

The idea that the Fife D.A. should have a second hut, in addition to that at Myrehaugh, arose out of conversations among some of the younger, active members with Ben Vorlich and Stuc a Chroin playing a part. Myrehaugh and Mellock were easy meat for many in one day but Vorlich and Stuc and the sixty miles to their feet were in another metre altogether.

Jimmy Shand of Torryburn was probably the man who first put the idea into words. He was certainly the most active single advocate and missed no opportunity of canvassing the plan, so much so, that the organisers of what was to have been an amusing general cyclists' quiz at the Thistle Hotel, Milnathort (Jimmie Reid and Chrissie Birrell, tandem partners then later life partners) were disgruntled to find that almost every quiz drawn out of the hat was either directly aimed at provoking discussion on a new hut somewhere in our area, or was twisted round by contributors to the same theme. All this was a preliminary airing of the subject prior to a formal motion at a general committee meeting, 'That the D.A. consider the desirability and feasibility of erecting another hut.' Said Secretary David Todd, 'The first thing to consider is the cost — and we simply can't afford it.' 'A very important point', treacherously agreed one of those young back bench committee members, adding, 'And one that is often put to wilful young couples contemplating marriage; but still not the very first thing. We could afford lots of things — tiddlywinks, for instance but we don't buy them because of a prior consideration — we don't want them. That's the first essential, do we want a hut? Decide that. If we do want it, then, are the members willing to pay for it, willing to take the trouble to find an acceptable site, willing to take the trouble of running it and so forth?'

So it was that the 'wanters' were given licence to roam the country in search of a suitable site — a splendid excuse for all sorts of extra runs-with-an-object and so it was that Jimmy Shand and this writer asked a man in a kilt one Sunday morning on the road running along the south bank of Loch Earn if he knew of a possible site for a hut this side of the Loch?

I remember he looked rather warily at us, taking our measure. He suggested that Loch Tay was a bigger Loch, better by far perhaps, for our purpose. The worse by far-ness, we assured him and we expatiated on the superior attractions of Loch Earn, with its own Head of it, a Saint at its foot and Ample Glen to the bargain. He seemed not displeased with our enthusiasm, but supposed that surely the north side with its smooth, straight, wider road would suit better. We assured him that we far preferred the winding, up and down narrow road we were on, where cars were seldom seen and from where we could pat Vorlich on the back when we were so minded. He thought a moment more, then suggested we write to Laird Stewart of Ardvorlich and tell that gentleman all we had told him and 'I am sure he'll consider your request and give you an answer.' In due course, and fortified by the addition of Mr. Walter Browne, B.Sc., and possibly also by E.E. Gardiner (I mean the possible presence, the fortifying effect would be undoubted — hadn't he then, two times three times three gears between his cowed pedals and the startled highland roads?)

Thus then we met the Laird by appointment, at Coilmore (which he told us, means the big wood). He was the same kilted gentleman whom we had so unceremoniously hailed in the passing, three or four weeks before, but none of us recalled this. And so the precious site was secured – ‘If it had been a blinking committee of some democratic district council, it would have taken as many months to be acknowledged, minuted, remitted and discussed and finally refused,’ W.L.B. declared.

Estimates from at least three joiners were obtained but our own Brown and Templeman of Dunfermline, good naturedly undercut the other two. Some months later, with a few events interposed, such as surcharged social evenings, sales of work, and unashamedly naked whip rounds – in fact all the usual devices by which a mixed body persuades itself to pay for something which part of it wants, a lorry containing, I believe, Bill and Jack Brown and the irrepressible stalwart, Tom Allan, made the journey from Dunfermline one Saturday. To the surprise and relief of these erectors, that lorry driver ran a knowing eye over the steep, slippery and twisty hillside track, refused an offer to unload at the first corner and, recalling ‘All aboard’, drove his lorry full tilt at the Coilmore challenge and dumped his load bang on site.

A day and a half of hard professional work, with the surrounding hills cheering them on to the echo, and Coilmore Hut had ‘been built by our men’. What happy hours have been passed there since by Fife D.A. members and their children and in some cases their childrens’ children you already all know, hence this reluctant full stop.