

## BRAEMAR OF OLD:

### Extracts from a Highland Diary.

*(The following extracts are taken from a longer paper on the Diary of Angus McIntosh, by Mr A. G. Cumming, of Braemar, to whom we are much indebted.)*

MR ANGUS MCINTOSH was born at Balnellan, Braemar, on August 1, 1788. At the time of this diary he lived in Glen Cluny and had three separate occupations, each of which he plied for several months in the year. About December 1 he opened his school in Glen Cluny, where there were then many families; in spring he was employed as road surface-man by the Invercauld Estate, his beat extending from the Castletown of Braemar to the Spital of Glenshee. About the third week of July his services were transferred to the game watching for some ten weeks. In October he returned to the roads, and in December commenced school again.

Mr Cumming records that the diarist's activities extended to "gardening, bridge, house and dyke building, paving, house-thatching, sheep-shearing, etc." He kept a daily weather report from 1846 to 1873, a register of marriages and deaths in Braemar for many years, and a diary, which gives not only something of the mellow atmosphere of last century but reveals also much of the grand old character, Angus McIntosh.

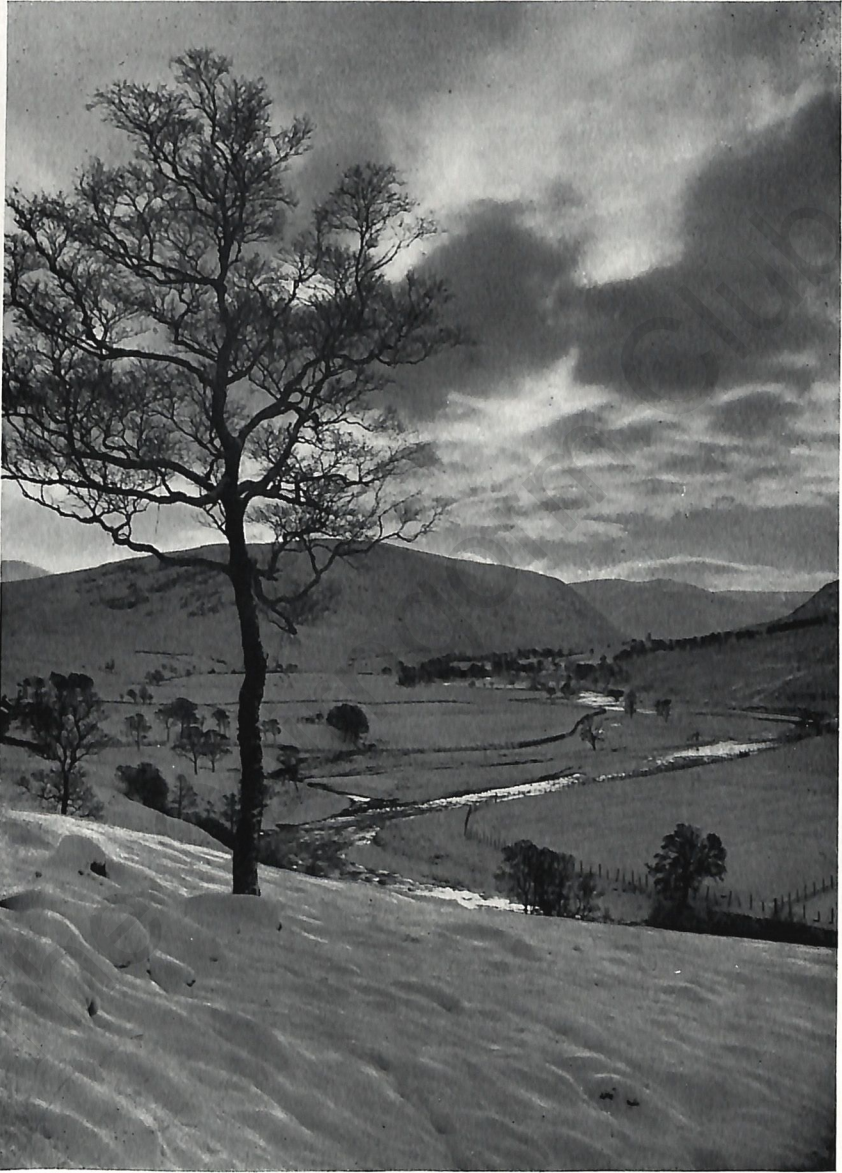
His weather report may, in view of recent comment on the disappearance of the Scottish snow-beds,\* be of particular interest. These reports may not have been compiled with

\* Various authorities, John Hill Burton in 1864 and Mr Seton Gordon in more recent years, have stated that one or two of the snow-beds in the Cairngorms have never been known to disappear entirely. This until 1933; for recent notes on their disappearance, see *C.C.J.*, Vol. XIII., No. 75, and *S.M.C.J.*, Vol. XX., No. 119.

the scientific exactitude of a meteorological office, but if we are occasionally surprised by almost incredible figures, we are bound at the same time to admit that, in the case of the more gossipy entries, the diarist shows the most exemplary restraint! Mr McIntosh's remarks on the severer storms of his time are therefore given in the original diary form, without comment; the second part is devoted to passing events of local interest.

The One Inch Ordnance Survey Map of the Cairngorms shows most of the Glen Cluny place-names mentioned in the diary.

- 1846—Sept. 29. (*First entry.*) Home 17 loads of peats, formerly 10.  
 1847—Dec. 18. Unprecedented flood in Cluny.  
 1851—Feb. 15. This is the mildest week for the season ever seen in this Grampian climate. No snow to be seen.  
 Mar. 4. This has been the finest winter known for many years. Communication across the Cairnwell has not been interfered with up to this date. This is a circumstance unprecedented in the memory of the oldest inhabitants, say Robert Macdonald, now aged 84 years, and Charles McIntosh, now aged 86 years.  
 Apr. 26. Snow falling heavily.  
 „ 28. Furious with drifting snow. Wind north.  
 „ 30. Very stormy all day. All communication is shut. The snow is over 2 feet deep at my door. Drifts 12 feet deep on the Cairnwell.  
 1853—Feb. 18. A quiet day; still snow falls. Snow commenced to fall on the 8th current and has fallen to a good extent each day since, with a strong north wind. The carriers all stopped, the mails all but stopped. Provisions are exhausted; my fuel is done. I look forward with awful forebodings on seeing my crook cut in three to light the fire and dissolve my frozen fingers. This is serious.  
 „ 19. Snow still falling.  
 „ 25. The storm continues unabated.  
 „ 26. This is extraordinary.  
 Mar. 2. The snow round my humble home is from 6 to 18 feet deep.  
 Apr. 1. No outdoor work can be done owing to so much snow.  
 „ 16. The great quantity of snow on the low ground is fast disappearing.  
 May 12. Vegetation has not moved yet.



GLEN CLUNY, BRAEMAR

*H. C. Dugan*

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- 1854—Jan. 13. Snow has fallen less or more every day this year.  
Feb. 11. Wind veered south-west, giving us one fair clear day.  
,, 12. Snow falling again in good earnest.  
,, 14. Was at Castletown to-day, walking through deep snow.  
Was overtaken by a severe snowstorm and compelled to lodge overnight with A. Fleming. Average depth of snow 4 feet and still falling.
- 1855—Mar. 30. March has been severe without much snow. The frost has continued without any abatement for twenty weeks; rivers covered over. Snow to a good depth all winter.  
May 14. Snow continues to fall every day with severe frost overnight.
- 1856—Feb. 29. Has been a fine winter; the mildest February ever seen in this Grampian glen.  
July 7. Cold culminated last night in a severe snowstorm.
- 1858— March comes upon us in the same temper as Sir Colin Campbell came upon the mutineers at Cawnpore, with a storm drifting furiously.
- 1859—Feb. 8. A heavy fall of snow to-day. Our glen has a vast majestic appearance. The snow is general, about 18 inches deep—not a black speck to be seen as far as the eye can reach.
- 1860—Feb. 22. We have now had eighteen weeks of snow and severe frost; we are all but shut up; communication cut off by deep snow.  
March comes in on us with the old tune, wind and snow, with severe frost.
- 1861—Jan. 11. To-day is the severest frost ever seen in Glen Cluny.
- 1864—Feb. 4. Snow commenced to fall.  
,, 12. This is the most furious day we have had for years past, wind and sleet causing much damage to private property, hay and corn stacks overturned, houses denuded of their covering, window frames broken, etc.
- (A selection of miscellaneous entries.)
- 1850—Mar. 6. Some busy engineers on the hill road (*i.e.*, Cairnwell).  
,, 8. Closed school to-day. I hope we have progressed to meet expectations in the proper quarter.  
,, 18. Engineers pass down, having finished survey of road.
- 1851—July 22. Catherine and Miss Gruer to Lochnagar by Loch Callater, there joined by Miss McCrostie.
- 1852—Mar. 17. My small seminary at Allt-mhait was visited by the Rev. Mr Mitchell, Braemar. It was indeed refreshing to see the little ones vying with each other in their different branches and drew an eulogium from the clergyman on their several progress.

- 1852—Oct. 27. We have been disturbed by poachers, which put all our energy in motion. We only got clear of them on the afternoon of the 26th. That night I was in Corrie-vaich, exposed to the rigour of furious elements. But for the kind exertions of my friend, Archibald MacMaster, I had lain in that wild desert until life had fled from this poor mortal body.
- Nov. 8. I marched off with stirks from Invercauld for Rochallie; stopped overnight at the Spital. Started Tuesday morning, reached Rochallie 2 P.M., delivered my charge to Mr Ramsay, turned my face to the Highlands, reached Spital 6.30 P.M., Allt-mhait 9 P.M., having travelled 42 miles in 12 hours, including dinner and the slow process of driving eight stirks 16 miles at the rate of 2 miles per hour.
- „ 29. This is the wedding day at Strone. So away goes the shepherd with his bride—he full of thought, she full of pride.
- 1853—June 22. Mr McLagan and party fishing on Loch-na-nain, I with them. Thirty-seven trouts. (Presumably Loch nan Eun.)
- Sept. 15. This is the day of the Braemar Gathering, a fine day. Sir Charles Forbes of Newe was at the Gathering with 150 men of the Lonach Society, in full Highland dress.
- 1856—Mar. 17. A dool day for Braemar: William Gruer sails to-day from Glasgow for America. (Various others are named about this time.)
- 1857—Apr. 28. This is Grocer McGregor's wedding day.
- May 13. On Monday, the 13th day of May, Donald McArthur, Schoolmaster, Castletown of Braemar, absconded, leaving his wife and family destitute, drink and debt the cause thereof. He leaves Braemar minus a teacher, a Session Clerk, a Registrar and an elder, a four-fold office vacant by the desertion of one man. (Another dool day for Braemar?)
- Sept. 15. John Gruer left here for America; still they go.
- 1861— The new road is to be made along our quiet glen.
- 1862—Apr. 9. The bothys at Allt-mhait are again occupied by the navvies, making the new road through the quiet Glen Cluny.
- July 11. This day the country is up searching for Admiral Johns, who has been two days and nights on a shelf of the rocks at the Breakneck Falls, Glen Callater, without food or shelter. He was found and extracted from his perilous situation and borne to Glencallater lodge. He was much exhausted but mentally sound. He was upwards of 80 years of age.



WINTER'S GLORY, GLEN CLUNY

*H. C. Dugan*

- 1863—Aug. 15. On August 15, 1863, the new road from Castletown of Braemar to the top of the Cairnwell was finished. The navvies leave the bothys at Shanspital bridge.
- Nov. 2. The Misses Farquharson were here to-day white-washing a black house.
- 1864—Aug. 15. I came by an accident. (Nothing added.)
- Sept. 1. The Ordnance Survey camp left here.
- 1867—Mar. 6. Far from old custom, Shrove Tuesday has passed unheeded in Glen Cluny.
- 1868—Feb. 25. This is Shrove Tuesday. It was kept in the good old style at Allt-mhait, what with eating, drinking, music, vocal and instrumental, dancing, etc., the lone folk of the lone glen of Cluny enjoyed themselves to a late hour. The night was fair and pleasant for the home-going.
- 1869—Oct. 16. To-day the Queen's Despatch was upset on the Cairnwell and smashed. The driver, in relieving the horse, lost his hat and gloves. Placing the mails on horse-back, he fought his way through drifting snow, reached here more like death than life. After an hour's doctoring he was able to continue his way to Balmoral.
- 1872—Aug. 1. To-day I enter my 85th year, a weary pilgrim indeed.
- 1873—Jan. 19. Stayed at Coldrach over Sunday. The journey to and from Braemar too long for me.
- Mar. 5. Left off teaching at Newbigging, having been there a fortnight.
- „ 8. I left Newbigging for home. Day clear and fair after a fall of snow. Travelling in snow all the way. (*Last entry.*)

His daughter adds:

- 1873—Mar. 25. Died at Glen Cluny Lodge, Angus McIntosh, aged 84 years.

[The diary spelling of Glen Cluny and other place names is retained.]