

The Mar Estate

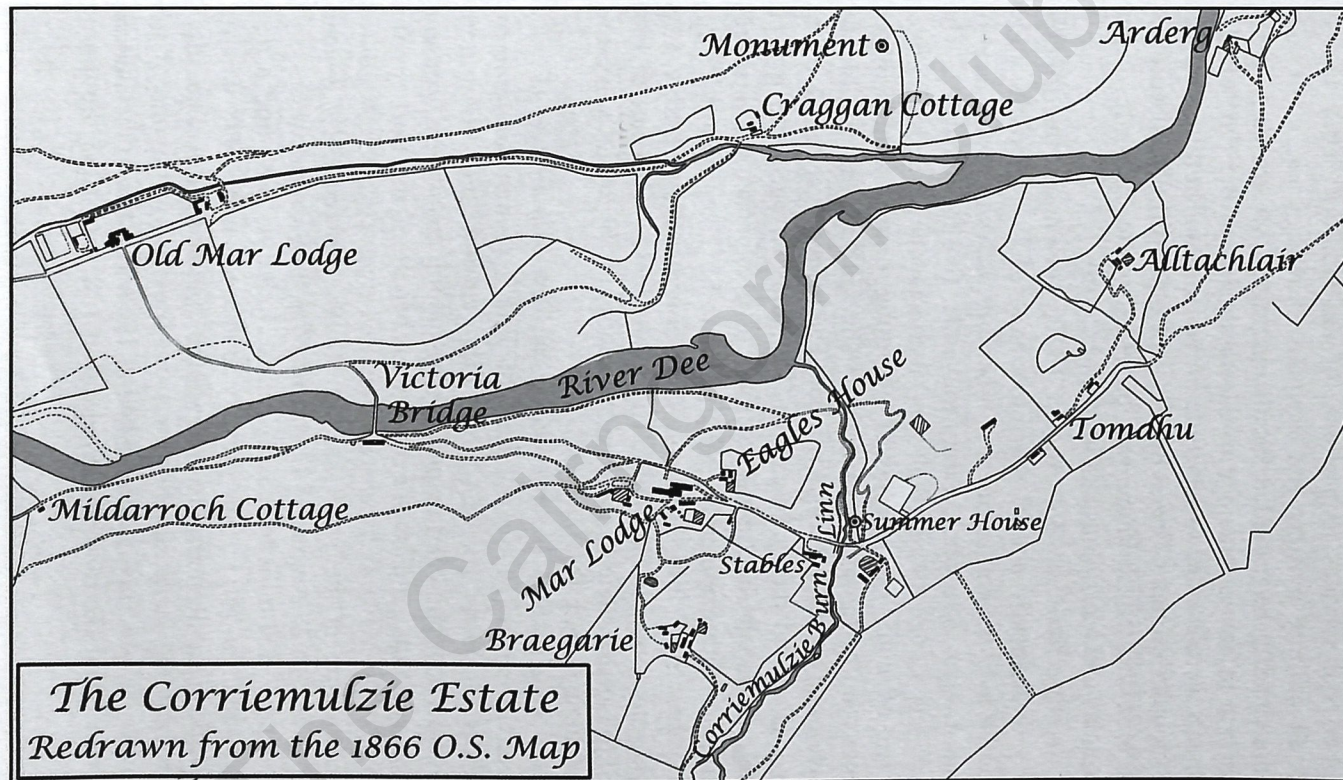
Editor's note: Graham Ewen, the late Honorary President of the Club, has written 9 articles for the Journal on the history of the Mar Estate. This is the final one, on the Corriemulzie Estate. After he started to write this article he became ill and died, but his long-time collaborator on the research of the Duff House Papers, Eddie Martin, has undertaken the task of completing the article.

Corriemulzie

Eddie Martin and Graham Ewen

The precise boundaries of the Corriemulzie Estate are difficult to identify beyond the fact that they were located on the road from Braemar to Inverey, bounded by Auchendryne Estate to the east and Inverey Estate to the west. In a Charter dated 28 September 1632, granted by John, Earl of Mar to an Alister Mackenzie, it is described as the town and lands of Corriemulzie, with the pendicle called Wester Arderg extending to four oxgates, the town and lands of Craggan extending to two oxgates and the shielings of Reflinchwood, Inveraltlat and Corronraw which were probably on the east side of Glen Ey. An oxgate varies in area and averages about 13 acres. The southern march was probably the ridge of Creag an Fhithich or, using the archaic phrase for a ridge, 'where wind and weather shears'. The northern march of the Estate is even more difficult to define as Craggan is on the north side of the river Dee and one would have expected the river itself to be the natural boundary, (Fig. 1). After much litigation between Farquharson of Inverey, who now owned Corriemulzie, and the Earl of Fife, who now owned the Mackenzie of Dalmore Estate, Craggan was ceded to the Earl following an exchange of grazing rights and the river became the northern march. In 1785 the Farquharson of Inverey Estate was sold to the Earl of Fife through an intermediary by the name of Robinson and Corriemulzie became just a name on the map.

There were only around seven holdings on the estate, two of which were above the road at Braegarie and the others below the road on the flatter ground near the river Dee. The tenants had the



usual personal services to perform for the landlord. They had to attend all military musters and weapons showings and eight men with dogs had to be provided for all huntings. All growing trees, present and to come, remained in the possession of the Earl of Mar but tenants were entitled to servitude timber for their holdings as was usual on other estates. They were thirled to the mill of Dalmore. A rental of £12 : 10 shillings was payable to the Earl of Mar at Whitsunday and Martinmas at Kindrochit Castle.

A massive flood on 3/4 August 1829, known as 'the muckle spate', dramatically altered the importance of Corriemulzie. The Dee broke over the embankment at a bend of the river to the west of Old Mar Lodge. The whole valley was under five feet of water. The corner of the Lodge dining room was taken away and filled with over three feet of mud. The window of the dining room was undermined and many outbuildings swept away. The garden was completely destroyed and roads and walks ruined. The bridge over the Dee was washed away and the farmlands of Allanaquoich buried in gravel. Rather than repair the Lodge at their own expense, the Trustees leased it out with game and fishing rights to Sir Harry Goodrich for seven years from July 1830, on condition that Mar Lodge was brought into habitable use by the end of the lease. The Earl of Fife moved to Corriemulzie Cottage on the south side of the Dee, west of Corriemulzie Gorge.

The Cottage, which became known as New Mar Lodge, (Fig.2), was built about 1825 by the Earl of Fife's brother General Sir Alexander Duff. The Earl of Fife carried out continuous improvements, repairs and extensions. Running costs were high and a list of accounts paid by the Factor on behalf of the Earl for the period 12 July to 10 October 1837 totalled over £2,200. Accounts for expenditure in the years 1837 to 1849 averaged £450 a year. Window Tax on 27 August 1847 was £29:5:4 for 93 windows.

A laundry was built to the east of the lodge in 1887 and a new boiler installed in 1911. The laundry functioned until 1938 when it was decided that all linen was to be sent to "the nearest best laundry" and the building made suitable for a dwelling house for one of the employees. It was finally demolished in 1962. Repairs to the stables, straw house and sheds were carried out in 1882. In 1883 the dining



Figure 2 *New Mar Lodge before 1893. Photograph by George Washington Wilson.*

room, hall and attic rooms were rebuilt and alterations made to the kitchen. In 1886 five new bedrooms were built for servants.

The Earl of Fife married HRH Princess Louise of Wales in 1889 and was created Duke of Fife in the same year. The Duke began to feel that because he was married to a Princess he would have to extend the accommodation at New Mar lodge. Plans were drawn up and work started on a substantial extension to the Cottage. It was during these works on 14 June 1895 that fire broke out in His Grace's private room and immediately spread to other parts of the building. The fire was quickly tackled by the workmen who were on site carrying out the improvements and help from Braemar was called for. A great deal was saved from the fire including furnishings and the ballroom.

After the fire it was decided not to replace Corriemulzie Cottage (ie New Mar Lodge) on its previous site but to build a replacement New Mar Lodge on the other side of the river Dee to the west of the existing Old Mar Lodge. The foundation stone of the new lodge was laid by Queen Victoria on 15 October 1895 – four months after the Corriemulzie fire. After completion in 1898 the Corriemulzie site was completely cleared and the ballroom and furnishings rescued

from the fire were moved to the new lodge and Old Mar Lodge demolished.

Many of the buildings associated with Corriemulzie Cottage became derelict but some were later restored for use as holiday homes or permanent residences. These include the Roaring Stag, which was the hospital, Dairy Cottage which was used as a bothy for gillies in the stalking season, and the Estate Office, built in 1897, which was part used as the Factor's Office. An ice house to the rear of the Factor's Office was filled in as it became very dangerous, especially for children. The ice house was built in 1898 by a Charles McDougall who was paid 5/6d a day plus one gallon of whisky costing 18/- for the men storing the ice. There is no trace of the Eagle House where a live eagle was caged.

Around this time hydro-electric power became a possibility and the Earl was anxious to see if electricity could be provided by this means, albeit for lighting only. Various sites were investigated, including a burn at the back of Old Mar Lodge and some sources in Glen Quoich but the site chosen was on the Corriemulzie burn. There was a suitable hollow below Braegarie to act as a reservoir and from there a steep drop down to the river Dee to provide a head of water. Unfortunately the reservoir proceeded to silt up and there was generally not enough water to provide electricity. The power station was housed in a small concrete building and the water was carried to it in a pipe which still works but the machinery has been removed. The output was so poor that it had to be used to charge up batteries which were then used when lighting was required. The estate manager who lived in the Estate Office, was allowed to use the electricity but only if the Princess was not in residence. The scheme was not much of a success and it was not long before petrol generators were introduced to Mar Lodge. Eventually the hydro-electric scheme was allowed to fall into disrepair but the dam built in 1898 is still there with its pond behind it.

Access to the Corriemulzie Falls and the summer house which was at its foot, has been a continuing problem right up to the present day. In 1908 a notice was placed at its entrance 'Parties using the path do so on their own responsibility' and in 1928 the steps were in such a bad condition that they were closed to the public. They have now been repaired and it is again possible to get right down to the old



Figure 3 *Corriemulzie Falls.*

power station. There is no trace of the summer house which is shown in an etching of the Corriemulzie Falls and is named on the 1866 OS map, (Fig. 3).

Mention must be made of places in the Corriemulzie area not directly connected with New Mar Lodge. In the west we have Milldorach Cottage and its adjacent workshop which was the home

of John Lamont, a taxidermist, and locally known as ‘the stuffer’. He was responsible for the presentation of many of the antler heads in the Stag Ballroom at the present day Mar Lodge

To the east, below the ruins of Arderg at the river side is Father Farquharson’s Seat, a carved stone dated 1785, (Fig. 4). It relates to a Roman Catholic priest who administered to those of the old faith in the Braemar area following the 1745 uprising. A Mass was held in the ruins of Arderg Cottage in 1965 on the Feast of the Assumption to commemorate the works of Father Farquharson in preserving the Catholic Faith.



Figure 4 *Father Farquharson’s seat, Arderg. Photograph by Graham Ewen.*

There were 19 households in Corriemulzie in 1696, dropping to 10 in 1785 and rising to 18 in the period 1841 to 1901. The reason for the nineteenth century increase has been explained by the Earl of Fife’s move from Old Mar Lodge to New Mar Lodge around 1829. From the 1841 Census there were 3 households in Braegarie, 8 in Corriemulzie and 2 in Arderg. The 1911 Census shows 2 households in Braegarie, 7 in Corriemulzie, 1 in Alltchclair and 2 at Arderg.

Today there are few permanent households, but one of note is Inverey House built in 1986 for Captain Ramsay and Lady Saltoun, owners of the Mar Estate. Another permanent household is Bourtree in Inverey, the home of Norman and Betty Robertson. Norman became an Honorary Member of the Cairngorm Club in January 2014 to acknowledge his many years as 'man on spot' and fixer of all things that go wrong at Muir Cottage. (See page 258).

The present Braegarrie, built in 1900, was sold in a very dilapidated condition to Cairngorm Club members Richard and Gill Shirreffs in 1982. During renovation many old wooden box drains were unearthed.

This concludes Graham's series of articles about the Mar and Mar Lodge Estates. We acknowledge the assistance given by the staff of Aberdeen University Special Collections who gave access to the Duff House Papers and also wish to thank Captain Nicolson and the late Betty Lobban for permission to publish extracts from private papers held by them.



Where is this? Answer in the next Newsletter.