3. River Leven

When writing about a river, and following the course from source to mouth, it is often the case that determining the starting point is a problem. Either springs or field ditches give birth to most rivers; in the case of the former, they may be weather dependent, so that a river may be longer after a period of wet weather, while in the latter case it is sometimes difficult to determine where a definite flow is established. None of this seemingly applies to the River Leven since there is agreement that it first appears as the outlet in the south-east corner of the loch of the same name, at grid point NT 170 994; it starts life as a substantial river, rather than as a trickle of water emanating from a spring or ditch to be gradually boosted by other like-effusions. However, this picture is a matter of choice and common usage rather than the only possible interpretation of the situation on the ground. Loch Leven has many feeder streams, with three significantly larger than the others, though still relatively small, namely North Queich Water, South Queich Water, and the Gairney Water. South Queich Water is the longest, flowing 16km, to reach the west bank of Loch Leven, at a point 5½km west of the River Leven outflow. Thus it would be possible to add 21½km to the normally quoted 26km for the length of the River Leven, giving 47½km, following the chosen means of length determination for Scotland's longest river, the River Tay. By this reckoning the River Leven would be almost the same length as Fife's other main river, the River Eden, and it carries significantly more water; the mean discharge rate is c85400 gallons/minute, (almost 9 tanker-loads per minute), compared with c54000 gallons/minute.

Nonetheless, I shall abide by convention and consider the River Leven as starting as the outflow from Loch Leven, but before doing so I shall follow the pattern of other river journeys and consider the aforementioned tributaries and the said loch. Loch Leven has something of the shape of a sperm whale, aligned with its head to the north-west, and its tail to the east where the River Leven outflow is located. The town of Kinross is on the bank, west of the open jaw, and the smaller town of Milnathort is north-west of the bulbous upper jaw. The Gairney Water enters the loch from the south-west half-way along the whale's underbelly; the South Queich Water enters at the lower jaw, and the North Queich Water, half-way up the upper jaw, all in the county of Perth and Kinross.

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I begin with the southernmost stream, the Gairney Water, which flows from a patch of boggy ground a short distance to the south of Crook of Devon, the village, so named because the River Devon changes its direction of flow abruptly there from south-east to south-west. Much more will be said about that river in due time, but for the moment it can be observed that a number of streams whose contents end up in Loch Leven, start very close to the River Devon. Tullibole Castle, shown alongside, is near the B9097, and to the left bank of the Gairney Water, c2½km north-east of its

source. More a laird's house than a fortification, though it has defensive features, it was built very early in the 17th century, and now serves mainly as a wedding venue. It is an attractive building, with the unusual twin bartizans on the stair turret, and its crow-stepped roof.

Moving on downstream, the Gairney Water picks up right bank tributaries from the Cleish Hills to the south; they rise to 380m, and are rounded and largely tree-covered. Substantial remains of 2 hillforts have survived there. On the left bank, the route of a mill lade serving Maw Mill, dating from at least the mid-18th century, can be picked out. Cleish Castle is near the right bank, just west of a village of the same name. A family named Colville built the castle, probably in the middle of the 16th century, and they appear to have held it with few alarms until 1775, when it was sold. At that time, it received necessary restoration and has been inhabited since then, though seemingly requiring further refurbishment in the early 1920s and again in the early 1970s. The castle is L-shaped, and 5 storeys high; the 2 lowest storeys may have been built earliest though the windows are much later. The lay-out was conventional with a hall on the 1st floor, vaulted basements below, and spacious private accommodation above. The masonry is ashlar and the gables are crow-stepped. The photograph above is a view from the north-east.

There are a number of small lochs in the midst of the Creich Hills, and the largest, Loch Glow is a reservoir, and fisherman's haunt now. It had an earlier role, because its un-named outlet stream drove 3 mills in the 19th century, on its way to join the Gairney Water, namely Nivingston Barley Mill, Cleish Flour Mill, and Dowhill Corn Mill. A short distance downstream from the last of these, the ruin of Dowhill Castle is not far from the right bank, and nearer but not visible from, the B9097. It was originally a 15th century tower of the Lindsay family, remodelled as a hall house, with a defensive barmkin. As can be seen from the photograph taken by a Mr. Shackleton 13 years ago, there is not much left, though it seems the building looks a bit more substantial, viewed from other directions. Apparently, consideration has been given to a full restoration, but that seems to me to be a daunting enterprise.

Thereafter the Gairney Water flows under the M90, Edinburgh to Perth Motorway, and through the hamlet, of Gairneybridge. The photograph alongside looks east from there, and shows that the Gairney Water, a few hundred metres from entering Loch Leven is still a small stream, but following a regular enough path to suggest that it might have been canalised, though I have no evidence for such a statement. Water has travelled slightly over 12km from the source to get here. It is very much a lowland stream, having fallen little more than 20m over its length, and this probably explains why there has only been one water powered mill on it, in the past three centuries.

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Moving north, the next tributary is the South Queich Water, and in its upper reaches, it could hardly be more different in character from the placid lowland stream just described. The source is on the northern slopes of Lamb Hill in the Ochil Range, at a height of c360m, and at grid point NO 011 080. For its first few kilometres it races south alongside the B934 road which links Dunning and Yetts O' Muckhart; the photograph alongside shows the juxtaposition, looking north-east about 2½km downstream from the source. Shortly further on, the stream swings south-east, away from the road, and continues down the steep sided glen shown in the lower photograph. Apart from isolated houses, there is little habitation near to the course of the burn so far, but this is about to change as it drops below the 200m contour and arrives at Easter Fossoway, hardly even a hamlet but once the site of a corn mill driven by water supplied from a small tributary by way of a lade, which has left its imprint on the landscape. Here the South Quiech Water crosses under the A91, and passes south of Carnbo, a scattering of houses along the road, but once the location of a saw mill and a flour mill. About 2 kilometres further downstream, just north

of a hamlet called Tillyochie, there was another group of mills, in the 19th century powered by both water and steam. Bellfield Mills carried out spinning and dying of cloth, and grinding of corn, while there were 2 saw mills there as well.

With all trace of its rugged origins now lost, the South Queich Water continues eastwards, and skirts round the runways of Balado Airfield, which has had a varied career since it was founded as a satellite of an airfield at Grangemouth in 1942. Its role then was in the advanced training of Spitfire pilots, but it became surplus to requirements before the end of the War. There ensued a period when gliding was the main aerial activity, before in 1957 the site became a military communications centre. By 1985, a characteristic giant golf ball-like structure had been built to further this work, but the site was decommissioned in 1996. Then for 17 years the airfield became the home of Scotland's version of Glastonbury, the annual 'T in the Park' Music Festival, which latterly attracted quarter of a million people over 3 days, but safety considerations caused it to be moved to Strathallan Castle in 2015. As of now, aerial activity continues at Balado in the form of microlight training, and much of the infrastructure of an airfield survives, including two runways, a control tower and hangars.

A short distance further downstream a lade drew off water to a millpond, which by way of a stream called the Clash Burn, in turn supplied the Town Mills in the centre of Kinross, just to the east of the High Street. They were corn and flour mills, but according to old maps had disappeared by the late 19th century, and the only trace now is a road called Mill Street; the same was true of the mill pond. Nearby there was a dyeing factory, and also a bleachfield, which perhaps processed cloth from the mills at Bellfield. The South Queich Water next reaches the M90 motorway under which it is culverted and enters the south of Kinross, passing a large car auction site on the left bank before coming to a Cashmere Mill on the right bank. Mills were built in this location in 1846, then processing wool and linen, and cashmere production began in 1897. At present, 200 people are employed there in a business that is now, perhaps worryingly, in Chinese ownership. The South Queich Water travels a few hundred metres further between tree-covered banks, as shown in the photograph above, and then reaches Loch Leven, just south of a visitor centre, and a small harbour from where boats leave for the islands in the loch. The stream has covered 16km from its source, and as already noted there is a great contrast between its upper and lower reaches; the mean discharge rate is c12500 gallons/minute, so it cannot quite be described as a fully-fledged river.

Kinross can claim burgh status from 1541, but it is much older than that, with documentation as far back as the middle of the 13th century. Its early existence is linked to the royal castle on an island in the nearby loch, which was a convenient stopping place for kings perambulating between such places as Edinburgh and Dunfermline, and Perth and further north. Kings travelled with substantial numbers of servants and

supporters, of whom only the close household will have found accommodation in the castle, and hostelries must have sprung up to accommodate the rest of the royal train, while traders will have set up shop to supply everyone with necessities. From the outset there were probably two centres of activity, one on the headland beside Castle Island and the other, further west beside the through route to the north and south. Certainly, the first church, founded by 1250 was on the headland, and the transfer of its income and the right to appoint its priest, by King Robert the Bruce to Dunfermline Abbey in 1317 is recorded. That arrangement ended with the Reformation, but the church continued to serve the parish, until 1729, when it was decided that the church should be in the western part of the town which had become the real centre. An aisle had been added to the old church to serve as a mausoleum for the Bruce family who had built a nearby mansion; this survived the relocation of the church though the rest of the old building did not, but it was completely rebuilt in 1860, by which time the new church in the town centre had also been replaced.

The Bruce mansion, Kinross House, does still stand, now doubling as the family home of its present owners, and as a property available for hire for events. Begun by the noted Scottish architect Sir William Bruce in 1686, as his own residence it was the first such Scottish mansion built in classical style, and is regarded as one of the finest of its type, with many rooms furnished as at its first occupation. I shall leave its description to the appropriate volume of the 'Buildings of Scotland' series, but present the photograph above taken from publicity literature. In spite of the age of the town, it has no other building nearly as old as Kinross House, or indeed as distinguished. The centre is neat and tidy, but the oldest buildings are Victorian, and pleasant rather than striking. There are businesses employing substantial numbers in the town, but a majority of working people amongst a population of c4000 may commute, many to Edinburgh.

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The North Queich Water and its headwater tributaries follow a similar course to its sister stream, but to its north and east. According to most maps, it is formed by the junction of the Warroch East and West Burns which rise at a height of 400m in the Ochil Hills and flow south on each side of Warroch Hill, meeting on the 200m contour, at grid point NO 053 047. A minority of mappers choose to call the Warroch West Burn the continuation of the North Queich Water, but this does not alter the picture of two hill streams rushing down deep gullies, and joining to create a still fast flowing rivulet with small waterfalls in a steep-sided valley, very much an upland pastoral landscape. A change occurs a fairly short distance downstream, perhaps signalled in the 19th century by the presence just above the left bank of Touchie Corn Mill, supplied with water from a millpond formed by damming a small tributary of the North Queich Water. Sure enough, arable fields appear south of the stream when it reaches the hamlet of Dalqueich, and on both banks well before it reaches the next hamlet, Ballingall. Perhaps surprisingly, there have been no mills in modern times on this stretch of the North Queich Water, but there were corn mills on a left bank tributary, the Fochy Burn, at Nether Craigo and Meadowhill, (interestingly, called Waulk Mill, which suggests that cloth was processed there at some time).

Like its sister stream, the North Queich Water is culverted under the M90, and after a large loop it enters the south-west of the small town of Milnathort, as shown in a photograph alongside, taken by a Mr. Burke. Just downstream from the location in the photograph there were linen and cotton mills in the 19th century, though the weaving of woollen tartan plaids became far more important to the town later. Near the centre, to the north the aforementioned Fochy Burn powered grain mills, and in 1790s it was recorded that there were 5 such mills, and 2 cloth mills in and around Milnathort. On that basis, it would not be surprising if the place-name was owed to the presence of mills, although there are alternative derivations linked to standing stones. I will not attempt to second-guess the experts, but the town is much older than the great age of watermills in the 18th and 19th centuries; the parish if not the town, was called Orwell then. Originally the church of Orwell, on the north shore of Loch Leven, 3km east of Milnathort, was a chapel attached to Kinross Parish Church, and a possession of Dunfermline Abbey, but it became independent in the 15th century. It was more or less appropriated by the Earls of Morton after the Reformation, as a mausoleum, and the parallel with Kinross Parish Church was continued in 1729, when a new church was built on the north side of Milnathort where most of its congregation lived. No masonry from the old church survives in the graveyard which once surrounded it.

Just as Kinross originated to service Loch Leven Castle, so Milnathort, 3km to the north, is similarly linked to Burleigh Castle, now on its western outskirts. The striking ruin dates to the mid-15th century, when the Balfour family built a tower house, which is now the northern square tower, and probably stood on the west side of a courtyard surrounded by an enclosing barmkin wall. In 1582, a south west tower was built by the then owners, so that the castle comprised a quadrangle; a west range, of which some survives, connected the two towers as shown in the photograph taken from the south-west, while a south range projected to the east of the south west tower. The remaining two sides of the square were enclosed by a barmkin wall. In 1607, the head of the family became Lord Balfour of Burleigh and the family continued to thrive until the early 18th century. Then, the 4th Lord saw scandal when his son fled abroad after being convicted of murder, and soon himself brought disaster on the family by supporting the Jacobites in 1715. He also fled abroad, and the castle was forfeited and sold, becoming ruinous in the late-18th century, when the south range was used as a quarry for nearby houses. The square tower had been laid out conventionally with basement storage, the hall

on the next floor up, and bedrooms above, topped by a corbelled-out wall-walk and corner turrets. A spiral stair within the thickness of the wall leads up to the hall, which is today open to the sky. The south-west tower is three storeys high, with the top floor corbelled out to an externally square plan, in fairly unique fashion. This tower is roofed and windowed, though internally there is no structure between the stone floor at first floor level and the rafters supporting the roof, two levels higher.

I have not much more to say about Milnathort, a neat and tidy little town with a present-day population of c2000, nor indeed of the North Queich Water, which really only skirts it to the south, and flows another 1½km, first east, then south-east, and finally south to enter the north-west corner of Loch Leven. Its length is c9½km, though addition of the Warroch West Burn would add 3km to that. The mean discharge rate is 10100 gallons/minute.

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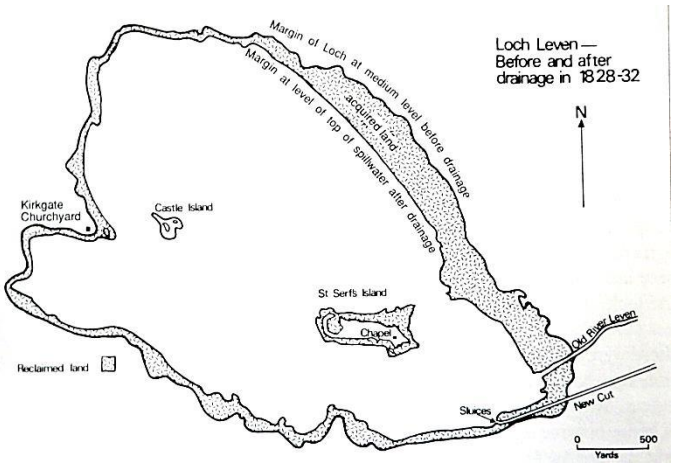

Loch Leven is described by the Gazetteer for Scotland as the largest Lowland loch in Scotland, though it lies just below the 110m contour so is not really low-lying. It was most likely formed when a receding icecap scraped out a hollow c11000 years ago at the end of the most recent frozen period, ('Ice Age'), though there have been recent suggestions that it could have had its origins in an asteroid impact over 200 million years ago; the latter theory is still seen as speculative. The surface area is 1611 hectares, (c2270 football pitches), though it was larger before a land reclamation scheme, completed in the early 1830s. Excavation of a new cut for the River Leven, and the provision of sluice gates to control the outflow into that river, dropped the water level in the loch by 1.4m, and reduced its area by 503 hectares, as shown in the map above, taken from Munro's book. As can be seen, the shape of the loch was more or less preserved, with the largest accretions of land along the eastern shore where some new farms were created. The areas of 7 islands in the loch, of which 3 are of more than passing interest, namely Scart Island, Castle Island and St. Serf's Island, were increased, with the last named seeing much the largest change, as shown in the map. The first-named, north of Castle Island, but not shown, is home to a fairly rare cormorant breeding colony, in part no doubt because of the abundant fish-stocks in the loch.

While gathering information, I was reminded that the brown trout found in the loch is apparently some kind of sub-species, but I laughed aloud when I read it was valued by anglers for its fighting qualities if hooked. In the late-1950s, my father was quite an enthusiastic fisherman, and spent a few days a year fishing for trout on the River Tweed, and once a year he and a couple of friends would hire a boat for a day to fish on Loch Leven. While a day on the Tweed would yield a catch of 2 or 3 trout at most, the day on Loch Leven normally saw my father returning with around 20 good-sized fish; I am afraid I got into the bad books once by asking if the fish had just leapt into the boat. In fact the size of the catch was a bit of a problem, because in our household only

my father was keen on eating the fish, and we had no refrigerator, a fairly uncommon luxury then. So friends and work colleagues of my father were visited and presented with fresh trout; the recipients were probably mainly grateful because this was long before the days of farming game fish, and like chicken and turkey, for similar reasons, they were expensive to buy.

Loch Leven Castle, which has already featured, is on a small island, 500m from the west side of the Loch, and the town of Kinross. The first castle was probably built for King Alexander II in the 13th century, and featured in the Scottish Wars of Independence, being held in the early stages by the English, who may have built a stone curtain wall, and then it was successfully defended against them in the 1330s. The 5 storey tower house or keep, prominent in the photograph alongside, taken from the shore of the loch, to the west, was added in c1500; the layout was fairly conventional, with a vaulted basement, retainer's quarters above, the hall above them, and private rooms in the upper storeys. The round Glassin Tower was added in c1550, but its purpose was probably cosmetic rather than defensive. The powerful Douglas family had obtained custody of the royal castle in the late 14th century, and were still in charge when Mary, Queen of Scots was imprisoned here and forced to sign away her throne to her infant son, King James VI in 1567. The custodians connived at an escape, which has become the stuff of legend, but sadly in most eyes, it only started the ex-Queen along the road to a long imprisonment and finally execution in England, in 1587. The castle ceased to be the main residence in the estate in c1550, and it was no longer lived in at all by the time the estate was sold to Sir William Bruce, the builder of Kinross House, in 1685. Ruinous by the end of the 18th century, it was kept in reasonable condition before being given into state care in 1939.

St. Serf's Island near the south shore of Loch Leven is named for a semi-legendary 6th century saint who is alleged to have founded a monastery on the island, at the instance of St. Adomnan, Abbot of Iona, (best remembered as the biographer of St. Columba). Certainly, reading that St. Serf was born in Palestine, and served as Pope for 7 years before coming to Scotland, stretches credibility, but the links with the loch, Culross, and Dunning imply a historical figure. However, it seems much more likely that the Pictish or Culdee monastery which definitely existed until 1150, had been founded in c840, albeit that the choice of site may well have owed much to the sanctity conferred by a link with St. Serf. At the later date, King David I granted the island to the Augustinian Priory of St. Andrews, requiring that a daughter house be founded there, and expelling those monks who refused to embrace a new order. Whether the King's instructions were followed exactly throughout the lifetime of the establishment may be open to doubt, as medieval documents regularly refer to the priory of St. Serfs with Portmoak, the parish on the east bank of the loch. The supposition is that the canons had accommodation at a location occupied now by an old graveyard, and preferred it to the isolation of the island. Nonetheless, though never wealthy, the priory survived until the Reformation, after

which its possessions were granted to St. Leonard's College in St. Andrews. Although features thought to relate to the Pictish priory have been detected below ground by electronic means and excavations, the only visible remains, shown in the photograph alongside, are thought to be low ruins of a chapel which was once connected to the chancel of the Augustinian church. There is also evidence below ground of the claustral buildings to be expected in an Augustinian priory. The present truncated state of the chapel probably results from its use as a fishing bothy in modern times.

There was also a religious establishment located in Scotlandwell, near to the east bank of Loch Leven; it began as a Culdee monastery, but the site was granted to the Trinitarians as a site for a hospital in 1250, to the displeasure of the Augustinians of St. Andrews who did not want to have rivals on their 'patch'. It was an appropriate foundation, though hospitals were not necessarily the same in the Middle Ages as they are now, because the village was famous for a well which yielded water with healing properties. It is thought that King Robert the Bruce visited, presumably in the late 1320s, unavailingly seeking a cure for leprosy. The well is now under a canopy erected in 1858. The Arnott family, who ended up in possession of the assets of the hospital after the Reformation, built a tower just to the east of the village in the early 16th century, and its ruin still stands in the private grounds of a later house. Old maps show at least 3 mill ponds beside farm steadings nearby, but show no signs of the mills their water must presumably have powered. Finally, my journey along the River Leven can begin where it emerges at the south-east shore of the loch.

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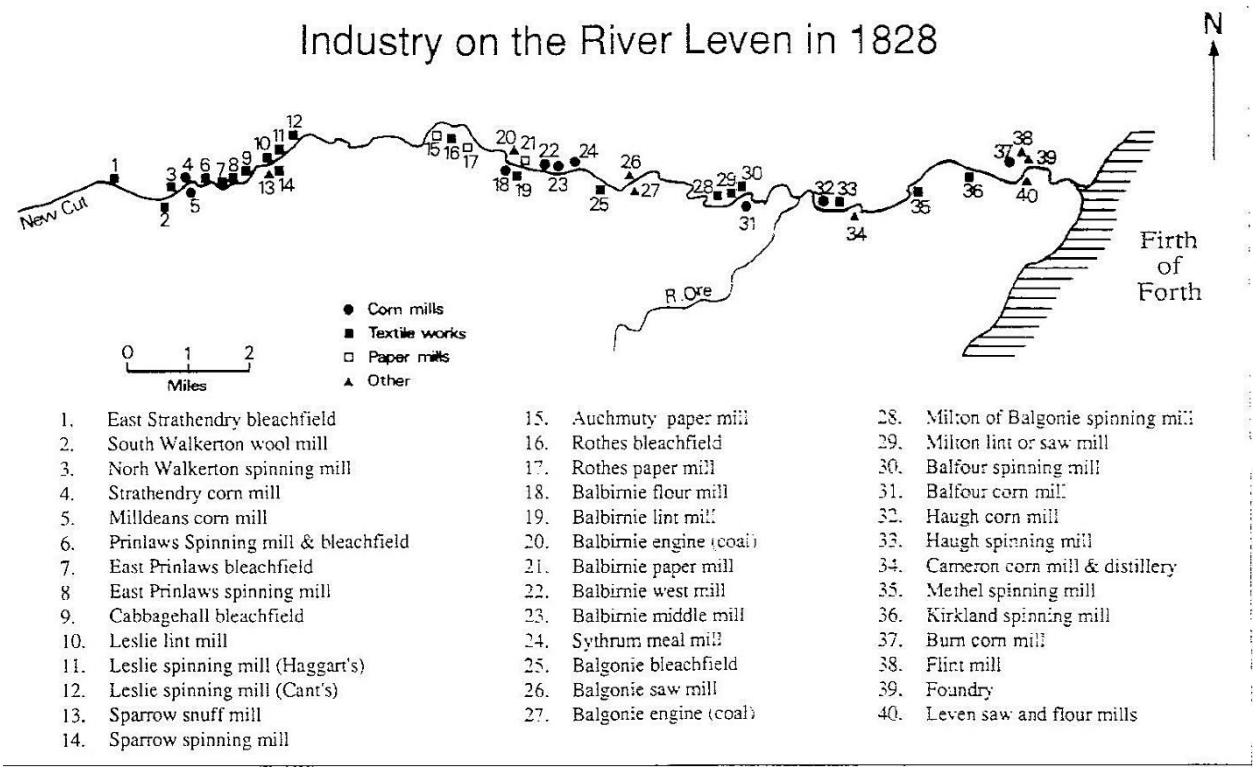
In its own way the birth of the River Leven is quite spectacular, and I am doubtful if my photograph of the sluice house does full justice to the vigour of the flow. Certainly, when I visited in late December, it had been raining in previous days so the outflow from the loch was perhaps greater than average, but I was surprised by the amount of turbulence in the channel which is 9.6m wide. To eliminate the possibility that the newly reclaimed land round the perimeter would flood when exceptional amounts of water entered the loch, for example after snow melts, a spillway was provided to the right of the sluice house, though it is now hidden by a hedge and trees, at least from the river side.

I have already indicated that the obvious beneficiaries from the reclamation scheme were those owning land around Loch Leven, whose holding would be expanded, and better drained with less susceptibility to flooding.

However, there were other interested parties whose support had to be obtained to gain the necessary parliamentary approval; in particular the operators of mills along the River Leven, and even more importantly, the land owners there from whom the land on which the mills stood was leased, and the necessary water rights obtained. The scheme was sold to them by giving assurances that better control of the water level in the loch, would allow steady flow rates into the river, and in particular the amelioration of summer shortages. However, there could of course be no question of increasing the total amount of water made available. The case must have been put persuasively, because the mill operators were going to be out of pocket in two ways; they were expected to contribute to the trust fund raised to pay for the scheme, and their landlords were bound to expect higher rental payments if the water supply arrangements were enhanced.

Anyone looking at the scheme may be surprised by the length of the New Cut, which stretches for just over 5km north-east from the sluice house before joining with the old course of the river east of Auchmuir Road Bridge; the junction is at the bend in the photograph alongside. The long channel was built to satisfy owners of land east of the loch where the River Leven had previously wound tortuously through wetlands for c5km from a source a few hundred metres north of the sluice house. Helped of course by the lowering of the water level in the loch, the New Cut made proper drainage of this whole area possible, creating an additional few hundred hectares of good agricultural land. The mill operators derived no benefits from this part of the scheme even although they helped to pay for it, and there were complaints from proprietors of bleachfields immediately downstream, when the New Cut was opened, that the water arriving there carried sand and mud, which had failed to settle out in the faster flow.

At Auchmuir Bridge the River Leven is joined on its left bank by the Arnot Burn, which rose on the south-western slopes of the Lomond Hills, until a reservoir was created there as part of Kirkcaldy's water supply in 1901. To its north-east, the headwaters of another left bank tributary of the River Leven, the Lothrie Burn, now connect a string of reservoirs, Harperleas, Ballo, Drumain, and Holl, also built around the turn of the 20th century to serve Kirkcaldy. Just short of the junction between the Arnot Burn and the River Leven, there was a corn mill fed with water from the former; the mill building is now a white-washed private dwelling. The Lothrie Burn also powered two corn mills and a saw mill before its junction with the River Leven, just east of the small town of Leslie, which is c3km downstream from Auchmuir Bridge.



1. East Strathendry bleachfield
2. South Walkerton wool mill
3. North Walkerton spinning mill
4. Strathendry corn mill
5. Milldeans corn mill
6. Prinlaws Spinning mill & bleachfield
7. East Prinlaws bleachfield
8. East Prinlaws spinning mill
9. Cabbagehall bleachfield
10. Leslie lint mill
11. Leslie spinning mill (Haggart's)
12. Leslie spinning mill (Cant's)
13. Sparrow snuff mill
14. Sparrow spinning mill
15. Auchmuty paper mill
16. Rothes bleachfield
17. Rothes paper mill
18. Balbirnie flour mill
19. Balbirnie lint mill
20. Balbirnie engine (coal)
21. Balbirnie paper mill
22. Balbirnie west mill
23. Balbirnie middle mill
24. Sythrum meal mill
25. Balgonie bleachfield
26. Balgonie saw mill
27. Balgonie engine (coal)
28. Milton of Balgonie spinning mill
29. Milton lint or saw mill
30. Balfour spinning mill
31. Balfour corn mill
32. Haugh corn mill
33. Haugh spinning mill
34. Cameron corn mill & distillery
35. Methel spinning mill
36. Kirkland spinning mill
37. Burn corn mill
38. Flint mill
39. Foundry
40. Leven saw and flour mills

This is an appropriate point to recommend Munro's book 'Loch Leven and the River Leven – A Landscape Transformed' which deals in detail with the improvement scheme, of which I have provided only the briefest summary, and also describes the industrial developments along the river in the early 19th century, the great age of watermills. Rather than itemising these mills as I go along, I have copied Table L1 above from Munro, though I augment it with general comments in the text, and identify mills on tributaries in Table L2 at the end of the article. Munro's Table shows that there were 11 mills, mainly producing cloth though including a snuff mill, and 4 bleachfields along the c4km stretch of river between Auchmuir Bridge and the east side of Leslie in 1828, and another 3 mills on tributaries feeding into that stretch. Later maps show that one of the Leslie cloth mills, 'Cant's' in the Table above, was converted to paper production in 1859, and known thereafter variously as Fettykil, Levenbank, and Sapphire; though it closed in the early 21st century, it has recently reopened, still making paper. In fact, paper making has been resilient on the river with enterprises still operational and utilising the water-flow, whereas cloth-making has almost died out.

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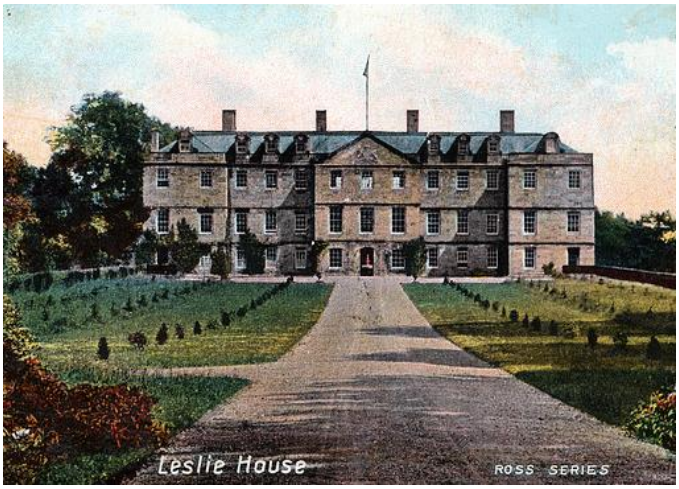
Resuming the journey along the River Leven, Strathendry Castle is a short distance from the left bank, c2km east of Auchmuir Bridge. It is a tower house of no special architectural distinction, built in the early 17th century by the Forrester family and much altered in the 19th century. It is now occupied by the McIver clan organisation for which it serves as a centre. The castle's claim to fame arises from an event in 1726, when Adam Smith, then 3 years-old, but destined to become world-renowned as an economist, (indeed some would argue that he invented the discipline as we know it now) visited his uncle there, with his family. The child was kidnapped by gipsies, albeit that he remained in their hands for a few hours at most, before being dumped when the pursuit got close. The town of Leslie is centred on a single street running east/west along a ridge

above the left bank of the River Leven, and has a population of just over 3000. It is old, and once had the name of Fettykil, meaning 'field by a wood', utilised in more modern times by a mill and a hostelry in the area. The Leslie family acquired the estate containing the village in the 14th century, gave their name to it, and had it created a burgh of barony in 1458. In the same year Sir George Leslie was created Earl of Rothes, and the title is still extant, borne by its 22nd holder, though the earls now reside in South-West England.

The most notable holder of the title was John Leslie, 7th Earl and 1st Duke of Rothes who was born in 1630. He succeeded to the earldom in 1641, and was a strong adherent of King Charles II, who was crowned in Scotland in 1650; Rothes commanded a regiment during the Scots invasion of England which ended disastrously at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. He was captured and imprisoned, but seems to have been treated with remarkable indulgence, as he was released regularly to conduct business in Scotland. However, he had no standing during the Cromwellian years, and it was only after the Restoration that his political career took off. It did so to great effect, so that by 1667, he had been King's Commissioner in Scotland, and was Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, while also an English Privy Councillor. His downfall came about because friendship with the King's most favoured representative in Scotland, the Earl, and later, 1st Duke of Lauderdale had turned to rivalry and enmity. Rothes was by all accounts hugely self-indulgent as regards women, drink and food, though highly intelligent if poorly educated; in 1667, Lauderdale was able to mount a convincing attack on the grounds that Rothes was putting louche pleasures above fulfilling his responsibilities. As compensation for the loss of his effective offices he was appointed Lord Chancellor of Scotland for life, but that role was mainly honorific. Thereafter, the Duke of Lauderdale's authority in Scotland was challenged only by religious dissidents for more than a decade but his hegemony ended in 1680, when James, Duke of York, brother of the King was installed as Lord High Commissioner in Edinburgh. Rothes received his dukedom then, and again became a power in the land after the Duke of York returned to London. However, his life-style caught up with him, and he died of jaundice, probably a symptom of something worse, in Edinburgh, in 1681, an event followed by a sumptuous state funeral, which impoverished the Scottish exchequer for years.



Rothes left his mark on the town of Leslie, because after the eclipse of his power in 1667, he commissioned a mansion which was the grandest in Scotland at the time, not even excluding Holyrood Palace. The main architects were John and Robert Mylne, but Sir William Bruce, of Kinross House was also involved. The building was quadrangular, with four ranges, probably all of 3-storeys, surrounding an inner courtyard. Contemporaries seem to have been particularly impressed by a massive picture gallery in the north range, and by the extensive gardens with terraces and water features. Unfortunately, it survived in its built form for less than a century because a major fire in 1763 gutted most of it. The then earl knocked down the remains of the north, south and east ranges, refurbishing only the west range which had suffered less damage. The house which was still impressive enough, as shown in the mid-20th century postcard above,

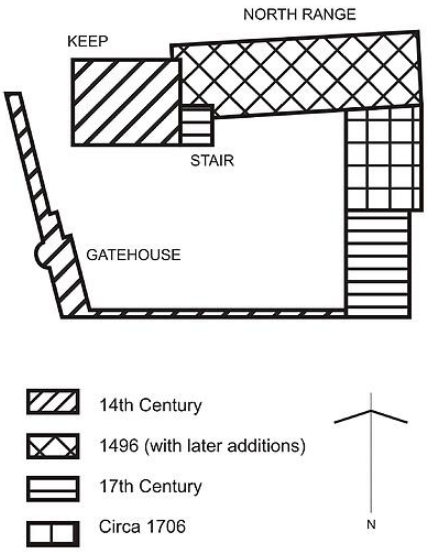
survived in the reduced form, until it was sold by the 19th Earl in the early 20th century. By then, upkeep of large mansions was beyond all but the richest, and Leslie House became an Eventide Home after the 2nd World War, and was in the process of being converted into flats when in 2009, another calamitous fire gutted the building. Since then schemes for refurbishment have been advanced, but as yet none has got underway, and the building is still an empty, roofless shell. Although it is approaching 600 years since Leslie became a burgh, the mansion just described is its oldest building; there are 18th century private houses and public buildings including meeting houses, but none is striking and the impression is of a rather dull, grey little town.

Leslie is on the western outskirts of the new town of Glenrothes which was founded in 1948, and would perhaps have absorbed its much smaller neighbour by now if things had gone fully to plan. The name was chosen mainly to reflect the significance in its locality of the Earls of Rothes, and Glen was added because the River Leven in its valley wound through the area set aside for the development. (Confusion with Rothes in Moray was also thereby avoided). Its genesis was a proposal to transfer almost 4000 miners from the Lanarkshire coalfield to new collieries in central Fife, but it was conceived as a large enough conurbation to house other industries, for example, paper-making. Munro's table, (page 11), shows 3 paper mills in 1828 along the stretch of river within the Glenrothes limits, namely, Auchmuty, Rothes and Balbirnie, and all were still operating at the time of the founding of the new town. Although a number of previously existing settlements, were absorbed, including those associated with the mills, they did not contain any buildings of great interest to an account of a historical journey. The new town buildings have been viewed unenthusiastically by most architectural experts, but high praise is due to those who provide and arrange flowers for parks and the many roundabouts; national prizes have been deservedly won. The photograph above shows Riverside Park, once part of the Leslie House estate, with the River Leven in the foreground.

Initially things went more or less to plan for the town, and the opening of the Rothes Colliery in 1957 was seen as a landmark, securing the mining future of the town. However it proved a great disappointment, plagued by flooding and geological faults, and produced coal for only 8 years. This was a body blow, but the town was re-invented as a centre of light industry, and many foreign companies were persuaded (with the help of government grants) to invest in electronics and other advanced factories; the town became a key part of Scotland's 'Silicon Glen'. In the mid-1970s, the town also took over from Cupar as the administrative centre of Fife, and extensive new offices were provided for the council workers. Since then, the fortunes of the town have been mixed. The original target population of 32000 was revised upwards to 50000 in the 1970s, but the actual population is 38000 at present, having declined slightly in the past few years. The foreign-owned factories have proved very sensitive to world economic conditions, with closures sometimes following the slightest hints of a downturn. The inevitable ill-feeling was exacerbated by the impression that the companies involved had pocketed government grants, and then taken the first opportunity to transfer operations to

countries where wages were lower. However, many medium sized enterprises remain, and employment is boosted by a relatively strong retail sector, and the local government offices, so the number of claimants of job-seeker's allowance is at a historically low level of c1.5%, albeit slightly above the national average.

Markinch is immediately to the east of Glenrothes, on the left bank of the river. Originally an island site, hence the 'inch' part of the name, it is thought to have been an important centre in the Pictish kingdom of Fife. In accordance with that history, the present location of the church, a small hill at the centre of the town, was occupied by a church as early as the 6th century, though nothing nearly as old as that survives. The main part of the present church was built to replace a medieval church at the end of the 18th century, and I shall not disguise my dislike of the large windows in the side walls which for me almost destroy any aura conferred by its situation and the ancient tower at its west end. This artefact is Romanesque, ashlar-built in mid-12th century, square and of 4 stages rising to c22m in height; the octagonal spire which had a pyramidal predecessor was added in the early 19th century, and enhances the overall impression. I obtained the aerial view from the internet rather than using my own ground-level photograph, because in the former, the fine tower dominates the frame. Stob Cross, on a bank above a road just to the north of the church, is a probable survival from the age of the Picts, but its original form and function are unclear as is usual for artefacts from those times. The importance of Markinch declined through the Middle Ages, but the process was arrested when it became a burgh of barony in 1673, and mills on the River Leven provided work from the 18th century onwards. The bottling plant for Haig's Distillery employed c500 for a century before the 1980s, but now the population of c2500 must look for work outside the town, though not necessarily too far away.



Balgonie Castle is near the right bank of the River Leven, c2km downstream from Markinch. The tower (keep) and barmkin with its enclosing wall and gatehouse were built in the 1370s by Sir Thomas Sibbald but apart from a visit by King James IV, nothing much is recorded of its history over the next 2½ centuries, though a north range was added in that period. In 1635, it was purchased by Sir Alexander Leslie, later 1st Earl of Leven; a Field Marshal in the Swedish army and Covenant general during the Civil Wars, though his long involvement in the latter left him only a few years to enjoy the property. The castle remained with his descendants who made some additions as indicated in the schematic alongside, but its general condition deteriorated, perhaps not helped by its temporary occupation by Rob Roy MacGregor in 1715, until it was sold in

1824 to the Balfours of Whittinghame in East Lothian. It continued to decay until recent years when it and the lairdship was acquired by a family called Morris who are attempting to restore the castle. The basement and the hall above are both vaulted, though not internally connected, and the two upper floors are the laird's living quarters. The north range, dating to the 1490s, had basement storage and a hall and private room above. The 1st Earl, and his immediate successors, made significant modifications, and built an east range. Only the tower was roofed when I visited a few years ago and enjoyed a tour guided by the present laird, whose laudable commitment to the restoration project shone through, and 2 very large but docile Irish Wolfhounds. The photograph is a view from the south, showing the keep on the left, and the other ranges to its right.

Sir Alexander Leslie was undoubtedly one of the greatest Scottish soldiers of any age. He was born, out of wedlock in c1580, at Couper Angus, though his father later married his mother, so legitimising him. He joined the Swedish army in c1605, beginning a career lasting for more than 30 years, before he retired a Swedish Field Marshal and knight. He served King Gustavus Adolphus, after whom he named his eldest son, during the 30 Years War in Germany, commanding brigades and wings of the King's armies in famous battles like Lutzen, and led detached forces in campaigns along the Baltic coast with conspicuous success. When he returned to Scotland to take command of the Covenanter's army, he brought guns and cannon for that army supplied in lieu of back pay, and his reputation triggered the return of many Scottish officers from continental armies to join him. He successfully invaded the North of England in 1640, occupying the area north of the Tees for a year until peace was negotiated with the King. In 1643, the English parliament requested Scottish aid in the Civil War, and very early the next year, Leslie led an army of 22000 into Northern England. His reputation suffered, at least with later historians, in July 1644, when the wing of the army he commanded with the aid of Thomas Fairfax was routed at the Battle of Marston Moor by Prince Rupert, and he was forced to flee westwards. In battles of those times, there could be contrary outcomes on different parts of the battlefield, and at Marston Moor success elsewhere turned the battle into a Parliamentary victory. It is also true that in such circumstances, high profile generals were wise to avoid capture once defeat was certain, if they could; Leslie may well have lost his head as a traitor if he had fallen into Royalist hands. As it was, he immediately re-joined the successful Scottish contingent and took an active part in the operations which followed, including the capture of Newcastle.

Leslie continued in command of the Scottish army, first in England, where he received the defeated King Charles I into the Scottish camp in 1647, and then back in Scotland as the nation swung behind King Charles II, and attempted to resist Cromwell. By then he was over 70 years old and his role had become organisational, with the field command devolving on David Leslie, later Lord Newark, though the older man may have been present in some capacity at the disastrous Battle of Dunbar in 1650, and have been forced to flee a battlefield for a second time. He did not give up the struggle, and was still trying to muster Scottish resistance when in August 1651, he was captured near Dundee, taken to London, and imprisoned in the

Tower; a period of house arrest in Northumberland followed, before he was again locked up in the Tower a year later. This time, a plea from the Queen of Sweden to Cromwell was granted, allowing him to return to Northumberland, but only in 1654 was he fully freed to return to Balgonie Castle, where he resided until his death in 1661. He was recorded as calm and self-effacing, but rarely had difficulty in obtaining respect from his subordinate officers and the confidence of his fighting men; of course, his many successful engagements went a long way towards ensuring that. He must have been an exceptional organiser as he put together 4 or 5 Scottish armies in a dozen years, which must give the lie to the suggestion by some contemporaries that he was hardly literate. However, there seems no doubt that he was diminutive, like a number of famous generals, and as a result of wounds sustained in battle, and maybe latterly, of his age, a twisted figure, hence the link with the nursery rhyme which follows.

There was a crooked man, and he walked a crooked mile.

He found a crooked sixpence upon a crooked stile.

He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,

And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

Though there are other interpretations, the most plausible casts Leslie as the crooked man, the Anglo-Scottish border as the stile, and the 'living together' as the treaty between the Scots, and the English Parliament.

A short distance downstream from the ruined castle, is the small village of Milton of Balgonie, which with its equally small partner to the south-west, Coaltown of Balgonie, may originally have grown up to service the castle. Later, they had different roles as the names suggest, and reference to page 11, shows that Milton once housed a cluster of mills, though none operates now, and only street names and mill lades survive. The road leading into Milton from Balgonie Castle crosses the River Leven just south of the village by way of a twin-arch bridge which in part dates back to the 17th century. A source of some frustration to me, because I have been carrying out a project which involves assessing old bridges around the country, but few have proved as difficult to view as that at Milton of Balgonie; for this reason no photograph is forthcoming.

However, a walk down a farm track leading south from Main Street, and across a less interesting bridge over the River Leven, allows the scant remains of Balfour Castle to be viewed, as shown alongside. The barony here gave its name to its owners in the 12th century, and they have remained prominent in the affairs of Fife, and indeed far beyond, ever since. However, their direct male line failed in the late 14th century, and a daughter and the barony were awarded to the Bethunes or Beatons who produced 2 Cardinal-Archbishops of St. Andrews before the Reformation. They built a tower house on a small knoll in the mid-16th century. In the 17th century the tower was incorporated in a larger mansion which eventually came back into the possession of a Balfour of Whittinghame and Balgonie in the 19th century. The mansion, and

with it the tower, were demolished as late as the 1980s, but the destruction was comprehensive, and all that can be seen now is a scatter of low ruins, overgrown with trees and other vegetation, as in the photograph. After two more sinuous bends, by which the River Leven travels c1½km east, it is joined on its right bank by its main tributary, the River Ore. I shall now travel westwards to the source of the latter stream and follow it to the confluence.

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At first sight, it is an easy task to locate the source of the River Ore at the beginning of a short stub of a stream flowing into the west end of Loch Ore by way of a small entry pool; the grid reference is NT151 956, and the point is just below the 100m contour. However, reference to any modern map suggests that this choice is rather peculiar; it would have seemed logical to have defined the source as the outlet at the east end of Loch Ore, (as is done for the River Leven), but if not, the longer stream entering the aforementioned entry pool, the Kelty Burn, might have been claimed as the upstream extension of the River Ore. Reference to NLS historic maps complicates the picture further. In William Roy's map of the area, produced in c1750, the River Ore is depicted as transitioning from the Kelty Burn further west, near the village of Kelty, and then as flowing through a much smaller Loch Ore, without any sign of an entry pool. It is known that during the 1790s, Loch Ore was drained, with the aim of providing agricultural land of good quality. Later maps show the River Ore fed by many ditches, flowing through the reclaimed area. The scheme bankrupted its projector, and was never more than a partial success, with much of the area remaining waterlogged all through the 19th century, and up to the middle of the 20th century.

The coal field here was exploited in a big way from the middle of the 19th century, with later 19th century maps showing many deep mine shafts. Railways opened to move the coal out; the Lochore Branch Line, carried by an embankment crossing the area once occupied by Loch Ore, dates to 1862, and only closed in 1970. Subsidence is frequently a by-product of extensive deep coal mining, and the land sank where Loch Ore had been. During the decade after the early 1930s, a new larger Loch Ore appeared, occupying 110 hectares; water lapped around the railway embankment. Once again the River Ore flows through the loch, and the disused embankment is now separated into islands, as can be seen in the aerial view from the west. Spoil heaps in the area have been demolished and general industrial detritus removed in a successful reclamation, to create a country park, offering aquatic and land-based pursuits.

As with accounts of other rivers, I shall say something of the Kelty Burn, as an important feeder stream before starting the journey along the River Ore. It is formed at the junction of Lochornie Burn, which rises on Roscobie Muir, c3km to the west, and Pieres Burn which rises a bit further north, both in managed forest on the south side of the Cleish Hill range. After flowing~~Another~~ 1km eastwards, ~~takes~~ the Kelty Burn enters~~into~~

Blair Adam Wood, which is~~. The wood was~~ part of an~~the~~ estate purchased in 1731 by William Adam, an acclaimed architect in Scotland, and father of the renowned Robert Adam. The former built the mansion at the centre of the property, a surprisingly modest building, seen in the foreground of the aerial photograph. and he and his descendants laid out gardens, parkland and woodland walks. As can be seen the house has grown over time into something of a cluttered complex. The burn then flows east under the M90 to reach the large village of Kelty. Although the first settlement, which grew up to provide services to those travelling along the ancient precursor of that motorway, dates to the 16th century, it expanded greatly in the 19th century, when it became a centre of the coal mining industry in the area, and was connected into the rail network; its population reached almost 10000. The 20th century has seen the removal of almost all Kelty's assets; the railway station closed in 1930, the motorway bypassed the town in 1969, and the deep coal mines in the locality closed by the 1990s, some exhausted after disappointingly short operating lives. It is scarcely surprising that the population has decreased to c6000, and many of them now commute to work in Edinburgh.

The Kelty Burn enters the village with which it shares a name, at the northern extremity; here is a mix of pleasant houses, some 19th century, others much more modern. In the earlier period, a lade drawn from the burn fed water to a saw mill just upstream of a bridge which carried an extension of Kelty Main Street over the water. When the bridge is viewed from a bank of the burn as in the photograph, striations on the underside of the single, semi-circular arch show that it has been widened, probably on more than one occasion; it may have begun life only 2.5m wide, though it is now c6m wide. The fact that the original bridge has most probably been sandwiched between later extensions explains why it looks as though it was built later than the 17th century, in spite of evidence to the contrary. The Kelty Burn flows more or less directly east from the bridge to enter Loch Ore; taken with Lochornie Burn, it is 7½km long. From the rather curious starting point of the River Ore to its exit at the east end of the loch, is another 2½km, so according to some systems of river measurement, 10km in total could be added to the length of the River Ore, but I shall not do so. I shall add only the 2½km accounting for its passage through the loch, to the 27km normally quoted.

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Near the left bank of the re-emerging river is the ruin of Lochore Castle, at the entrance to Lochore Meadows Country Park, viewed from the north in the photograph. The first castle on the site was a motte and bailey built by Sir Duncan de Lochore in 1160; the property passed by marriage to Adam de Valance before the end of the 13th century, and he rebuilt the castle with a tower on the motte, surrounded by a barmkin, and renamed it Inchgall Castle. The castle is not known to have seen action but passed through a number of hands before being bought by a local family of Malcolms in 1656. They changed the name of the castle to 'Lochore' but chose to build a new mansion, now also ruined, rather than living there, and its decline towards its present state began then. The 4-storey tower was 10.6m square with walls 2.7m thick; unusually the basement was not vaulted, but with a hall above, and private rooms in the upper storeys, the internal arrangements were otherwise conventional. There are traces of domestic buildings in the barmkin (fortified courtyard) which was surrounded by a 1m thick wall with mural towers and a gateway to the east.

The castle is at the south-western edge of the township comprising, from north to south, Ballingry, Lochore, Crosshill, and Glencraig, once separate settlements but fused by the expansion which took place when coal-mining took off in the 19th century. Apart from a few remnants of a medieval parish church in Ballingry, there is nothing old to be seen, and most of the housing built for a population of 5500 is modern and functional at best. Dominating the scene is the Benarty Hill ridge, immediately north and west of Ballingry, rising to 356m but steep enough to look higher; Loch Leven is immediately to the north of the ridge. After flowing through Crosshill, the River Ore swings south and almost immediately receives a right bank tributary, the Lochfitty Burn. This stream drains Loch Fitty, to the north-east of Dunfermline, which was the subject of some controversy, a few years ago. A scheme to drain the loch and surface-mine coal was approved on the understanding that the loch would be restored after the operation. Those who used the loch and its surrounds for leisure purposes objected, and the project was abandoned. It remains to note that there was a 19th century corn mill, Inchgall, on the stretch between Crosshill and the junction with the Lochfitty Burn, and 2 corn mills and a saw mill on the latter watercourse; the name 'Milton' in the former village suggest that there must have been a mill there at one time.

The River Ore returns to an eastwards course, and passes north of another mining town, Lochgelly. Although there was a hamlet here in the 17th century, the town developed in the early 18th century to provide accommodation for miners who worked in the pits opening up all around, and the railway arrived soon afterwards. There was other industry, including an ironworks, but mine closures which began in the 1950s had a severe impact on a town, which by then had a population of 7500. To its west Lochgelly runs into the largest town of the West Fife coalfield, Cowdenbeath, which may have originated as a stopping point on the old Edinburgh/Perth road, but was transformed by coal in the 19th century. A boom town of sorts, if hardly deserving of the soubriquet, 'the Chicago of Fife', but such exaggeration seems to be a speciality of the town;

the football team, which more often than not struggles in the lowest Scottish league, has the local nickname ‘the Blue Brazil’! The population reached 25000 when mining was at its height but is now 18000. These towns were built for a purpose in relatively modern times, and the buildings reflect that, so it is not intended as disparagement to say that this account is going to pass them by fairly rapidly.

The Lochgelly Burn passes through Cowdenbeath and powered a bleachfield there in the 19th century, then continues to the west end of Loch Gelly, a shallow stretch of water of area 60 ha. The name meaning ‘Loch of Shining Water’ may be more apposite now, but when surrounded by spoil tips, and open cast excavations, a century ago, it must have seemed ironical above all else. The eastern outflow from the loch, seems to alternate its name between Gelly Burn and Den Burn; two mills, Powguild Mill and Shaw’s Mill are on an east-flowing stretch, before the stream turns north. The latter appears on old maps as a corn mill, but the former’s type is unspecified, though as it is shown as early as the mid-18th century, that was most likely its role also. Here, the stream enters Carden Den, flowing between tree-covered banks of varying height and steepness. The wooded area, shown in the photograph, was part of a royal hunting forest as early as the 12th century. High above the right bank of the stream is Carden Tower, shown alongside in an old postcard, found on the ‘Geocaching’ website. Apparently it was a conventional, if small, castle built by the Martins of Midhope in the early 16th century. The postcard is presumably no more than a century old, yet according to recent photographs, the ruin has collapsed almost completely, with only foundations to be seen, and they may be visible only because they were uncovered by a recent archaeological project.

The Den is crossed by the A92 trunk road a short distance north of the tower, and winds north and west, following the stream into the centre of the small town of Cardenden. This hardly existed until the railway came through in the 1840s, and it was its owners who selected the name of Cardenden for a station there. Once again, coal, and the need to house miners, provided the motivation for the development of the town, and its contiguous neighbours Auchterderran and Bowhill; together they now have a population of 5000. The former has a longer history, suggested by its18th century parish church, with an aisle and outbuilding from a century

earlier; it is likely that foundations of a medieval church lie below the present building. Carden Corn Mill is shown on Roy's map of c1750, so predated the town which grew up around it; the Gelly Burn joins the River Ore just outside Cardenden. Immediately downstream on the parent river is Parsons Mill which also seems to date from before 1750, but then it probably ground corn rather than treating flax as later maps suggest. From here the river flows east, keeping close company with the Dunfermline/Thornton railway line, opened in 1849, and still carrying trains, though the station at Thornton, 7½km east of Cardenden, has been moved in recent years. The river is passing through good arable land, but it is still within the bounds of the Fife Coalfield, so there are disused mine shafts aplenty in the area. On this stretch, Roy shows a mill at Cluny, presumably a corn mill, and there is a saw mill on 19th century maps at Cluny Bridge, along with flax 'factories' at Redford and Strathore. Thornton was 'made' by the railway, in the 19th century, and is at the junction of the track already referred to and the main line north from Edinburgh; though somewhat diminished now there is a large freight marshalling yard, and its station serves Glenrothes though it is hardly well placed to do so.

The River Ore passes south and east of Thornton village, and once it has done so, is joined on the left bank by its longest tributary, the Lochty Burn. The stream rises on Benarty Hill, already encountered between Loch Leven and Loch Ore, and flows for 16km eastwards to the junction; it is a curiosity that the 3 rivers, Leven, Ore and Lochty Burn follow roughly parallel courses, quite close together for a considerable distance, before they eventually meet. The other curiosity concerning the Lochty Burn is that one of its feeder streams has been recorded as emanating from a spring on the southern slopes of Benarty Hill, called Gruoch's Well. Better known as Lady Macbeth, Queen Gruoch's reputation was probably traduced as much as that of her husband in Shakespeare's great tragic play, but we know little for sure about her. She is linked to no other geographical feature, though it is known that the King and Queen both made grants to St. Serf's Monastery in Loch Leven, a few kilometres to the north of the spring. Moving forward almost a thousand years, (the royal couple probably married in 1033), the burn can be followed east through Ballingry and it arrives at a massive open cast mine called Westfield Colliery. Coal extraction began in 1956, reaching a production rate of 20000 tonnes per week; not surprisingly perhaps, the site was claimed to contain the biggest hole in Europe. Much of the area became water-filled, though the parts that did not, predictably are eyesores. Production ended in 1998, and it might have been hoped that the authorities would have been ready with plans to reclaim the land, as they have done successfully in other worked-out parts of the coalfield. Unfortunately, this did not happen, though as I write, an ambitious plan to redevelop the site has just been approved. The village of Kinglassie is a short distance to the east, and has a long history, though the only tangible survival from its earliest days is a segment of an 8th century Pictish cross. The village began to expand as a small weaving centre in the late 18th century, but as with most everywhere else in the area, it was as a home for coal miners that its population rose to the present 1500. Downstream from here, the Lochty Burn skirts the south edge of Glenrothes, before joining the River Ore; a 19th century bleachfield was just upstream of that point, otherwise the burn seems to have driven no water wheel. The two streams enclose the rectangle containing Thornton Golf Course, on more than 3 sides, and although I have never played there, the satellite view suggests that a cautious approach will be wise, if a golfer wishes to end a round playing the same ball that he or she started with.

19th century maps show a Waulk Mill on the left bank of the River Ore, immediately downstream of the junction, and after another bend, it is crossed by New Bridge or Barrel Brig, the former name being in use in

1725. However, the pathway which incorporates the bridge is called Queen Mary's Road, in commemoration of its alleged use by the ill-fated monarch to travel from the Royal Palace of Falkland to Wemyss Castle where she met Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, in 1565, before her disastrous 2nd marriage. It is just possible that the bridge shown alongside, stood then, but it more likely had a predecessor, perhaps only a narrow footbridge, which was replaced in c1700, to allow coal to be carried to the coast. The absence of parapets leads to its being termed a packhorse bridge, but its width, c3m, and the paved surface of the carriageway suggest a cart bridge.

The River Ore is now on its last reach travelling generally north-east to its junction with the River Leven, 3½km downstream. It passes between fields of corn in close company with the now defunct Leven Railway, which opened in 1852, and carried passengers and freight until the late 1960s. Its death-throes have been quite prolonged, and one short stretch may still be carrying coal from an open cast development. There are proposals to reopen the line, not least because the Leven-mouth townships, which we are fast approaching, make up the most populous conurbation in Scotland unconnected to the rail network, but as yet there is no sign of anything happening on the ground.

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The River Leven flow rate is increased by almost 50% by the contents of the River Ore, and fortunately the days when this was water heavily polluted by mining operations are past. Windygates, a village on the left bank, is now an outlier for the Leven-mouth townships referred to above, but it was for long an important road junction, and staging post between Kirkcaldy and Dundee or St. Andrews. It impinged on my consciousness as a child in the 1950s, because I remember the exceptionally long straight for those times which got the family car there, along the A915 from Kirkcaldy. We were on our way for our annual holiday in Lundin Links, a village just along the coast from Leven. Industry came to Windygates in the 19th century; Haugh Mills ground corn, and spun flax, and there was also a bleachfield beside the river, while the Haig family had opened Cameronbridge whisky distillery in 1824. Now the mills are closed and the village has been bypassed, but the distillery is the largest of its type in Europe. After many mergers, the plant is owned by the drinks conglomerate, Diageo, and has a key role in the production of iconic brands of gin and vodka, as well as whisky.

Over its final stretch, the River Leven separates the burgh of Leven on its left bank from Methil and Buckhaven on the right bank, though the tendency now seems to be to group the towns as Leven-mouth with a population of 38000. Leven achieved burgh-status in the early 17th century, but a search for any buildings remotely as old as this is likely to be unavailing. In fact, there is a fragment of a medieval church in Scoonie graveyard to the north of the town, and a far older artefact found there, is now in the Museum of Scotland, but for the rest it is 19th and 20th century houses and retail establishments. Close to the said graveyard is the

Scoonie Burn, which flows from there past and through Leven Golf Course to reach the Firth of Forth. One of the older golf clubs in the world, beginning life in 1820, as Innerleven Golfing Society, they originally played on the right bank of the river mouth, effectively in Methil, but in 1867 moved to Leven Links. As I remember from the 1970s, the aforementioned Scoonie Burn only featured on one hole, the last, where it flowed just in front of the green, but even amongst the best amateur golfers of the day, it caused havoc. Sadly, the improvements to golf equipment that have effectively shortened every golf hole since then, must have drawn the teeth of this fine test, and the good modern-day player will wonder why it was ever so highly rated. Leven Golfing Society and its links partner along the coast, Lundin Golf Club occupied the same ground after 1867, with members starting from their own clubhouses at opposite ends of the links; it was not unusual at that time for a number of clubs to play over one course, and a few still have playing rights on the Old Course at St. Andrews, including the R & A, but normally the starting point was the same for all. It was probably the increasing popularity of the game, that in 1909 led Lundin Golf Club to acquire a lease on land, in part occupied by Lundin Lady's Golf Club, on the landward side of the East Coast Railway Line, and to employ the great James Braid to design a new course on it and their part of the original course; part of the deal was that Braid also designed a new lady's course on land further inland. At the same time, Leven Golf Club acquired additional land which allowed them to extend their part of the original course to 18 holes, so the separation appears to have been fairly amicable; once a year, the two clubs still play a competition on the 19th century lay-out.

When I first progressed from the afore-mentioned Lady's Course onto the Lundin Golf Course as a boy in the late-1950s, the East Coast railway line with Lundin Links station was an unmissable feature, and its presence as a course boundary, a constraint on a significant proportion of the holes. The Fife Coast Express ran once a week then between Glasgow and Crail, though the term express seemed a misnomer as it stopped at many a Fife village on the route. It ceased to operate some years before 1966, when the line between Leven and St. Andrews closed and the track was quickly uplifted; Leven and Lundin Golf Clubs acquired the land occupied by the railway line, and allowed its recolonization by grass, heather, and scrub. When I returned to playing at the two courses in the 1970s, I was surprised to find that the removal of a railway line passing through the middle did not seem an unalloyed blessing. My memory is hazy as to how Leven Golf Club dealt with the change because I played there less, but on Lundin Golf Course, where the railway had been a more prominent feature, it was replaced with a row of white posts constituting what amounted by then to artificial out of bounds areas within the course. Golf purists rightly abhor such devices, and perhaps things are different now, with other solutions found for safety or other issues which might have arisen.

As can be seen from the Table on page 11, there were many mills and foundries deriving power from the River Leven, along its final stretch in the 19th century. The importance of the port at the river mouth had grown after the provision of a quay in 1833, and to cope with increased demand, a sizeable dock, on the left (Leven) bank was dug out in 1880; a branch from the Thornton to Leven railway was added to carry freight, mainly coal, to and from the dockside. However the enterprise struggled commercially from the start, with the task of dredging to keep the waterway clear of silt proving unaffordable and it was bought out only 3 years later by the Wemyss estate. They were engaged in enhancing the dock at Methil, and saw an extension of the branch to Leven dock, as the best way of linking their facility into the rail network. This was done by way of a girder bridge over the River Leven by 1887, when the enlarged Methil dock opened, though there were to be many

disputes between the Wemyss estate and various rail operating companies in the future. However, this was the death-knell for Leven dock which ceased to trade before 1910, and was filled in not long afterwards. The demise of the mills and the decline of coal-mining in the 20th century had a serious impact on Leven, but its fine beach proved at least a partial salvation, as tourism thrived in that period, though the town was never able to capitalise fully by providing attractions like a pier or pleasure gardens, presumably because of a lack of resources.

Before ending this account, a few words on the other townships of Leven-mouth are appropriate. In the 17th century, Methil, which had originated as a settlement around a 12th century church at Methilmill on the right bank of the River Leven, some distance from the coast, acquired a second growth point around a beach harbour. The future lay with this settlement which grew until the events noted above, built on by later developments, gave it the large deep water harbour shown in the Forth Ports photograph above. The port thrived on annual coal trans-shipments above 3 million tonnes in the years up to the end of the 2nd World War, but thereafter as mining declined so did the port. Most of the plethora of rail connections, many to local mines, were lifted and part of Dock 3, (on the left in the photograph) was filled in. For periods since then, the port has profited from supplying oil rigs in the North Sea, and even assembling them, and import of grain for the distillery at Windygates, remains important, but the prosperity of the town has certainly been reduced and its appearance has suffered. Unfortunately, the third main township in the Leven-mouth grouping has also seen more prosperous days. Buckhaven was a centre of weaving and fishing in the 19th century, but coal-mining and shipment of coal took over. Buckhaven still has a robust coherence, with solid properties, but needs a path to the future, like its companion townships.

I left the River Leven on the brink of completing its journey, and this it does, entering the Firth of Forth, as shown in the photograph alongside. To recap, it has flowed 26km from the sluice gates in the south-east corner of Loch Leven, and discharges a mean flow rate of 85400 gallons/minute; in this regard it is comfortably Fife's largest river. I must acknowledge again the major omission in this account which does not treat the flora and fauna of the river, other than as an occasional aside like the swans in the last photograph. On the other hand, I hope there is sufficient to whet appetites to find out more about the buildings and townships, industries, and people associated with the river.

Table L2. Mills on Feeders and Tributaries of the River Leven

Mills are ordered from the source of the stream; tributaries are ordered from the source of the stream which they feed. Left Bank tributaries are denoted (L), Right Bank tributaries, (R), Continuations, (c).

Colour code for mill type; Corn, Grain, Flour, Meal, Barley; Textiles; Paper; Sawmills, Coopers; Foundries; Special inc. Snuff, Flint, Gunpowder; Unknown:

For mills with different functions at different times, more than one colour is used. BF ≡ Bleachfield

Stream	Parent	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7
Gairney W.	Loch Leven	Maw						
L. Glow Outlet	Gairney W.	Nivingston	Cleish	Downhill				
S. Queich W.	Loch Leven	E. Fossoway	Cambo (1)	Cambo (2)	Bellfield (1)	Bellfield (2)	Bellfield (3)	Bellfield (4)
S. Queich W. cont.	Loch Leven	Kinross	Kinross BF	Cashmere				
N. Queich W.	Loch Leven	Touchie	Milnathort (1)	Milnathort (2)				
Fochy B.	N. Queich W.	Nether Craigo	Meadow Hill	Milnathort (3)	Milnathort (4)	Milnathort (5)		
Arnot B.	R. Leven	Arnot						
Lothrie B.	R. Leven	Holl	Ballingall	Whinstone				
R. Ore	R. Leven	Inchgall	Parsons	Cluny	Cluny Bridge	Redford	Strathore	Ore
R. Ore cont.	R. Leven	Mackie's	Thornton					
Kelty B. (c)	R. Ore	Kelty						
Lochfitty B.	R. Ore	Lassodie	Rough Hill					
Gelly B.	R. Ore	Beith BF	Powguild	Shaws (1)	Shaws (2)	Carden		
Lochty B.	R. Ore	Lochty BF						
Kennoway B.	R. Leven	Auchtermarnie	Greenbank	Den	Kings			
Markinch B.	Kennoway B.	Slate Pencil	W. Conland	Balfarg	Brunton			

In Table L2 there are a total of 52 mills, of which 31 were corn mills, 12 were textile mills or bleachfields, 9 were saw mills, 1 was a slate pencil mill, and the function of 1 is unknown; the numbers do not quite add up because 2 mills had different roles at different times.

In Munro's Table (L1), there are 43 mills, of which 9 were corn mills, 21 were textile mills or bleachfields, 3 were saw mills, 3 were paper mills, 1 was a snuff mill, and others had roles in mines and a foundry.

So the totals for the River Leven Catchment are 95 mills, of which 40 were corn mills, 33 were textile mills or bleachfields, 12 were saw mills, 3 were paper mills, 2 were special, 1 was a foundry, and 6 were unknown.