

1958?

2pm.

Leaving the main gates of Benmore the coach travels North past Inverchapel, the home of the late Lord Inverchapel, wartime Ambassador in the United States of America and previously in Russia. Loch Eck, on the left, is some six and a half miles in length, lies 50 ft. above sea level and is up to 140 ft in depth. The ground on each side is almost wholly the property of the Forestry Commission and has been planted between 1926 and 1956. The farms and hotels existent before acquisition are still in occupation alongside eight houses and three Forest Worker's holdings added since.

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As the forest comes into production gravelled access roads have been built as the best means of extraction from the steep hill slopes. The road entrances and the lines cut in the plantations can be observed in passing.

As the northern extremity of the loch the coach passes Loch Eck Forest Office, Hostel etc., and continues past the memorial erected in memory of Sir Harry Lauder's son on to Glenbranter Forest.

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A brief stop will be made to see, on the western shore of the loch, a downfall to the stone sheepfold. The sheep follow the fence lines downhill in severe weather, when they may be fed in shelter. They may be herded down for seasonal workings e.g. dipping, clipping, inoculations etc., then released to wander back to their grazings. The grazings are, roughly, 1300 acres in extent and the downfall is 400 yds. wide on average. A further 1300 acres to the north is worked from Bernice Farm in the next gap between the plantations.

3 p.m. Glenbranter : Forester's House and Office.

To the North and West are seen the Ballemeanoch and Invernoaden areas. These former sheep farms have been treated in differing fashions. Something of the Forest Worker's Holdings at Ballemeanoch will be seen at 4.30 p.m. but from the present viewpoint can be seen part of the 1,200 acres of plantation on the former sheep grazing. The unplanted land (some 350 acres) is let for sheep grazing and, since the plantations are unfenced, the sheep graze within the forest in winter.

Invernoaden Farm remains as one complete unit after formation of the plantations. The downfall on both sides of the stream funnels from 750 yds. to 250 yds. in width and connects the low grazing with 2000 acres of hill grazing. These hill grazings are from 800 ft to 2,557 ft. on Ben Bheula.

The plantations flanking the downfall on the left (West) side were planted in 1929, while those in Loch Eck Forest on the right were planted in 1936. The fenced area which can be seen between was planted this year (1958).

Glenbranter Forest

Plot. No. 1. Hybrid Larch, planted in 1929, now aged 29 years. Compartment No. 133. Elevation 100 ft. (30.48 m.). Aspect W.S.W. Soil a light loam over mica schist. Thinning grade C/D. Qual. Class I by J.L. table.

Thinning Year	Volume, o.b.	
	Per Acre	Per Hectare
prior to 1949	928 H.ft.	82.68 c.m.
1949	117 "	10.42 "
1951	244 "	21.74 "
1952	233 "	20.76 "
1955	319 "	28.43 "
(Dec.) 1957	257 "	22.90 "
Total vol. thinnings to date.	2098 H.ft.	186.93 c.m.

The present crop, of 168 trees per acre (414 per hectare), averages 63 ft. (19.2 m.) in height and 8 ins. b.h.q.g. (25.87 c.ms diam b.h.) Basal area is 74.6 sq.ft./acre (21.80 sq.m./hectare) and vol. per acre is 2143 H.ft. o.b. (190.9 c.m./hectare) with a Form factor of .456 and a crown % of 41.

The mean annual increment is 147 H.ft /acre (13.1 c.m./hectare) while the periodic annual increment is 158 H.ft/acre (14.1 c.m./hectare) or 3.3 sq.ft. (1 sq.m./hectare) basal area.

Glenbranter Forest

Plot No.3. Sitka Spruce, planted in 1929, now aged 31 years.
Compartment No. 138. Elevation 100 ft. (30.48 m.). Aspect
W.S.W. Soil a light loam over mica schist. Thinning grade
C/D. Qual. Class II

Thinning Year	Volume o.b.	
	Per Acre	Per Hectare
1949	476 H.ft.	42.41 c.m.
1952	643 "	57.29 "
1955	479 "	42.68 "
Dec. 1957	175 "	15.59 "
Total vol. thinnings to date		1773 H.ft 157.97 c.m.

The present crop, of 330 trees per acre (816 per hectare), averages 60 ft. (18.29 m.) in height and 7 ins b.h.q.g. (22.63 c.ms diam b.h.). Basal area is 108.5 sq.ft./acre (31.71 sq.m./hectare) and vol. per acre is 3073 H.ft. (273.8 c.m./hectare) with a Form factor of .472 and a crown % of 46.5. The mean annual increment is 157 H.ft./acre (13.99 c.m./hectare) while the periodic annual increment is 289 H.ft./acre (25.75 c.m./hectare) or 7.5 sq.ft. (2.192 sq.m./hectare) basal area.

- 4.30 p.m. Leaving the plantations the coach passes by the arable and poultry holdings formed on the Ballemeanoch Farm ground. A timber merchant's pitprop-depot and the Cowal-Ari Sawmill can be seen on the left before the buildings (now divided) of Ballemeanoch Farm are passed and the coach leaves the forest over the boundary stream.
- 4.45 p.m. As we rejoin the main road above the village of Strachur, recent additions to the school are visible on the left and new houses occupied by forest and sawmill workers on the right. Past the ancient church the road reaches the shores of Loch Fyne and the coach turns north along its banks. Immediately on the right Strachur Park, the fine Georgian house of Sir Fitzroy Maclean is passed. Ahead, on the west shore of Loch Fyne can be seen Inveraray and, from St. Catherines Hotel, Inveraray Castle, the seat of the Duke of Argyll can be picked out. The estate was at one time well wooded and still contains many notable stands. This is the centre of Clan Campbells' territory and Dunderave Castle, the headquarters of the MacNaughtons, stands on a promontory in Loch Fyne some way north of Inveraray.

Leaving the main road the coach turns south east and, crossing the water-shed, enters Hell's Glen. (The name, though suitable enough, is really an anglicization of the Gaelic name meaning the Glen of Willows) The plantations of Glen More are soon visible; the older woods of Glasgow Corporation's Ardgail Estate on the right and the patch-work of Forestry Commission wartime and post war plantings ahead and to the left, on Ardgartan Forest. At the glen's southern extremity the road passes through a stand of oak, at one time worked on a coppice rotation and containing a high proportion of the indigenous sessile oak (*Quercus robur*). Crossing the River Goil the route again enters Forestry Commission ground.

The coach stops near a sheep fold to permit the better viewing of a farm recently acquired for planting. The molinia (*Molinia coerulea*) covered lower slopes giving way to schistose rock before the planting limit ordained by climatic conditions is reached; the overgrown coppice oak; the peat covered flats, are typical of this area of heavy precipitation and poor quality sheep grazing.

Travelling N.E. up Glen More the plantations made, without fencing off the upper grazings, between 1954 and 1940, lie on the right as the road rises to 983 ft. above Rest and be Thankful.

6 - 6.15 p.m.

Rest and be Thankful, at 806 ft. above sea level was the highest point in the 18th century military road, built to link Dunbarton and Inveraray Castles and still to be seen below the present county road, built in 1939. The plantations are continuous on the south side of Glen Croe and were formed between 1926 (in the east) and 1940 (at Rest and be Thankful). The 1940 plantings, at 1,200 ft above sea level ~~are~~ the highest in Cowal where the general upper height is 8 - 900 ft., in exposure to the ~~West~~. The Glen Croe plantations are, on the south side, characterized by good growth on the deep soiled, well drained, middle slopes, and by poorer growth owing to exposure at height and to lack of drainage in the valley bottom. The blocks of plantation on the north side are of slower growth on well drained shallow soils over rock.

6.15 - 6.40 p.m.

At the South Eastern end of Glen Croe the oldest plantations of Ardgartan are to be seen across the valley. These contain some fine stands of Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and of Hybrid Larch (*Larix eurolepis*). The coach travels north round the head of Loch Long and pauses in the car park of the Arrochar Hotel to see the Cobbler slopes.

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The Cobbler (Ben Arthur, 2891 ft.), dominates the view. The eye is then drawn by the hard straight northern boundary of the Range Plantation, now happily to be obscured by the uneven line of the 1958 plantation area, approximately outlined by the fence across the hill slope. The "Range" block was planted (to 800 ft) about 1930 and has been the scene of two plantation fires. The area last burned, was replanted in 19 but its outline can still be detected. The block was also the site for testing the Wyssen Cable Crane and the cable tracks can be seen, with compartment boundaries and road line cuttings, crossing the plantation. To the right of the 1958 planting area is a wide funnel shaped downfall to the low ground of Succoth Farm. This downfall, together with the unplanted ground on the North side of Glen Croe, serves a large area of high sheep grazing, worked as a sheep farm from Succoth, lying among the trees to the right. Further to the right is visible the Glen Loin plantations, the northern-most part of Ardgartan Forest.

Also visible on the Cobbler slopes is the Ardgartan Forester's house. A prefabricated Finnish timber structure, it blends well with the landscape. A little to the south the long straight scar on the hillside is that of a Hydro Electric constructional rail line.