

# Loch Grannoch Lodge

## SITUATION

Loch Grannoch Lodge is situated in the depths of Galloway in the south west of Scotland.

The lodge lies on the southern shore of Loch Grannoch at the floor of Craigronald (513m).

To get to the lodge there are two routes, from the north and from the south. From the north you take the A712 from New Galloway and follow it for approximately seven and a half miles (past Clatteringshaws Loch) and immediately after crossing the Pullaugh burn there is a small forest gate on the left followed by a small forest track. After six miles along this track you arrive at Loch Grannoch Lodge.

Alternatively, from the south, you take the Gatehouse of Fleet to Creetown road (B796) for approximately six miles (from Gatehouse), and then turn right along another forest road, past the disused viaduct (over Big Water of Fleet) and follow the track for six miles through the forest and you find yourself at the Lodge.

## HISTORY

No one knows the exact date of when the main stone building was built; however it is thought to date back to the early 18th century. The initial use of the main building is thought to have been as a farmhouse, and the only other building around the immediate area was the small stable which still exists today.

In 1831 the Norwegian designed recreation but (looking out over the loch), was transported from the London Exhibition to Scotland (by rail) and brought to Loch Grannoch by pony and trap. Pony and trap was the only form of transport from Gatehouse until the railway viaduct was built in 1862. Gatehouse Station was the official nearest stopping point to the lodge, however, the local people could persuade the train driver to stop - by what was then the Buck's Head Inn (which is now a small farm cottage next to the viaduct).

One of the main features noticed by travellers to the lodge is the monument to Maggie (at the top of the Cleugh). There are many stories about Maggie and who or what she was, but the true story is that she was a working white pony who pulled the trap to and from

the lodge for twenty-eight years until she died at the age of thirty in 1906. (A tale of Maggie and other stories from Loch Grannoch can be found in the small booklet - 'Strange Stories from Loch Grannoch'.)

An unusual feature inside the dining room of the lodge is the large round basin. This was specially put in for the famous opera singer Dame Clara Butt, who stayed in the lodge during the height of her career.

Opposite the main building is a sleeping but with three sleeping cubicle bedrooms, which was erected in 1919. Also in 1919 an extension was put onto the north side of the building. This was originally a drying room, and the other extension behind it was the lady's bathroom which still exists today.

The next extension was the storeroom (original] built of wood in 1929 but was corrugated in 1934). This used to be a scullery with two larders, but which is now one large storeroom.

Due to the large number of workers at the lodge around 1934, an additional men's bathroom was built at the west end of the lodge (and which is today the W.C. and shower-room). Also erected in 1934 was the wood shed (next to the cubicle bedrooms).

up to the white gate (approximately two hundred ards from the lodge) was also completed in '934, however, the use of the road was limited o pony and cart or land-rover. This road was later resurfaced for the use of ordinary ,vehicles when the Forestry Commission took over he ownership of the land and the lodge in 1979.

The earliest known tenant of the lodge was the family of the late George Rigby Murray, fore-tathers of Mrs. Murray Usher, (Caley Estate owner), who inherited the land and lodge around 1927.

George Rigby Murray owned it for a long time, and it is in his time that the aforementioned booklet, 'Strange Stories from Loch Grannoch', was written. Despite Mrs. Murray Jsher's ownership of the lodge, it was let out to various tenants, who used it for a variety of reasons such as shooting, fishing and entertaining large parties.

The Moores family (of Littlewoods fame) used the lodge from 1938 to 1948. Another renowned tenant was Major Archie Coates, who holds the record in Britain for shooting the most pigeons in one day. Although the lodge was used frequently it was only during the spring to autumn period that it was occupied; however the 'only known

person within the last fifty years to have stayed all year round was a man named Hankie.

Whilst parties stayed at the lodge, one of the main evening pastimes for the men was to site the recreation hut by the small fire and tell stories. Whilst in the hut they would drink in large quantities and the many empty bottles were discarded into a large bush outside. Just after the Second World War the bush was cleared and two large cartloads plus another five hundred spirit bottles were found.

### **AIMS OF THE LODGE**

Although in the past, the lodge was used for hunting and fishing it is now no longer used for this. The primary aim of the lodge is to provide for groups of adventurists with the basic necessities of accommodation.

Despite the lack of fishing (due to acidic rain) and no hunting, the lodge still provides excellent facilities for groups of outward bound people to carry out many adventures such as hill walking, nature watching, rock climbing and all water sports.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

The lodge consists of a large stone building with two adjoining wooden buildings, one of which is used for washing and the other as a large storeroom. In addition to this, situated around the main building are two huts, one of which has extra sleeping accommodation and the other is a recreation room with two adjoining bedrooms. Also there is an exterior bathroom, a small storeroom and a woodshed.

The main building consists of a large kitchen with a woodburning stove, (this has a back boiler which provides all the hot water for the lodge and heating in the shower room). There is also a gas cooker. Adjoining the kitchen there is a dining room/bedroom with a wash hand basin. This room has three single beds, however when parties are small a table can be put in. Also on the ground floor at the east end of the building there is a bedroom with a large open fire and four double bunk beds.

The steps from the kitchen lead to the attic which can accommodate up to five people (camp beds are needed). Also, on the east end of the lodge there is an exterior flight of steps which leads to an additional bedroom with four single beds.

The sleeping but has three small bedrooms with a double bunk in each, each room with separate entrances.

The recreation room, looking out onto Loch Grannoch, has a large room with a small stove and plenty of seating. At the end of this but there are two adjoining rooms each with a double bunk bed.

The wash room adjoining the end of the stone building has three modern hot and cold running showers, three hot and cold running modern hand basins and two low W.C.'s.

The aforementioned exterior bathroom has an old bath, basin and W.C. Despite its appearance it is still usable.

The water supply is fresh from the burn which runs from the top of Craigronald. The water is very fresh and clean, however the main water pipe occasionally gets blocked where the water enters it at the top and may need attention.

## **SPORTING FACILITIES**

The lodge is in an ideal situation for a variety of sports. Although there is no fishing, there are great opportunities for hill walking, camping, orienteering, and the old viaduct (six miles away) can be used for abseiling. A few hundred yards from the lodge is a lovely sandy beach and this is ideal for launching all types of boats.

Windsurfing and canoeing can also be carried out on the loch.

Swimming can be done by people brave enough to endure the water.

## **WILDLIFE**

There are many aspects of wildlife to be observed. One of the most common features around the lodge are wild goats; however there are many types of birds (including eagles), deer (roe and red) and snakes.

## **LOCH GRANNOCH LODGE. IS IT HAUNTED?**

There are many strange ghost stories about the lodge, however some of the weird noises that are heard have an unsupernatural answer. For example whilst sleeping in one of the bedrooms of the recreation hut,

strange scraping sounds can sometimes be heard. This is not due to ghosts as many people have thought, but merely the horns of the wild goats scraping against the but floor.

Despite some people's fear of the lodge being haunted, sightings of ghosts have been fearless which can only lead to the conclusion that if there are any ghosts they are benevolent.

During the years 1927 to 1946, Jack Henderson, a local from Gatehouse (who used to work on the Caley Estate) spent the summer months living with his family at the lodge. It is Jack Henderson who we wish to greatly thank for helping us with the compilation of this leaflet.

Thanks are also due to Mrs. Murray Usher and the Forestry Commission.

Produced by Douglas Wallace and David Macdonald  
of George Watson's College, Edinburgh.