



GLEN FESHIE



THE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY
OF A HIGHLAND GLEN

Published by the North of Scotland Archaeological Society

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By Meryl M Marshall

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Front Cover – The bridge at Carnachuin in upper Glen
Feshie and *Return from Deerstalking*, Landseer, 1827

Back Cover – Plan of corn-drying kiln at Righ na Bruach
and the heather covered footings of buildings at the
township of Achleum-a-Coid.

PREFACE

Glen Feshie is one of the most beautiful places in the Cairngorm National Park, iconic for its ancient pine forests, towering mountains and sparkling waterfalls, famous for its black grouse, crossbills and deer. Wild though it is, however, like everywhere in the Highlands, it is steeped in history: it is the interaction between nature and people that makes it so interesting.

This excellent short book tells it all, from the old shieling systems and the deserted farmtouns high in the glen once growing grain (it seems incredible now), to the days of the nineteenth century deer stalkers. Particularly fascinating are the high jinks of the Duchess of Bedford, holding parties in her "huts" with her friend Sir Edwin Landseer and other guests, playing at turning their backs on civilisation. It is all a far cry from the usual idea of Victorians as prim and proper.

There are lots of illustrations - maps, archaeological drawings, photographs, paintings, some contrasting what Landseer saw with the same scene today. Finally, there is a suggestion for a short walk and a long walk, with plenty to see on the way. What a useful book!

T. C. Smout.
Historiographer Royal in Scotland
October 2005

..... and from NOSAS

This book is the first publication under the auspices of the North of Scotland Archaeological Society and we are very grateful to the Cairngorm National Park Authority for the financial assistance which enabled us to produce it. NOSAS was formed in 1999 by a group of mature students who had completed the Certificate of Field Archaeology of the University of Aberdeen. NOSAS has gone from strength to strength and today has a membership of 63. We all share the same avid enthusiasm for archaeology.

Meryl is a founding member of NOSAS. She has spent much time over the last few years in Glen Feshie, prospecting for the archaeological remains and then following it up by surveying and recording the sites.

By publishing this work, NOSAS fulfils its objectives of furthering the study of archaeology in the North of Scotland and promoting that interest to a wider audience. We wholeheartedly commend it to the reader. Enjoy!

John Wombell,
NOSAS Chairperson,
October 2005

INTRODUCTION

Glen Feshie has been a favourite location for me for many years. I first visited the area in 1964 and have since spent many happy hours exploring the glen and the neighbourhood. Following my completion of the Certificate of Field Archaeology through Aberdeen University in 1998, it seemed an obvious target to focus my attention on. I embarked on a project, the aim of which was to survey and record the archaeology of the glen, south of the settlement of Tolvah, and of the Allt Fhearnasdail to the west. This would appear to be a huge task, as it involves many square kilometres of heathery upland and mountains, with an altitude of 300m to 1,200m. The actual area prospected was about 20 square kilometres. Inevitably most of the archaeology was found along the valley floor. The project was to take me 4 years, the final report being produced in October 2003.

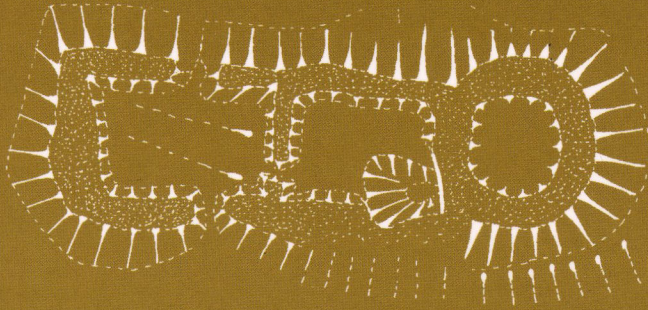
During the historical research for the project I investigated documents from both primary and secondary sources. The rentals and correspondence of the Mackintosh of Mackintosh family in the National Archive of Scotland, Edinburgh, were useful. The Census Records back to 1841 were studied, as were the old maps of the area. Roy's Military Survey of Scotland, c.1750 (page 17) and the Thomson map of 1830 (page 36) were particularly useful.

The publication principally confines itself to the history and archaeology of that part of the glen which was the subject of the survey, ie. south of Tolvah. In the early title deeds, Glenfeshie is referred to as "the Summer Shielings of Dalnavert" and all along the glen seems to have been closely linked with Dalnavert and South Kinrara (now Inshriach), so I have explored some of the history of these two places too. I have also referred to some of the historical events in Badenoch and the wider world.

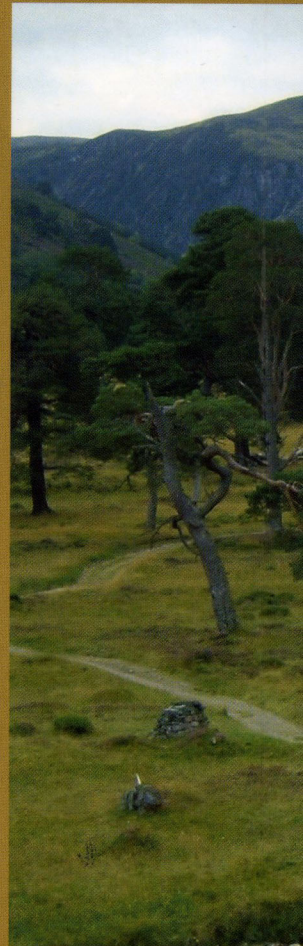
I was particularly lucky as there were a number of accounts of the life in the glen in the early 19th century, when it was being developed as a sporting estate, one of the first in the area. William Collie, who spent his early days working for the estate during this time, wrote his memoirs in later life and gives an insight into a childhood and a life in the employment of the "sporting fraternity". There are contemporary accounts of some of the guests invited to shoot in the glen. I make no excuse for quoting these extensively, as I feel they give a flavour of the times, however the Highlands were viewed in a very romantic light during this time and the language and descriptions seem "over the top" today. Last, but not least, there is the work of the Victorian painter, Sir Edwin Landseer who derived much inspiration from the Glen. All the paintings and drawings in the book are the work of Landseer unless otherwise stated. It must however be remembered again, that his was the romantic view in vogue at the time. Landseer, through his paintings, almost certainly added to the romantic image of the Highlands. A major exhibition of his work entitled "The Monarch of the Glen - Landseer in the Highlands" took place in Summer 2005 at the National Galleries of Scotland and featured many paintings of Glen Feshie.

Two self guided archaeological walks are described in the last chapter. Many people have shown interest in the project and it seemed that the best way to share the information which I had discovered was through a publication. This is the result.

Meryl M. Marshall
October 2005



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