

THE BIN OF CULLEN.

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THE Bin of Cullen is well known for its beauty, its accessibility, and the wide prospect it commands. Though rising not more than 1050 feet, it furnishes a view of parts of no fewer than ten counties. From it may be seen the Moray Firth and almost its whole coast line, while the northern parishes of the counties of Elgin and Banff can be examined in minute detail. Towards the south and west a magnificent panorama of mountains meets the eye.

The distance from Cullen to the summit is a little over three miles, a carriage road leading to the top. Entering the grounds of the Countess-Dowager of Seafield, at the mouth of Cullen Burn, we follow the course of the burn, passing the Battle Haugh and Cullen House, until we meet the Glen Burn, which leads us in a south-westerly direction up the glen to the base of the Little Bin, passing on our right the gardens and the trout-breeding ponds. We keep the Little Bin on our right and reach the top by an easy ascent in a zig-zag direction. The Glen Road is the most romantic part of the grounds of Cullen House, and, at certain seasons of the year, not many glens on a small scale will rival it in beauty. The abundance of holly (*cuillion* in Gaelic) accounts with little doubt for the origin of the name. Fine beech and fir trees of large size may be admired on the way.

The Bin is flanked on the right and the left by the Little Bin (802 feet) and the Hill of Maud (900 feet). The Bin shows a conical appearance, regular and graceful. Till nearly halfway up it is covered with wood, chiefly firs, which look sombre by contrast with the bright green of the larch and the beech; it was planted with wood about 1770. It is situated in the Parish of Rathven, and distant, as the crow flies, from Cullen $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, Buckie $3\frac{3}{4}$, Keith 9,

Portsoy 7, Banff $12\frac{3}{4}$, Lossiemouth $15\frac{1}{2}$, Elgin 16, Forres 28, Ben Rinnes $22\frac{1}{2}$, Cairngorm 47.

The height of the Bin being 1050 feet, we have nearly 40 miles as the distance of the visible horizon, but allowance must be made for refraction, which varies with the state of the atmosphere. In general, the addition for refraction of one-eleventh will give the correct distance. The nearest points on the opposite shore are in the vicinity of Brora and Helmsdale, at a distance of 43 miles, and thus within the visible horizon—the fact being that the rocks can be seen to the water's edge. Within a radius of 43 miles are comprised the eastern shores of Ross, including the Sutors of Cromarty, while almost the whole of Banffshire and Aberdeenshire falls within this circle—Aberdeen being at a distance of 46 miles.

NORTH-EAST.—Starting from Troup Head in Gamrie, the eye ranges over a wide expanse of sea as far as the outer limit of the Moray Firth. Nothing can be more beautiful than to see this Firth, calm as it often is as a mill pond, and dotted over with vessels reflected in the clear water. What looks like the Orkney Islands appears to be the first land to catch the eye. As the nearest of them—the Pentland Skerries—are 71 miles distant, they would require to be about 500 feet high to be visible, so if the keeper of the lighthouse there could raise his lighthouse some 300 feet he would have the satisfaction of getting a view of the top of the Bin.

NORTH-WEST.—In this direction are seen the hills of Caithness, Sutherland, and Ross, rising blue and faint on the horizon. The first certain indication of land is slightly to the west of due north, where the land at Moss Head, and again near Wick, rises dim and distant. This being situated at a distance of 55 miles, owing to the curvature of the earth we cannot see nearer the sea level than 80 to 100 feet. Then in succession appear Sarclet Head, Occumster, Lybster, Latheron Hill, Dunbeath, Dunbeath Castle, after which the striking heights of Braemore, Maiden Pap, Morven, and others come in sight. Then Helmsdale is seen, and near this part we can make out the cliffs, here

100 feet high, while behind are seen farmhouses, fields, and dykes, and a bridge which is very prominent. Further south, lofty hills bound the view until Dunrobin Castle is reached. Here we enter the Dornoch Firth, on the eastern shore of which is a long, narrow, low-lying peninsula, crowned with buildings and terminated by the lighthouse at Tarbet Ness. Then we have the Sutors of Cromarty, two woody hills rising boldly from the sea, and at this distance like massive piers at the entrance of a mighty harbour, while, looking up the Firth, we distinguish the church spires and almost every building in Invergordon, at a distance of 47 miles. After the Black Isle, the land seems to trend towards the east.

WEST TO EAST.—Turning the eye now along the coast in a direction from west to east, what strikes us at once is the immense stretch of level ground, which, though in general undulating, appears from this position singularly level, and especially in front of us, laid out in small fields with the regularity of a draught-board. It extends in length from Nairnshire to Troup Head, upwards of sixty miles, with a breadth of five miles or less. It is well wooded, and the numerous towns, villages, and farmhouses give indication of the fertility of both land and sea. The coast is in general bold and rocky—the cliffs in the east rising to a perpendicular height of 600 feet. Little of Nairnshire is visible owing to its extreme flatness and the intervening heights of Morayshire. Entering upon Morayshire, we see near the western boundary—but only in imagination, for trees and hills conceal the view—the Findhorn flowing through its charming scenery towards the sea. Somewhat nearer appears the Nelson monument on Cluny Hill. Burghead Point then rises prominently to view, but the town itself is hidden from sight. Coming along the coast, we distinctly see Hopeman, with the church near the middle of the town, while further round the coast the eye meets the Covesea Lighthouse. Two miles east is seen Lossiemouth, to the north of which lies Branderburgh. The streets lie north-west and south-east, and we can make out the appearance of the houses and

see the people moving about in the streets. From Lossiemouth along the shore the yellow sands are seen curving round. To the south we see the Duke of York's Tower on the Knock of Alves. Proceeding by the smoke of the railway train, we arrive in a short time at Elgin, which cannot be mistaken, for its Cathedral—"the Lanthorn of the North"—marks it out at once. The various church spires, the Duke of Gordon's Monument, Anderson's Institution, and many of the houses come into view. Northwards of Elgin, over the Black Hill of Moray, we view three sheets of water nearly in line behind each other. These are the Loch of Spynie, the River Lossie, and the Loch of Cotts. The farmhouses of Morayshire may be all individually examined, but we pass on to the Spey. For many miles from its mouth it is seen with the naked eye like a silver thread till lost among the hills. At its mouth lie Kingston and Garmouth, in which, being little more than eight miles distant, every house can be distinctly made out. South we see the Red Church of Speymouth. Crossing the Spey we are in Banffshire, which stretches from east to west about thirty miles, almost the whole extent being spread before us. Following the line of the Spey we get into the woods of Fochabers. Nothing of the town itself is seen except two church spires springing from among the trees, and there is another spire further to the north. About three miles east is the position of the Burn of Tynet, with its Old Red Sandstone deposits and the finest fossil beds in the north. Where the coast line curves there lies Portgordon. The Tynet separates the parishes of Bellie and Rathven. The latter contains upwards of 23,000 acres, and can be all seen from the Bin except the part hid by the Hill of Maud, which rises immediately on our left. This parish includes on the east Portknockie, the Links of Cullen, and the greater part of the grounds of Cullen House. A beautiful bird's-eye view is obtained from here of Buckie. The Roman Catholic and other churches bulk largely in the view, also the Public School, and last, but not least, the splendid new Harbour. The church of Enzie, the distillery of Inchgower, and the

whole course of the turnpike road from east to west are well seen. Eastwards appear the village and church of Rathven, and overlooking them the Public School. Nearer us is seen the Main Drain, a formidable undertaking for draining the land between Woodside and Cullen, which cost no less than £10,000. Portessie and Findochty, though built at the foot of high cliffs, are not altogether hidden from view, but Portknockie, being on higher ground, is still more visible. Here is the Scar Nose, the furthest north point in Banffshire, which, like an old veteran, has stood in the forefront of many a fierce fight, but has not escaped scatheless, as its wild look and shattered form abundantly testify. Near this part the violence of the waves has wrought fantastic results. To the west is Farskane's Cave, where the last proprietor, having come out in the rebellion of 1715, deemed it prudent to live five or six weeks in this, the safest part of his estate. To the east are several caves, one of which has been celebrated by George Macdonald in his "Malcolm". The Royal Burgh of Cullen, it may be remarked, includes a large part of the parish of Rathven, its western boundary extending from the top of the Bin to the coast close to the east of Findochty, and its southern from the same point to the Mill of Towie. South of Portknockie lie Seafield Church and Manse and the Public School. Between us and Cullen is Cullen House, with its extensive and beautifully kept private grounds. These extend in all to a length of nearly three miles, with a breadth as great, and comprise a rich variety of scenery. The district around here was always well wooded, for hither came Kings Alexander II. and III. to enjoy the pleasures of the chase. On more than one occasion Edward I. visited it, although for a different purpose. The road may still be seen, south of the turnpike, along which passed Queen Mary and her suite. Another century and we have Montrose mercilessly ravaging and burning in all directions. Still another century and the rebels are seen bearing off as plunder all the valuables of Cullen House, to be followed, however, soon by the Duke of Cumberland and his army. West of

the Seatown and the Harbour rise the three Kings of Cullen, whose hard quartzite has resisted the waves, while the softer strata have been washed away. The regular streets of Cullen next come into view, and east thereof is Portlong (the ship harbour). Coming inland we find the charming village of Lintmill, which derives its name from the linen manufacture which was carried on here till it could no longer compete with cotton in the end of last century. Then come the Crannoch Hill and Loch, and the cliffs overhanging the old Castle of Findlater. The cliffs also hide the village of Sandend and the part of Portsoy to the north of the Catholic Church. Numerous farmhouses occur all along till we reach Whitehills, where a good part of the village and the adjacent wild rocky headland come into sight. The slope of the town of Banff is unfavourable for being seen from this direction, but the Gallow Hill and the houses on the north-west are seen. No place could lie better exposed to our view than Macduff. Here it is seen rising from the sea like a miniature Constantinople, almost every house and every tombstone in the Churchyard being visible. The road from Banff to the town, on which people may be seen moving up and down, comes into sight a good way below the Church. We follow the high cliffs of the parish of Gamrie—cliffs almost unequalled in Scotland for picturesqueness—to the bend of the land at Crovie. The houses of Crovie, many of them with their gable ends to the sea, are clearly seen, with the road ascending from the village, and on the height above is Northfield, also a windmill, &c. It is in this direction that Fraserburgh lies. Then comes Troup Head bounding our vision.

SOUTH-EAST.—Looking from the Bin in a south-easterly direction, three successive lines of heights meet the eye. The nearest is formed by the Towie Wood, Cotton Hill, Hill of Summertown, and the Lurg in the Parish of Deskford; then come Durn, Fordyce, and Knock Hills; and, lastly, Hill of Alvah, Hill of Ord, and Culvie Hill. Beyond these, King-Edward and Gamrie form a striking background, and bound the view. Between the Bin and the

first line of heights lies the beautiful valley of Deskford, drained by the Burn of Deskford. The chief object that strikes the eye is the Kirktown, where are the tower of Deskford, the old and new Churches, the Manse, the School, and Schoolhouse. North-east of the Kirktown is a charming ravine, with the picturesque Poma Linn. South are the village of Berryhillock and the farm of Mains of Skeith; here also is the site of the ancient Castle of Skeith, the residence of the Abercrombies. The lime-kilns, active and extinct, at the various farm-towns, indicate the presence of a bed of limestone traversing the parish. In the next valley is the village of Fordyce, and we clearly see the Churches, the School, the Castle, the remains of the old Church, and the U.F.C. Manse. The chimneys only of the Established Church Manse are visible. Durn Hill is 651 feet high, and has a triple rampart on the summit. The Knock Hill (1409 feet) is said by some to be the *Mons Grampius* of Tacitus. It is six and a half miles distant, and forms a most noticeable feature from the Bin. Over this line of hills, woods and fine-looking farms come into view. The most prominent object is the Hill of Alvah (464 feet) a landmark to mariners, slightly to the north-west of which is seen very clearly, as the ground slopes towards us, the old Castle of Inchdrewer, the residence of the Lords Banff, one of whom was here burned to death in 1713; another the fifth Lord, was drowned in 1738 in the Bay of Cullen at a rock within our view. Further to our right a singularly bare building is visible, the Church of Ord, near the Hill of Ord (570 feet). The top of Culvey Hill (865 feet) with its irregularly shaped woods, is well seen. We now come to Gamrie and King-Edward, parishes which rise from the valley of the Deveron. To the south of Macduff are seen woods, farms, and roads. Over the top of Durn the first object to meet our view is Gavenwood, and near it Corskie. On the higher ground are the houses about Boghead, Whitestones, and the Longman Hill.

SOUTH.—Passing, in our survey, the massive shoulder of the Knock, we encounter an endless succession of hills. Slightly to the left of the Knock is the direction in which

Aberdeen lies, but not even by smoke does it give any indication of its presence. Somewhat to the right is the *Bin* of Bennachie. Over the Lurg is the Bin Hill of Cairnie, covered with wood, with farm-towns fringing the border. Right over the nearest height rise the Little Balloch and the Meikle Balloch, the boundary of Aberdeen and Banffshires, along the base of which runs the train to Keith. The Glacks of Balloch are between the two, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Keith. On the top of the Balloch tents used to be pitched at the time of Summereve's (*Malrubius*) Fair, as Keith had no accommodation for the great crowds that flocked to this market. Tap o' Noth (1851 feet) is the most prominent object in the horizon. It is in the parish of Rhynie, and remarkable for possessing on its top the remains of a vitrified fort. A convenient hollow in the hill of Aultmore enables us to get a good glimpse of Keith. The Catholic Church shows first on the right; then come numerous houses and trees. Roads are seen diverging to the south, while beyond it lie Caird's Wood and the Wood of Aultmore. In the horizon is seen, six miles distant from the Tap o' Noth, The Buck (2368 feet). To the left of The Buck a striking height rises in the far distance, Mount Keen (3077 feet), on the borders of Forfar and Aberdeenshires. Cairngorm is visible, and Ben Muich Dhui will probably also be seen.

WEST.—Next is seen the outline of Ben Rinnes (2755 feet) against the sky, its commanding presence at once arresting attention. On the side next to us it rises steep and abrupt, and, from whatever part it is visible, it never loses its distinctive character. Coming northwards, we see the wild peaks of the hills of Inverness and Ross-shires. The view of Ben Wyvis (3415 feet) and the hills to the south compares not unfavourably with the prospect from the Righi, and, given a favourable light, the picturesqueness and impressiveness thereof cannot be said to be much inferior. With this grand mountain we close our survey.