

Inverpolly

Vignette: Inverpolly, Scotland,
September 1974



Contents

Inverpolly.....	1
September 1974	1
On return from Kenya and holiday at Inverpolly	1
Reminiscences inspired by photographs	2
Photographs of Inverpolly, September 1974.....	3
Photographs of Inverpolly, September 1974 (continued).....	4
Photographs of Inverpolly, September 1974 (continued).....	5

Inverpolly

September 1974

On return from Kenya and holiday at Inverpolly

These notes were written in 1977 during my travels through Greece...

On return from Kenya: Virginia, Nick and Eva were there to greet me at Heathrow. I saw Dad in London and reached Mum at home later the same evening – so I saw the whole family the day I returned. Everything was so familiar – it seemed I had not been away for so long. Yet the year itself, with such a fullness of experience had seemed like a lifetime. It was similar to the children [in the CS Lewis books] returning to England after being kings and queens in Narnia. A friend of the family suggested that it depended on one's quality of perception. I would say that and involvement in the situation at hand...

So reads the note written in haste in 1977. But this note does not make any mention of the two weeks spent at Inverpolly in north-west Scotland immediately after returning from Africa. Writing more than 40 years later, my recollections of precise dates and places are somewhat hazy. Not surprisingly, after almost a year of unbroken and detailed diary writing, I gladly relinquished this task as soon as I set foot on British soil. But I seem to remember staying just a day or two at Legbourne, then I recall that my mother and I drove, in the white Renault, to York, where we boarded the overnight train to Inverness, arriving the next morning, with the car being unloaded without incident this time (recalling that in 1972 we were delayed several hours because the car got stuck in the railway van!)

I remember stopping near a river between Inverness and Ullapool, probably for a picnic lunch, and

“revelling in the pastel highland hues after Africa's garish colours”

(to quote from Gavin Maxwell's Ring of Bright Water).

At Inverpolly I spent much time walking in the hills around the valley, praying and thanking God for my year in Kenya, and that he had brought me safely back to Britain. I took the photograph during one of these walks, that shows Inverpolly Lodge, the River and the Bay beyond.

I have rather vague memories of who else was there: Virginia and Fiona feature in the photographs, and Nigel too, and I think Antonia was there too, as Nigel thought she was brave to be walking along the stony Inverpolly beach.

Almost certainly we did a Viking funeral one evening, watching our flaming raft floating out to sea. The Carlises were there too, I am sure, and I certainly remember Iain describing stag hunting.

On 12 September 1974 the 'Inverpolly Mixed Voices Choir' gave their performance of 'Ach please Mary...', which was composed during several late-night fly-tying sessions. I was not part of this, as I was generally too tired to stay up late and made a point of getting to bed early each night.

On one occasion (perhaps 1977) some of us climbed to the top of one of the nearby hills at sunset, and as it was a clear evening, we could see not only the panorama of famous mountains – Stac Pollaidh, Cul Mhor, Cul Beag, Benn An Eoin, Ben More Coigeach, Suilven and Canisp – but far to the north-west across the sea to 'Paradise', the Outer Hebrides, Lewis and Harris. I took some photographs, and later glued the mountain ones together to form a panorama that would later adorn my desk...

But it was on the second to last day that I realized I was *not* feeling well, and special arrangements had to be made for me to travel back home at a later date, after some extra rest (which meant Virginia had to travel home early, and she was not pleased). This turned out to be the very beginning of my TB, but no one suspected it at the time, putting it down to 'post-Kilimanjaro' exhaustion, or flu. The beauty of north-west Scotland was etched in my mind as some of my last memories of normal life, before experiencing the long and severe illness of TB, which included some 5 weeks in hospital...

Reminiscences inspired by photographs

A few more notes reflecting on the Inverpolly photographs taken in September 1974, just after my return from Kenya...

- There's the classic photo of Uncle Keith, wearing an orange anorak, sitting on a rock in Achnahaird Bay, puffing on his pipe and gazing out to a blue-grey sea with foaming white breakers, under a grey sky.
- Then there's a picture of Nigel and Fiona on the stony Inverpolly beach, with a fire going – another young man, possibly Tim Taylor with a white terrier. Everyone wearing thick jerseys, showing that it was pretty cold. Moors, mountains, sea and mist.
- The familiar shapes of the mountains I came to know and love – Stac Pollaidh, Cul Mhor and Cul Beag, Benn an Eoin, Ben Mor Coigeach. Not many climbed those mountains, but on occasions I did, and so those experiences and memories are special.
- There were only two mountains that I climbed on more than one occasion – Cul Mhor (several times, including in the late 1960s) and Stac Pollaidh. I also climbed Suilven with Brian in 1977, my last trip to Inverpolly.
- Clearly I climbed Stac Pollaidh in 1974, as the album contains several photographs taken from near the summit, including misty ones over Loch Oiscaig and Loch Bad a' Ghail.

Photographs of Inverpolly, September 1974



Inverpolly Lodge, River and Bay



View looking south towards Stac Pollaidh



Benn an Eoin and Ben Mor Coigeach



Keith, Achnahaird Bay



Fiona, Nigel and Tim, Inverpolly Beach



Coastal view

Photographs of Inverpolly, September 1974 (continued)



Virginia and Fiona at Inverpolly Bay



Sunset from near Inverpolly...



Views from Stac Pollaidh over Loch Osaig and Loch Bad a' Ghail



Towards Inverpolly Bay at dusk

Photographs of Inverpolly, September 1974 (continued)



Suilven beyond Loch Scionascaig



Cul Beag and Stac Pollaidh



Benn an Eoin and Ben Mor Coigeach



Suilven over Loch Scionascaig



Cul Mhor



View from Stac Pollaidh



Stac Pollaidh