

BRIDGE OF ALLAN. 'QUEEN OF SCOTTISH SPAS' ITS NINETEENTH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT AS A HEALTH RESORT

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The nineteenth century saw the rise to popularity of many Scottish resorts and districts. Some were coastal, others inland; some rather select, others more popular. Amongst those firmly on the tourist map was Bridge of Allan, praised highly in the widely-read Guidebooks - Murray's *Handbook for Scotland* (1894 edition) calls it "a watering-place, very popular, especially in spring on account of its sheltered situation and its saline waters"; Baddley's *Through Guide to Scotland* (1903) - in similar vein, "one of the favourite inland watering places of Scotland . . . those who wish to devote some time to this borderline of the Highlands may find it more enjoyable headquarters than Stirling"; Black's *Picturesque Tourist* (1873) - enthusiastic, "this beautiful watering place". Locally published handbooks were not to be outdone - Miller's *Handbook of Central Scotland* (1883) claimed it was the "Queen of Scottish spas, which is yearly becoming more and more a fashionable watering-place with its genial and unvarying atmosphere."

The development of Bridge of Allan as a health and tourist resort is, therefore, a significant one in the history of tourism in Scotland. The analysis that follows looks firstly at the discovery of the mineral springs which brought a hitherto obscure village to wider attention, then at the development of the resort and its facilities, and finally at the signs in the late nineteenth century of a decline in its popularity.

The transformation of Bridge of Allan needs to be set firmly in the context of the rise of tourism in the early nineteenth century. If there is a starting date for the emergence of tourism in Scotland as something to be enjoyed by large numbers of people rather than the travelling of the intrepid few, it is 1810 when the publication of *The Lady of the Lake* set off a flood of visitors to Loch Katrine and the Trossachs. Sir John Sinclair congratulated Walter Scott on his having increased the number of visitors in that vicinity "beyond measure" (1), and tried to persuade him to write a sequel *The Lady of the Sea* to be set in Caithness in the hope that it would inspire a similar tourist boom there! In fact, though there is no doubt that a high proportion of visitors from 1810 onwards did travel through Scotland with Scott in hand, interest had already begun to grow prior to then, particularly while the prospects for travel on the Continent were blighted by the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Some had been drawn north by scenery and the search for the picturesque, others for sport - fishing and shooting -, and while most had been the top drawer of society, the flow was beginning both to increase in scale and to broaden in terms of social composition.