

## ALLANAQUOICH

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Most members will be familiar with the farm of Allanaquoich which today occupies a small area in the south-east corner of Mar Lodge Estate. In historical times however Allanaquoich was a separate estate which belonged to a branch of the Farquharson family. The meaning of the name is somewhat obscure, but it may come from the Gaelic Ailean Quoich, ailean meaning a meadow or a plain. In historical documents, however, various different spellings of the name appear such as Ellancoich which appears on Robert Gordon's map of 1630 or Ellanaqueich which appears on William Roy's Military Map of 1746. Ellan in Scots means an island and so perhaps the name derives from a former island at or near the mouth of the Quoich. It is supposed that the name Quoich comes from the Gaelic word cuach, which means a cup or drinking bowl, and is so named after the cup-shaped hollows in the rocks at the Punch Bowl.

The eastern boundary of the estate was similar to the present boundary between Mar Lodge Estate and Invercauld running from the River Dee opposite Dalgowan northwards across the flood plain and straight up the hill to the top of Carn na Drochaide and from there along the ridge to Carn na Criche. It continued down the northern slope of the latter, crossed the Quoich and the Allt an t-Sneachda on its way to the south summit of Beinn a' Bhuid. From there it continued along the ridge to the North Top. On the north side the estate marched with Glenavon and the boundary followed the watershed westward over the tops of Beinn a' Chorrainn and Beinn Mheadhoin. On the west the boundary was the watershed between Glen Derry and Glen Luibeg. From the junction of these two glens the boundary was undefined and it was stated in a sasine<sup>1</sup> granted to Joseph Farquharson in 1731 that the boundary from here across the hills to the Quoich was to be demarcated in agreement with Mackenzie of Dalmore, but this never happened for reasons which will become clear later. The lower part of the River Quoich below the Punch Bowl was however fixed as the boundary across the flood plain of the River Dee, and the River Dee itself formed the boundary on the south side.

According to the Legends of the Braes of Mar the estate was originally in the possession of the Lamonts who were once powerful in the area. It is said that it was confiscated by the Farquharsons following the murder of a wealthy drover at Inchroary for which Lamont's son was falsely accused. The lairdship was then given to Alexander (Alister), third son of Donald Farquharson of Castletown. It is not clear exactly when these events took place or for that matter how accurate they are but there is no doubt that the first Farquharson laird was called Alister Farquharson and he was certainly there in 1632, when he received a charter from the Earl of Mar. From that time the estate passed on in the

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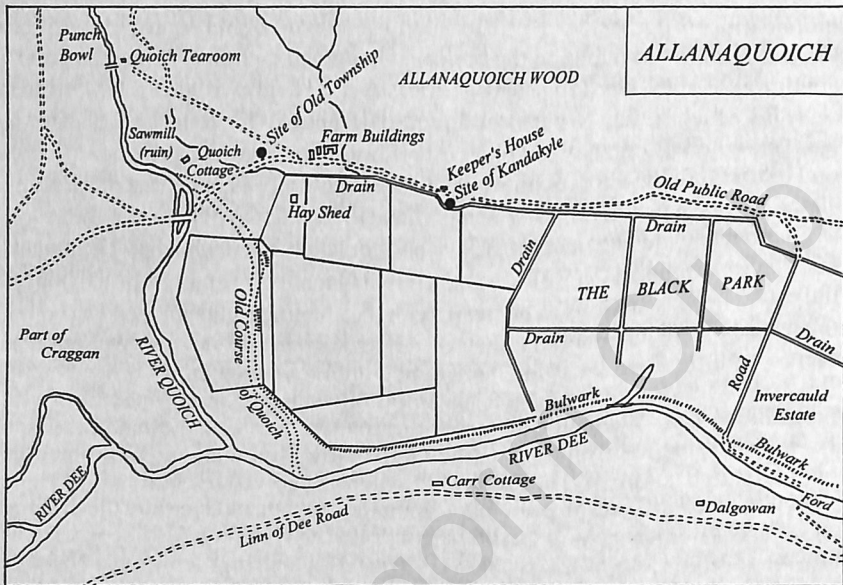
<sup>1</sup> Sasine - the law involved in the act of giving or registering possession of a feudal property.

normal way to the eldest sons, Donald Farquharson around 1670, Alister around 1684, and John prior to 1715. Then in 1727 John Farquharson disposed the estate to his eldest son Joseph in fee, while retaining a life rent on it for himself. (This meant that John would continue to enjoy all the advantages of ownership of the estate but that the title to it had been passed to his son).

It is likely that by this time the Farquharsons were having considerable financial difficulties. Joseph borrowed 1000 merks from Farquharson of Invercauld in 1728 and as no repayments had been made by 1732, Invercauld instituted legal action to recover his money. Despite these difficulties a house of some pretensions was built at Allanaquoich by the Farquharsons around this time and the cost of this probably accelerated their demise. In 1735 Lord Braco bought the Superiorities of the estates of Allanaquoich, Inverey, Dalmore and many others from Lords Grange and Dun. Then on 21st October 1736 Joseph sold the estate of Allanaquoich to Lord Braco, whose date of entry was fixed to be at Martinmas following the death of Joseph's father. This finally enabled Joseph to repay his debt to Farquharson of Invercauld which he did on the 17th December of that year. In 1738 Lord Braco came to an agreement with John to buy out his life rent and so obtained entry to the estate in that year. This was not however the end of the matter because, as it was an entailed estate, the sale had to have the agreement of Joseph Farquharson's eldest son and at the time he was still a minor. He had to sign a document called a registered homologation to ratify the sale and he could not do this until he reached the age of 21. This was apparently done on the 28th May 1747 but it was not actually registered in Edinburgh until the year 1761. When Lord Braco also bought Dalmore from the Mackenzies in 1739, the absence of a properly demarcated boundary between the two estates became academic, and this is why the instruction contained in the 1731 sasine was never carried out.

The charters granted to the various Farquharsons of Allanaquoich by the Earls of Mar show that they held the estate under very similar conditions to those of the neighbouring vassals. The fir woods and mineral rights were reserved to the Superior as was the hunting of deer and roe. They did however have the power to cut and dispose of birch wood and they and their tenants were entitled to a certain amount of fir wood as servitude timber i.e timber which they required for their houses and other buildings. The charters from 1632 onwards all mention that they had liberty to build a mill, but it is not until 1727 that it is mentioned that the mill had now been built. They were also expected to perform various services and these included supplying two persons with dogs at all huntings arranged by the Superior and attendance at all hostings (military musters).

The poll book of 1696 gives us the first indication of how many people lived on the estate. Alister Farquharson is mentioned as the laird under the name Alexander. He is listed as having one man servant, two women servants along with four tenants and twelve sub-tenants. The poll book of course does not include children under sixteen or paupers, so that all we can say



from these figures was that apart from the Farquharson's own household there were at least sixteen others.

At the time of the sale of the estate to Lord Braco there were 15 tenants. They were split between two townships, one called Allanaquoich which was situated near the site of the present farm buildings, and the other named Kandakyle which was about a kilometre east of this near where the keeper's cottage is today. Unfortunately the earlier rental lists do not distinguish between the two townships but in 1750 there were eight tenants in Allanaquoich and six in Kandakyle.

It has always been supposed that no-one lived permanently in Glen Quoich but at the time of the sale, John Farquharson told Lord Braco that he had had a tack in Glen Quoich which paid him ten pounds Scots yearly, but that the same had been waste these eight years past and that he had received no rent during that time. All the tenants had lease agreements or tacks. The conditions of these were all very similar and it will suffice here to describe one of these, a tack granted in the year 1750 to one John McGregor for part of Kandakyle. The tack was for 12 or 19 years at the proprietor's option. He was allowed to have sub-tenants with the heritor's consent and had shieling rights. The money rent was £30 8s 4d Scots<sup>2</sup> and he had to supply 88 loads of peats in creels and one reek hen<sup>3</sup> for himself and one for each sub-tenant. He also had to pay multures,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> £12 Scots was equal to £1 sterling.

<sup>3</sup> reek hen - one hen per chimney

<sup>4</sup> Multure - a duty consisting of a proportion of the grain or meal payable to the proprietor or tenant of a mill on corn ground there.

ground officers dues and perform miln (mill) services, but these are not specified. He was required to maintain the buildings occupied by him in at least as good a condition as they were in when he took over. There was also a list of other services which he had to perform if required. These were 8 shearers one day at harvest, 4 horses one day leading corn, 4 horses one day repairing river banks on Dee or Quoich, 4 horses one day leading limestone, 4 horses one day leading slates, divots or heather, 1 horse and carriage to Rothiemay, 3 horses and carriage to Glenbuchat and one man to carry errands or letters to Glenbuchat. The tenants had shieling rights in Glen Derry and in Glen Quoich. When Lord Braco bought the estate he was anxious to do away with the shieling rights in Glen Derry, but the tenants were adamant that they could not keep horses or cows without it as there was little or no grass in Glen Quoich until midsummer.

In 1743 Lord Braco began an ambitious scheme in co-operation with Farquharson of Invercauld to drain the marshy parts of the haugh, which stretches eastwards from Allanaquoich to below Braemar, and to protect the haugh from flooding by the Dee. This scheme involved the building of stone bulwarks and earthen embankments along the Quoich and Dee and the digging of several kilometres of open ditches to drain the water away. The work was completed by 1746 at a cost of well over £400 sterling which was a large sum of money at that time. In the accounts it is noticed that a pound was spent on whisky, and it was explained in a footnote that when the ditching began the ground was very wet and it was necessary to purchase the whisky so as to encourage the men by giving them drams from time to time. The part of Allanaquoich which was affected by this scheme had previously been partly wooded as well as marshy and was called the Black Ward or Black Park. Lord Braco had originally thought that the newly reclaimed land might be used for growing flax, but this never happened and the area was simply apportioned among the tenants of Allanaquoich at a rental of £1-6-1 sterling each.

From 1767 onwards the number of tenants was reduced to around ten and those remaining were instructed that they had to erect properly constructed neat dwelling houses with two chimneys of stonework built with lime. A report in 1782, which seems to have had the view to reduce the number of tenants further, lists ten tenants and eight sub-tenants. Of the sub-tenants one is stated to be a tailor, one a weaver and one a packman. It is likely that some if not all these sub-tenants were removed about this time. In 1786 a number of tenants were summoned out as they were unable to pay their rent arrears. In the same year James Stuart, the Earl of Fife's factor, moved into the house which the Farquharsons had built at Allanaquoich and took over a proportion of the land for his own use. In a submission to Lord Fife in 1788 he complains that he has no tack, but that he has built four office houses in a substantial manner, and was obviously worried at his lack of security. All he got at this time however was a promise of up to 50 pounds meliorations for the buildings should he have to remove. There were still tenants listed in

1791 but from this point there is a gap of twelve years in the estate records and the next rental list for 1803 shows that Allanaquoich had been consolidated into one unit which was now tenanted by James Stuart. It was not until 1808, however, that James Stuart finally got a tack for his holding, but when he did it had two unusual features in it, possibly because he was the factor. Firstly it was stated that the tack would last for all the natural days of his life and secondly he was to be at liberty to fish with the rod for salmon and trout in the River Dee and branches thereof for his own amusement.

The estate of Allanaquoich has always had very substantial woodlands. In all the historical records these are normally divided up into four parts:- (1) Allanaquoich Wood which covered the face of the hill behind the farmland of Allanaquoich and extended eastward to the boundary with Invercauld estate; (2) Glen Quoich which was the valley of Glen Quoich from Allanaquoich to its junction with the Dubh Gleann burn; (3) Dubh Gleann which covered the whole area of the said glen; (4) The Beachan which was Glen Quoich above its confluence with the Dubh Gleann burn. The river in this section was also called the Water of Beachan at that time. It is unlikely that most of these woods were much exploited in the early days because of their remoteness. However a sawmill had been established at Allanaquoich in 1695 by a consortium of John Farquharson of Inverey, Donald Farquharson of Camasnakist and Duncan Shaw, who had obtained a fifty year lease for cutting wood in Glen Quoich. In 1736 Lord Braco had all the woods in the area surveyed and it was reported that in the area called the Dubh Glen there was some good old wood. To the north-east of Glen Quoich in the wood called Beachan there was a great deal of good timber and down the glen from there was a mixture of old timber but also a lot of young thriving wood, not at that time fit for cutting. The surveyors reckoned that the total value of the saleable wood from these areas at 50,000 merks Scots money<sup>5</sup>. In a similar survey taken in 1763 it was reported that there was a great quantity of old great timber in the Beachan and that in Glen Quoich where fir trees had been felled birches were growing in abundance. The woods between Allanaquoich and the Invercauld march were described as being of little value as the trees were yet young and too small for felling. However the Reverend Charles Cordiner, who visited the area in 1776 reported that when one looked up Glen Quoich there was not a tree to be seen except in the most inaccessible parts, but on closer inspection he found that there were thousands of young seedlings growing. These may well have been planted rather than naturally sown. Certainly eight years later in 1784 the Earl of Fife<sup>6</sup> planted a large number of trees in Glen Quoich. This planting consisted of 20,000 firs, 1,000 birks (birches), 800 rowan, 500 poplar and 80 large firs. It is clear from the reports that the best of the wood available was in the area called the Beachan

<sup>5</sup> Merk - two thirds of a Scots pound

<sup>6</sup> Lord Braco was created Earl of Fife in 1759

<sup>7</sup> Sarking deals - roof boarding

but being remote it must have been difficult to harvest. Attempts to exploit it were made however and an Estate Account from 1761 lists 13 men floating timber on the Beachan. The 1763 report mentions that there were a good many logs ready to float down from the Beachan which were at that time lying in the water. It must have been very difficult to float large logs on such a small stream. Probably for this reason a new sawmill was built in 1787 at a cost of £36 in the Beachan situated on the south bank of the river about halfway between its junction with the Alltan na Beinne and the Dubh Gleann burn. In the same year a new road was constructed from Allanaquoich up the east side of Glen Quoich to the site of the mill. In 1788, the first year of its operation, the mill produced 1509 planks, 3684 sarking deals<sup>7</sup>, 5165 flooring deals, 248 slabs and 1363 laths. It is not clear whether these were then carted out along the new road or floated out along the river. The mill was still being worked in 1797 but by 1826 had fallen into ruin and was so described in a map published at that time. There is no trace of it to be found today. The old track up the east side of the Quoich remained usable, at least for walkers, though rather overgrown and known to comparatively few people, until recently when it was opened up again to become the bulldozed track that we know today.

Flooding had always been a potential hazard to the tenants of Allanaquoich. A serious flood occurred in September 1768 which carried away the stooks of corn from the fields, causing so much hardship that the proprietor waived the payment of rent for that year. Another bad one occurred in 1799 but no previous recorded flood could compare with the Muckle Spate of August 1829, which had a very severe effect on the farm of Allanaquoich. The tenant of the farm at the time was Mr Charles Cumming, Lord Fife's factor on Mar Estate. Accounts from the time suggest that the bulk of the farm was inundated to a depth of at least eight feet. Once the water had subsided great tracts of the soil had been scoured out by the water and other parts were covered in sand and gravel. On the Craggan side, which had been run as part of the same farm was a large lake. A bridge which had spanned the gorge of the Quoich just above the farm had been washed away. By the time the waters had subsided the Quoich had adopted a new course well to the west of its former one. The old course is shown on the map. It can still be seen today from a vantage point on the Inverey road where it shows up as a slightly different colour of green compared with the surroundings, and it can be followed on the ground. Some time later a fragment of a mill was found on the farm. It was later proved that this had belonged to the sawmill previously mentioned which stood in the upper part of the glen. The damage to the land was so severe that the tenant was unable to continue in the farm at the same rent as before. It was obviously some time before repairs were effected as an advert appeared in the Aberdeen Journal in January 1831 looking for contractors to erect a considerable extent of earthen embankments and stone bulwarks at the farm of Allanaquoich. This work was executed by the end of

the year by a local contractor James Gruer for the sum of £172 sterling. Charles Cumming remained as the tenant at a reduced rent and during the remainder of his tenancy worked hard to repair the rest of the damage done. At first he was only able to plough certain areas which had not been too badly affected by the flood. Year by year this area was gradually extended by clearing away piles of gravel and filling up holes torn out by the floodwaters.

In these early days the shooting interests on the Allanaquoich estate were not of any economic importance. The Earls of Fife all enjoyed shooting and it was kept for themselves, their families and their own private guests. Glen Quoich was however included in the area let out to Sir Henry Goodriche in 1830 along with the occupancy of Old Mar Lodge. These shootings continued to be let to a succession of different tenants until 1870, of whom the most prominent was the Duke of Leeds, when they again reverted to private use by family. In October 1850 Queen Victoria, accompanied by Prince Albert, attended a deer hunt in Glen Quoich as guests of the Duke of Leeds. In 1886 a bothy was built in the Dubh Glen to accommodate deer watchers during the Season. The first such was a J. McHardy and he was there for the whole of August and September. The 6th Earl of Fife (later 1st Duke of Fife) married Princess Louise, one of Queen Victoria's grandchildren in 1889 and from that time onwards many of the shooting guests had royal connections.

It is not until 1841 that it is possible to ascertain the exact population of the area. At this time there are only four families listed and a total of 27 people. Of these 12 were in employment, Charles Cumming, the factor, 10 agricultural labourers and two female servants. There were twelve children below the age of ten. There is no mention of a sawmill at this time. The table below gives the full breakdown from 1841 to 1891.

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891
farm servants	10	3	5	4	5	5
factor/overseer	1	1	1	1		1
house servants	1	3	1	1	2	1
gamekeeper		1		1	1	
sawer		1		1	1	2
boot & shoe maker					1	
pauper		2	1	1		
children	12	8	1	14	3	2
not employed	3	1	1	5	4	4
<b>total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>no of households</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

It is not easy to draw conclusions from these figures, coming as they do from such a small sample. It is difficult to know why there should only have been two households in 1861 when there are four at the time of every other census. There is one house listed as uninhabited at that time, but perhaps this was just a temporary feature and we cannot take the figures for this particular year as being reliable. The way the total population fluctuates up and down is almost entirely caused by the number of children at the time. The number of people employed is more consistent, starting with the high of 12 in 1841 and thereafter varying between eight and ten if the 1861 figure is ignored. The people listed as not employed are either wives of those that are or old people. Quoich sawmill is listed from 1871 onwards. It is not possible to trace the population figures from 1901 onwards as detailed information from the census remains confidential for 100 years, but at the time of writing only one person lives in Allanaquoich.

When Charles Cumming gave up the tenancy in 1857 the farm was let to John Hunter, the tenant of the Auchindryne Inn (now the Fife Arms Hotel), who continued there until 1867. The let then passed to George Clark, a sheep farmer, who was also tenant of the sheep grazings around Bynack at this time. From 1880 the lease passed back to the Fife Arms Hotel and this arrangement continued until 1912 when the farm was taken over and thereafter run directly by the estate. It continued to be run as a normal mixed farm as was common at that time on Deeside, but was expected to provide certain produce such as eggs to Mar Lodge when the family were in residence during the summer time. During the First World War they were forced to increase the amount of grain grown by order of the Agricultural Executive Committee.

Some time during the 1930's a major breach occurred in the bulwark beside the Black Park causing flooding to occur in this area even at normal river levels. Despite protests from Invercauld Estate whose land was also being affected, repairs were not carried out until after the Second World War. The breach can still be seen as the bulwark was not reinstated properly and the present bank protection consists of a wooden fence of old railway sleepers with a facing of corrugated iron and backed up with all manner of rubbish including old cars, lumps of concrete etc.

A letter written in January 1904 describes the sawmill as being very badly situated, requiring constant repairs. The wheel had to be thawed out every morning in frosty weather, causing the short winter days to pass without much to show for them, although the workers may have been labouring hard. By 1923 the sawmill had been shifted to a new site immediately east of the farm buildings and now driven by an engine. This was very much designed as a small scale operation for use for estate purposes only. It did not have a happy history, being burned down in November 1923 and again in 1943. It continued in use however until comparatively recently but is now in a ruinous state.

During the Second World War a great deal of tree felling took place in the





*Allanaquoich farmhouse and steading showing the asbestos roofing  
which has now been removed*

area. At the end of 1941 12,000 trees in Allanaquoich Wood were sold to Messrs Gray & Co, timber merchants, and a further 11,000 were sold in February 1944. These were all felled by the end of the War. A bridge was erected across the Dee opposite Allanaquoich to facilitate their extraction,



*The Punch Bowl*

but this was removed at the end of the operation at the request of Princess Alexandra, as she felt that leaving it in place would affect the privacy of the estate. In 1954 the farm buildings and dwelling house underwent substantial reconstruction. This was presumably the time that the recent asbestos roofing was put on. The roofs were certainly slated before that. At the same time the farm and also Quoich cottage were connected to the mains electricity supply for the first time. Also in 1954 the road bridge across the Quoich was substantially reconstructed by Aberdeen County Council.

Today the farm of Allanaquoich seems a very remote place, standing as it does at the end of a long narrow winding road. However this was not always the case as the road down the north side of the Dee to Invercauld was a public road. There was also a ford across the Dee at the lower end of the Black Park which gave easy access to Braemar except when the river was in spate. Originally called the 'Timberfoord', it was shown on a map published in 1742 and continued in use well into the present century. A boat was also used at this point until much more recently. In 1952 the People's Journal published a photograph showing two ladies from Allanaquoich crossing the Dee here in a rowing boat with their bicycles. No trace of the ford remains today but the roads leading to it on either side are still clearly visible.

When the Duke of Fife died in 1912 the estate was left in life rent to his wife, Princess Louise, and his daughter Princess Alexandra became Duchess of Fife. The two Princesses, who spent every summer on a long vacation at Mar Lodge, were very fond of the area around the Punch Bowl and liked to take their guests there for picnics. The small cottage beside the Punch Bowl was used to store the necessary cutlery, plates, china, tablecloths etc., which were required for this purpose, and presumably also acted as a shelter in inclement weather. For this reason the cottage became known as the Quoich Tearoom or sometimes the Princesses' Tearoom. Today there seems to be a move to recreate this as Queen Victoria's Tearoom but I do not have any evidence that it was ever called that at the time.

Princess Alexandra was very keen on fishing and in 1928 a trout pond was constructed by a local contractor on the Clais Fhearnaig burn. It was restocked with trout every year. Today the dam remains in a fairly good state but I do not know if any trout remain in the pond above it. In 1961, following the death of Princess Alexandra, Duchess of Fife in 1959 all the Mar Estate on the north side of the River Dee was sold to the Panchaud brothers, Anglo Swiss businessmen, the new estate thus formed being subsequently known as Mar Lodge Estate. During their ownership a considerable amount of reforestation took place including the replanting of part of Allanaquoich Wood and three new plantations in Glen Quoich. They have later been criticised for the fact that these plantations were not 100 per cent Scots Pine. They were also responsible for extending the road in Glen Quoich, which before that time hardly went more than 1.5km up the glen, to a fairly high point up on Beinn a' Bhuird. The purpose of this road was to open up the south face of

that mountain for skiing but perhaps fortunately this idea never came to fruition. The road however remains an obvious scar, particularly on the higher reaches of the mountain. During their ownership the farm continued running with an emphasis on rearing cattle. In 1989 following the death of Panchaud the estate was sold to an American businessman, John Kluge. During his ownership Allanaquoich ceased to function as a farm and was let as grazing for sheep during the winter time and cattle during the summer.

In 1995 the estate was bought by the National Trust for Scotland. They have since repaired the Quoich Tearoom and have started repairs to the farmhouse. There are plans to repair the farm buildings as well and to restore the Black Park to wetland. Perhaps even more important, they hope to encourage the natural regeneration of the pinewoods in Glen Quoich, but that is in the future.

*Most of the information on which this article is based, derives from the Duff House Papers which are held in the Special Collections Department of the University of Aberdeen Library.*

