

People and the Landscape

The landscape of The Great Trossachs Forest landscape is a result of a long relationship between man and nature as this brief overview outlines.

The land north of the three lochs is formerly known as Strathgartney rather than the Trossachs as it is known today.

The early settlers.

Hunter gatherers are thought to have arrived here some 9,000 years ago, settling around 4,000 BC during the 'Stone Age'. Around 600 AD the area became a turbulent frontier, fought over by the Britons, Scots and Picts. The Romans arrived in the first century AD and constructed several forts in the area. Christianity followed, in the 6th century and by 1300 parish churches were to be found throughout the area.

Early Religious remnants

Strathgartney was in the parish of Kilmahog with the southern shore belonging to the Stewartry of Menteith. Religious remnants are still present today from this time period. A large stone between Glen Meann & Glen Finglas is said to mark the graves of the followers of St Kessog. Additionally, an old burial ground surrounded by a stone wall can still be seen on a promontory sticking out into Loch Katrine by Portnellan. Both of these features are called Dalinive (field of the saint).

1300-1450's- A struggle for ownership

Between 1300 and 1450's there were numerous disputes over who owned the lands within Strathgartney. They were initially owned by Sir John Logie, but after he became involved in a failed conspiracy to assassinate King Robert 1, he was executed and his lands were confiscated. Consequently Strathgartney was given to Sir John Menteith, and his wife Elene of Mar, niece of King Robert.

The subsequent King Robert II surrendered the lands in 1385 after a dispute between the Earl of Fife (and Menteith) and John of Logy. This dispute went to arbitration with the decision favouring John of Logy. However, it seems the tenants of Strathgartney were deeply upset by the change in ownership, resulting in the Earl of Fife (and Menteith) sending them a letter ordering them to obey John of Logy as their lawful landlord.

The tenants at this time were predominantly multiple-tenancy farms and houses were clustered together in small townships. Today, you can still see the sheiling grounds, with the outlines of stone huts used by cattle herdsmen on their droving routes

1451-1600- Rise of the Royal hunting forest

The land disputes continued to rumble on and records show that by 1451, Strathgartney was once more in Royal ownership. As part of his marriage settlement, King James II granted Strathgartney along with Stirling and Doune castles to his queen, Mary of Gueldres.

During this time, Glen Finglas became a popular hunting destination for the Royals and much of this land was given over to hunting and was declared 'pro forestea' ie a waste for forest. At this time there was tension between the King, who wanted the maximum area for hunting and his Exchequer who wanted the greatest income from rents. Thus in 1486, properties dedicated to forest were Westirbrigend (now Brig o'Turk), Downtehagarte, Dowss, Laganeand Glenmane (now

Glen Meann). A hunthall was built for the king at Tom Buie in 1459, which is now an island in Glen Finglas Reservoir. During times of low water, some of the remnants of the footprint of this hunthall are still evident.

A royal forester became the custodian of the hunting grounds in Glen Finglas and was also the keeper of Doune Castle. This forester position became hereditary and was predominantly held by the Balfours of Burleigh and later by the Edmonstones of Duntreith with one of their duties being to keep the King supplied with venison.

In 1508 the lands of Duncraggan (now Brig o'Turk) to Milton were granted to Henry Schaw of Garntully. The conditions attached to this grant stipulated that 'Schaw and his heirs should not tolerate any damage to royal lands by intruders with hunting dogs and bows. Failure to comply would result in forfeiture of the grant'. In the same year 1508, the royal forester, Sir William Edmonstone, received a stern warning from the King who had learned that people were pasturing their animals and hunting deer without permission. The officials were told to make proclamation in neighbouring churches that practise must stop or they would incur severe penalties. Any animals found grazing would become the property of the forester for his efforts. People were also forbidden from passing through the glen but as this was a commonly used route, this was likely to have been ignored by many.

During this time period some Strathgartney came into the ownership of James Stewart, whose marriage to the daughter of the first Earl of Moray (half brother of Mary, Queen of Scots) resulted in the descendants of this marriage becoming the subsequent Earls of Moray.

There is no evidence that either Mary, Queen of Scots, or James VI ever hunted in Glen Finglas so royal hunting came to an end with them, although it remained a deer forest until 1745 and officially a royal forest until 20th century.

1600 to 1750s The infamous MacGregors

The lands within Strathgartney continued to change ownership with the Earl of Perth, Lord Cardross and the Marquis of Montrose being just some of those listed. Glen Gyle at the north-west tip of Loch Katrine is the ancestral home of the MacGregor clan and in 1572, when Glengyle was registered to George Buchanan on Buchanan, they arrived here as tenants. The infamous Rob Roy, was born in Glengyle in 1671.

So much has been written of Rob Roy that it is difficult to find out what is truth and what is legend. These things we know for certain.

The family MacGregor house is at Glen Gyle which is still inhabited today. In 1693 Rob Roy married a girl from Comer (south of Loch Arklet) and lived for part of his married life at Inversnaid. In 1712 he borrowed money from the Duke of Montrose to purchase more cattle but the money never arrived and so the cattle were never purchased. The debt still existed and was the cause of him being outlawed.

The family grave yard can still be seen today at Loch Katrine as it has not quite been submerged by the rising waters. Rob Roy died in 1734 but his body is not buried with the family- instead it is in the graveyard in Balquhidder. His youngest son was captured in 1754 and was held at the Inversnaid Garrison, found guilty in Edinburgh and subsequently executed.

Industrialisation of the land during 1700s

The woodlands have always been used by farmers and crofters as shelter, food for their livestock and as a building material. By the early 1700s timber was seen as a useful industrial resource. The population of the area soon increased to fuel demand. Deforestation occurred on a large scale with some of the wood being coppiced with the wood being used to make charcoal and the bark to in the tanning industry. Both became a valuable source of income for many. One of the uses of this charcoal was used at an ironworks was operational at Loch Achray between 1723 and 1738 making iron plates which were used at the salt pans in the Clyde.

The remnants of this coppicing system and the charcoal platforms can still be seen in woodlands today.

1800's The birth of Scottish Tourism and the Romantic Movement

The Napoleonic Wars resulted in many eminent writers and artists being unable to travel abroad to seek inspiration. Instead their attention turned to Scotland and it became fashionable to explore these less 'civilised' parts of the world. In 1803 William & Dorothy Wordsworth & Samuel Coleridge toured Scotland and whilst William was inspired to write a number of poems whilst on this trip, it is Dorothy's journal that provides the most fascinating insight ('Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland').

Sir Walter Scott then followed in their footsteps culminating in his dramatic verse-narrative 'The Lady of the Lake' being published in 1810. In essence, Scott wrote a blockbuster poem and set it in a real landscape. The work was constructed in six cantos and covers six days, starting with a stag hunt, via Ben Ledi and Loch Venacher to Loch Katrine. This poem, immortalised the landscape around Loch Katrine, sold over 25,000 copies in the first 8 months and by 1830 there were 20 translations into European languages. It was a huge hit and, aided by Scott's subsequent work-*Rob Roy*, really put the Trossachs on the map causing a wave of tourists coming to visit. This is why the Trossachs is cited by many as the birthplace of Scottish tourism. The boom in tourism resulted in a boom in construction with inns, coaches and railways being constructed to meet the requirements of the tourists.

The Lady was apparently Queen Victoria's favourite poem, and she is said to have kept 32 copies at Balmoral. The Italian composer Rossini composed his opera *La Donna del Lago* in 1819, with the MacGregors transformed into Neapolitan partisans. It was also the inspiration for Schubert's famous song (based on a German translation of the poem), often referred to as his *Ave Maria* (the opening words).

Artists also flocked to the Trossachs and the area was painted by notable artists such as Alexander Nasmyth and Horatio McCulloch. These romantic views of the landscape from this era have shaped people's opinions of 'true Scottish scenery' to this day.

Influential writers and poets also captured the beauty of the landscape in their work. The philosopher John Ruskin too sought inspiration here in 1853. His visit was captured in the famous portrait by his friend, the painter Millais (who later went off with Ruskin's wife!). Gerard Manley Hopkins, too, visited the area, and captured the drama of the waterfall at Inversnaid in his much-loved poem of that name.

Towards the end of the 19th Century, Brig o'Turk was a summer home for an artists' colony. They were known as the Glasgow boys, a group of around 25 young and rebellious artists who were born or worked in Scotland. They revolutionised Scottish art in the years 1880 to 1900. James Guthrie was one of the best known 'Glasgow Boy' and the remnants of the building in his painting 'A funeral service in the Highlands' can still be seen in the village.

Many other artists have been and continue to be inspired by the drama of the landscape and the ever-changing light, including local artist whose sculptures in The Trossachs are featured in the Inspiring Landscapes film you can see on the website.

The Tourism Boom: The Trossachs Tour 1905

After the Romantic poets and artists brought The Trossachs to prominence, the area attracted increasing numbers of tourists. The beautiful steamship SS Sir Walter Scott, which operates on Loch Katrine today, and the piers and road along the loch side were developed to cater for this new trade.

The Trossachs Tour became a popular holiday activity. Arriving by train at Callander, tourists were taken by horse and cart to Loch Achray where they had time to undertake 'an excursion by foot or

hired carriage'. The following day they would board the steamship at the Trossachs Pier and travel sail along Loch Katrine to Stronachlachar where further horse and carriages would take them to Inversnaid to board a steamship down Loch Lomond. The tourists would then take the railway back to Glasgow or Edinburgh.

To the present day

A tunnel was completed in 1859 from Loch Katrine to Glasgow, to enable the loch to become the primary water supply for the city. In 1965 the river in Glen Finglas was dammed in order for the resultant reservoir to be a feeder for the Loch Katrine water supply. Similarly Loch Arklet also now supports the water supply to Loch.

The population of the area continued to decline in the 19th and 20th Centuries and sheep farming became the predominant type of land use. The lands came into the ownership of public bodies or private landowners. Throughout the 20th Century the area was primarily managed for tourism, agriculture (sheep farming), forestry, fishing and other sporting activities.

Thus the remnants of woodlands in the area today are the result of the changing cultural history and land management practices. They have been an important source of fuel and fodder, providing grazing and shelter for cattle, income from industrialised practices as well as the reason for tourism and conservation activities now.