

A LITTLE-KNOWN PASS—THE MINIGAIG.

If anyone spending a few days in Upper Speyside should want a pleasant and out-of-the-way walk, he might traverse the Minigaig Pass from Glen Tromie to Glen Bruar and Struan.

Some time ago two members of the Club were motored up the Tromie as far as the Bhran Bridge, and proceeded by a somewhat indistinct path through long heather up the right bank of the Allt Bhran. In a very short time the whole rather featureless basin of this burn revealed itself, and away in front stood the slopes of one or two corries, including those of Coire Bhran, up one of whose grassy sides stretches the old drove road, which is still occasionally used and which possibly took carts in former days. For the first few miles the going is delightful, although the path, while it skirts the burn, is intermittent. As the travellers neared the foot of the Coire they fell in with difficulties, for country similar to that between the Geldie and the Feshie confronted them. However, a little manoeuvring and keeping to the right brought them beyond the slough, and up the grassy slope to the summit of the Pass they plodded. This track certainly does penetrate the "Back o' Beyont," which is, however, not "dry," as in "Hamewith's" case, but decidedly spongy and wet on the north side.

At the top, which by the way is near the head-waters of the Feshie, there is no defile, the path merely going over the ridge. From this point of vantage the prospect is pleasant, especially towards the south, where some of the Highlands of Central Perthshire stand out. A little farther east, and at no great distance, Beinn Dearg (3,304 feet) catches the eye; while the background is magnificently filled by the noble heights of Beinn a' Ghlo (3,671 feet). Farther eastwards, An Sgarsoch (3,300 feet) and Carn Ealar (3,276 feet) are prominent by reason of their round, featureless masses, viewed on this occasion from an unusual

stand-point. On the extreme horizon, near the latter, Lochnagar is just visible. The remainder of the view consists of the rounded and steep hills of the Gaick and Tromie areas, while the flat Monadhliath ridge blocks the view further north.

From the summit (2,750 feet) the track is clear and broad, and undulates for a mile or so, till it sharply descends by zig-zags for 750 feet to the head of the Bruar Valley, where there is an unclassified road. Once in the Glen, the walkers were shut in on three sides by high and precipitous rock faces, down which cascade one or two fine burns. No place could be much more secluded and desolate, even in the "wild and woolly west."

A three-mile walk down the glen took the members past an artificial lochan to Bruar Lodge. This building is haphazard and ramshackle, and has been added to from time to time, to judge by the various kinds of "architecture."

Below the house the road is fairly good, but very hard on the feet and somewhat dull, since the view is rather restricted. For those who would follow the old road, it must be added that it strikes directly over the hills from the Lodge to Glen Banvie and Old Blair. After the walkers "leggit along" for some four or five miles, they were led away from the stream up the steep side of a small eminence, by name Craig Bhagallteach (1,612 feet), near whose summit a delightful view up the Garry almost to Drumochter and down to Ben Vrackie (2,757 feet) met their gaze. Thereafter they wended their way down to Calvine and Struan, about eight miles from the Lodge. The pull over the last rise is most exhausting after a walk of some eighteen miles, so that it is worth while to follow the Water and visit the famous Falls of Bruar, striking the main road a little below Struan. Finally, it will interest any who may consider doing this walk to know that the glen road, as it leaves the Perth-Inverness road at Calvine, is, it would seem, intentionally kept in disrepair to deceive motorists; but after a hundred yards or so it becomes good, so that the somewhat weary trek from or to Bruar Lodge can be covered comfortably in a conveyance.

The expedition described was accomplished about two years ago, so that the accuracy of all details cannot be vouched for; but the principal facts are related with sufficient precision to show that this old drove road, in general use as the way from Athole to Badenoch long before the present Drumochter route, is still easy to traverse, and leads the wanderer into regions now but seldom trod by man.

For more particulars, Alexander's *The Cairngorms* and back numbers of *The C.C.J.* should be consulted.

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THE UNKNOWN SOUTH.

In Miss Carswell's "Life of Robert Burns" (London: Chatto & Windus) there is a very interesting account of the departure of William Burns (the father of our national poet) and his brother Robert from the Mearns.

ONE morning before sunrise, when spring was well advanced, William and Robert put on the new suits of grey homespun their sisters had made ready for them, drank down their thin porridge, thrust their horn spoons into the folds of their dark blue bonnets, shouldered the bundles that contained their patched working clothes, and said their good-byes. It was in the highest degree unlikely that they would ever see their father again, a fact of which both he and they were fully aware.

When they had walked all forenoon they reached the crest of Garvock Tap (*sic*), whence they could see backwards to the Clochan-hill lands and over the Mearns, where all their ancestors had lived. It was the last time either of them would look upon it. So far their way had been the same, so they had each other's company for the "twal hour" repast, and together they set to upon the mess of boiled beans they had brought with them from home. But after this their roads would divide. Looking forward toward the unknown South, they felt no elation. It was not as if they were in their first youth, and there was so much failure behind them that failure might only too possibly lie before as well for either or both. When at length the brothers parted William was outwardly the calmer, as he seemed the older man. But all his life he remembered the intensity of his feelings at that moment on the hilltop. Many years later, attempting to describe the scene to his children, he made use of what for him was the extreme word, anguish.