

## INVEREY

GRAHAM EWEN

The origins of the village of Inverey are lost in the past. The lands of Inverey and Glen Ey belonged to the Farquarsons of Inverey. They had a castle in Inverey the remains of which can just be seen, behind, and to the right of Mains of Inverey. It was built around 1640 and was a long narrow building. The best known of the Farquharsons was John Farquharson, a staunch Jacobite, otherwise known as the Black Colonel. He was forced to hide from Government troops after the Battle of Killiecrankie and chose the spot in the gorge of the River Ey which is still called the Colonel's Bed. The Government troops, led by a General McKay destroyed his castle but did not find the Black Colonel. He was later pardoned.

Near the castle was a chapel dedicated to the 'Seven Maidens' but no trace of it remains. Behind the castle and nearer to the bank of the River Ey is found the remains of an old graveyard which has no readable gravestones. Perhaps the chapel was sited here. An original letter from Peter Farquharson stated that his father, 'the Black Colonel' was buried at the chapel of St Maurice, Inverey. It seems likely that the chapel of the Seven Maidens had later been rededicated to this saint.

There was also at the east end of the village a hanging tree, which still survives. The most common reason for hangings was apparently cattle stealing, the last man hanged for this offence being one by the name of Lamont.

The lands of the Farquharsons of Inverey were purchased by the Earl of Fife in the 1780's. His descendants later bought Dalmore, as the lands on the north side of the river were then called. In order to pursue their hunting interests they built a shooting lodge now known as Old Mar Lodge which occupied the site of the present building. Old Mar Lodge was later extensively damaged by the Muckle Spate of 1829, and a new lodge was built on a site just above the road to the west of Corriemulzie Bridge.

The village is divided into two parts, Muckle or Meikle Inverey which is the part lying on the east side of the River Ey and Inverey Beg or Little Inverey, being the part on the west side of that river. The first accurate statistical information about the village is contained in the 1841 census. At that time the population of the village was 137, living in a total of 39 houses, most of these being in Muckle Inverey. At this time Muckle Inverey had a row of houses on both sides of the road. Only 38 of the population are described as being employed and of these 26 were farmers or farm labourers and 6 were wrights. There were also a weaver, a tailor, a dyker, a contractor, a miller and a sawer. The meal mill was situated in the lower part of Glen Ey in between the Knock and the sheep pens. There was also a saw mill nearby but it was not in the village.

The houses were all of the small cottage type with low walls either built





Extract from Ordnance Survey Map based on Survey of 1869



with stone and lime or simply of dry stone with small windows and neatly thatched roofs. There was also a large number of outhouses which were mostly built of dry stone and often roughly thatched. The road through the village was unsurfaced and just wide enough for a horse and cart. Boundaries were either dykes of dry stone, or wooden fences of the post and rail or paling type, no wire being used in their construction. Early photographs show stacks of peat beside the houses indicating the importance of this fuel at the time.

During the next forty years the population of the village declined slowly as the figures below show.

	Population	Houses
1841	137	39
1861	122	33
1871	104	22
1881	98	24

The biggest loss came in Muckle Inverey as by this time there were twelve inhabited houses in each part of the village. There were 50 people living in Muckle Inverey and 48 in Little Inverey and so the two halves of the village were now roughly the same size. Inverey Cottage, now called the Knock is the only house listed as uninhabited. By this time almost all the houses on the south side of the road in Muckle Inverey had fallen into ruin.

The structure of the population shows some signs of depopulation having already started, and with perhaps worse to come. There were 27 children of school age or below, which is perhaps healthy enough, but only 18 in the 15-30 age range, an indication that young adults were leaving the village in some numbers.

In 1851 there were a total of 49 people employed, exactly half the population. The details are as follows.

Employed		Others	
Estate labourers/farm servants	17	School children	18
Farmers/crofters	14	Under school age	9
Domestic servants	7	Wives	9
Gamekeepers	3	No status given	6
Tailors	2	Retired	6
Schoolmaster	1	Pauper	1
Gardener	1		
Taxidermist	1		
Horseman	1		
Carpenter	1		
Sewing Maid	1		



As in 1841 by far the biggest employer was farming, but the growing importance of deer shooting is reflected in the fact that there are now three gamekeepers and a taxidermist. His name was John Lamont and it was said that his showroom with its fine collection of stag's heads was well worth a visit. The farms varied from 1 acre to 15 acres in size, the total arable land for the 14 separate holdings being 86½ acres. There would have been of course a large amount of rough pasture land available but the acreage is not listed. It is recorded that the flat strip of ground in the lower part of Gleney yielded good crops of grain. The same writer also mentions seeing a fair number of cattle grazing slightly further up the glen.

As in 1841 the main language of the village was Gaelic with 87 of the population able to speak it. All the children who were of school age (5-14) are described scholars, a change from 1841 where one child of 7 years old is described as an agricultural labourer. It is however beyond doubt that education was available in Inverey from an early date. It is recorded that John Lamont of Corriemulzie attended a school held there between 1810 and 1817.

As for the glens round about it seems that they were almost as empty in 1881 as they are today. Gleney itself had one inhabited house at Aucherrie occupied by a gamekeeper and two of a family. Altanour Lodge was uninhabited. Glen Derry had two gamekeepers, one with two family, residing at Derry Lodge and Luibeg. The Dee/Geldie valley had two gamekeepers, one listed under Glendee with two lodgers, the other at Geldie with five family. The latter had a visitor at the time of census - a coal miner from Lanarkshire. Geldie Lodge was uninhabited. Bynack Lodge was occupied by a gamekeeper and three family. The glens above Inverey therefore had a total population at this time of 20 people. There is no mention of Corroun in the Census. There is a record that the building was roofed in 1883 so perhaps it was not habitable in 1881, or perhaps it was too remote for the enumerator. There is no doubt that in earlier times there were many more people in these glens as the numerous ruins in Glen Derry, Glen Dee and Glen Ey testify. One of the best examples is a hamlet of 8 houses found on the east bank of the River Ey not far beyond the gorge, where there is a well preserved example of a lime kiln.

Around the time the Club was formed a start was made to improving or rebuilding the houses of Inverey and replacing thatched roofs with slated ones. In 1893 only three or four thatched houses remained in Muckle Inverey and five in Little Inverey.

The whereabouts of the early school mentioned in 1805 are not known but in 1869 the school was certainly on the site now known as the Old Schoolhouse. On November 19th 1883 another school opened in Inverey - Inverey Roman Catholic School. The records of the original school, which then became the Protestant School have been lost, but the school continued in existence until it was closed in 1914, when there were 11 pupils. The



records of the Catholic School survive. The Duke and Duchess of Fife showed considerable interest in the school and visited it annually and distributed sweets to the children. In October 1887 the school was closed for a few days on account of sickness among the children, and in May 1894 for three weeks because of a measles epidemic. Other epidemics followed - a sign of those times I suppose. The school roll slowly declined through the 20th century, until it finally closed on October 30th 1947, when there were only five pupils.

New Mar Lodge at Corriemulzie was destroyed by fire in the summer of 1895 and construction of the present Mar Lodge building commenced in October of that year. Construction was completed in 1898. The suspension bridge between the Lodge and the village was built in 1897 and Victoria Bridge in 1905. The falling population, as we have seen already led also to a drop in the number of houses in the village and it is recorded that houses were demolished in Inverey in 1902, 1905 and 1909.

Muir Cottage, at that time called Moor Cottage, was originally sited on the opposite side of the road to the present site. In 1881 it was described as a farm of six acres arable. This consisted of the triangular field which still exists to the west of the present building, and a square field of similar size on the opposite side of the road. The original cottage had a bench mark on the north-east corner of the building, which gives the exact height above sea-level as 1144 feet. In the 1869 map the hillside opposite is shown as rough pasture, but all the area to the left was wooded. The present enclosure on the north side of the road was already there apparently occupied by outhouses. The original building on the south side of the road was destroyed by fire in May 1911, and the steading or part thereof was converted into a dwelling house. This is the reason for the house 'sitting' gable end to the road, instead of 'front' to the road as all the other houses in the vicinity are.

On the south side of the road in Muckle Inverey is a monument which, as a boy I always thought was a war memorial, but in fact it was erected in memory of the John Lamont mentioned earlier in this article. He was really a native of Coirriemulzie, rather than Inverey, but he did receive his earlier education in the village. In 1817 he went to a Scottish seminary in Ratisbon, Bavaria, and continued his education there. He later became Astronomer Royal of Bavaria and was known there as Johann von Lamont. The memorial was erected by the Deeside Field Club and was unveiled by H.R.H. Duchess of Fife in 1934.

It is not possible to trace the decline in population from 1881 to the present day because the census records are confidential for 100 years. There are however records available for the school roll at the Roman Catholic School which suggest a gradual decline over the period in question. The figures of course include pupils from outwith the village. In 1884 there were 28 pupils and to this figure would need to be added the unknown roll of the Protestant School. By 1928, when it was the only school, the roll was 23. It



was 18 in 1933, 16 in 1939 and only 5 in 1947. The main reason for the decline in population was, no doubt, the break up of the old system of small-holding agriculture, which started in the late nineteenth century and is now complete today.

Maggie Gruer became famous for the hospitality she extended to climbers and hill walkers in the period prior to the Second World War. However many other residents offered accommodation to visitors, and at the turn of the century no fewer than 13 of the houses in Inverey were offering such accommodation. It was only available, however, in the early part of the summer as the villagers were not allowed to take in lodgers during the shooting season.

There was considerable activity in the area during the Second World War. A lumber camp was established on the bank of the River Luibeg, near its confluence with the River Dee. Canadian lumberjacks were brought across to cut down much of the woodland in the locality, to supply timber, much needed for the war effort. Some traces of this activity can still be seen, for example, the remains of a weir across the river, which can be seen from the Derry Road. They built a wooden road bridge across the Dee about a quarter of a mile west of Muir Cottage, which became known as the Canadian Bridge. It survived for many years after the war and provided a useful short cut for walkers going from Inverey to Derry.

At the time the Club acquired Muir in 1950 most of the houses in Inverey were still occupied, and it was with some reluctance that the estate agreed to grant the club a lease of the property. The factor felt that he might need the building to house workers to replant the woods which had been felled during the Second World War. The building was in fact, at that time, temporarily occupied by three men who were working on the construction of the fish-ladder (now defunct) at the falls on the River Luibeg. It seems likely that the population of the village at this time would have been around 20 people. There was still some arable farming practised and it was possible to purchase milk and eggs locally.

When the club acquired Muir there was still no public electricity supply to the village. Lighting was provided by oil wick and tilley lamps. Before long a calor gas lighting system was installed at Muir, to be replaced by electricity when this became available in the mid fifties. Over the years the road from Braemar has been widened and improved and a telephone kiosk was provided in the village. The woodland at Little Inverey was at last replanted in the early sixties.

The last thirty years or so have seen the decline in population continue. In 1986 there were only six people, 4 adults and two children living permanently in the village. There is no longer any arable farming, all the former arable land being left in pasture. Blackburn Cottage is now a youth hostel and the former Catholic School is now an outdoor centre. Most of the other houses are now used as holiday homes. The indigenous population of

Inverey has gone the same way as that of St Kilda - scattered elsewhere. The small number of people living in the village now are not descended from the original inhabitants.

**Postscript:** For purposes of extracting the statistical information used in this article Inverey is defined as being exclusively on the south bank of the Dee from Mildarroch Cottage westwards.

*Footnote - As an appropriate addition to the above article, Graham Ewen approached Betty Lobban for permission to reproduce her poem 'Inverey'. - Editor.*

#### INVEREY

Tak the Deeside road fae Aberdeen,  
 And hud oot beyond Braemar  
 Till you reach that clachan in the valley, green  
 Thats kent both near and far.  
 Its steeped in local legends of clansmen lang awa  
 Of the 'seat' of the might Farquarsons  
 There remains but ae crumblin wa  
 A monument stands on a grassy mound  
 In memory of a famous man  
 By the name of John von Lamont  
 Of a local highland clan  
 The hangman's tree stands gaunt and bare  
 Where gruesome deeds took place  
 Noo sightseers often gather there - its a failin  
 o the human race  
 The school is a climbing centre, for the peaks  
 that reach to the sky  
 Its a dead end sleepy village, the Clachan o' Inverey

Betty Lobban