

Read to the audience at the Glass Talent Competition 16th March 2013 by Phyllis J.Goodall

Some of the changes in the Cabrach, lamented in the poem “There’s been bonnie days”, have also occurred in upper Glass.

Coming Huntly-wards from the Cabrach the first dwelling in Glass after crossing the Brig Ardgallie, was Butterwards, on the left, facing east to the road, first the steading and then the dwelling house with a bittie garden in front of it and a few trees at the back sheltering it from the west. There is nothing left of it now except the trees, and the ash tree in the park at the front that was old when I was a bairn.

In my childhood, about sixty-five years ago, old Mrs Duncan lived there with her son Geordie, her daughter Bessie and grandson Sandy a few years older than me. In these days nobody had cars, except the doctor, the vet and the minister. Folk got their groceries from the vans that travelled from the shops in Huntly, Howiesons’ of the Square on Fridays, Gordons’ of Gordon Street on Tuesdays. My mother would walk over the hill from Timberford to meet the vans at Backside, where Graham now lives. In my early childhood it was a family Jessiman that lived there and farmed it, but Mr Jessiman suffered very badly from asthma in the summertime and on the doctor’s advice he moved to a farm near Spey Bay, and thereafter the laird kept Backside in his own management and the house was empty during the rest of my childhood.

Every dwelling had a peat stack near the house. Every summer one of the chores was cutting peats, a man’s job, but the wheeling out from the bank, the spreading, and setting-up to dry, was woman and child work. Then in the weeks before the 12th of August, the hill road would be busy with a string of horse-drawn carts, from the Mains, Lynbain and other places on our side of the Deveron, making way up the Craigwatch hill to bring the peats before the grouse shooting started. Places on the other side of the Deveron cast peats on the Gromack.

When I was five years old, in 1942, I went to Beldorney school. There was one other new pupil, Jamie Simpson, and about two or three in each of the other six primary classes. Pupils moved on to Glass or the Gordon Schools in Huntly for Secondary education. There had been evacuees at the Mains of Beldorney early in the War, but had not stayed long. There were children from the other side of the Deveron, Backahill, Waterside, the Gouls and the Succoth. After the War a new gardener came to the Castle, an ex soldier, Mr Shepherd, whose daughter was in my class at Beldorney and in Huntly until her father went to be head gardener at Pitfodels on Deeside. There were two gamekeepers at the Castle, and an estate joiner and handyman, Mr Willie MacBain.

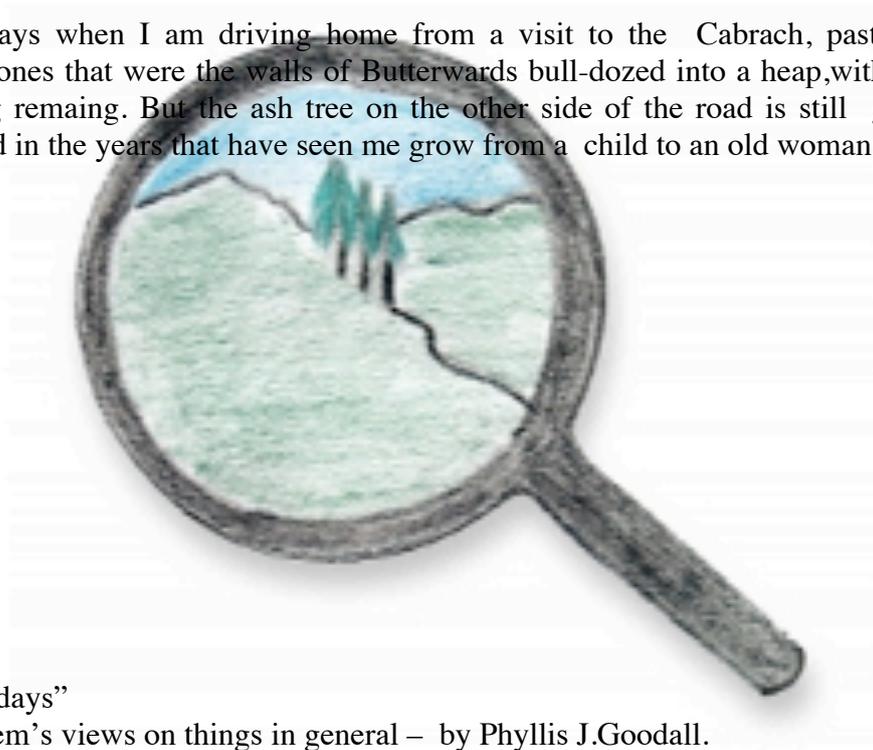
After the War there were fish vans came up the road and my folk had an arrangement with Bessie of Butterwards that she would get fish for us and I would be sent over to get them, so I was a frequent visitor.

The farm women in these days all kept poultry, midden hens, that is hens that roamed free and foraged all over the farmyard and cornyard, into byre and stable if the doors were open. In spring and summer hens with the urge of motherhood were inclined to ‘lay away’ that is lay in some secret place instead of the nest boxes provided in the henhouse, so some time had to be spent looking for likely nests, eggs wiped before packing them for collection for the grocer’s van. Bessie of Butterwards was a great one for fancy breeds of poultry, and often in the summer there would be a brood of ducklings, trying, to the horror of their midden-hen foster mother, to get to the burn across the road.

For some reason ducks were never employed to hatch their own eggs, perhaps they did not become broody. In those days you rode your bike carefully down past Butterwards. I had my most serious mishanter ever when a small yellow duckling shot out in front me and got its neck between the spokes of my front wheel. Kind-hearted Bessie was more concerned about my bloody hands and knees than her dead duckling!

Butter and cheese making, with the cleaning of the utensils involved was a fairish part of the farm wife's work then. Water had to be carried in from the horse trough and boiled in a great cast iron pot hung over the peat fire. My folk had three cows, Butterwards had more. One perk of dish- and utensil- washing was that one did it in a basin on the table in front of the window and so could catch a glimpse of the ongoings in the fields in immediately front and across the howe, and see approaching visitors on the road. I can still hear Bessie's greeting when I called on an errand "Come awa in! I wis jist washin a puckle dishes!"

I remember those days when I am driving home from a visit to the Cabrach, past the bare farmyard with the stones that were the walls of Butterwards bull-dozed into a heap, with no trace of house or steading remaining. But the ash tree on the other side of the road is still green and bonnie, little changed in the years that have seen me grow from a child to an old woman.



“There's been bonnie days”

– A doric deem's views on things in general – by Phyllis J. Goodall.

Available from Orb's Bookshop in Huntly click [here](#) for details or from the usual online stores such as Amazon.co.uk or from the publisher [here](#)

© Phyllis J. Goodall