

## Inverey and the Duffs

### *Graham Ewen*

When James Duff, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Fife, purchased the Inverey Estate from Alexander Farquharson of Inverey in 1786, he then owned almost the entire catchment area of the Dee west of Braemar, apart from a small area around Allanmore and a somewhat larger area of the upper Quoich, both parts of the Invercauld Estate. He had of course already been feu superior of all this area, the superiority having been bought by his father, then Lord Braco, in 1735. The following table shows the succession of the family.

1. William Duff	Lord Braco	1735	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Earl of Fife	1759 - 1763	
2. James Duff	2 <sup>nd</sup> Earl of Fife	1763 - 1809	2 <sup>nd</sup> son of 1
3. Alexander Duff	3 <sup>rd</sup> Earl of Fife	1809 - 1811	3 <sup>rd</sup> son of 1
4. James Duff	4 <sup>th</sup> Earl of Fife	1811 - 1857	eldest son of 3
5. James Duff	5 <sup>th</sup> Earl of Fife	1857 - 1879	nephew of 4
6. Alexander Duff	6 <sup>th</sup> Earl of Fife	1879	eldest son of 5
	1 <sup>st</sup> Duke of Fife	1889 - 1912	
7. Princess Alexandra	Duchess of Fife	1912 - 1959	daughter of 6
8. James Carnegie	3 <sup>rd</sup> Duke of Fife	1959	nephew of 7

The 6<sup>th</sup> Earl married Princess Louise, eldest daughter of King Edward VII, in 1889. Shortly afterwards he was created the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Fife. Edward VII later decreed that his two daughters, Alexandra and Maud, were to be Royal Princesses. This explains the Royal connection in number 7.

After the purchase of the estate, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl lost no time in trying to tighten up on the poaching, which he saw as being a constant problem. All the tenants of Inverey Estate were summoned to attend what was called a judicial rental at Mar Lodge. The proceedings were to establish exactly what each tenant paid in rent, how long their tack (lease) had to run, what their grazing rights were, and what their obligations were in terms of services to the landlord. They were overseen by William Rose of Balival, one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace of the County of Aberdeen, and also the Earl's principal factor. In addition to the above matters, all the tenants were required to make the following oath of fidelity obliging them to their true obedience of the game laws:

"I (name of person) do solemnly promise and swear that I will not directly or indirectly by myself or by my allowance or authority rise or carry a gun or other weapon for hunting of deer, roe, muir fowl, black game or other game, hare, pigeon or partridge, and that I shall

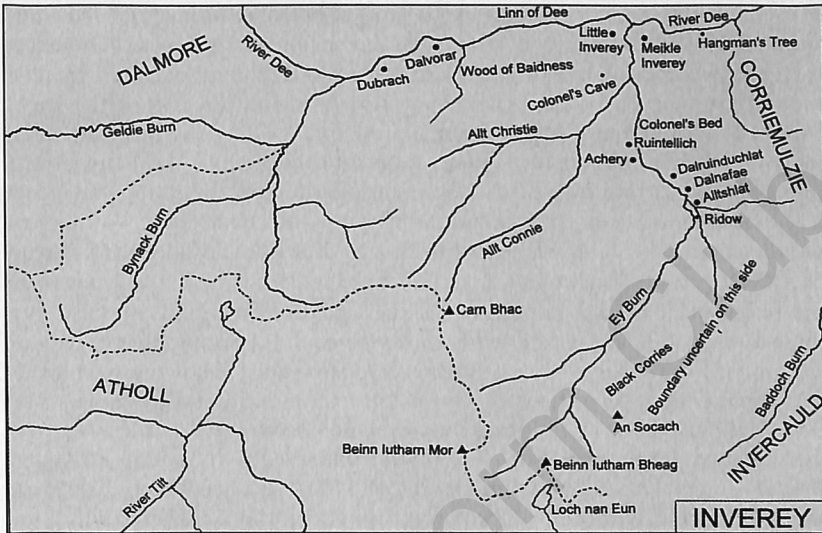
not by myself or by my family or neighbours act in any respect to my knowledge contrary to this my affirmation but give information of the same to the heritor or his servants, nor will I receive, purchase, buy or receipt or sell or dispose of any deer or roe, skins or horns of the same species without informing as above to the utmost of my powers without fear or favour. So help me God."

Despite this effort a certain amount of poaching still continued. James Stuart, the local factor, mentions the problem at regular intervals in his correspondence with the Earl of Fife. In one letter, dated February 1799, he mentioned that he had searched the houses in Inverey for guns, and had found one in the house belonging to Finlay McIntosh. On examination, he writes, "that the gun did not appear to have been used recently", but nevertheless, as McIntosh had been suspected of poaching on a previous occasion, he was summoned to remove from his holding. Seems fairly rough justice!

The other matter in which the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl was interested was the improvement of agriculture in the area. A large-scale plan of Inverey was drawn in 1787, showing how this was to be carried out, by doing away with the old system of run-rig farming and rearranging the available ground in consolidated units. This did not happen immediately, but in 1799 all the tenants of Meikle Inverey were summoned to remove for the reorganisation to take place. The rental list for 1803 shows an entirely new set of tenants in place. The number of tenancies had been reduced from eleven to eight. No date has been found in the estate records for the similar reorganisation in Little Inverey, but this might have taken place a year or two later, because in the 1803 rental list the tenants here were also completely different from previously. There were, however, eleven new tenants compared with eight previously. The explanation for this may lie in an expansion of the farmed land into the area known as Moor of Inverey. There is some correspondence about ploughing, manuring, enclosing and removal of stones from this area in 1795-96.

Despite this reorganisation the tenants continued the system of transhumance farming which had been in existence before, with the cattle being taken to summer shielings, a practice that continued without interruption until the 1830s.

There were two other farming communities on the Inverey estate. The first of these was in middle Glen Ey, but this one was adequately covered in my article on Glen Ey (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 103) so I will not repeat it here. The other was in Glendee where there were three holdings, two at Dalvorar and one at Dubrach. In 1786 the tenants at Dalvorar were Donald McKenzie and James MacGregor, and at Dubrach, Peter Grant. By 1803 all these holdings had been taken over by a Charles McHardy, who also rented the lands of Baynock and Corryvron.



Baynock was the catchment area of the Bynack Burn and Corryvron was the area of hills to the east of the Geldie between White Bridge and Bynack. There followed in 1809 an Alexander McHardy, and then another Charles McHardy in 1816. In 1817 Charles McHardy was reduced to having Dalvorar and Dubrach, while Baynock and Corryvron had been taken over by a William Gordon. I think that the McHardys and William Gordon were sheep graziers.

Agriculture in this area must have provided a very precarious existence. Most of the tenants' holdings were quite small, and the climate would seem to have been much colder than it is today. There are frequent references in the factor's letters to the severity of the weather. For example in a letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> April 1793, he mentions that snow was still lying on Inverey, and no ploughing or sowing had yet been done. The tenants had lost about one third of their sheep and a great many cattle. Since most of the arable land was on the flood plain of the Dee, flooding was also a common problem, causing damage to crops and sometimes livestock. There were particularly severe floods in 1768 and in 1799, but no one was prepared for what happened in 1829.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, following a morning of heavy showers, the wind and rain increased during the afternoon until by 5 p.m. it was heavier than anyone could remember. In the early evening there was a spectacular thunder and lightning storm, which ceased by 7 p.m., but the rain continued unabated into the night. By 7 p.m. the water in the rivers was beginning to run very high and, by measurements taken at six different

places in the Braemar area by a Dr Robertson of Crathie, the Dee rose about fifteen or sixteen feet. Six of the houses in Inverey were submerged by the flood, and the inhabitants were forced to flee to an elevated piece of ground, by then an island, where they had to spend the rest of the night, and were not rescued until between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. the next day when the water started to subside. The wooden bridge across the Linn of Dee was entirely carried away. At Dalvorar, the tenant, his wife and seven children escaped from their house by wading and made their way to seek shelter in Inverey. The whole of his crop and 11 acres of arable land were destroyed. Hugh McDougall, a gamekeeper, whose house was situated on the peninsula between the River Geldie and the Water of Bynack, was trapped in his house along with his wife and family, with no way of escaping. Fortunately they all managed to survive. There is no record of the damage to crops in Inverey, but it must have been considerable. This flood has since been called the Muckle Spate because it was the worst one that anyone could remember. Following this event, stone bulwarks were erected along the banks of the Dee in 1834. A less substantial bulwark was built at the west end of Dalvorar Haugh in 1837, and in 1845 stone bulwarks were built along parts of the Water of Ey, where it crosses the flood plain of the Dee.

When James Duff, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl succeeded to the title in 1811, the estates must have been in some financial difficulties because he did not get control of all the estates which the family owned. A trusteeship was set up to control the whole area north of the Dee, which had originally been the estates of Dalmore and Allanaquoich. The 4<sup>th</sup> Earl was left in control of the Inverey Estate along with Corriemulzie and Auchindryne. When the trustees decided, in 1830, to let out Mar Lodge and the shootings on the area they controlled, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl was obviously going to have to pursue his own shooting interests elsewhere. This was the main reason that the Inverey estate was converted from a largely agricultural economy to that of a shooting estate, although the process was to be a gradual one.

The Earl gradually assumed control of areas which had previously been let out. First of all, William Gordon lost the lease of Baynock and Corryvron in 1830. Charles McHardy's lease of Dalvorar and Dubrachs was terminated by 1834. In 1836 the tenants of Little Inverey had lost their grazing rights in the Glen of Christie, and in 1839 the tenants of Meikle Inverey lost theirs in the Glen of Connie. Their rentals were reduced by one third in compensation for this loss. When in 1843-44 all the tenants in middle Glen Ey were cleared out, this left the small area immediately around the village of Inverey as the only area on the estate still in agricultural use. The remainder was all deer forest.

The next twenty years or so saw a flurry of building activity to provide the infrastructure required on a shooting estate. Cottages were built at Altanour and Bynack in 1838, and work began to build a road up



Glen Ey to connect Altanour with Inverey. The road to Bynack of course was mostly in what used to be Dalmore Estate, and only entered the Inverey Estate after fording the Geldie and Bynack Burns. Trees were planted around both cottages to provide some shelter. A stable and byre were built at Bynack in 1840. In 1841 a bridle road was constructed through the Glen of Christie. It was connected to the Glen Ey road by a footbridge. This bridge became known as Ricardo's Bridge, after John Lewis Ricardo of an old Jewish family, who married Catherine Duff, a daughter of General Sir Alexander Duff (second son of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl). He must have taken a keen interest in the estate as there were also Ricardo Stables and a Ricardo room at New Mar Lodge. In 1844 the cottages at Bynack and Altanour were slated; perhaps we can assume that they were thatched originally. In 1855 a cottage was built in Glen Ey, presumably to house the keeper at Acherrie. In 1868 a deer larder, coach house and dairy were built at Altanour. The shootings on the estate were never let out during the nineteenth century but were kept for the enjoyment of the Earl and his family and guests.

At the time the Earl of Fife acquired the Inverey Estate, it is likely that the inhabitants were all still living in fire houses, i.e. crudely built, one-roomed thatched houses with the fireplace in the middle of the floor, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. In 1860, when the first Ordnance Survey was made, the surveyors wrote notes about Inverey. The houses were all still thatched and in indifferent condition, those in Little Inverey being in a much worse state than those in Meikle Inverey. Both the Catholic School and the Assembly School were said to be in good condition, as were Inverey Cottage (The Knock), Bynack and Altanour Shielings. As the years passed the houses were gradually improved, with thatched roofs being replaced by slates or shingles. Some thatched roofs survived into the 1900s. In 1911 the original cottage at Muir, then standing on the south side of the road, was destroyed by fire; presumably sparks from the chimney had set fire to the thatched roof. The present building was a conversion from a barn situated on the other side of the road. By this time the population of Inverey was declining and as houses became empty they were usually demolished, to stop vagrants using them.

On the September Holiday Week-end in 1858 there occurred what might have been the first modern climbing accident on the Estate. A young bank clerk from Aberdeen, by the name of William Roger, had gone for a hill walk in Glen Ey with his older brother George. He slipped and fell into the Falls of Connie and was drowned. At a later date a plaque to his memory was inserted into the rock face on the south side of the falls. This plaque can only be partly seen today, as most of it is obscured by moss and other vegetation. Sadly this is not the only death that has occurred here.

It is not clear when tourism became an important part of the local economy, but the above accident shows that people were visiting the area by the 1850s. By 1900, most of the houses in Inverey were offering accommodation for summer visitors, although of course they were not allowed to do so after the shooting season started.

Although mention of fishing occurs in all the earlier records, it does not seem that it was as important to the local economy as shooting. However, interest was increasing by the latter part of the nineteenth century and in 1894 blasting work commenced at the Linn of Dee, in an effort to ease the passage for salmon. This had no sooner started than there was an outcry all over the country, the operations being characterised as 'vandalism', 'irreparable injury', and 'destruction' etc., so much so that the Duke of Fife immediately ordered the operations to stop. Fortunately the works, so far as they had gone, improved the pass so much that fish were able to ascend with wonderful ease. Similar blasting work took place much later in 1950 to improve access for fish in the vicinity of the Colonel's Bed, apparently without any protest.

In 1897 a suspension bridge was erected across the Dee at the west end of Mar Lodge Haugh. This was to provide access to an extension of the golf course, which then existed on the ground in front of Mar Lodge. Four years later the estate took over 14 acres of Miss Gruer's holding at Craigview for further extensions to the golf course; the Duchess of Fife was very keen on golf. This would have been very much a private bridge, and it is recorded that in 1897 a Charles Lamont was paid 1/- per day for 100 days as a watcher at the suspension bridge.

The well at the roadside near the Catholic School is now enclosed with stone slabs and the Gaelic words Tobar Mhoire are cut into the slab behind the well. This work was carried out in 1902, without the knowledge of the local estate manager. He thought that the Roman Catholic Church had something to do with it, as in English Tobar Mhoire means St Mary's Well.

In 1903, estimates were obtained by the estate for providing a water supply to the nine houses in Meikle Inverey. There was also to be a branch to Inverey Cottage (The Knock). The water was to be obtained from a source on the hill above the Bridge over the Ey, and carried over the Ey in a wooden box shaped structure. The supply was to stand-pipes outside and on no account were the tenants to extend this into their houses. It was probably constructed during 1904, as rentals were increased in 1905. However a year later the Duke of Fife decided to reduce the rentals to 5% of what they had been, in order to bring the holdings outside the scope of the Fixity of Tenure Act, although this did not actually become law until 1911. The tenants of Little Inverey also had their rents similarly reduced at this time.

During the First World War the area was assessed to determine how many sheep the estate might be able to carry. Apparently by this time the tenants of Inverey had been allowed to graze their sheep in Glen Ey, and the estate was unwilling to see the number of sheep increased. However at the beginning of 1918 the Government ordered that the number of sheep were to be increased by around 2,700. This move went ahead and the order was not rescinded when the war ended.

In 1920 the Gallows Tree fell down and after some discussion about the matter the Duchess of Fife ordered that it should be re-erected at approximately the same site. It stands to this day now in a very decrepit state held up by four wire stays (see the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, no.107, p. 122).

In 1924 a Mr. Stanley Bond took on the rental of the shooting and fishing on the Glen Ey beat. The terms of the lease made it clear, however, that should the Duchess of Fife wish to go fishing in Glen Ey, she would be free to do so. It was also made clear that she was to be left in peace when fishing there. Although called the Glen Ey beat, the area rented was much larger and may have included the whole estate, apart from populated areas, and may even have extended into what had been the neighbouring estate of Corriemulzie. Mr. Bond was obviously a wealthy man, and he also rented Braemar Castle during the season, which he described as a good place to entertain guests, much better than staying in a local hotel. He continued as the tenant until the end of the 1939 season when he gave it up. Although Mr. Bond obviously thoroughly enjoyed Glen Ey, there were a number of things that he was unhappy about. The presence of sheep in the Glen annoyed him, although he understood the estate could do nothing about that. He had a Ford car, which he used in the glen, but at the beginning of the lease the road was very bad, and the car could only get as far as the ford which crossed the River Ey a short distance south of Achery. The estate seemed somewhat reluctant to spend much money on the road, but some work was done and attempts were made to improve the ford. It would seem that Mr. Bond became impatient with these efforts and started spending his own money on the road, including the construction of a new bridge to replace the ford. This bridge is situated at least half a mile south of the ford and ever since it was built has been known as 'Bond's Bridge'.

In August 1933, the Deeside Field Club approached the Estate to obtain permission for the erection of a memorial to Johan von Lamont, the noted astronomer, who had been a native of Corriemulzie. A site was agreed in Meikle Inverey, roughly opposite Thistle Cottage, and the memorial was officially unveiled by the Duchess of Fife on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1934. John Lamont, as he was first known, received his early education at the Assembly School in Inverey, but at the age of 12 was sent



*The Canadian Bridge, around 1950*

to a College at Ratisbon in Bavaria, run by a Scottish Order of Benedictines. He eventually became Astronomer Royal of Bavaria.

During the Second World War the largest pine wood on the estate was felled by the Canadian Forestry Corps. This was the wood historically called the Wood of Badness, which occupied the hill opposite Muir Cottage and extended eastwards from there right round the hill into Glen Connie. Ricardo's Bridge was crudely widened at this time to facilitate extraction of timber from the Glen Connie side. The Canadian Forestry Corps built another wooden bridge across the Dee at this time, about a quarter of a mile upstream from Muir, which became a familiar landmark for many years thereafter, until it was seriously damaged by a spate.

It is not known when the first school opened in Inverey, although a school was shown on the 1787 map, more or less in exactly the same place where the house known as the Old Schoolhouse stands today. It therefore seems likely that this school dates back to Farquharson of Inverey's time. The school was probably run by the Church of Scotland and was usually referred to as an Assembly School. Little mention of it appears in the records, except for one entry in 1850, noting that the Assembly School in Inverey had 16 scholars, that almost all the protestant children who could attend did attend during the winter, and that the teacher was Mr. Matheson with a salary of £25 per annum. There was by this time another school in the village. A John Morgan had been trying to run a Catholic School in



Braemar in the early 1800s, but at this time there was still much religious persecution and in 1822 he decided to remove his school to Little Inverey. Attendances at both schools tended to be bad. There were frequent epidemics of infectious diseases and pupils were often kept at home, particularly at harvest time, to help on the farms. In 1910 the school board for Crathie and Braemar, in the hope of improving attendances, decided as an experiment to provide a conveyance to take pupils from Corriemulzie to the two schools in Inverey. It is not known what type of conveyance was involved, but it must have been successful, because it was decided to continue the practice for a further year. In 1917 the Protestant School was closed and the remaining pupils transferred to the nearby Catholic School. By 1928 there were more protestant children at the school than catholic ones, and some of the protestant parents were unhappy that the Catholic Church still had the right to insist on having a catholic appointed as teacher. Perhaps as a result of this, the school was taken over by the Aberdeenshire Education Authority in 1930 and run thereafter as a normal public school. The number of pupils at the school was described as being quite large and a number of improvements were carried out. A partition was removed to enlarge the classroom, a new floor was laid and a porch was added to provide cloakroom accommodation. The coal cellar was converted into a closet for girls. There was no mention of similar facilities for boys. Over the years the school roll declined, however, particularly from 1941 onwards, and the school closed altogether in 1947.

When the Duchess of Fife died in 1959 her own son having predeceased her, her title passed to James Carnegie, her sister's son, who became the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Fife. The estate, however, passed to Captain Ramsay, a nephew by marriage. Thus ended the association of Inverey with the Duffs.

*Most of the information on which this article is based derives from the Duff House Papers, which are held in the Special Libraries and Archives of the University of Aberdeen, and also from some private papers kindly lent to me by Captain Nicolson.*