

Remember the great gale of 1953? How could I forget it? I was twelve years old and living at Lochnagar Distillery. On the morning of 31st Jan. at approx. 10.30 am, I was despatched to George Strachan's shop at Easter Balmoral for some messages. This meant taking a path of some 400 yds. through a mature wood of Scots Pine & Larch. There was a light covering of snow and a light wind but when I emerged from the shop it was into a different world. The roar of the wind was deafening and I had scarcely entered the wood when a tree fell in front of me. I didn't hear it fall for the noise of the wind but felt the impact through my feet. I tumbled in a panic but another came down across the first. I ran a gauntlet of some twenty falling trees, absolutely terrified, climbing over some and crawling underneath others. The most frightening thing was being unable to hear them falling for the wind was absolutely screaming through the trees by now. I was almost out of the wood in site of home, when a huge larch came down alongside me and one of the branches ripped the jacket off my back. Next morning when all was quiet again, it was easy to trace the tortuous route I'd taken by the trail of discarded groceries.

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