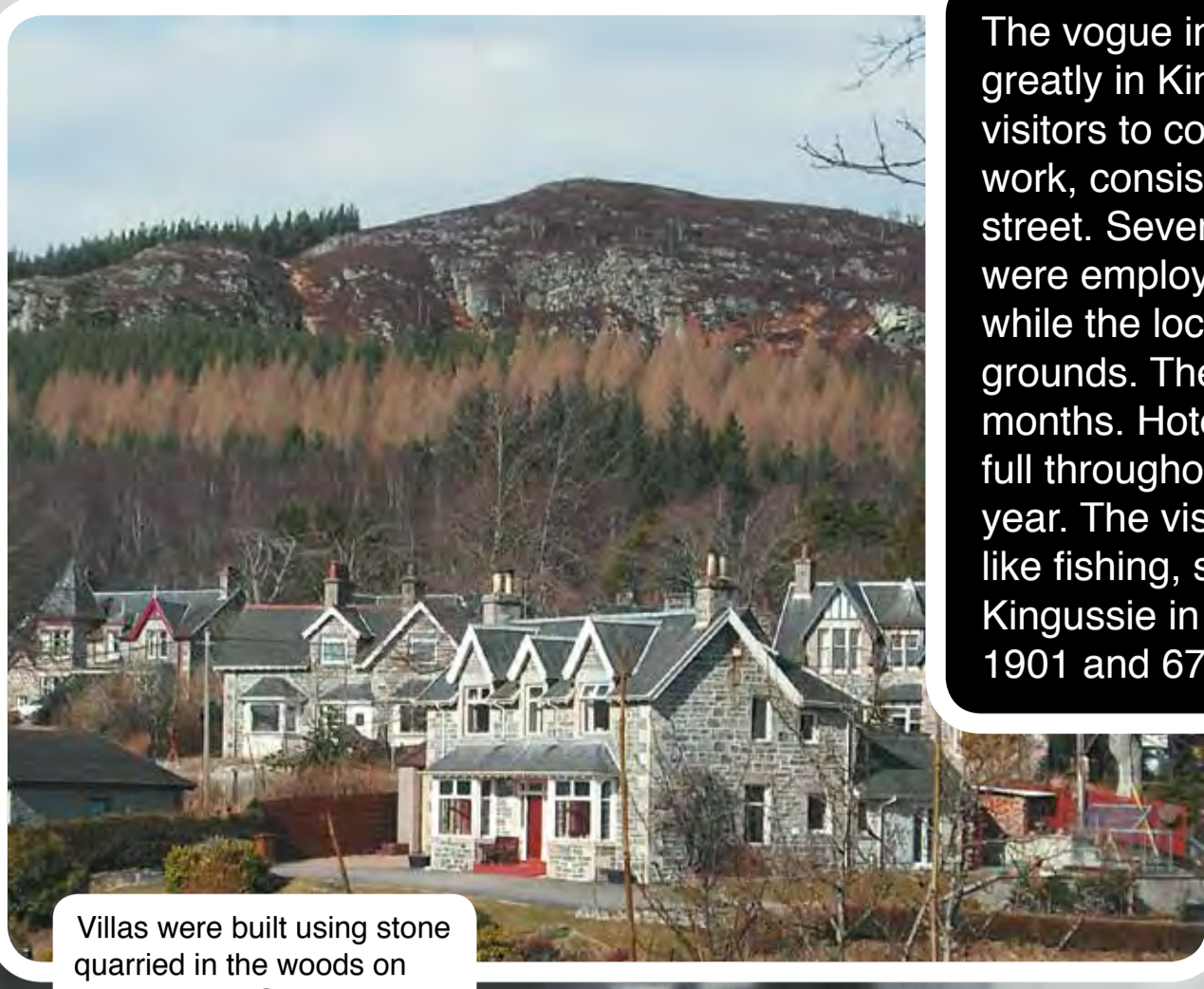


A Healthy Resort



Villas were built using stone quarried in the woods on the slopes of Creag Bheag.

The vogue in Victorian times for taking holidays in health resorts worked greatly in Kingussie's favour. Thanks to the railway it was easy for wealthy visitors to come, often for lengthy periods. From the 1890s major building work, consisting of stone villas, took place on the terraces above the main street. Several quarries on Creag Bheag were in use and many men were employed in the building trade. Houses were let out all summer, while the local families would squeeze into small wooden cottages in the grounds. The population of Kingussie increased dramatically in the summer months. Hotels and shooting lodges as well as private houses would be full throughout the season. The same families often returned year after year. The visitors were attracted by clean, healthy air and summer activities like fishing, shooting, walking, golf, bowling and tennis. The population of Kingussie in 1911 reached an all-time high of 1171, compared with 989 in 1901 and 676 in 1871.

Robert Louis Stevenson was one eminent visitor who took the air in the town during the 1880s. Some of his poems relate to his time in the town. 'Where Go the Boats?' is thought to describe his enjoyment of sailing paper boats down the River Gynack.

*Where Go the Boats?
Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand,
It flows along for ever,
With trees on either hand.
Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating –
Where will all come home?*

*On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill,
Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.*

OS map of Kingussie, 1910. There are major changes since the 1870 map. Extensive building has taken place on the terraces to the north. There are several quarries on the slopes above. Notice the huge distillery with its own railway siding.



“ Oh the owners lived in a small cottage which was built somewhere in the grounds, mostly just a few yards away really, but it was remarkable how the householders managed to shoehorn every member of the family into the little building. ”

Cath Hunter, BOHP 1984



In summer, families would vacate their house for visitors and move into a cottage in the garden.

“ Always on the first of the month, like the first of June, the first of July, the first of August when the afternoon trains came in, the two twenty nine it was called, I'd go to the shop door just to watch the hordes of people coming off the train and... Wordy's lorries – and he always employed a few extra at that time – went past laden with luggage right up to the top... Yes that was the changeover of tenants. One crowd went away the night before and the next lot were in the next day. And it was pandemonium, as far as we were concerned, from the moment that the last lot went out until the next lot came in, because all the housewives arrived down with lists of breakages and what have you to be replaced and...that all had to be done within twenty four hours. But mind you the people at that time, they got as much for the letting of their house in the summer time as kept them in fuel, rates, taxes... everything for the winter. ”

Malcolm Fraser, BOHP 1984



“ The type of visitor who came to Kingussie left absolutely nothing to be desired – they were mostly from the professional classes who brought a great deal of colour into Kingussie. The residents, I would say, they looked after their visitors by being respectful and in return they got respect from the visitors who took over the house. These large families came and they got to know the local people, particularly the people who were in business. It was a lovely association really, I can't remember ever having heard anyone, as it were, patronise us; they accepted us just as friends, and year after year they would come back, their family would be growing – most of the families then went into professions and they came back again to Kingussie. That, I think, is what I recall as our richest heritage. ”

Cath Hunter, BOHP 1984

“ Well that was a very popular feature of the paper every summer and...I myself was one of those who used to go round the houses and gather the names. We had to go round every so often, at least once a month, because it changed, but then, when the visitors in those days came and stayed, a fortnight was quite common, a month fairly common and sometimes longer even. So you got the names. I'd perhaps be given the West Terrace and somebody else would be given the East Terrace and somebody else the Streets and that's the way we did it. And the hotels used to supply us also with their own lists. ”

William Johnstone, BOHP 1984

(On the list of summer residents that was put out weekly with the Kingussie Record.)

“ The motor cars – I remember the first few motor cars that came through here quite well. Oh there was some lovely cars; I thought they were wonderful – curtains on the windows and vases of flowers inside; yes great things! But they nearly all came by train, the visitors, and therefore they couldn't run away next day after coming away up here by train. So they stayed, and they...formed themselves into groups on the golf course and the tennis courts and they made their own enjoyment and they really had long lets...They used to get the same people coming back, year after year, for a long time. ”

William Johnstone, BOHP 1984

“ That generation of Macphersons, Charles Julien and his wife...were tremendous benefactors to the local community. We have a lot of accounts which show, quite charmingly, that they would hand out a half ton of coal to poor people in the village... They were known more as the Newtonmore Lairds than the Kingussie ones...but we do know with regards to Kingussie that they opened the tennis club, they opened the bowling green, they opened the golf club...and Charles was President of the Bowling Club for 65 years, which is probably a record for any kind of club. ”

Allan Macpherson-Fletcher
(On CJB Macpherson of Balavil)



Charles Brewster Macpherson of Balavil, who supported many clubs and societies in Kingussie.

“ It was very busy in the summer time. My father golfed a lot. He was up in the clubhouse. He used to tell people what walks to go on and what hills to climb and where to go for this and that. He just loved doing that; he felt it was part of his job. He would teach the kids golf and everything. ”

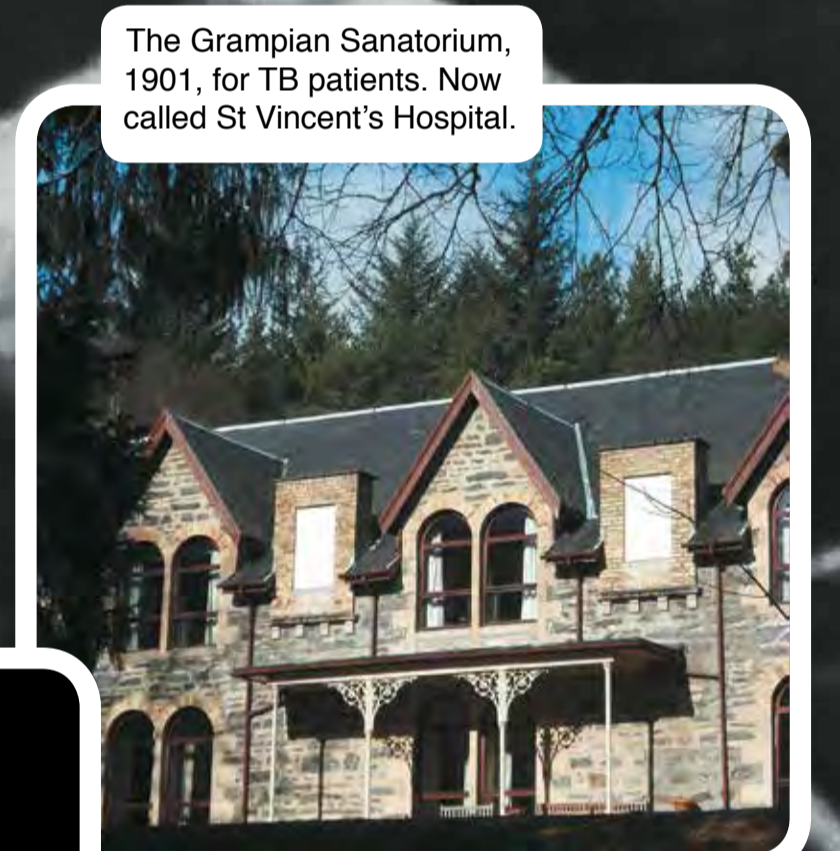
Ray Smillie



The golf club dates back to 1891. The current pavilion was built in 1911.



The bowling pavilion, built 1877, is one of the oldest in the country.



The Grampian Sanatorium, 1901, for TB patients. Now called St Vincent's Hospital.



In 1901, Dr Walter de Watterville, a Swiss doctor specialising in TB, established the Grampian Sanatorium on the west side of the River Gynack, above the town. Dr de Watterville believed that this site was the ideal place for open air treatment, where patients were expected to spend as much time outside as possible, even sleeping outside. The Seychelles-born Dr Joseph Savy took over the sanatorium in the early 1920s, continuing the pioneering work. The building was bought by the Sisters of the Charity of the Order of St Vincent de Paul in 1934, and they continued to treat TB patients until the use of antibiotics to treat the disease was developed in the 1950s.

“ It wasn't the nuns then; it was Dr Savy, 'Sonnhalde', and then the nuns took over. It was a TB hospital still...in fact you used to see the patients, and the beds were out on the verandah, and they would have waterproof covers over them because they slept out there day and night. ”

Isobel Harling



A monumental failure in Kingussie was the distillery, located at the present Ardvonie car park. It was built in 1896 for the sum of £22 000. It employed thirty men and had its own railway siding connecting to the main rail line and its own dam on the Gynack. The smoke and smell made it unpopular locally. Due to a combination of mismanagement, poor water and unsuitable barley it closed in 1911 and was sold for a meagre £750. It was demolished in 1926 and much of the stone used in the construction of the Great North Road.

Hitherto it was little better in parts than a winding, treacherous track across the hills, now it is a grand sweeping highway capable of carrying the heaviness of present-day traffic.

Badenoch Record 29th September 1928
(On the Great North Road)



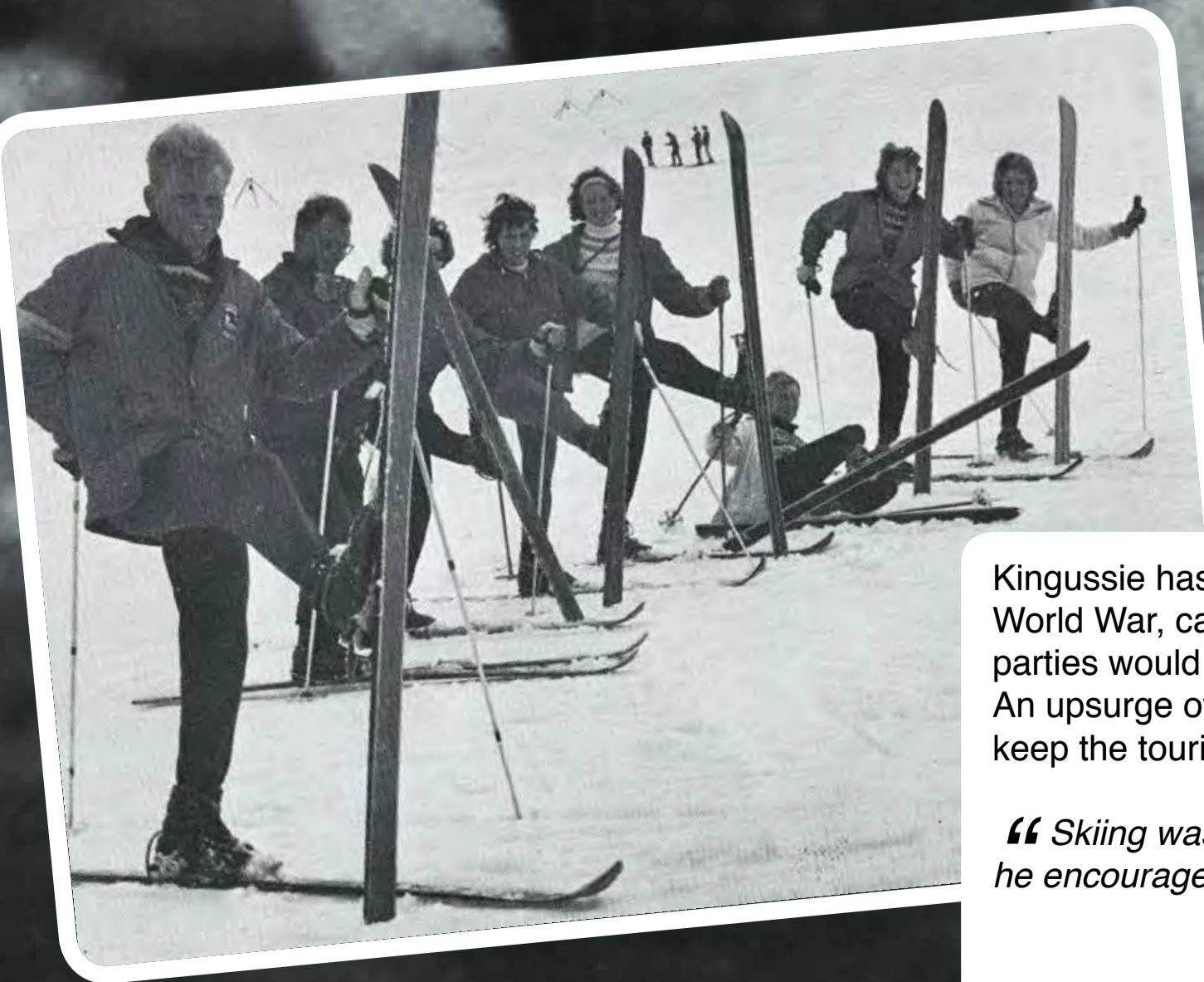
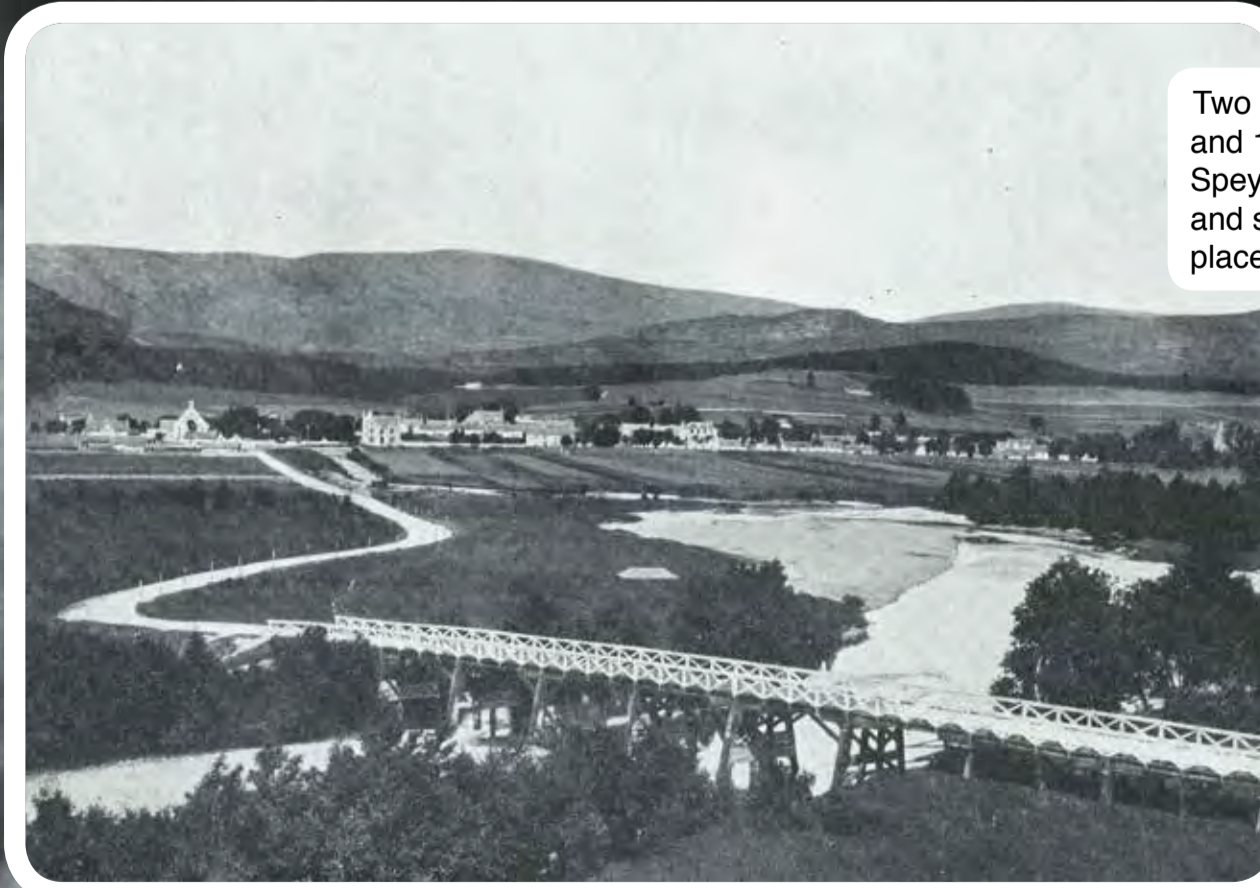
The buildings in the centre are all that remains of the Speyside Distillery, demolished in 1926. The site is now occupied by Ardvonie Park.



This postcard shows new villas on the left, the dam on the Gynack which provided water for the distillery and the railway, and the tweed mill on the right.



Two views of Kingussie from the south, in 1876 and 1910. The old wooden bridge across the Spey has been replaced (1894) by one of stone and steel. A huge amount of building has taken place on the higher ground to the north.



Early skiing, from a 1970s tourist booklet.

Kingussie has remained popular with visitors right up to the present time, although their activities have changed. After the Second World War, car travel became more common and summer letting gave way to bed and breakfast; long stays gave way to touring. Coach parties would stay at the hotels and then move on to other places. The development of skiing in the sixties brought winter visitors too. An upsurge of interest in a wide variety of outdoor activities, and Kingussie's inclusion in the Cairngorms National Park, have helped to keep the tourists coming all year round.

“ Skiing was also a big part of my young sporting life. I guess with Rudi Prochazka moving to Kingussie and opening up his business, he encouraged all the young kids in town to get involved with skiing. ”

John Macpherson

“ Of course there was the skiing – that had just started. I remember we went up to see the skiing slope when it had fairly recently opened. It would be in April... Easter holidays – it would be snowy then. And certainly in those days because people didn't often go abroad...the B and B's in the winter months would be pretty good...In those days ski buses would leave from here to take people up to Cairngorm. I think most people stay in Aviemore now. ”

John Moyce

