

## **Glenisla Hotel and Restaurant**

**We are situated near Blairgowrie in the Angus Glens - the Heart of Scotland. Our aim is to offer you comfortable, enjoyable surroundings with excellent food, in this magnificent part of Scotland. The Inn and restaurant is conveniently located for all country sports. Recently renovated and refurbished to the highest standard, retaining in full the charm of its original character.**

**An Old Coaching Inn.**

**Being out of the town we offer walking and cycling enthusiast's incredible wilderness routes starting on our front door. This hotel in Fort William offers evening meals and packed lunches for walkers and mountain bike enthusiasts. Quiet and peaceful, just the call of the wild forest.**



**Our Scottish country Hotel is located in beautiful quiet countryside from where you can visit Castles and distilleries, enjoy bird watching, horse riding / trekking, excellent loch and river fishing, ski cross country. Discover many pleasant walks in the Angus Glens and all country pursuits. Near to Glenshee for hill walking, downhill skiing and boarding.**

**Visit Braemar and tour Royal Deeside.**

**Adjacent to a nearby Beauty Therapist.**

**There are around forty golf courses in the surrounding area.**

**With our magnificent scenery this is a photographers paradise.**

**There is of course ample free parking available.**

**Around one hour from Aberdeen and**

**one hour forty minutes from Edinburgh Airport.**

**Good Pub Guide Scotland.**

**The Best Recommended Good Beer Guide.**

**The Guardian Newspaper's top 150 Gastropubs.**

**Pets welcome.**

## **Glenisla Hotel History**

The picturesque valley of Glenisla runs for 17 miles in the eastern Grampians, 780 feet above sea level. The Kirkton of Glenisla where the hotel is situated is a third of the way up the glen. Some four miles further on, the road passes Fortor Castle once the stronghold of the Ogilvie Clan. After more than 300 years the castle has recently been fully restored. The River Isla, a tributary of the River Tay rises from the Monega Pass, 3000 feet above sea level, near Braemar.

The Kirkton of Glenisla Hotel ( <http://www.glenisla-hotel.com> ), as it is known locally, has for a long time been a focal point for travellers and inhabitants of the Glen. Little written record about the hotel prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century can be found. In the 'Letters from a gentleman in the North of Scotland' written in 1754 we read "The highlands are but little known even to the inhabitants of the low country of Scotland ... to the people of England the highlands are hardly known at all; for there has been less than I know written on the subject than either of the Indies". However wall paintings recently discovered during the refurbishment of the hotel are at present under analysis by the University of Dundee and seem to indicate that the hotel was in existence before 1750. Part of these paintings have been preserved behind glass and may be seen by the hotel guests. One of the subjects depicted is a Rowan Tree. In Scotland it was believed that a Rowan Tree planted in your garden was essential to ward off witches and to this day Rowan Trees are planted where new houses are built.

In the rebellion of 1745 the then Innkeeper of the hotel was a private in the rebel army, fighting for Bonny Prince Charlie. After the rebellion James Rioch was taken away by the English together with Alexander Shaw of Auchavan, William Shaw of Forter, John Robertson of Crandart, William Farquarson of West Mill and Thomas Ogilvie of East Mill. Although they would have been brutally and severely punished by the government, the names of their properties still live on in the glen today.

After the church disruption of 1843 when the Church of Scotland broke its connection with the State, John Crombie, Innkeeper of the hotel gave his cart, shed, barn and loft to the congregation of the Church. The barn and loft are now the function room at the hotel.

The history of the hotel is bound up with the history of Scotland, especially with the Church in the Glen – the old manse and the school together with the hotel and a few of the houses in the vicinity make up the hamlet of Kirkton after which the hotel is named.

Although there is a history of the Church in Glenisla from 1275 the building of the present church dates from 1821. An amusing account of the church attendance in Glenisla in 1831 was written by Mr. G. Ure showing that not only the close proximity of the church and hotel but that both enjoyed the same patronage 'When in Glenisla in 1831 many of the last century customs still continued ... A fine hospitable race they were. They travelled a long distance to the Kirk. They came before the bell rang and went to the 'public' at the Kirkton – the men to have a dram of whisky and the women to have a taste of some cordial or small beer. When the bell ceased they all hurried to the Kirk'.

The incumbency of the Rev. Andrews (1806 – 1823) did much to strengthen the links between the church and the hotel. At the end of the Napoleonic wars the duty of spirits was greatly increased. When a party of excise men entered the glen they usually stopped at the hotel to rest and refresh their horses. The manse windows looked conveniently onto the hotel and all approaches to it. After the excise men were seen to be safely inside the Kirkton, Mr. Burns led his pony out and when out of sight galloped around the Glen and at every house and bothy waved his hat over his head shouting “The Philistines be upon thee Samson” - the smugglers responded to the call and dashed to the hills carrying their illicit still, sometimes still steaming from recent use. It is said that when the stills were closed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Glenisla lost almost half of its inhabitants.

George IV (the first reigning monarch to visit Scotland since the reign of Charles II 172 years previously) landed in the royal yacht at Leith on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1822. He asked for whisky, but there were no legal Highland stills by that time of the required 2270 litres capacity as required under the 1814 Act. He got his whisky never the less.

The present day visitor to the hotel will see the same occupational activities, as have existed for the past two hundred years (possibly with the exception of illicit whisky making) Sheep and cattle farming, ponies, deer stalking, fishing, hill walking and grouse shooting.

In the Glenisla School Records of 1908 the headmaster noted

October 3<sup>rd</sup> : A fairly good attendance not with standing the harvest operation and grouse driving.

October 16<sup>th</sup> : Attendance very much improved this week. Grouse shooting almost over and the greater part of the big folks (shooting tenants) have left the glen. The victual mostly in the Stackyard

October 23<sup>rd</sup> : A grouse drive on Thursday when four of the most advanced boys were absent.

The first celebration of the Glenisla Games took place in 1856 when the Glenisla Highland and friendly Society was formed. The games have continued every year since with the exception of two world wars and in 1900 when they were cancelled owing to the death of both the Patron and the Secretary. An entry in the 1859 records reads ‘dinner and drink to the policeman 5’s. Candles for the ball 3’s. The games were held in August each year at the foot of Mount Blair, ending with a scramble to the top of the mountain.

The ‘Case of Kitty Olgilvie’ by Jean Stubbs tells of a well documented murder in the glen. Thomas Olgilvie of Eastmill was given a large dose of arsenic in his morning tea by his wife Katherine. She was a pretty girl of 20, half her husbands age. Patrick Olgilvie, Thomas’s younger brother, a dashing lieutenant in the Gordon Highlanders, was found guilty and hanged in the Grassmarket in Edinburgh in 1756. Katherine was also under the sentence of death but escaped from the Tolbooth in Edinburgh.

A kettle full of silver is said to be hidden on the Llandilo to the north of the hotel on the eastern side of the hill. The sun was seen to glint on the kettle in the early morning but the treasure was never found. Perhaps no one has looked very hard because the reward for the finder is reputed to be death.

From far I return to my home in  
Glenisla,  
Where oft on my lone watch my thoughts  
used to be;  
Once more I gaze on the hills round Craig  
Isla  
And watch the sun glint o'er the Broomie  
Ha'lea  
A smurach has passed o'er the hills above  
Airlie  
The Reekie Linn's hid in a mantle of  
spray  
While down by the Watersheil still runs  
the burnie  
And the Scrusloch lies glimmering in  
peaceful array.

From: Donald of Glenisla by John O'Blair

The Glenisla Hotel is now prominently placed on the Cateran Trail. The Cateran Trail is named after the Caterans who were marauding cattle thieves. They flourished from the Middle Ages until the 17th century. More feared than wolves, raiding parties numbered anything from 50 to 500 fierce warriors.

The caterans raided far and wide, but the rich farmlands of Glen Isla and Strathardle were particularly 'favoured'. By custom they would return by a different way from which they came, using ancient drove roads through remote glens.

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