

A Cairngorm Diary

24th -29th July, 1932

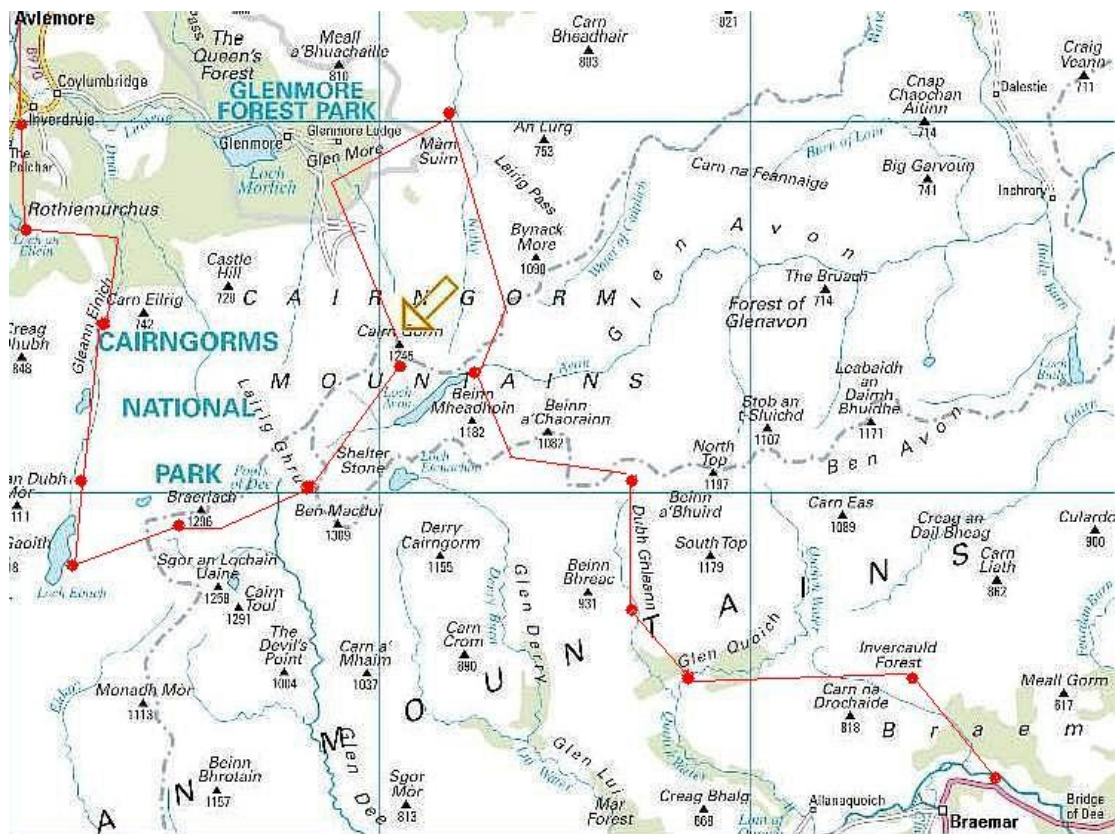
Written 'en route' by

James Nicoll Kerr Henderson (1908-1989)

Edited and word-processed from the original by his son

John Henderson in April, 2000

Maps added in 2008.



Sunday 24th July, 1932

Jim (JNK) Henderson (1908-1989) writes,



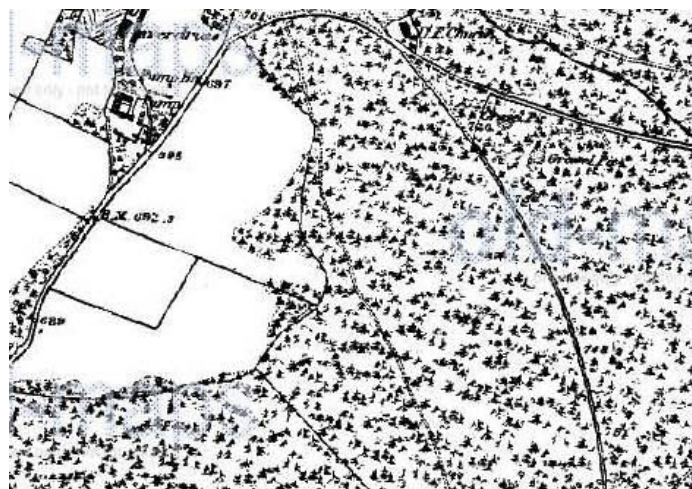
Arriving in Aviemore Railway Station from Stirling at 12.30 pm. the sun was shining - I remember my fellow adventurer *Jim (JJ) Walker (1907-1978)*....



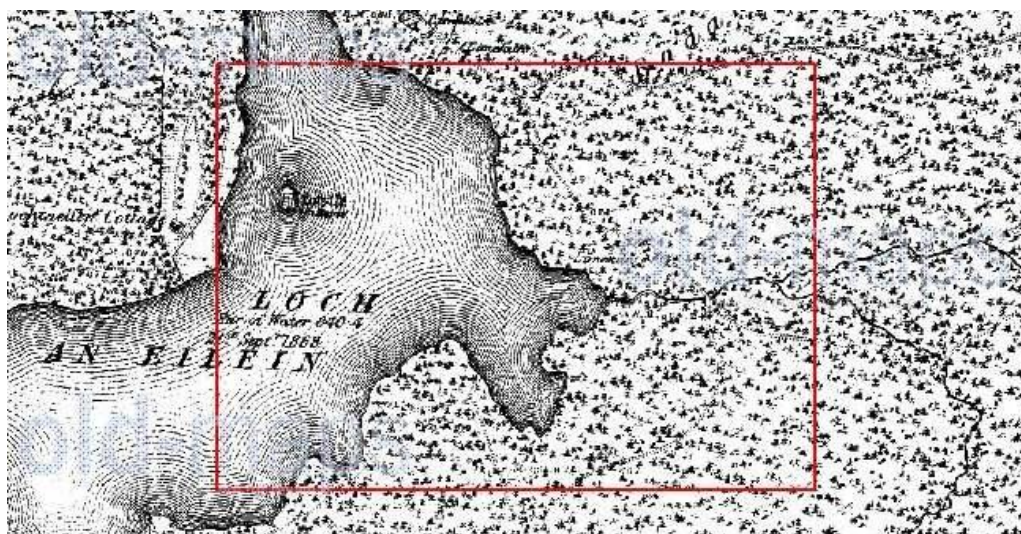
remarking that he hoped this was a good omen!. It wasn't, as just after we'd lunched at the Temperance Hotel and were half a mile on the way, the rain came down in torrents.

Aviemore, flanked by the swift running River Spey, consists of two luxurious hotels, a few scattered shops and villas, a Bank of Scotland, a railway station and has a very picturesque setting midst wooded slopes about 800 feet above sea level. Away to the South, the Duke of Gordon's Monument and the Waterloo Cairn are outstanding landmarks, while to the South-East today the enormous bulk of the Cairngorms was just visible in the mist. Finding to our disgust that the Temperance Hotel didn't stock writing paper and thus forced to use telegram forms instead, we persuaded the proprietor to post our necessary arrival correspondence on the Monday despite our lack of stamps. This done we set out in a South-East direction, across the Spey towards the little village of Inverdrurie where we left the main road and struck South through Rothiemurchus Forest.

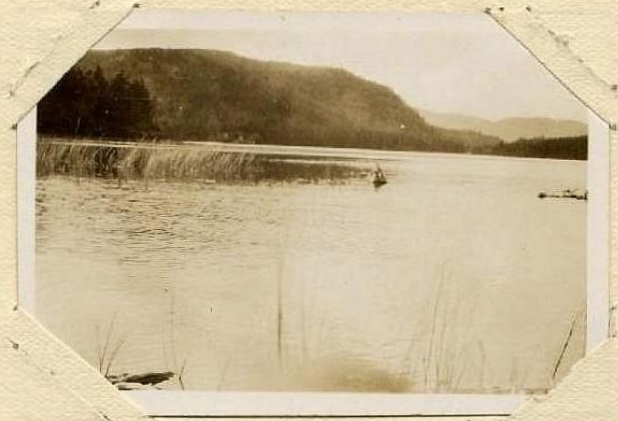
1901 Map



At that point the rain abated leaving everything fresh and sparkling in the consequent bright sunshine. One could not but experience an exhilarating feeling of 'joie de vivre', fitness, and sublime content with the scent of pine wood in one's nostrils and the fragrance of honeysuckle, bell heather, fox gloves and bracken all around. Soon civilization is left behind and pretty little Loch an Eilein meets our gaze - a peaceful scene, with the Wolf of Badenoch's ruined castle in its midst. A halt here and a few snaps of it.



July 24th 1932



Rothiemurchus Forest + Loch an Eilein

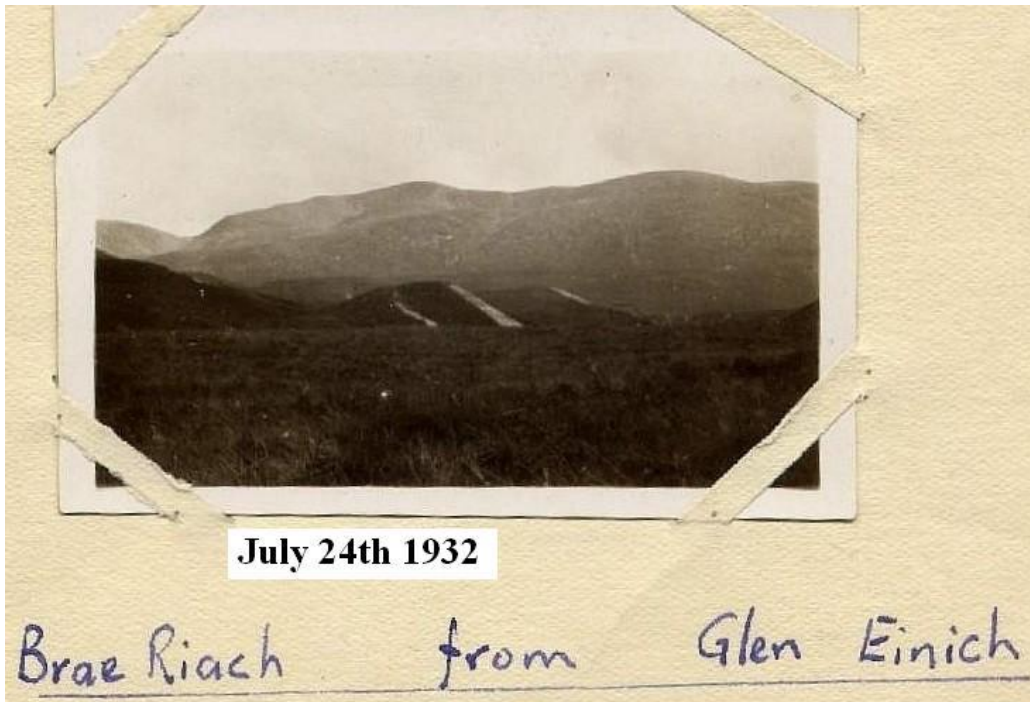
On again, forking through the forest, climbing steadily towards the foot of Gleann Einich, and alongside a rushing stream, Am Beanaidh, remarkable for its brown stones and water. Another lovely snap here



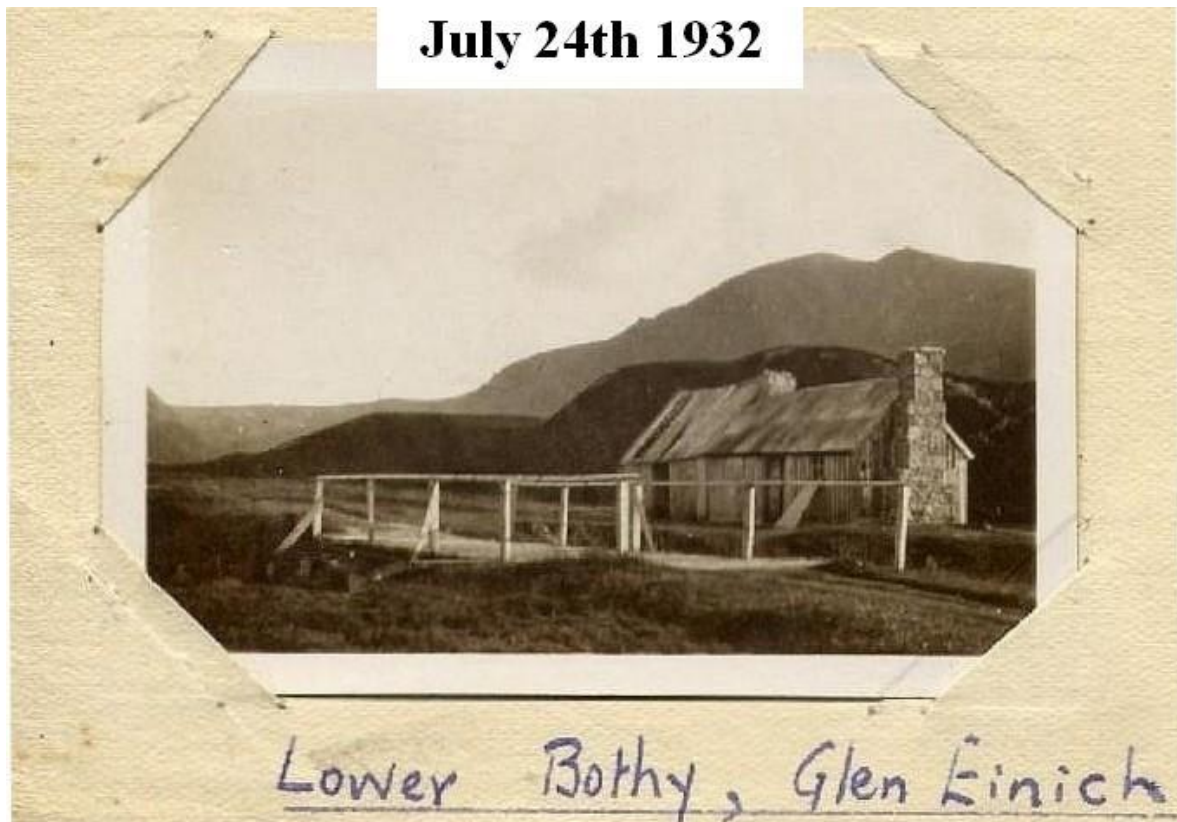
July 24th 1932

Glen Einich

Then so on up the glen with the hugh 'pile' of Braeriach, patched with snow, towering before us in the south.



Then the forest gives way to moorland, swept by a refreshing hill wind, which dispels our extraordinary following of flies - troublesome brutes - and the hills appear to enclose us more and more - they are inviting today. And now, within a mile of the lower bothy we see, high up on Creag Dubh, to the West, the famous Argyll Stone (2766 feet). **Hail the bothy and tea!** (6 p.m.). It is a dilapidated shack in two parts. One part is very snug but padlocked, while the other serves as a stable and has only half a roof.



A shower of rain comes on, so we make the stable waterproof by means of a piece of corrugated iron and ground sheets and regale ourselves with sardines, half a loaf, butter and strawberry jam. After JJ has mistaken salt for sugar and some sardines have fallen into my tea, we succeed in accomplishing a highly satisfactory 'meal'. A wash! - first since 7 a.m. - is indicated in the stream hard-by - an outlet of Coire an Lochain on Braeriach and the highest loch in Britain (3250 feet).

It's a lovely evening now, about 8.30 p.m., so we decide to walk a bit up the glen to see Loch Einich at its Southern end. Three hundred yards from the lower bothy we come upon the cairn built in memory of Thomas Baird, the Glasgow 'Varsity boy - and pause to pay our silent tributes of respect, admiration and sorrow. What a tragedy! Only 300 yards from help and life! We place a lovely red granite block in the centre of the cairn and build it up all round. Up nearer the Loch, a horse shoe presents itself. So we have a good spit each and heave it over our shoulders.

On our return we decide to apply gentle pressure to the steeple which holds the padlocked chain of the habitable quarter of the bothy (it has been obviously done before) and to our joy, it gives way very willingly. The time is now 9.45 p.m., so while waiting for supper, we settle down to our daily task - our diaries! It has been a glorious afternoon and evening despite the short sharp showers which are a feature of these hills and every ridge and peak is now clearly defined against an almost cloudless darkening sky. One can hardly imagine that this place could ever be shrouded with mist, blinded by snow or rain, or swept by devastating winds. Our poor faces are 'peeling' from exposure but judging by their 'peeling rate' this process won't last long out here.

Tomorrow we go up about 2 miles to Loch Einich at the head of the glen, then over the shoulder of Braeriach to the South East, thence visit Angel Peak, Cairn Toul, Wells of Dee and Braeriach before descending into the Lairig Ghru for the night at Corrou Bothy below Devil's Point.

Fauna have been scarce today but flora is abundant (even water lilies in Loch an Eilein), while all kinds of stone are to be found, though granite predominates. I'm terribly sleepy and needing my bed - let's hope the porridge oats are good to-morrow after steeping the meal overnight.

*'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
While to be young was very heaven.'*