

Chapter 38
1957 – 1958
Bannockburn / Portree (ii) – June 1957

Our secondary target was to spend the night at Ratagan Youth Hostel at Sheil Bridge near the foot of the loch ... and, among other things, do a right good washing of both ourselves and our clothes!

With Dornie and Eilean Donan Castle still miles off, an empty lorry initially seemed to ignore our frantic ‘thumbing’, but then slid to a halt some fifty yards further down the road. With great alacrity we raised a gallop in pursuit till we heard its jovial driver hanging out of his cab shouting, “I’m gaen tae Dornie ... whaur are yees lads heided fer?” I replied, “Ratagan at Sheil Bridge but Dornie would be a real help on our way, thanks.” “Ach, weil, he grinned, I’m in nae hurry hame, sae I’ll tak ye ... gat up back, and kep yer heids doon.”

Whether this meant Dornie or Ratagan, we did not know. But up and off we went at a ‘guid skelp’ down the winding road till, lo and behold, we sailed right through the village and on down to Sheil Bridge in the lea of the ‘5 Sisters of Kintail’, where, gratitude expressed, we headed to the youth hostel about quarter of a mile up the road to Glenelg.

As you can see from this photograph of a gloaming at Ratagan,



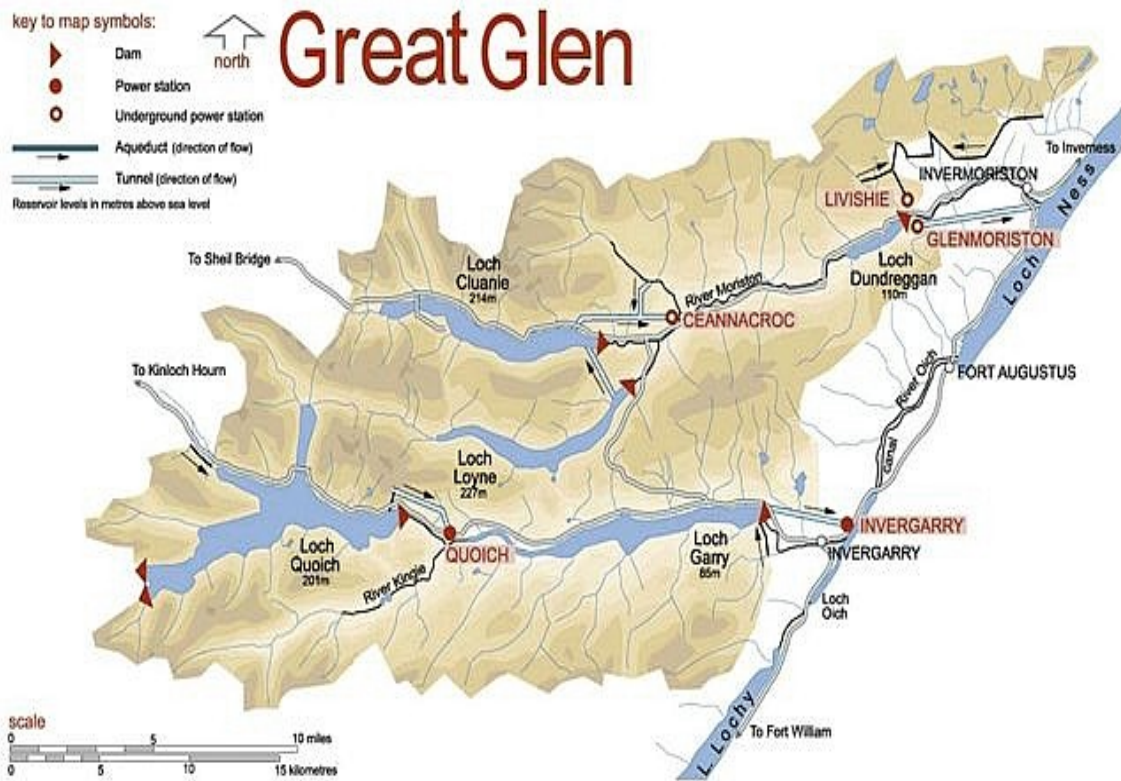
Ratagan Youth Hostel on Loch Duich,

it was an idyllic setting in which to rest-up, revive our weary legs, and ‘mak oorsels a bittie mair daicent’, before concocting an evening ‘barbecue’ of beans on toast with spam, in the company of quite a few others who were also savouring the splendours of Kintail. Although of totally wood construction, and thus truly rustic, the hostel and its grounds were as clean as new pins, and these features we found in the morning were no accident as the warden handed out the traditional hostel jobs and then did not

allow any ‘guest’ to leave (he held our membership cards) until satisfied by the results.
 “Quite right too, we thought. Best way to do justice to such a wonderful facility.”

Our targets for the next few days were firstly, Invermoriston Youth Hostel on the steep banks there of Loch Ness and near to the John Cobb Memorial, secondly, before heading directly home next day to Stirling, via Perth, was Inverness Youth Hostel.

The following photo tour will give an idea of the delights we sampled en route courtesy of adequate ‘lifts’ and the minimum of walking!



Five Sisters of Kintail



Loch Cluanie



Invermoriston to Inverness



Jim Watson at John Cobb Memorial, Invermoriston



Loch Ness



Drumnadrochit and Castle Urquhart



Inverness 'The City of Churches'



Inverness Castle (Youth Hostel in 1957)

