 and 1740 Major General George Wade built 238 miles and between 1740 and 1767 a further 8 to 900 miles were constructed by his successor Major William Caulfield. They were maintained by the work of soldiers until 1790 and by government contractors for a number of years after.

In 1789 the first Perthshire turnpike act was passed by parliament, the qualifications of Turnpike trustees, and their powers were regulated, with the officers to be elected, and accounts to be kept, their powers to borrow money, and rules regarding the levying of tolls and allowing certain exemptions.

In 1797 it was reported to Parliament that the state of the road between Crieff and Lochearnhead was in a state of disrepair and that in many places so deep and ruinous that travellers cannot pass without difficulty and danger, and it had been found by experience that the Statute Labour is not sufficient for the repair of said roads. It granted powers to the trustees to undertake the making, repairing, and maintaining the road. The trustees were Sir Patrick Graham of Ochertyre – P R D Burrell – Thomas Graham Stirling & Robert B Graham.



Dundurn Tollhouse

The old Toll House at Dundurn Bridge

Work started in the Road from Comrie in 1807 at the same time another turnpike was being built though Glenlichorn known locally as the Langside road.

While turnpike roads were an innovative solution, they were somewhat resented by the poorer road users who now had to pay for passage they had previously used for free. Particularly hard hit were small farmers taking produce to market.

The first record of the Dundurn Toll being offered for let by Roup was in April 1811; from then until 1870 it appears annually with the tolls levied according to the tables affixed at each bar.

In 1811 there were 3 Toll bars & sidebars between Crieff and Lochearn, the first at Turret Bank, the next at Comrie and lastly one at Dundurn.

On Tuesday 11th Feb including Ardvorlich. 1812 a meeting was held by the trustees at Comrie, to discuss a shortfall in funds raised from the toll duties for the upkeep of the turnpike road on both sides of the loch westward from Woodend and

An advert for tenders to construct roads and bridges from the east end of the loch to Lochearnhead was placed in the Edinburgh Evening Courant in 1814 and the Lochearnhead toll bar was added in 1817, and in 1828 a Check Bar was added on the Strowan Road at 'Quoig'.



Dundurn Turnpike and Sidebar 1880s

Toll Rates: - from Whitsunday 1816 to Whitsunday 1817

For every Coach and other similar carriage with four wheels drawn by six horses	4/-
For ditto drawn by 4 or 5 horses	3/-
For ditto drawn by three horses	2s 6d
For ditto drawn by two horses	1s 6d
Carriage with two wheels drawn by one horse	10d
Carriage ditto drawn by two horses	1s 5d.
For every Wagon, Cart or similar carriage drawn by six horses	6/-
For ditto drawn by five horses	5/-
For ditto drawn by four horses	2s 8d
For ditto drawn by three horses	1s 4d
For ditto drawn by two horses	8d
For ditto drawn by one horse	4d
For every horse &co	3d
Each score of sheep, lambs, calves, or swine	8d
Or if lesser number 1 farthing each	
For each cattle beast	1d

In 1834 the returns from Tolls & Duties at Dundurn amounted to £512 and in 1835 £462 a shortfall of £49 on the previous year. While from then onwards the annual rents increased the returns from the tolls started to fall. Resulting, ultimately in poorer upkeep of the roads.

The 1851 Census shows the Toll keeper as John Crearer from Killin along with his wife Isabella and two sons and two daughters. Shortly afterwards they, like so many others, migrated to Canada.

In 1854 – On the Road from Crieff to Lochearnhead

The toll bars at Comrie with the side bar on the crossroad to Strowan was valued at a rent of £198 for that year - Dundurn toll and sidebar was valued at a rent of £50 per year. And Lochearnhead at a rent of £23 per year

From 1856 onwards the tolls from Dundurn were being used to supplement the Langside road, the revenue from this section of road had for some years been insufficient to cover its maintenance and management and the gentlemen responsible wished to be rid of it; and have it placed on the statute labour list; but the Statute Labour Trustees were unwilling to burden themselves with the additional expense.

By 1861 the rental values had risen to £261 at Comrie - Dundurn with Side Bar £111 and Lochearnhead £52 it then dropped in 1874 to £205 at Comrie - £72 at Dundurn and £41 at Lochearnhead.

It appears that no interest was ever paid on the original cost of construction, which was raised by an assessment under the act of 1807, which was specially passed for making both the Glenlichorn and Lochearn Turnpike. The principal of the assessment was, that the properties that were to benefit by the making of the roads were proportionately assessed for the cost of construction. This principal was adopted in the general turnpike Act passed for the county of Perth in 1811: but that act was repealed in the following year in regard to all other roads, except the Glenlichorn and Lochearn Roads.



St Fillans looking west about 1904.

The turnpike system was abolished in 1878 and the road was taken over by the Burgh Trustees, and with the creation of County Councils in 1889 the powers passed to them.

In the 1950s during the construction of the Hydro Scheme the spoil from the tunnels was used to improve the road from the village to the Derry Lay-by which was the Perthshire boundary. In 1995 responsibility for the road passed to Transport Scotland when the A85 road was designated a trunk road.

No one is quite sure who is now responsible for the upkeep of Station Road or for the provision of salt bins in the village. It appears that the bin at the Four Seasons and the one on the hall lane are being claimed to be private by the hotel owners.

The Old Crock – July 2022

Johnny on the Run

The Buzz and excitement in 1952

Filmed in Edinburgh and around Lochearn



The children at play on the Drummond Jetty

- Janek (Eugeniusz Chylek) a war orphan from Poland now living with a distant relative in Edinburgh, his aunt (Mona Washington) and her three children, but he is not made to feel at all welcome by his relatives, aside from his younger cousin Janet (Margaret McCourt) who shows him the only kindness. One day he is supposed to be looking after the baby in the pram when it gets away from him as a gang of kids set upon him for kicking their football, and he runs after it in a panic with a growing crowd pursuing – including his stern aunt. He manages to stop the pram before it tumbles down a flight of stairs, but the damage has been done; even though it was not his fault Jan is blamed.

Leaving the boy, no option but to go, this was a film from the Children's Film Foundation based around the concept of runaways. Location filming was important to the company, so Johnny was blessed with some impressive shots of the Scottish countryside to run through.

The film shows that there are plenty of orphans who needed a helping hand; indeed, Johnny soon meets a whole village of them – although still technically on the run as not only is his aunt looking for him, but the police are too. Why's that? It's down to a rather Pinocchio type development where our hero falls in with a couple of crooks.

What two Cockney thieves were doing in Dundee goes unexplained, but there they are when Jan stows away in a lorry after consulting with a travel agent, who oddly also sells garments, about how to return to Poland. Discovering there's a boat going from that city, off he goes, but on arrival he is unlucky enough to cross paths with Harry and his sidekick Fingers – who are trying to break-in to steal a priceless brooch, usual story – being too big to fit through the gap in the door they recruit Jan who obviously assists until he twigs that all is not right and scarpers – with

the crooks hot on his heels – one thing leads to another and soon the boy has the brooch unwittingly hidden in his jacket while the ne'er-do-wells track him.



Jan escaping from a Cottage at Locheearnhead

After a while Jan is discovered by a group of orphans just like him, giving a multicultural appearance to the film, this whole community of orphans are real butter wouldn't melt in their mouth types.



Flags flying outside Oakbank 1952

Still Jan's travails are not over as all sorts of people are after him for various reasons, the film ends with a paper chase turned dramatic for the exciting finale – and yes – there is a character saying "it's a fair cop" when the game is up, and the crooks apprehended.



Watching the Paper Chase from outside Holly 1952

The Old Crock – August 2022

A potted history of the Railway Caravan Park – 1959-2022



New Caravan Site at St Fillans

Transformation of Old Railway Station

Strathearn Herald 23rd May 1959

A sign of the times is in the process of manifesting itself at St Fillans where the disused railway station is being converted into a caravan site. In addition to having a splendid situation the site has available a number of station rooms admirably situated for various facilities, providing an ideal place for the ever-increasing type of business it is designed to encourage. In this lovely spot just far enough off the main road to give the users peace and restfulness from the turmoil of traffic, several caravans have already taken up selected positions and it is understood that many more will join them at an early date.

Picturesque Loch

Well positioned at the east end of the village the site is quite close to the golf course and beautiful Loch Earn which at this time of year is made more picturesque by stately sailing craft, while thrills are supplied further west in the sport of water skiing.

Tenant of the new caravan site is Mr Donald McGillivray, formerly proprietor of the Achray Hotel under whose personal attention caravanners can be assured of good service and a pleasant stay in a delightful holiday resort. Mr McGillivray retired in 1965.

From inspecting police

Strathearn Herald 3rd April 1965

Police Inspector James Grant McPhee, to take over the Station Road Caravan Site at St Fillans this month - after 31 years in the force. He has been in charge of the Crieff sub-division since 1959. He joined the county force in August 1934 and was promoted sergeant in September 1951. Among the stations he has served are: Auchterarder, Blackford, Abernethy, Blairgowrie, Alyth, Kenmore, Callander, and Pitlochry & Perth. He was promoted inspector at Perth in 1959.

Married with no family 50-year-old Inspector McPhee is a native of Kilchatton, Argyll, he retires on 15th April. Jimmy & Roberta, his wife sold up and retired to Comrie in 1987.



Where Home is a Signal Box beside Platform 1

Where Home is a Signal Box beside Platform 1

Strathearn Herald 13th Sept 1991

When the last train rumbled out of St Fillans in 1951, it looked as if the pretty platform would soon be overgrown with a tangle of weeds.

But 40 years later hanging baskets still swing merrily outside the ticket office at the centre of St Fillans Caravan site.

The station was converted to a caravan site in 1959 and three owners later Phil and Doris Brown are still catering for the regular St Fillans visitors. We bought in 1987 recalls Doris, “Philip was in high pressure sales, he was working hard for a company, and we thought it would be better to work for our own pocket.”

In at the Deep End

Doris had stopped working in 1974 in order to bring up their two sons Leighton and Morgan, so taking on the site was jumping in at the deep end “people think you get the winter off but that’s the only time we can get work done. We haven’t had a holiday since we came here. One year we completely re-wired the site. We’ve refurbished the toilet block and every year all the caravans have to be thoroughly cleaned out.”

Son Leighton is a trainee chef at the Achray House Hotel. He will be going to Perth Collage on a catering course this year. Meanwhile home for him is a signal box halfway down the platform surrounded by flowers. Morgan is still in his fourth year at Crieff High School.

The site is extremely popular with Geordies, according to Doris, although Scots also come to enjoy the walking and scenery.

With the old booking office converted to a shop, the waiting room now a store and the signal box a two roomed flat, St Fillans station still has plenty of company.



Where Home is a Signal Box beside Platform 1

In November 2020 Phil & Doris Brown sold the site to a corporate buyer.

Planners to look into ongoing work at Caravan site.

Strathearn Herald 6th May 2021

Officers from Loch Lomond & Trossachs national Park authorities have visited the station road site after concerns were raised by locals who suspected that groundwork had been carried out without the required permission.

Perth & Kinross Council has also pledged to investigate the recent activity in the area which was once home to the village's railway station and sits within a conservation area, and the work is currently on the radar of the St Fillans Community Council. Chair Stewart Gavigan said he had been contacted by a number of people in relation to the issue in recent weeks. He said the intention behind the work was unclear, although it is believed it is being carried out with a view to constructing holiday lodges. He also pointed out that the work had been going on for several weeks possibly seven or eight, "I don't know who the contractor is but have been told that they have said they have some form of consent, but the area is part of the former station which is B listed, and it looks like they have taken away the old platform." In addition, he pointed out that recent tree felling, and the burning of debris had resulted in an increase in the number of people contacting him.

A spokesperson for the National Park authority said "we have been made aware of groundwork undertaken at St Fillans Caravan Park and as such have engaged with the landowner and visited the site to gather information – this is ongoing. Once we have concluded, the landowner will be advised of planning requirements which may include the submission of an application for planning permission and / or building consent; in the meantime, we will continue to monitor the situation. – The tree felling which has been undertaken is out with the St Fillans Conservation area, but again, the landowner has been contacted."

A Perth & Kinross Council representative said "We do not have any recent or current building warrants on file relating to St Fillans Caravan Park. Planning decisions on the site would be a matter for the National Park as it is the planning Authority – An officer from our building standards team will be visiting the site this week to assess the situation and the council will take any action as appropriate thereafter."



Renames - Caledonian Lodges - 15 months on

Renames - Caledonian Lodges - 15 months on

The Site is now up and running, potentially home to 32 luxury lodges, the platforms have been in-filled and given a tarred covering, and yet more trees have been removed, new signage has been erected at the bottom of Station Road and on the wall leading up to the station, all done it would appear without consent.

Now we in the village are not against development, but as part of a conservation area we must ensure that any and all work carried out, must only be done after and not before, all appropriate permissions and warrants are in place.

There has been a lack of communication from the park authority, the Forestry, and Perth & Kinross - regarding this issue, which has left the village wondering why we bother – it would appear that no one wants to talk to us or respond to our enquires. You can bet that if as an individual you want to alter your windows or erect a solar panel you will soon hear from some bright young thing telling you what to do. Until then perhaps we should be telling the authorities the last train departed from platform one on the 3rd of October 1951 – ether get on board or get off!

The Old Crock – September 2022

More Bureaucratic Balderdash

Just recently as I was leaving our village shop clutching one of our local barista coffees – and looking forward to a relaxing morning in the garden, I was accosted by a new resident to our village, who was most insistent that I tell her how often my property had been flooded in recent years. This I found to be puzzling and despite my assurances that there had been no known instances of flooding in the vicinity, she was most insistent that that could not be the case. I then pointed out that my house was one of the oldest in the village and given my extensive knowledge of local history I was convinced that what I said was true, but still she insisted – SEPA! she said

have advised her that there is a 10% chance of annual flooding in our area between the Drummond Arms and the golf course - We need to put in place a flood mitigation plan she insisted and would I support her at the next Community Council Meeting. My immediate thoughts were *'we're doomed Captain Mainwaring – we're all doomed,'* Ok I live within 50 meters of the river, but the river sits in a gully 10metres below the level of the road, and although sometimes in the depth of winter or following severe rainfall the water rises several feet – it has never crossed my mind to be concerned – after all water runs downhill doesn't it and by the time I fill the sandbags or shutter up the entrances – Comrie would be under several feet of water – and I would still be high and dry.



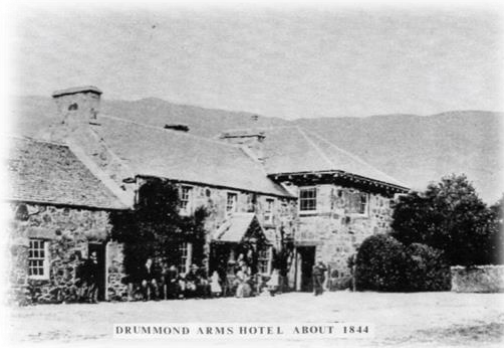
River Earn

As Liam's coffee was beginning to go cold, I decided to humour the lady and said that I would look into the situation and report back.

Later that day I checked the SEPA flood maps and after reading a questionnaire on what I was and was not allowed to do with the information they would be providing, I reluctantly declined their terms. It would have been easier to get a camel through the eye of a needle than make sense of some of their ridiculous conditions.

I did however discover that according to them everything from the old Drummond Arms eastwards including the war memorial and the field behind it had been included in their plan.

Consider first the Drummond Arms – for more than two hundred years a hostelry has stood on this site – and not once throughout its long history has there been any record of flooding. So, it's hard to see how they should be required to produce a flood mitigation plan, unless it's to design a new Ark, and for the residents to enter in two by two.



Drummond Arms Hotel about 1844

The War Memorial sits at the entrance to the river; how that can be considered as sitting in a flood plain the mind boggles. Granted the field behind which has always been referred to as An t Eilean or 'the island' is prone to flooding in the boggy bottom corner by the south side road, and at times of severe conditions the water forms a stream round the edge curving back into the river at the top side of the Weir.

Surface water flooding on the main trunk road, again there is a 10% chance of annual flooding throughout the area, due in my opinion to poor maintenance of the drainage system. SEPA would have us believe that they only advise and are not responsible for the upkeep of the system. That duty falls to 'Bear-Scotland' yet another arms length Quango.

They also insist that annual flooding in the field behind Dundurn Walk – Glentarken Park – The Butterfly Field and even the Village Hall car park is imminent; again, anyone with knowledge of the area could point out that had the culverts associated with the old railway line been maintained, this flooding would not now be happening. I would also suggest that if as SEPA would have us believe - there is a problem with surface water on the A85 – why! – why! – why! is Bear Scotland not prioritising repairs to our drains – instead of continually marking them with red dots to indicate problems?

So no, I won't be donning my waders to go putting on the fourth green on the golf course, or rushing out to purchase new water wings to man the flood barriers, or joining the woke brigade, and I certainly won't be changing my insurance policy on the whim of an incomer - sorry no offence intended. However, I might just hang on to my old canoe to make sure of getting to Liam's for my morning coffee.

The Old Crock – October 2022

Much ado about nothing

Further to recent articles in the Press and on television regarding the spate of hotels and guest houses applying for change of use within the National Park, purporting to be as a direct result or knock-on effect of Covid and increased costs.

A charity calling itself Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs with its headquarters in Balloch have expressed growing concerns and disappointment at the scale and loss of family run hotels, and its perceived effect on the appeal of the national park as a tourist destination.

Could I perhaps suggest that instead of pontificating from the warmth of their centrally heated offices in Balloch, they take a trip out to some of the far-flung areas of the park or even take time to Google some of the sites in question? Or take soundings from the locals affected by the unsightly abandoned buildings.

They are particularly concerned with the current crop of applications before the Parks planning authority, including the Pier Hotel at Kilmun, on the Holy Loch – which had they bothered checking has been looking for a new owner since 2017! It is now a derelict shell and could in no way be considered an asset to the local area, the roof had caved in, and water damage had rendered the building uninhabitable. Here the owners have applied to turn the property into flats, which I am sure the locals would much prefer to the present mess.

Another property is the former Drummond Arms Hotel at St Fillans. The new owners want to transform this eyesore at the heart of the village into twenty-two serviced apartments, which they say will provide employment for upwards of twenty people, in what has been described as ‘flexible’ roles, including marketing, guest services, maintenance, housekeeping and gardening. They also indicate scope for an apprenticeship scheme and graduate employment programme. It was clear from the new plans that this grade C listed building required major refurbishment and would no longer be viable as a hotel.

For the past twenty years this once thriving establishment has slowly been disintegrating. After a succession of short-term owners, it was purchased by The Arran Brewery in 2013 - their managing director Gerald Michaluk had a grand scheme to create a brewery, visitor centre and hotel with bistro including 39 bedrooms, this never came to fruition and the hotel, other than the bar, stopped trading long before the outbreak of Covid

Mr Michaluk talked a good story and some residents even purchased shares in this venture, sadly they were nonrefundable – however no-one lost their shirt – or will admit to their losses.



'Part of the unsightly backdrop to the Drummond'

Yet another property The Coach House Hotel in Killin, are seeking a change of use to residential accommodation. Having been under the same ownership since 2005 they have been looking for a buyer with no success for the past five years.

Concerns were expressed at a local community council meeting in Killin about the trend of the loss of business premises and a lack of places for people both local and visitors to eat, also a lack of staff for places trying to stay open. At present there are another two hotels and a restaurant up for sale in the same village. A sad reflection on the lack of appropriate advertising throughout the national park.

While I agree with much of what this charity have said, the park authorities will have to look long and hard at their new five-year partnership plan and come up with a better solution encompassing the more rural areas instead of spending the majority of their recourses on Loch Lomond. It is vital that they try to tackle this problem and reverse the drift towards dormitory villages with no structural amenities.

Sadly, in St Fillans while a number of the residents would like to see a local pub opening, some relative newcomers can see no need to encourage tourists, sighting the anti social behaviour of revellers on the shore side. I find it hard to understand this attitude as we have a long history of welcoming visitors; we were after all the first village in Scotland to erect signage stating, *'Welcome to St Fillans, please drive carefully.'*

Presently we have more than thirty short term lets in our village. Adding another twenty-two will bring the total to well in excess of fifty-two, and with no provision for reasonably priced restaurant meals, I am at a loss to know how these people will be catered for.

In addition Perth & Kinross are about to introduce a licensing scheme with the most ludicrous criteria to be met, for short term lets, and the highest rates in Scotland to come into effect by late November - once again showing a disregard for the hospitality industry that generates huge

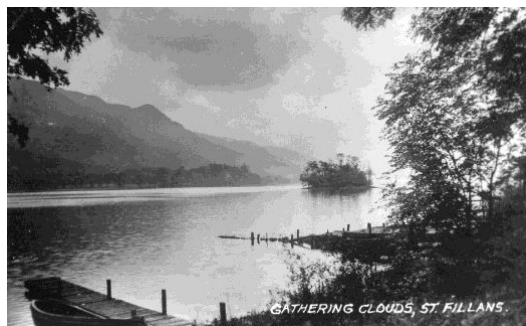
benefits to the local economy, I am sure they, and they alone, will reap the benefits, and no doubt they will require an increase in staffing to operate the scheme, but it's doubtful if we ratepayers in rural areas will see any advantages.

The Old Crock - November 2022

Visitor Management - yet more Gobbledegook from P&K

I had no intention of writing yet again on this subject, but shortly after I submitted my last Ramblings, we as a community were advised that in 2020 organisations from across Scotland came together in a national partnership with the propose of developing a Scotland wide strategic and coordinated approach to visitor management - as part of this strategy they identified five national visitor management hotspots, one of which was Highland Perthshire.

Perth & Kinross then went on to explain that they had in the same year set up a committee called the Perth & Kinross Multi Agency Visitor Management Group (PKVMP) part of their brief was to address the high volume of visitor pressure identified over eight hotspot areas including Loch Earn.



Gathering Clouds

PKVMP consists of partners working together under the umbrella of Perth & Kinross Community Planning Partnership, and we are told! *'They work closely with local communities empowering them to deliver bespoke and localised solutions to encourage responsible behaviour.'*

In 2021 they received funding from Visit Scotland to develop a three-year strategic plan to build on the existing multi-agency response. And on the 18th of October this year, at the eleventh hour we were invited to complete a survey which had to be returned by 27th October, we were also informed that this survey would only take 15 minutes to complete, however on checking through

the questionnaire it soon became apparent that Strathearn had not been included within the survey, meaning that nothing west of Perth had been included - this despite Loch Earn being identified as one of the areas hotspots.

I duly pointed this out to Perth & Kinross, and a spokesperson responded stating that the Multi Agency Visitor Management Group works closely with the National Park authorities, but she failed to address the fact that Strathearn had been missed from the survey; they did however extend the deadline to 31st October and stressed the importance that communities had their say in the development of this plan.

How can we as a community respond to a survey when our voice is not being heard by those in authority?

Not content with their response I contacted one of our local Councillors for his comments - he in turn provided me with a link to the Perth & Kinross local development plan 2019 - a glossy 348-page document in which St Fillans and Loch Earn surprise, surprise, gets no mention. He then went on to say that he was of the opinion the development plan did not include St Fillans as the village was under the National Park.

So, it would appear that while Perth & Kinross are quite content to accept our community tax payments both Domestic & Commercial, they have abandoned us to the mercies of the National Park, perhaps we would be better off being affiliated to Stirlingshire then at least the entire loch would be under one authority.

Meanwhile as a community we have a group working on the new Local Place Plan, they are currently applying for funding to employ an assistant to help with the plan, with a view for questionnaires to be produced and distributed throughout the village. The group will work with focus groups throughout December and January, with the responses to the questionnaires to be analysed in February. The group will then work on the plan with a view to then having dialogue with both Perth & Kinross and The National Park. It is only to be hoped that when the time comes both authorities will take heed of the wishes of the local residents and see to the implementation of our plans.

In the meantime, may I wish everyone the complements of the season and all the best for 2023!

The Old Crock – December 2022