

THE COMPLETE SCOTLAND

FORT WILLIAM

Access.- Road from Oban, see previous chapter; from Newtonmore, see later; from Inverness, see next chapter.
Steamer from Oban; rail (L.N.E.R.) via Tyndrum.

Distances.- Ballachulish (N.) ferry, 12 m.; Ballachulish (S.) via Kinlochleven, 24 m.; Oban, 60 m.; Inverness, 66 m.; Kingussie, 43 m.

Early Closing.- Wednesday.

Hotels.- *Station, Highland, Palace* (40 rooms; R. & b., fr. 7s.), *Grand* (42 rooms; R. & b., 11s. 6d.), *Alexandra* (R. & b., fr. 10s.), *North British, Imperial* (23 rooms; R. & b., 8s. 6d.), *Argyll* (7 rooms, R. & b., 7s. 6d.), etc.

Museum of West Highland arts and crafts in Cameron Square, admission 6d. (10-6 in summer).

Sports.- Bathing, boating, bowls, fishing (permits from local angling association), golf (9 holes), tennis.

THE town originated in a fort built by General Monk, during the Commonwealth, to overawe the Highlanders, and reconstructed in the time of William III, from whom the place derives its name.

The fort was unsuccessfully besieged during the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, was garrisoned until 1860, and dismantled in 1866. The only part now standing is the north-west rampart and governor's house, the rest having been levelled for the railway. The arch which stood over the entrance gate was carefully re-erected to form the entrance to the Cemetery.

The introduction of the railway led to the development of the town as a tourist resort, and the motor and the rebuilt roads have added to its claims upon visitors, while the huge hydro-electric undertakings in the neighbourhood have done much to secure an all-the-year-round prosperity for a place which ordinarily would have enjoyed only a brief summer season.

The views from the higher portions of the town include Loch Linnhe in the foreground, with the Ardgorr hills in the distance. To the north-west is Loch Eil; to the north-east are the Lochy and the River Nevis. Ben Nevis is too close to the town to be seen to advantage from it.

At Fort William the River Lochy terminates its brief life of 8 miles by flowing into the head of **Loch Linnhe**. The loch itself has a westward continuation in **Loch Eil**, and in the angle formed by the two lochs are **Corpach** (*Corpach Hotel*) and **Banavie**, of some importance as the southern terminal point of the Caledonian Canal and ranking as satellites of Fort William in the eyes of tourists, since they are excellent centres for steamer and motor trips as well as for walks. At Corpach is a 9-hole golf course (*1s. round; 1s. 6d. day; 5s. week*).

BEN NEVIS.

The principal excursion in the neighbourhood is, of course, the ascent of **Ben Nevis** (4,406 feet), the highest mountain in Britain. It is most easily ascended from Achintee Farm (2½ miles from Fort William), which can be reached by motor by crossing the Bridge of Nevis at the north

end of the town and then turning sharp to the right by a fair road which follows the north bank of the River Nevis. There is a bridle path to the summit (7½ miles from Fort William), but in spite of this there is some stiff climbing to be done after the first mile or so, and strong boots, preferably nailed, are needed on account of the rough rocks. Four hours should be allowed for the ascent and two to three for the descent. The stone building at the summit was, until 1904, a meteorological observatory. Hardy walkers often ascend in the evening and spend the night on the mountain for the sake of the glorious view at sunrise; but mists are apt to cause disappointment. For geological note, see early chapter.

From Achintee Farm the path climbs steeply up the hillside, crosses several bridges and at a height of about 1,750 feet crosses the south end of the little valley containing Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe. From here it turns sharp to the right, passes the remains of the Half Way House, crosses the Red Burn and then rises up in steep zig-zags to the summit.

The actual summit of the mountain is flat and is covered with loose stones of all shapes and sizes. To the south it slopes away gradually and then very steeply into Glen Nevis. But on the north-east it is cut off by a magnificent range of rock precipices a mile and a half in length and nearly 2,000 feet in height. To the east the summit descends rapidly to a very narrow *arête*, which circles round the head of the glen at the base of the precipice and rises to the summit of Carn Mor Dearg.

The great north-east precipice is furrowed with many chasms, some of which hold snow all the year round. This, if local tradition may be relied upon, is a fortunate circumstance for Cameron of Glen Nevis, who is said to hold his land by a charter which gives it him while there is snow on the mountain. The story is told of a winter in which but little snow fell being followed by a summer so hot that the Cameron of that day had to put a tent over a snow-wreath to keep it from melting, lest his tenure of the land should be lost.

On a clear day the **View** from the summit embraces a panorama almost 150 miles in diameter. Nearly all the highest peaks in Scotland are visible and it is claimed that Ireland can be seen 120 miles away. Identification of the various points is aided by an indicator erected by the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

“In no other place,” Sir Archibald Geikie observes, “is the general and varied character of the Highlands better illustrated, and from none can the geologist, whose eye is open to the changes wrought by subaerial waste on the surface of the country, gain a more vivid insight into their reality and magnitude.

“It is easy to recognize the more marked heights. To the south, away down Loch Linnhe, he can see the hills of Mull and the Paps of Jura closing in the horizon - Loch Eil seems to be at his feet, winding up into the lonely mountains.

“Far over the hills, beyond the head of the loch, he looks across Arisaig and can see the cliffs on the Isle of Eigg, and the dark peaks of Rum, with the Atlantic gleaming below them. Farther to the north-west, the blue range of the Coolins rises along the skyline, and then sweeping over all the intermediate ground, through Arisaig, and Knoydart, and Clanranald's country (where the Pretender landed, whence also he departed), mountain rises beyond mountain, ridge beyond ridge, cut through by dark glens, and varied here and there with the sheen of lake and tarn.

“Northward runs the mysterious straight line of the Great Glen, with its chain of lochs. Thence to the east and south the same billowy sea of mountain-tops stretches out as far as the eye can follow it - the hills and glens of Lochaber, the wide green strath of Spean, the grey corries of Glen Treig and Glen Nevis, the distant sweep of the mountains of Brae Lyon and the Perthshire Highlands, the spires of Glencoe, and thence round again to the blue waters of Loch Linnhe.”

The name of Ben Nevis has been variously interpreted as meaning the "cloud-capped mountain," the "heaven-kissing hill," and the "hill of heaven," all alluding to the fact that its top is generally so obscured by clouds and mist as apparently to reach the sky.

A splendid alternative way of reaching the summit - much longer and harder, but perfectly feasible and safe for really strong walkers - is by the Allt a' Mhuilinn (pron. *Voolin*) and up the *arête* between Carn Mor Dearg and Ben Nevis. The rock scenery in the Allt a' Mhuilinn is of unparalleled grandeur and on a scale absolutely stupendous. Follow the ordinary path as far as the southern end of Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe, beyond which leave the track and proceed along the hillside, keeping the same level, in a northerly direction, having Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe on your left-hand side. In a short time you will come to a deer fence. Crossing this, you find yourself overlooking a wild glen, flanked by the red granite slopes of Carn Mor Dearg on the east side and by the north-east precipices of Ben Nevis on the west side. You now proceed to pick your way downwards in a slanting direction towards the head-waters of the stream which threads its way through the bottom of the glen, the Allt a' Mhuilinn. Having got down to the bed of the stream or near it, proceed upwards along its banks (past a Scottish Mountaineering Club hut - locked), crossing the burn at some suitable spot so as to get a wider view of the magnificent cliffs of Ben Nevis. Our route lies straight ahead south-east to the lowest part of the ridge or *arête* connecting Carn Mor Dearg with Ben Nevis. The slope at the top of the corrie seems at a distance somewhat formidable, but when one comes up and near to it, it will be found to consist mainly of rough screes and boulders, and a little care and judicious selection of the route will always find a way. On gaining the crest, turn to the right along its narrow edge towards Ben Nevis, and after a long pull up you will at length find yourself standing at the summit cairn of the Ben itself.

On the north-east precipice there are some of the finest and longest rock climbs in Britain; but they are difficult and for expert climbers only. Full and exact descriptions of them will be found in the Scottish Mountaineering Club's *Guide to Ben Nevis* (1936).

Glen Nevis, on the southern side of the mountain, is worth exploring; a road goes up it for several miles.

About 1½ miles from Fort William is a picturesque waterfall called *Roaring Mill*. About 2½ miles from Fort William, near *Glen Nevis Farmhouse*, is a rocking stone, and on the summit of a detached hill are the remains of a vitrified fort. About a mile farther up the glen are the **Upper Nevis Falls**, spanned by an iron bridge. Beyond *Evans's Burn* is **Samuel's Cave**, in which fugitives from Culloden Moor are said to have found shelter. At a point about 7 miles from Fort William the driving road ends. Beyond this the glen narrows to a fine gorge through which a path leads to **Steall**, near which on the south side there are some fine waterfalls. The path may be followed eastwards to the head of Glen Nevis and on to the south end of Loch Treig, in the midst of a wild inhospitable area between Rannoch Moor and Glen Spean. From Lochtreighead a rough track leads in 3 miles to Corrou Station, from which the train could be taken back to Fort William, or the route may be reversed. From Lochtreighead a track leads through the wild Lairig Leacach to Spean Bridge (10 miles).

FORT WILLIAM TO KINGUSSIE BY GLEN SPEAN AND LOCH LAGGAN (50 miles).

The first few miles, along a Wade road (now rebuilt and modernized) to Spean Bridge, afford magnificent views of the northern flanks of Ben Nevis. The mountain is pierced by a tunnel 15 miles long and 15 feet in diameter, bringing water from Loch Treig (see later chapter) for the production of electricity. Incidental to this scheme - one of the greatest engineering feats of its kind - are the raising of the level of Loch Treig and the elevation of part of the adjacent railway line by about 30 feet; also the diversion into Loch Treig (via the River Spean and a canal and tunnel 3 miles long) of the waters of Loch Laggan and of the River Pattack, the latter augmented in turn by a partial diversion of the headwaters of the Spey. The western end of the tunnel is plainly seen high up the face of the mountain. It is hardly picturesque, but demands some respect as a monument to modern engineering skill and resource. **Spean Bridge** is a railway junction and has a good hotel. The bridge takes us across the river, where we turn to the right for *Roy Bridge (hotel)*. This is the starting-point for the excursion up **Glen Roy**, of the highest interest to geologists and to all with an interest in the evolution of scenery.

The **Parallel Roads** are shelves or terraces formed by the waters of a lake that once filled the intervening glen. They begin about 2 miles north of the hotel, and extend to Brae Roy Shooting Lodge (10 miles), to which there is a road. An excellent view of them is obtained from a point about midway. The highest "road" is, of course, the oldest, and those below it were formed in succession as the waters of the lake decreased in depth. The lake not only filled Glen Roy, but also some of the valleys adjoining it on the west. The water was held by a glacier in the glen and in the valley of the Caledonian Canal. The latter was apparently filled to the brim with ice, which blocked the mouths of Glens Roy and Spean.

"When the lake," says Sir Archibald Geikie, "that must have thus filled Glen Roy and the neighbouring valleys was at its deepest, its surplus waters would escape from the head of Glen Roy down into Strathspey, and at that time the uppermost beach or parallel road (1,155 feet above the present sea-level) was formed.

"The Glen Treig glacier then shrank back a little, and the lake was thus lowered about 78 feet, so as to form the middle terrace, which is 1,077 feet above the sea. After the lake had remained for a time at that height, the Glen Treig glacier continued on the decline, and at last crept back out of Glen Spean. By this means the level of the lake was reduced to 862 feet above the sea, and the waters of Glen Roy joined those of Loch Laggan, forming one long winding lake, having its outflow by what is now the head of Glen Spean, into Strathspey. While this level was maintained, the lowest of the parallel roads of Glen Roy was formed.

"As the climate of the glacial period grew milder, however, the mass of ice which choked up the mouth of Glen Spean and pounded back the waters gradually melted away; the drainage of Glen Roy, Glen Spean, and their tributary valleys was no longer arrested, and as the lake crept step by step down the glen towards the sea, the streams one by one took their places in the channels which they have been busy widening and deepening ever since."

From *Turret Bridge*, 10 miles up Glen Roy, strong walkers have three routes: (1) Cross the ridge westward to the head of **Glen Gloy**, the foot of which is at Glenfintaig, on the Spean Bridge-Fort Augustus road; (2) follow the track to the *col* at the head of Glen Roy (14 miles from Roy Bridge) and 4 miles farther join the *Corrieyairack route (next chapter)* at Melgarve, thence either eastward to Laggan Bridge or north-westward to Fort Augustus.

For the route from Tulloch, 5 miles farther up Glen Spean from Roy Bridge, to Kingussie and Strathspey, see a later chapter.

FORT WILLIAM TO ARISAIG AND MALLAIG.

This run of just under 50 miles is through some of the most wildly beautiful West Highland scenery, but motorists must not expect to find roads comparable in surface and engineering to, say, the new road up Glencoe. The district is of historical interest, as Prince Charlie landed on its shores in 1745, and fourteen months later re-embarked from it, a "sair, sair altered man" after his failure to drive George II from the throne.

From Fort William the route crosses the Lochy and the Caledonian Canal to Banavie and Corpach, a little beyond which is **Kilmallie Church**, with an obelisk to the memory of Colonel John Cameron of Fassfern, who fell at Quatre Bras, 1815. The epitaph was written by Sir Walter Scott, who, in his "Waterloo," refers in touching terms to Cameron's death. Road and rail now run close to the shore of **Loch Eil**.

Near the centre of the north side of the loch is **Fassfern House**, where Prince Charlie spent a night. At the head of the loch is **Locheilside**, a district known also as Kinlocheil. Here it was that the Prince heard the Government had offered a reward of £30,000 for his capture, a proclamation to which he replied by another offering the sum of £30, afterwards increased to £30,000, for the capture of the "usurper," George II.

After traversing the strath stretching westwards from the head of Loch Eil to Loch Shiel, we pass through **Glen Callop** to **Loch Shiel**, a fresh-water lake about 17½ miles in length, less than a mile wide, and with a maximum depth of 420 feet. On its banks Prince Charlie remained in hiding for a considerable time. **Glenaladale House**, the old family residence of the Macdonalds, was the resting-place of Prince Charlie for one night.

A small steamer runs down the Loch from Glenfinnan, in connection with the morning train, to Acharacle, whence motors run to Salen, on Loch Sunart, and Kilchoan, Ardnamurchan.

Fishing in Loch Shiel can be enjoyed by visitors at the hotel known by the old name of the *Stage House*, at the head of the loch, at *Loch Shiel Hotel*, at *Acharacle* at the foot of the loch, and *Salen Inn* (2 miles to the south, on Loch Sunart).

By the head of Loch Shiel is **Prince Charlie's Monument**, marking the spot where his ill-fated standard was unfurled on the 19th day of August, 1745. The inscription on the monument is in English, Gaelic and Latin.

From Glenfinnan road and rail pass through a winding, narrow valley towards **Loch Eilt**, a fresh-water loch studded with islets. We then reach the head of **Loch Ailort**, an inlet of the western sea, where there is a small hotel. From here there is an exceedingly beautiful walk, for strong walkers only, by a good track along the coast and through Glen Uig to Loch Moidart and on to Shiel Bridge, Acharacle (*hotel*) at the foot of Loch Shiel, and **Salen** (*hotel*) on Loch Sunart. After leaving Loch Ailort the road soon crosses the Arnipol Burn and then Gleann Mama. At this point there is a magnificent view of **Loch nan Uamh** (Loch of the Caves), with its rock-bound shores. Far out in the ocean is the island of **Eigg**, with the mountains of Rum on its right, and

Muck on its left. It was in Loch nan Uamh that the French frigate *Doutelle* anchored on July 25, 1745, with Prince Charlie and seven followers on board.

The oddly named group of islands comprising Eigg, Muck, Rum and Canna - the Parish of the Small Isles - is of considerable geological interest.

The remarkable island of **Eigg** is, to a considerable extent, under cultivation. The *Scur of Eigg* is, by reason of its extraordinary shape, the most conspicuous object for many miles round. It consists of a mass of basaltic shafts, rising from a steep rocky base. At the north side of the island is a long line of cliff presenting a similar phenomenon, but not attaining so great a height.

Muck (*Muic*, the sea-pig; "Porpoise island") is occupied as a sheep and dairy farm.

Rum is the most mountainous of all these islands except Skye, and certainly the most barren. It consists almost entirely of rugged masses of rock and scree, rising to the most boldly defined outline in the Hebrides. The highest point is *Askival* (2,659 feet). Except near Kinloch there is no habitation. The island measures about 8 miles by 7, and the population is under 100. About 97 per cent. of the area is forest and moorland, the game comprising deer, grouse, woodcock, snipe, and wild-fowl. On the small lochs there is excellent fishing; the whole, however, is private.

Canna, with a little harbour, pier, and verdant slope, is attractive. The island measures about 6 miles by 1½, and its western extremity is a fine cliff 425 feet high. The population is about 60. The high ground at the north-east of Canna is *Compass Hill*, a name due to the manner in which magnetic compasses are affected by the quantity of iron in the basaltic rock of which it consists.

The district known as **Borrodale** is inseparably associated with the final wanderings of Prince Charlie. After Culloden he fled to Glen Beasdale, where he waited till a boat could be obtained to convey him to the Outer Isles, hoping to find a ship there that would carry him to France. But from South Uist he returned to the mainland, piloted part of the way by Flora Macdonald. He landed near Mallaig, was conducted through the military cordon by his friends, and after many wanderings farther east came back to Borrodale, where he stepped on board the ship which carried him to France.

Proceeding across a low-lying moss and crossing the *Brunery Burn*, we reach **Arisaig** (*Arisaig Hotel*), a hamlet at a charming spot. The coast is studded with rocks, on which seals may be seen in large numbers on a calm summer day, and the view includes **Loch nan Ceall**, with its countless rocks and islets, at the entrance to which, and 3 miles from the village, is Arisaig pier. There is good boating, bathing and fishing. **Morar** (*hotel*), some 6 miles farther, is on the coast near the western end of Loch Morar, the deepest lake in Great Britain (180 fathoms). It contains salmon, sea-trout and loch-trout, and capital sport is also obtained on the *Morar River*, which flows through delightful scenery and contains three falls. The bay in which the river joins the sea has wonderful white sands. Road and railway end at **Mallaig** (*hotels: Station, Marine (temp.; 12 rooms; R. and b., 8s.)*). Mallaig is an important fishing port. During the fishing season forty or fifty steam drifters may be seen in its harbour, where their freights are landed for dispatch to southern markets. The **Sound of Sleat** separates Mallaig from the **Isle of Skye** (*see next but one chapter*), 4½ miles distant.

Mallaig offers exceptional facilities for visiting other ports. Mail steamers sail daily (except Sunday) to Kyle of Lochalsh, Broadford and Portree (Skye), Raasay; to Kyle, Applecross and Stornoway (Lewis); twice weekly to Eigg, Rum, Canna, Lochboisdale (South Uist), Loch Maddy (North Uist), Tarbert and other ports in

Harris. Once a week, in connection with trains from and to Fort William, a steamer goes to Loch Scavaig on the south coast of Skye. There is also motor-boat connection with Inverie and the head of Loch Nevis.

FORT WILLIAM TO ARDNAMURCHAN AND MORVERN.

About 10 miles from Banavie a very poor road doubles round the western end of **Loch Eil** and returns along the southern shore of the loch until opposite Corpach, whence it skirts the western shore of Loch Linnhe past Inverscaddle and Ardgour (*hotel*) to **Inversanda**, at the foot of Glen Tarbert. From Inversanda a road, very narrow, runs southwards along the west side of Loch Linnhe to **Kingairloch**, a beautiful spot, and thence inland to Loch Aline on the Sound of Mull (*small hotel*), where there is a pier at which the steamers from Oban call.

At the western end of Glen Tarbert is **Loch Sunart** separating Morvern from Ardnamurchan. **Strontian** (*hotel*), near the eastern end, gave its name to the element strontium, first discovered in the lead-mines here. Farther west is **Salen** (not to be confused with Salen in Mull), with an inn and a steamer pier, and from here a road goes north to *Shiel Bridge* (4½ miles; note there is another Shiel Bridge, in Glen Shiel, on the Invermoriston - Strome Ferry route, next chapter, at the foot of Loch Shiel (later chapter) and on to **Dorlin**, on Loch Moidart, a rugged arm of the sea. Westward from Salen the road picks a somewhat precarious way westward along the southern shore of Ardnamurchan - a grandly beautiful route which should fully satisfy the needs of any wishing to get off the beaten track. So remote is it, that the statement that James IV held a court at **Mingary Castle**, the ruins of which are a little way short of **Kilchoan** (*inn*), seems a fantastic invention; but the court was held, and here the island chiefs submitted in 1495. Southward, across the Sound of Mull, is Mull (see earlier chapter), with Ben More towering to 3,169 feet; south-westward are Coll and Tiree; northward are Muck, Eigg, Rum, and Canna (see later chapter), and beyond them the mountains of Skye.