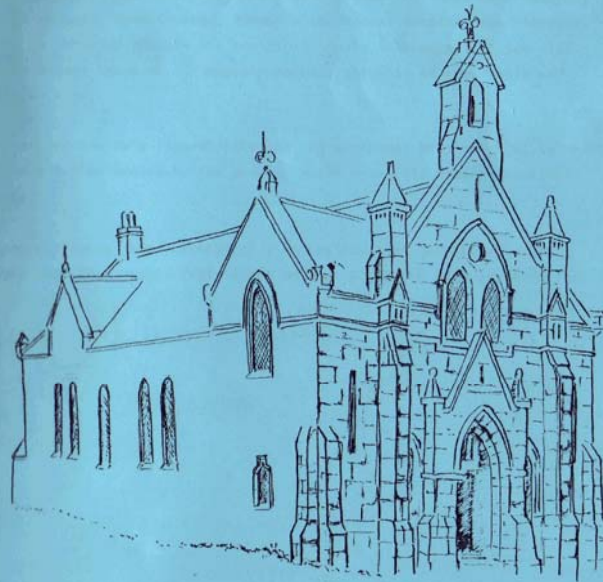


AUCHMEDDEN
CENTENARY
MAGAZINE

AUCHMEDDEN CHURCH.

Centenary Magazine.

1884 - 1984.



Editorial.

I.

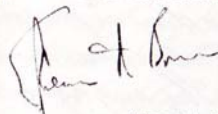
The kirk at the top o' the brae has now seen a hundred years of service to the community of Pennan and this magazine has been assembled to mark the occasion. A glance through the following pages will reveal, however, that the scope of the magazine extends beyond the church itself, bringing in, as it does, the wider community - past and present.

Yet, paradoxically perhaps, it was pressure from this 'wider community' that led to the building of Auchmedden Church in the first place! When we examine the records, we see that the church was conceived in response to a determination by the people of Pennan to have a place of worship of their own, upon which they could put the stamp of their identity.

In the 1860s, a robust community spirit prevailed, reinforced by strong religious conviction and an irrepressible enthusiasm. But times have changed. Values have changed. Nevertheless, Pennan's individual identity has remained. Therefore, as you read through the contributions to this magazine, you will undoubtedly become aware of a community spirit, which is as remarkable and compelling as ever.

What then of the church's future? Like the red sandstone from which it is made, its influence may be eroded by the passing years - but its inherent solidity will remain.

Do read the following pages carefully! I am certain that the articles and photographs will shed considerable light on the church and village, even for locals!



Graeme A Bruce.

The following extracts suggest that the building of Auchmedden Church was very much a community effort.....

Auchmedden Church of Scotland Mission
 Penman 27th November 1882

At a meeting called by the Revd James Wilson Minister of the parish of Aberdeen through the district Elders, viz Messrs John Watt, William Slessor, James Watt & John Gatt. And which meeting was found to be fully represented including a large majority of the able bodied men in Penman. The Revd James Wilson took the chair. Business was opened by prayer. There after the Revd Thomas Campbell who had conducted two services on the previous day in presence of large congregations was unanimously accepted Missionary. The engagement to be for a year, at the rate of ninety pounds per annum, to be paid on either side at two months notice.

Penman 27th February 1883

At a meeting of the people attending Public Worship in Auchmedden School Rooms held here to day at which the Revd James Wilson Minister of the Parish presided.

After the meeting was constituted with prayer. The following Ladies and Gentlemen were appointed as a Committee for this district of the Parish of Aberdeen to solicit and receive work for the Bazaar to be held in the Village of New Aberdour in the month of August next in aid of building a Church in this part of the Parish viz.

Miss Slessor, Miss Wilson, Miss McKenzie, Miss Gatt, Miss West, Miss West of the Inn, Mrs John West, Mrs West the Baker, Mr Forbes West, Mrs Watt of Auchmedden, William Slessor Esq, John Watt the Elder, James Watt the Elder, John Gatt the Elder, John Gatt, Peter Gatt, William West, Charles Forbes,

At the close of the meeting a vote of thanks was given to the Revd Mr Wilson for presiding.
 W. Wilson, Sec.

THE PENNAN CHURCH - AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS.

The Pennan Church, or to give it its proper name, The Auchmadden Mission Church, is this year a hundred years old. The fishing and farming communities of Pennan and District built it and cherished it with sincere fervour for some sixty years. Then a shrinking population and an erosion of the Church's hold on the people, let it slide into neglect and the attention of little more than a score of regulars. These were not all members of the Church but often individuals who willed it to continue as a place of worship rather than have it degenerate into a farmer's barn, which has been the fate of far too many of the church buildings of the North-East.

The Village of New Aberdour was founded in 1798 by William Gordon, then proprietor of Aberdour Estate and prior to 1818 when the new church was built at the north end of the village high street, the fisher folk of Pennan regularly walked the three miles over the old road to worship on Sundays at the ancient church of Aberdour, - St. Drostan's Church near the beach at Aberdour Shore. It embodied the roots of the christian faith in this part of Buchan. Legend has it that St. Drostan and his master St. Columba came ashore at Aberdour around 590A.D. and re-awakened in the local people an interest in the christian faith which may have been kindled originally by St. Ninian and his disciples some 200 years earlier. The old church still has a red sandstone font which had been removed from a much earlier cell at Chapelden about a mile and a half south-west of the Auchmadden Shore fishing village now known as Pennan.

However, in 1815 the old church was abandoned and the new building erected by the Community of New Aberdour, did not have the same attraction for the folk of Pennan. The old Village of Aberdour, although largely a farming centre was in part a fisher sea-town, whereas New Aberdour was almost wholly the centre of a farming community. The three mile road between Pennan and New Aberdour, although covered as a weekly jaunt by the younger generation, became for the older folk a wearisome lyaue over steep hills and rough country which year by year became steeper and rougher. Out of this came the yearning to have a church of their own nearer to the great Pennan Bay with its twin headlands of the Troop and Red Heads.

The Village of Pennan towards the end of the nineteenth century was booming, and the farming hinterland was also prosperous and peopled by large and active families. In 1882 a popular missionary preacher, the Rev. Thomas Campbell, was already preaching in the local hall and sometimes in the local school which had been built in 1862 on the south-east of the crossroads half a mile above the Village at the intersection of the Fraserburgh / Banff and Pennan / New Pitsligo roads.

On 27th. November 1882 a meeting was chaired by the Rev. James Wilson, who had been minister of the parish for the past 25 years, formally to accept the Rev. Thomas Campbell as missionary on a yearly basis at an annual salary of £90.-, either party to be able to break the agreement at two months notice. Another meeting in February 1883, fully representative of the people of Pennan and District, and again chaired by Mr. Wilson, decided to hold a bazaar in New Aberdour in the following August to start a fund which would eventually finance the building of a church in Pennan. Unfortunately on 3rd. August 1883, Mr. Wilson died, and the new Minister, Mr. Charles Birnie, was not ordained until 11th. January 1884. However, the seeds of the new church had been well sown - at the February 1883 meeting. Pennan was rich in craftsmen. There were boatbuilders and carpenters a-plenty and the Village was famous for its stone masons, the successors to the millstone quarrymen, who, based at Cummerton, some 2 miles south of the Village had supplied the North-East with the finest millstones known to the trade. One of these master masons, born in 1853, told me personally that he had been apprenticed to the old master masons of Pennan, and as a boy apprentice had earned the princely sum of sixpence a week. By 1884, this William West had set up business in Peterhead then the main Buchan centre of the granite cutting and polishing industry, as a building contractor. He built most of the beautiful granite houses in, for example, Landale Road Peterhead, as well as the Boddam Lighthouse to the south of the town. As a native Pennanite it is well possible that West, now an expert in granite construction work and with good contacts in the granite cutting and polishing trade, assisted in the construction of the fine east front of the Pennan Church and the granite window facings.

To co-ordinate this wealth of expertise and supply money, land and material as well, a champion came forward in the person of Mr. John Sleigh, the Factor of the Auchmedden Estate. Mr. Sleigh was a power in the land. The Laird of Auchmedden George Alexander Baird, born in a hotel in Edinburgh in 1861, was a young headstrong character of considerable wealth. His interests lay elsewhere and he left the management of Auchmedden to his able factor, John Sleigh, together with access to money in amounts rare in Buchan in those days. What Sleigh said virtually was, "I'll give you a design for your kirk, provide the dressed granite for the east front and the slates for the roof, if you will supply the local sandstone for the body of the building, build it and fit it." The offer might well have been like yeast to a loaf, and the community, desperately keen to have their own place of worship, threw aside whatever differences they may have had and fervently buckled to with a will to build their church. Sleigh, on behalf of the Laird, allocated 1275 square yards or just over a quarter of an acre of land immediately to the East of the new schoolhouse for the site of the new building. The farmers such as Siessor of Nethermill, Watt of Mains of Auchmedden and a Pennan village haulage contractor George West, sent their teams of clydesdale horses to haul great dressed red sandstone blocks, - the largest measuring four feet six inches by fifteen inches by twelve inches and weighing each about nine hundred pounds, - up Pennan Brae from the quarries on the west side of the Red Head. The women of the village were not to be outdone. They normally walked as far afield as New Pitsligo, Strichen and Turriff with their creels laden with fresh, smoked and dried fish. Now they vied with one another in carrying creel loads of small red stones up to the top of Pennan Brae to build the main church walls and the boundary wall, surrounding the church grounds on the east, south and west sides, - the north side being completed with a wrought-iron railing in which was set the impressive entrance gate. This was no slave labour but a labour of love and faith.

In the latter half of 1883 and most of 1884 the whole village and district must have been a hive of activity and all freely gave of their skills, labour and time, which in such a deeply religious community was in no way grudged.

The end result was the construction of a very fine stone building, with adjoining vestry and heating chamber below. This heating chamber was somewhat of a

disaster, however. All the houses of the Village were heated with open fires and central heating was a new concept. It appears that the system produced more smoke than expected, fumigating the pulpit area and the choir to the discomfort of both the preacher and the enthusiastic choristers!

Boat builders and master carpenters were even more numerous in the Pennan of those days than masons and these gentlemen saw to the fitting of the pulpit, choir stalls and pews in polished pitchpine.

There is no record, unfortunately, of when the first sermon was preached in the new church, but with the Village itself boasting a population of between three and four hundred and with a total population in excess of a thousand including those from the well-populated farm toons, a good congregation was well based.

At the time there were more ministers than charges available, so that although Mr. Campbell had had a full theological training and was licensed to preach, he had not been ordained or inducted to a charge. Hence the Rev. Charles Birnie, Parish Minister of Aberdour, conducted weddings and baptisms and was virtually Mr. Campbell's overseer. But Mr. Campbell was a popular and dedicated preacher and a forceful speaker. We cannot doubt that the first service was given by Mr. Campbell to a full congregation, and the fishers and farmers of Pennan, renowned for their musical talents must have made the new rafters ring with their favourite psalms and hymns. There was no "mechanical music". The singing was led by a "Precentor" who was also normally responsible for lighting the church lamps. He was latterly the recipient of an annual salary of £5.- for this dual duty. I have it directly on the authority of the last local precentor of the Pennan Church, before an interim precentor presided over the installation of "instrumental music" in the form of an organ in April 1918, that the Auld Hundred (the 100th. Psalm), was sung with great gusto to two different tunes, - on separate occasions, - when it was included in the repertoire, which was very often. The organ which was installed in April 1918, was bought second-hand from the South U.F. Church Fraserburgh for the sum of £30.-. Mr. Carrell, the schoolmaster who was the first organist, was also authorised to purchase music for the sum of eighteen shillings and sixpence. The Chairman authorised the removal of the choir table and two chairs to the vestry to make room for the new "kist of founils".

In 1921, Mr. Carrell was succeeded as organist by Miss R. Forbes (later Mrs. Joseph Watt), relieved occasionally by some of the schoolteachers. Mrs. Bruce the present organist, has officiated since 1938. She started playing the organ in church when she was actually a very young girl still at school.

On 15th. July 1897, the Rev. Thomas Campbell regretfully resigned. Church funds were low and Mr. Campbell's small salary had rarely been paid in full, so the Management Committee, also with great regret, accepted the resignation. The Rev. Mr. Charles Birnie, therefore, from Sunday 13th. July 1897 preached in the Penman Church at 3.P.M. The time of the service was later established as 3.30 P.M.

Charles Birnie died at the end of 1919. He had been greatly respected and admired and was sadly missed. He was succeeded in turn in 1920 by Mr. G. Catto, by Mr. W. Potter in 1928, by Mr. A.M. Adams in 1937, Mr. W.M. Hannah in 1954, Mr. Gavin McCallum in 1970, Mr. G. Lee in 1976 and eventually by another Charles Birnie in 1982.

In October 1897 a sub-committee was set up to attend to the business of getting the church heated by paraffin stoves.

In April 1898 a new bible, psalm and hymn books were purchased for the pulpit, the new bible costing the sum of five shillings and sixpence, plus one shilling carriage, presumably from Fraserburgh.

In October 1898, with a view to assist in heating the church and properly lighting it, it was decided to get, if possible, the "new modern circular burners for the paraffin lamps".

Again we find in July 1899 that it was resolved to purchase communion linen, two communion cups and bread plates and a gown suitable for the Minister conducting the service, - "the value not to exceed £3.-" The lowest price quoted was later stated to be £3.10/- and the Committee agreed to pay this exorbitant price. In this year also church funds must have been further strained by the necessity for having the church harled above the main sandstone block base. This naturally did not apply to the granite east front. This harling was necessitated by the fact that the red sandstone erodes very rapidly, especially in the teeth of salt-laden northerly gales. The harling was done by Messrs. Gerrard and Son of Rosneath.

In January 1938, Mr. William Birnie Gatt, an elder of the church for many years

and the man who also supervised the Sunday School along with local schoolteachers, died, and after the war his daughter had electric heating and lighting installed in memory of her father.

We must record at this stage certain minor changes during the years when support for the church was unfortunately dying along with the rapidly dwindling population of the Village and its farming hinterland. Fishing methods were changing, and bigger boats were of necessity based on bigger harbours such as that at Fraserburgh with a consequent drift of fishermen and their families to the larger centres. Gone were the days also when a farm had coltars, ploughmen, cattlemen, shepherds, etc. Most of the work can now be done by one or two men with tractors.

In October 1967 a communion table was purchased and some of the pitchpine choir seats were removed to accommodate it. In April 1968 a new electric organ was bought at the cost of £340.- highlighting the inflationary trend. In the same year a stone font was gifted to the church by a church in Glasgow and the local Post Mistress donated a silver christening bowl. Other gifts to the church include a Bible, from Mr. A Macdonald and a praise-board from Mr. and Mrs C.G.H. Weller.

In 1973 additional electric floor heating was installed at a cost of some £150.-

The elders of the Penman Church come out of the mists of the past hundred years as a grand procession of Gatts, Watts and Wests. Excluding present day elders, to whom later historical summaries will no doubt do adequate justice when their work is also done, the procession is dominated towards its end by such stalwarts as William Birnie Gatt, William Ritchie West and Alexander Sutherland Donnie, worthy successors to the founders and in whose perspectives the Penman Church loomed larger than its physical dimensions and very deserving of their wholehearted support. Were their successors to serve her half as well Penman's Church in the true sense of its mission has still many years to live.

David S. Watt.

THE INQUIRING AND ANALYTICAL MIND.

("FOLK WHA SAY THEIR SAY AND SPEIR THEIR SPEIR".)

Aye min, fairly! So that's the wye o't? A' that time, said ye?
I'se warran' wid it, ah wye.

An' ye say there's a date abune'e door. Fa wad 'a putten't there?
Na, his heid's nae sair the day.

An' 'is polished ballie o' granite on the tap noo. Yon wis niver the clapper
o' the bell, surely. Fit's it for than? Foo hivvy wid it be, think ye?
A gey wecht I wid say - min's ye come on yon ba' they dyst about wi' at
the Games.

The shot! Fit idder?

Ye took the verra word oot o' ma mou. I eence saw't deen wi' a haggis.
Hidna the same dird though. Did iver ee' see 'at? I hivv though!
Peterheid granite?
Yea, yea; Aiberdeen's grey fan ye think about it.

Bit 'at's nae fit we wis speakin' aboot ava! Ye wis gyan tae tell's aboot
'is date afore ye startit a leetachie aboot the quarry at Stirlin' Hill.
Wid there 'a been a gyle at Peterheid awa back? Divertin' min - if ane o'
yon scamps hid howkit the steenie that finished up on the croon o' the kirk.
Ah've seen as muckle, ye ken.

Fa wid 'a haen the biggin' o't? Eh fye na'! Lang afore Zander's time.
Fa wid ken than? Ah widna winner! They think they ken a'thing doon in
Edinburgh. - Wid ye say East Kilbride wis far ahin though? 'Ee'l be 'Centre I'
yersel' nae doot? O jist a termin'! They were gey sair on ye? Weel, weel.
Ye'll be rale high codit.... Eh man!! Bit there's ae thing. Ye canna tak'
the breeks aff a heilanman. An me on the pinshin! Foo muckle o' a pinshin
did they pey a buddy hyne back aboot yer 1884 (sae bein' ye're richt wi'
the year)? Is that a fact? The mannie fae Tyrie ilka month? An' aye an
antrin ane turnin' oot? So the minister tellt ye that ye'd niver hae anidder
chance till 2084? Weel, fa wid ken if he didna ken?

Bit he winna see't, pair stock.

Charles J Birnie.



JUNIOR AND SENIOR PUPILS OF AUCHMEDDEN SCHOOL,
ABOUT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.



ALL BELOW BLUE.

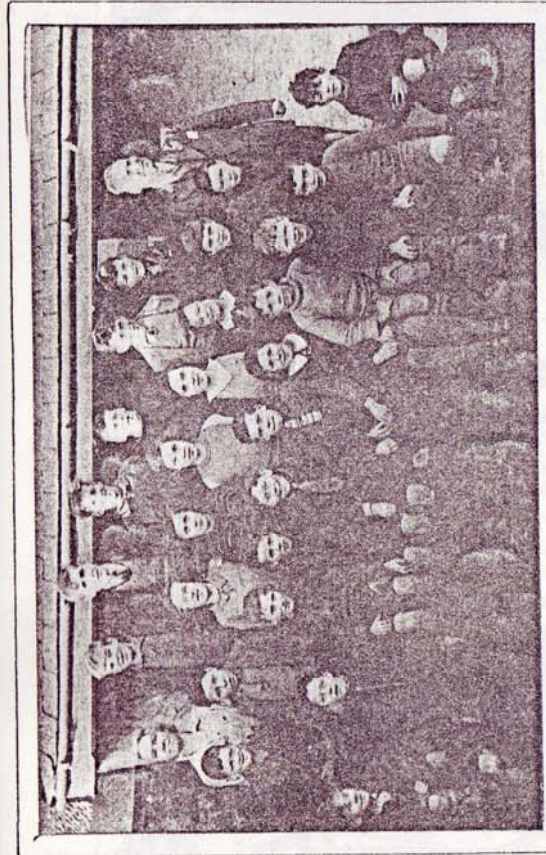
A tumbling tangle
 Of twisted contortion
 Levels,
 Pebbles, years, lives.

Shells of silence gaze
 Undisturbed,
 White and white suddenly
 Red and green and blue
 A wet wonderland
 Precious, simple.

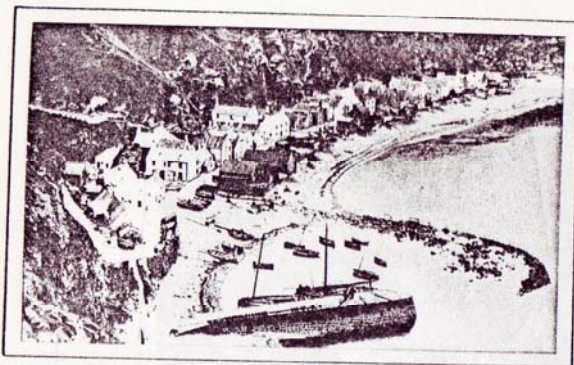
Ripples of foam - flecked merriment
 Dance,
 Below scowls of wrath.

And all, below blue.

Lilian Bruce.



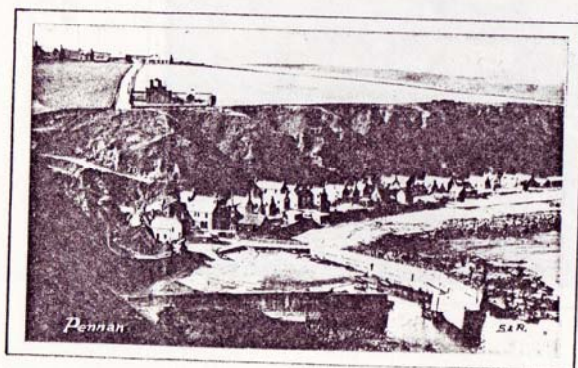
AUTECHEDEN SCHOOL, PENANG - 1918.



ABOVE- PENNAN, AS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BEFORE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

BELOW- PENNAN, AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE SECOND PIER BUT BEFORE THE 'BIG STORM' OF 1953.

(See harbour development diagram on page 21.)



PENNAN - AN EVOLUTION.

Some men believe, "Change is the only thing that is constant." This paper is intended to assist in the centenary commemoration of the building of Auchmedden Church. A very brief attempt is made to try and outline some of the changes which have occurred in the area. It is hoped that some enjoyment will be given to the reader.

PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

It may be argued that crustal faulting and uplift have been the dominant processes involved in the making of this land/sea-scape if the area is considered on a major scale. Nevertheless, the processes of erosion, transportation and deposition acting upon Old Red Sandstone may in this case have been more influential in the creation of soils and sites for man to develop and exploit.

Glaciation has left a legacy of meltwater channels, valleys and dramatic relief (see fig. 1). These valleys, deeply incised by post-glacial streams, have, until the age of the internal combustion engine, proved a great hindrance in the development of a good road communication network.

Landward, the area rises to a height of 750 ft. at a distance of two and a half miles southward from the village of Pennan. Thus, much of the area of study is a northward facing slope, frequently subjected to cold, northerly, salt laden winds. Rainfall is approximately twenty-five inches annually and snow lies on average from twenty-five to thirty days annually.

Soils in many places have been developed from the sandstone bedrock. As such, these are light, easily worked and fertile. Occasionally a patch of cold blue clay, which has been deposited by a glacier, appears. Cultivators have been so thorough that little natural vegetation cover is found.

The coastal zone is composed of rock showing various degrees of "softness". This has resulted in the sea having etched the once relatively straight coastline into a series of bays. The soft rock and the indentations made in it, contrast vividly with the bold and hard headland of Troup.

Changes in sea-level have endowed the bays with fine examples of raised beaches. Sheltered from behind by high cliffs and from the west by Troup

Head, such beaches were excellent sites for eighteenth/nineteenth century fishermen to develop. Previous to that period, the foreshores seem to have been in a state of equilibrium. When man devised a means of transporting large quantities of beach materials quickly, the building of sea-defences at sites such as Pennan became a necessity.

Whatever the primary reason for the erection of such sea defences was, obviously there were other needs. One of these was the need for space for industry e.g. outbuildings etc. Building outward of a sea-wall provided for such sites. See fig. 2. Resulting from the great storm of January 1953 the re-building of such defences and the maintenance of the same was undertaken by a governmental authority. Ill advised alignment of the present concrete wall has created severe problems which were previously unknown. The initial wall toe, having been too far seaward, suffered severe erosion. Repairs extended the toe farther seawards. This total extension has resulted in the sea removing the beach to bedrock level and caused tremendous volumes of water and seaweed to cascade on to the street during northerly gales.

PREHISTORIC PERIOD

Archaeologists have revealed that a major Iron Age settlement occupied the promontory at Castle Point about two and a half thousand years ago. On the same site evidence was also found proving the existence of a castle which had been built by one of the Lairds of Troup estate. (See fig. 3)

Place names, all of which were passed on verbally until southern cartographers were employed to produce Ordnance Survey maps, reveal the languages which had been spoken by earlier waves of settlers.

Some fishermen at Pennan called one of the neighbouring beaches "Easterbyackie". This was odd. Nobody knew what the name meant, neither did anyone know of a corresponding "Westerbyackie". Others, more cautious, pronounced it "ister-byackie" or "istra-byackie". Many place names in Wales are similarly pronounced. Examples are Ystrad and Ystradgynlais (both having silent d's). Prefixes such as 'Aber' and 'Pen' point to having roots in the Britonic language. Other names such as Dundarg, Port an Doon, Cnoc'na eathar and Dhustrath are Scots Gaelic. One name, Pit-na-Calder harks back to Pictish settlements.

From the foregoing it is suggested that at least three succeeding waves of settlers occupied the area subsequent to previous Iron Age settlers.

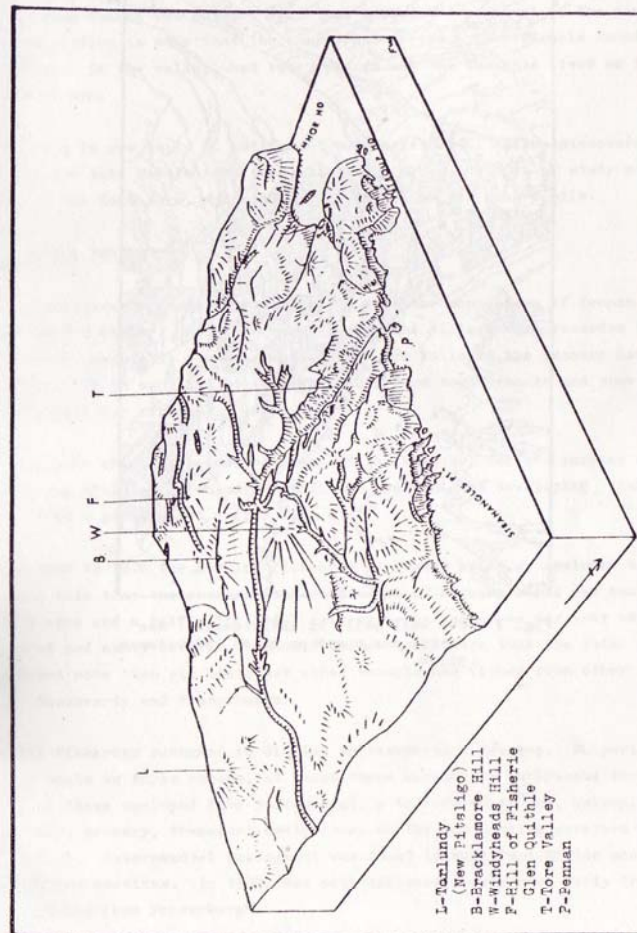


Fig. 1 - Block diagram of area from Quarry Head to Mhor Head.



Fig. 2 - Sea wall built by individuals. Sea energy was spent on beach and between piles.

Chapel Den is an English name which could steer thoughts towards a direct link with Auchmedden Church. No such connection is known. It would seem that the chapel in question had been disused for quite some time before Auchmedden Church was built. What then caused the survival of the name? The suggestion is made that the chapel had served a considerable farming population in the valley, had been revered and the thoughts lived on in the minds of men.

This area is now empty of settlement, but Professor K. Walton discovered that during the late Middle Ages, population density on the area of study and to the east of the Tore Burn, was at least five hundred per square mile.

HISTORICAL PERIOD

The Statistical Account reveals that in 1835 the population of Pennan was one hundred and eighty. Fourteen marriages in the village were recorded that year. Six boats, each with a complement of four men followed the inshore haddock fishery. (This supplied village and local farm requirements and provided salted fish for export.)

The earlier planning and development of the harbour, for the purpose of exporting millstones, coincided with the needs of the developing fisheries. It proved a great asset. (See fig. 4)

From 1860 to 1870 the herring fishcurer at Pennan arled or employed six boats. During this time the average number of crans of herring cured per boat was ninety-nine and a half. The total average number of crans per year was five hundred and ninety-seven. It should be mentioned here that the total fleet numbered more than six boats but other vessels had fished from other stations e.g. Rosehearty and Fraserburgh.

As the fisheries succeeded, so did the infrastructure develop. Shipwrights built boats in three venues, at least three shoemakers businesses thrived, (one of these employed five journeymen), a tailors shop, inn, bakery, butchery, grocery, transport-contractor, smithy and banking services were available. Governmental employment was found in both Post-Office and Coastguard services. In 1930, two mail deliveries were made daily from Banff and a third from Fraserburgh.

Early education was offered in private schools. Lady Jane Hay, daughter of the Earl of Kinnoull, "mortified" money, the interest from which was assigned,

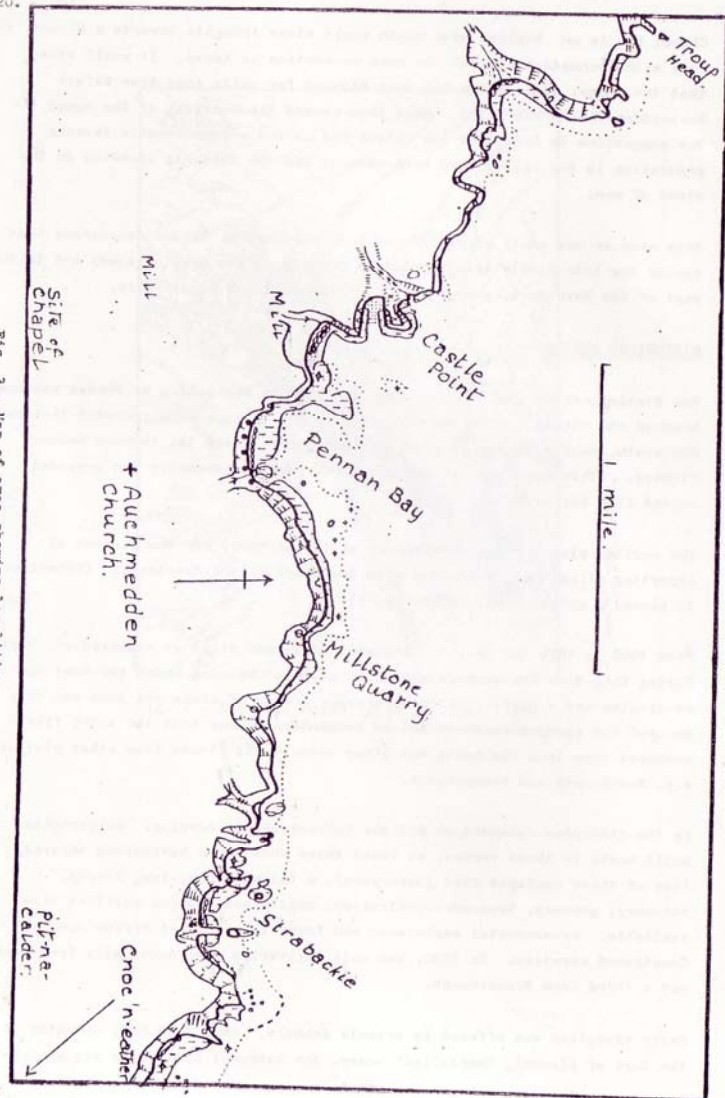


FIG. 3 - Map of area showing localities.

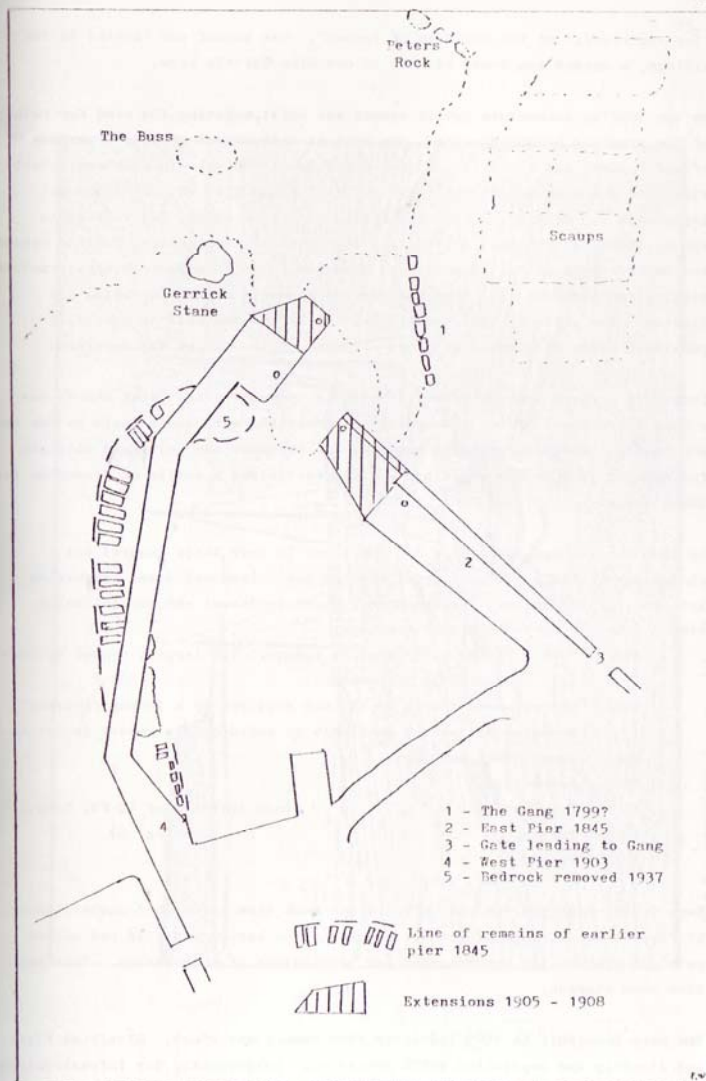


Fig. 4 - Development of Pennan Harbour.

"for the benefit of the children of Pennan". One school was located in the village, a second was found at what is now Glen Quithle farm.

By the 1860's. Auchmedden Public school was built, negating the need for both of the previous establishments. The roll at this school grew to a maximum of one hundred and sixty-three. The services of the schoolmaster and school staff and the active interest they took in village life was of the utmost importance for developing latent talents. It is recorded, "at Auchmedden school, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Navigation, English Grammar and Latin are taught". In addition, time was found to explore music, practice singing, participate in choirs and develop the arts of violin making and playing. One piece of fiddle music written by a James Watt is currently published along with works of Scott Skinner, Neil Gow and Tom Anderson.

Into such a young and vigorously developing community, the local church saw a need for a House of God into which all christian worshippers could gather as one family. The idea gathered momentum and enhanced the unity and ultimate fullness of life in the whole area. This was indeed a period of flowering for the village.

By 1900 the village population had increased to over three hundred but a change was brewing. Technological advance had introduced steam propulsion into the fishing boats. Fishermen were quick to invest and the following list of vessels show the dramatic change:

1904 - 1905	Watts, sixty feet in length. The largest vessel to have been built in Pennan.
1906	Laurel, a vessel of 90 ft. was acquired by a Pennan fisherman. No accomodation was available to build such a vessel in Pennan.
1907	Coral Haven and Light.
1908	Auchmedden.
1909	Dennyduff. Steam drifters of 90 ft. long.
1910	Pennan. (See fig. 5)
1912	Westis.

Each vessel employed ten men on board and more than twice that number ashore. At first the new class of vessels called at the harbour to load and unload nets and gear at the commencement and termination of each season. This practice soon stopped.

The name Dennyduff in 1909 indicated that change was afoot. Slowly at first but steadily the population drift proceeded. Subsequently the infrastructure

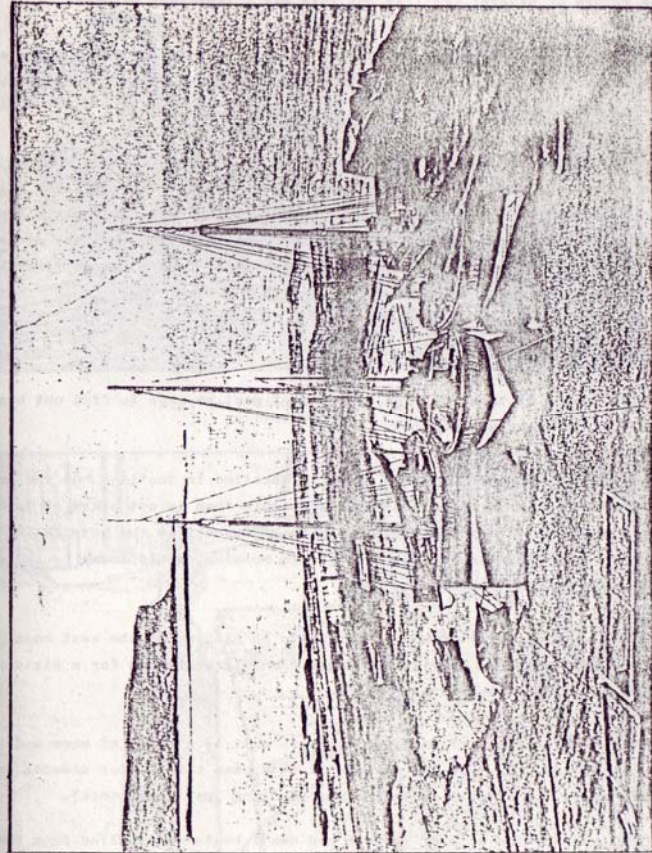


FIG. 5 - 1904: 'Passing Cloud', 'Onward', 'Smilink Horn', 'Passing Cloud' and 'Smiling Horn' built at Pennan.

wakened and gradually disappeared. As a result of the inter-war depression years, fishermen who still resided in Pennan sold off their drifters and stayed at home fishing in motor yawls. This stopped for a time the drift of people but those left were an ageing group. The years 1939 to 1946 saw the return of several families but this was a temporary measure.

An example of the tenacity to survive is witnessed in the maximum number of small fishing boats operating mackerel fishing from Pennan. In 1949 the number was fourteen.

In 1955 the number of pupils at Auchmedden School was fifteen. During 1958 the school was closed. This was a body blow. Further depopulation followed. Today few indigenous people are left in the village and fewer still are full time fishermen. With fish stocks over-exploited as they are at present, it is very difficult to envisage the re-growth of even a modest fishing industry at Pennan.

ROUND OF THE YEAR

Having looked at broad changes, an attempt must be made to find out how the Round of the Year has changed.

The first of January is still a major celebration in Scotland but the good humoured mischiefousness that was acceptable then is not heard of today. For example, white washing windows, tying of doors from the outside in order to keep the occupants inside on New Year's morning, would today be looked upon with a frown or worse.

The feverish activity of men preparing to go fishing on the west coast immediately following New Year is no longer seen. Preparation for a sixteen week voyage created quite a stir.

With the present age of motor cars, roads must be cleared of snow and salted to remove ice. In 1930 the area would have been cut off for several weeks. Sledging on the brae at that time was sledging "par excellence".

March was the time of poor returns and small boats were pulled from the harbour to be dried, overhauled and painted. The beaching of six boats was an operation which lasted several days and required the help of many hands. Old and young joined in the work.

By April, fishermen were returning from the west coast and lines had to be

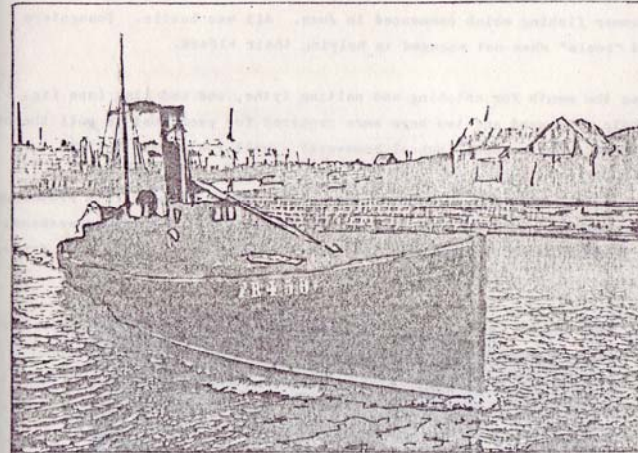


Fig. 5a - Steam drifter Wests at Fraserburgh.



Fig. 6 - Salted Cod and Lythe being sun dried - 1939.

dried and repaired, gardens had to be planted and herring nets prepared for the summer fishing which commenced in June. All was bustle. Youngsters played "bools" when not engaged in helping their elders.

May was the month for catching and salting lythe, cod and ling (see fig. 6). Row boats were used and two boys were required for each boat to pull the oars while fishing proceeded. School homework? - well, rowing was better.

From June to August was the summer drift-net herring fishery from Fraserburgh. The men employed on this were away during the week but home every weekend. Small boats fishing for mackerel landed twice daily at Pennan. Both fisheries, as then known, have collapsed.

During late August, workers to assist in the harvest were often recruited from crews who had finished the summer fishing. The children back at school looked forward to gathering berries (for jam making) and hazel nuts in late September and October. Pennan Den provided berries and nuts in abundance. Few berries are left since the advent of ranching.

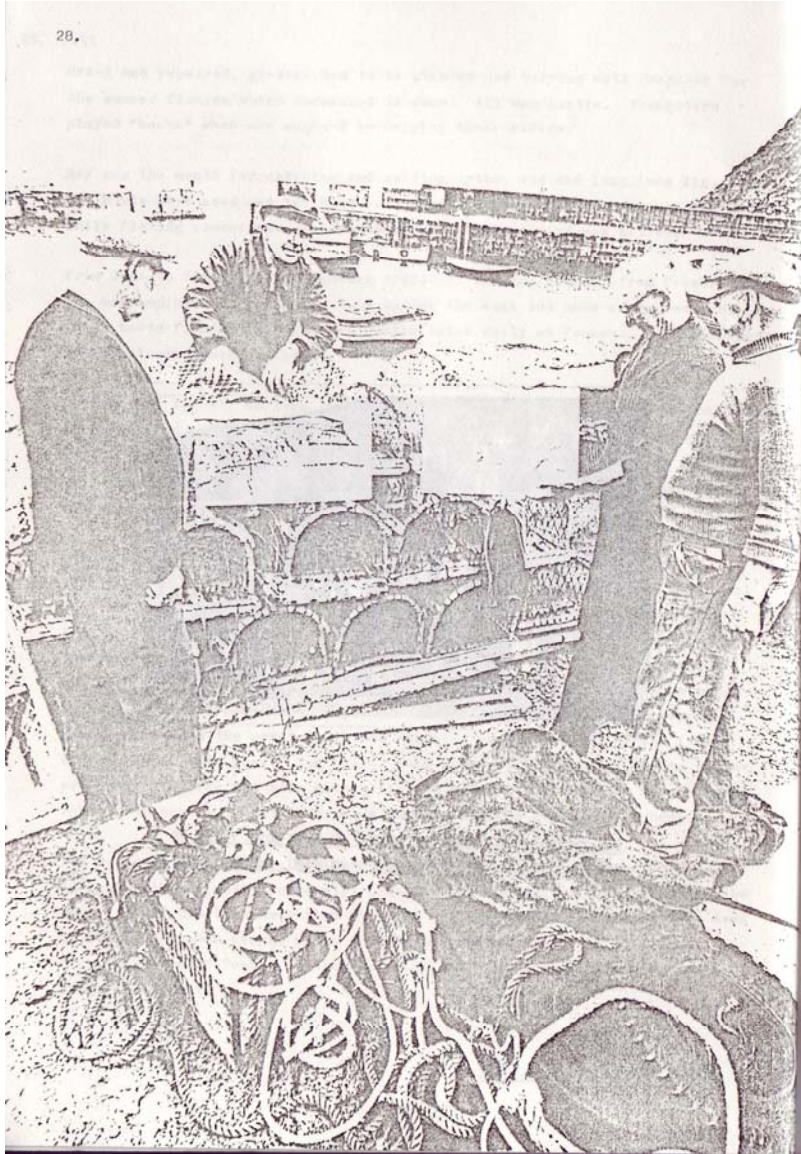
The period September until Christmas was the season of the East Anglian herring fishing when catches were big and earnings high. Children waited at home for dads to return from Yarmouth and Lowestoft laden with presents. Alas, it might have happened at one time but the closing of markets changed the scene. Meanwhile, children played street games in moonlit evenings. 'Tak-ye', 'Croon-ye' or 'Hoist the Green Flag' etc. Such games, requiring organisation were both mental and physical exercises. At school they prepared for concerts and the great Christmas festival on the evening of the final school day of that year. The senior boys were allowed to go with the farmer providing the tree and help him cut it and bring it back with a horse-drawn vehicle to school. Christmas was a period of quiet rejoicing at home.

The Round of the Present year has been so different to that described. That change must come, most people will accept. The rapidity of change during the past century has been such that many can not comprehend it. Today, this area is still very much caught up in this rapid change; but the soil is there - rich, the site of Pennan is there - solid, and the message of God to man is there - constant.

Forbes Watt.



THE PHOTO SHOWN ABOVE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN ON THE OCCASION OF QUEEN VICTORIA'S WEDDING, AROUND 1840.



FENNAN.

Nae place on earth's sae dear tae me
As Pennan, nestlin' by the sea;
An' if ye chance tae pass that way
Jist tak a turn doon the brae.

Ye'll see far pirates wild an' bold
Claimed Pennan's shores in days of old;
An' hear strange legends, if ye stay,
O' battles fought in St. Magnus' bay.

If time allows ye tak a stroll
As far as Siller Bucky Hole;
Whaur hangs a rock high in the air -
Tradition says it's chained up there.

If at th' cove ye tak' yer stan'
Yon towerin' cliff's th' "Hangit Man;"
Th' han' o' nature's deen its best
Tae mak' secure th' seagull's nest.

Nae doot ye'll dander up th' Den,
Enchanted wi' an oor' tae spen';
A marmurin burn lies at yer feet
Amang th' wild flowers scented sweet.

'Aneath th' hill there's tae be seen
Th' Otter bickerin' hame at e'en:
Th' "Brandy Hoose" weel hidden lies -
A smuggler's haunt its name implies.

Nae modern ways does Pennan claim -
Aul' farrant placie, aye the same;
O' may its beauties ne'er decline,
Wi' memories o' Auld Lang Syne.

An' when th' sun sets in th' west,
An' man an' beast has gane tae rest,
Ye'll fin' that Pennan's jist th' place
Tae bring ye peace an' happiness.

Alexander S Downie.



ABOVE - CELEBRATION OF A CORONATION.

(GEORGE V., 1910.)

PUPILS OF AUCHMEDDEN SCHOOL, PENNAN.

THE PENNAN PAPER - LOON.

If you don't live in Pennan, the next-best thing is to have friends who do. Cairine in 48, George in 53, are both old-established Pennanites, and friends of mine of long-standing, and many's the happy evening I've spent enjoying their hospitality.

In those days, an evening or a weekend in Pennan was a glorious escape from the Babylon of the Broch; an asylum, if you like, from the madhouse. So, when my career of bad-using bairns drew to a close, I had no option but take permanent refuge in Pennan.

And here, a new bright shining career has opened before me. I am the Pennan paper-loon. It is I who bear tidings of the wicked world outside, the crimes and misfortunes of mankind, fa's deid, and fa's awa wi' fa's wife.

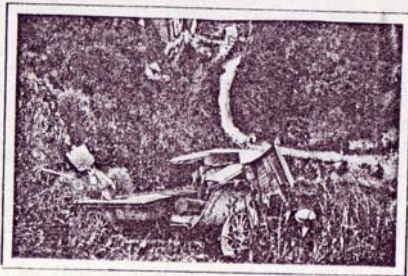
At 10 o'clock, I begin to get restive, and haunt the mou' o' the close, looking for the postie. His arrival, bearing the precious burden of P&J's signals the outbreak of feverish, frantic activeness. I set out on my paper round. Acting on the principle that you gie yer ain sea guts to yer ain sea myaves, I attend first to my neepers, to Marion in 21, then Leslie and Badie, then up to the end of the village, and work my way back.

A discussion on the state of the weather with Ruth, a genial wave and a lovely grin from young Master Anderson, a reassurance from Cathy that her leg is on the mend, a brief survey of the state of the world in general, and gardens in particular with David, and so on to Les and the pub and Gladys, whom we are all delighted to welcome to the village. A promise to come back for a coffee, and off we go, westward: Old Wattie's now happily settled in Fraserburgh, and dear Janet has gone to her well-earned rest, but thank God, we've still got Alec and Patch. Johnnie and Colin mark the successful completion of yet another day's round, as it's only in the holiday season that I venture as far as St. Magnus.

Happy, happy Pennan - and happy me!

The Pennan paper-loon.

(Oor very ain Sandy Forbes.)



MANY PEOPLE NOWADAYS WONDER WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF
THEIR BRAKES FAILED GOING DOWN PENNAN BRAB.
BACK IN THE 1930s, A GENTLEMAN BY THE NAME OF
GEORGE WEST ('GEORDIE BAKER') FOUND OUT!

FORTUNATELY, HE WASN'T IN THE LORRY AT THE TIME.....



ABOVE - PENNAN POST OFFICE AND POSTMEN, 1910.

(The sign reads, 'Post Office

For

Money Order Savings Bank.

Parcel Post Telegraph.

Insurance & Annuity Business.)

BELOW - CREW OF STEAM DRIFTER 'PENNAN', 1917.



IT'S BEEN A GUY TIME.

It all started in an attic in Marischal College which was the modest space given to the Geography department in those days. I was already in love with the Buchan area but my experience of it had been limited to the Lonmay area, the Broch and Rosehearty. The map allocated to me for slope analysis covered the Pennan area and whereas I had always thought of Buchan as 'bare and bleak as the coast around ye, wi' its aul' grey rocks. Nae a hill nor a tree nor a buac tac hap ye 'gainst the winter's shocks.' I suddenly found a deep, steep-sided valley with woodland cover shown. Not only that, but there seemed to be evidence of a complex system of overflow valleys. Something worth exploring, I thought. So the next weekend I was out at Cortes, I asked my hosts on the Friday how one got to New Pitsligo, and the next day, which was a crisp, blue March morning, I got off the bus at the Braid Milestone, and headed for the Gogar. The first few miles along the valley were rough, but all new country and the day grew more glorious. Then after wading through the wet, tussocky ground at the head of the Tore, I came upon a wonderland. All the light greens of Spring rustled in the trees and here was a path, that wandered, somewhat dubby, alongside a burn, cut into the rock and overshadowed by trees. Then came a grassy clearing with ford, waterfalls and ruins with rhododendrons almost West-Coast in their height and luxuriance. What was this? I paused for reflection and a coffee from the flask and wandered on in an almost juvenile delight of discovery. Enclosed meadows, trees, sunshine, the sound of the stream, new scenes at each turn of the path followed one after the other. A short lift up a rocky road, passed a hanging wood, round a corner and suddenly there was the sea; a blue triangle beyond an open valley, glorious in the gold of whin and breem. And apparently nobody but nobody; for although there were steadings and ruined mills, there was little sign of occupancy for there had been few signs of fences since my entry into the valley.

On then to the shore, where I sat and had lunch and pondered on the next move. The map showed a village round the coast. Was it possible to clamber along the foot of the cliffs? The tide was about half and with a bit of scrambling and one wet foot, I gradually made my way round. Now it is a curious thing but Pennan is hidden from view virtually until one has rounded the sugar loaf that separates Coral Haven from the main Bay. So imagine my surprise when I turned the corner and saw the cluster of houses at the foot of the cliff, fronted by a fore-shore of tarred sheds and stone huts. All this happened, you must remember, in 1948. Not only was there surprise but immense delight at the rightness of it all. Then I set off by Pennan Head and the cliffs to Aberdour and Rosehearty where I was to be picked up, and again was enchanted

by the scenery, the emptiness and the glory of the day, despite the descent to sea level and back up to 300 feet that is necessary if one sticks tightly to the cliff. The body was swacker and fitter in those days, though it's still deein' fine.

Well, that was that. Since then, I've become thirled to the area and have never really left but rather have carried it with me in my antrin wanderings. For several years, I camped the odd weekend at the millshore and gradually explored the coast to Gamrie. The Tore and its many side valleys which still enchant and still seem to provide new views each time I see them are a rich paradise. In the mid fifties, I acquired a house and the village became my summer home and weekend joy. Gradually, I got to know the folk of the village and the surrounding farms, and enjoyed the sense of community identification with the area that they so kindly gave me, and still do. Stu, was doing-up his house at Battlehill at the time and what had been a casual acquaintanceship developed into a lasting and much appreciated friendship, as did that of Jacob's, John Turnbull and Mr. and Mrs Watt Taylor, and O! so many others. It must now be obvious, that this could go meandering on indefinitely so we must start to telecope the years. What can one say of Andy and Janet, and of Mrs Kidd, whose remark to my mother, with whom she was great chums, I'll always treasure? Mother had suggested that village life might be disrupted and the appearance and activities of my various odd friends.....mother had a belief that I only knew eccentrics and was rapidly becoming one myself..... might be disapproved of. Old Maggie Kidd replied with great aplomb, "Na, Na, Bob's freends are jist a fair diversion!"

Then came the dig.

The first summer, when we spent most of the season excavating outside the Mediaeval founds, uncovering a paved courtyard and establishing a first section through the vitrified fort wall was a resounding success, not so much for the archaeology but for the amazingly happy community that developed within so many disparate people, and the many age groups involved. It was a rich thread of many strands: Colvin and myself, a few of our college students, some lecturers, a few University students, a glorious group of seniors Iron Banff Academy, visiting authorities from Aberdeen and Edinburgh, visiting parents and friends, teachers, art students staying at Battlehill, who came down and diverted us gently from over-seriousness about our efforts.

Last, but by no means least, there was the friendly acceptance of all these by the village and the farm folk. It was a little society which, in that summer, blossomed towards a form of tolerant social intercourse that should be available to more people, more of the time.

We had our adventures, such as the freak thunder and lightning storm that hit the area one Tuesday night in early August, when unfortunately, several acres of barley, largely on the south side of the road were left standing but completely threshed by the hail. There were grave doubts (no pun intended!) that this was a judgement for uplifting a Bronze Age short cist which had been uncovered in the Tore. The doubts struck deep, even in the most literal of men and in various places over the next few months, I was accused in a friendly manner as "the man that cost me twa, fower, sax thousand up !..... the sum inflated as the weeks went on! Happy days, but so are the present ones, for although the structure of society has changed in the village, there is still a gentle magic about it that makes for good neighbours.

Long may it remain so.

Robert H Cairns.

Acknowledgements.

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The poem 'Pennan' was included in memory of the late Alexander S. Downie, an elder of Auchmedden Church for some 65 years.

We are grateful to the Aberdeen Press & Journal for permission to use the photo on P. 28.