

This presentation was given by the Mar Estate, Senior Trustee, Mr Mark Nicolson (MN) who has held this position since June 1987. MN cannot guarantee everything is factual, although our records are the largest collection in Scotland; some 1500 boxes which, are on loan to Aberdeen University Library: I (MN) have not read them all.

The story starts with a young boy called William Duff, standing on a midden behind his father's farm, looking north down the river Lossie. He was purported to have remarked "All them lums that reek, I will ane", and eventually he did.

The business had been started by his grandfather, continued by his father, but it was William Duff of Dipple (1696-1763) later Lord Braco, Viscount Macduff and then Earl Fife, all purchased Irish titles, who really got things going.

Duff was a descendent of money lenders and followed in the family tradition, securing money by feudal superiorities. His game was to lend against superiorities and then monitor closely the fortunes of the borrowers through an excellent network of information. When the borrower was down he would foreclose, demanding payment of the loan. At that time there was no consideration; which means he just took the security for the loan with no obligation to sell and give any surplus back to the borrower.

Subsequently he would 'irritate' the feus, arguing that feuing conditions had been broken and that as a result the feu was null and void. In effect obtaining vacant possession and then re-letting at rents greater than the feu duty. Many cases went to the Land Tribunal in Edinburgh and Duff knew the judges well!

His empire was based in Bank Square in Elgin. One day walking to the office, Duff picked a farthing out of the gutter. A beggar said "Gan on Creely (his nickname) give it t'mae." Duff replied "Ganna find yer ane." A hard man with a burning ambition to become very rich, and he did. But we should be wary of judging by our standards of today: Scotland in the early 18th century was very different, indeed it was bust!

When the crowns came together in 1603 the first thing King James I (or VI) did, was stamp out reiving in the borders. The highlands were largely left alone; old ways continued, subsistence farming, cattle rearing and droving, for which, this was an important area. There was also some charcoal burning. Religion changed; although not in this area, where it is understood the Reformation never reached.

There was parity between the currencies of England and Scotland: where 1 "merk" was equal to 1 English pound.

The merk was a Norman word, possibly brought to Scotland's shores during the various Norman invasions. In the year 1602, King James VI had minted a small coin made from silver. On the front it bore a likeness of the king and on the back a design of the thistle. Following King James VI death, King Charles II, in 1675 minted a new coin to the value of 4-merks, another representing 1-merk with yet a smaller coin to the value of half a merk; all minted in silver.

England had a Civil War (1642-1651) but it did not reach here.

England acquired colonies, trade provided wealth, but that did not reach here.

England was protectionist and excluded Scotland from colonial trade, although Glasgow was born on an illicit tobacco trade, but that did not reach here.

So by 1700 England was prospering. The shoots of the Empire were sewn. The "Agricultural Revolution" had started. No need to live in fortified houses or towns; civilisation had arrived! Fine clothes, fine wines, delicacies such as sugar, but yet again, they did not reach here. In the 1700's the Scottish Highlands were mostly left to themselves to allow the development of the traditional way of subsistence farming and the raising of cattle.

In 100 years the English pound was now worth 12-merks. The Scottish currency had collapsed: Scotland was bust.

Land around Braemar was owned by the Farquharsons of Invercauld; further east by Gordons of Huntly, and by the Erskine's (Earls of Mar). I (MN) do not know how they acquired the Mar estates; there had been at least 6 creations of Earls of Mar by various Scottish kings (another subject for another day).

What is now Mar and Mar Lodge estates were feued:
Mackenzies of Dalmore
Farquharsons of Inverey
Lamonts of Corriemulzie and many more.

This was the old world; prosperity of the new had not reached, and this leads to conflict.

I (MN) do not wish to be controversial, but I do not believe the 1715 Jacobite rebellion to have been romantic, which the '45 could possibly be described. My reason for this is a letter in a Douglas Simpson book from the Earl of Mar's factor to his feuars telling them to be at the Invercauld at the appointed hour, and then telling them in clear terms what would happen to their animals, children, wives and homes if they did not turn up.

The venture failed and Bobbing John, Earl of Mar, fled to Paris. To avoid the crown forfeiting his estates, Mar transferred them to his nephews, Lords Grange and Dun, and in the early 1720's Duff acquired them, probably as security against an unpaid loan.

Duff wasted no time; feus irritated, vacant possession obtained. But Duff was not just an acquirer, he was a first class administrator. His agricultural improvements west of Braemar can still be seen today; runrig system to provide crop rotation, improvements for his tenants, which meant more rent to him. A map in Aberdeen University shows these and the village of Kanakyle, near Allanquoich, which no longer exists (Where was it?).

Forestry was developed with major plantings mostly to the West of Braemar and stretching over many glens. Harvested timber was floated down the river Dee to Aberdeen.

Mar was but one of many estates acquired: Balmoral, Kildrummy, Cromar, Tillypronie, Candacraig and many more in Strathdon, Banffshire and Morayshire. He was reputed to have moved gravestones in Glass churchyard to make claim of connection to the extinct Earls of Fife. During 1759 William Duff, the Member of Parliament for Banff, became Earl Fife and Viscount

Macduff. It was he who had commissioned the construction of the impressive Duff House in Banff in 1740 (but never lived there, having fallen out with the builder). The 2nd Earl Fife changed the name of the Banffshire village of Doune to MacDuff at the end of the 18th century. The 4th Earl Fife fought in the Peninsula War in 1808-14 and was made a Knight of the Thistle. In 1889, the 6th Earl married Princess Louise, eldest daughter of the future King Edward VII. He was created Earl of Fife, Marquis of Macduff, and later Duke of Fife. By a later marriage of his daughter, the title passed to Lord Carnegie.

Duff did well after the '15, amongst other deals he bought 26 parishes from Marischal College for £3,000 after they were forced to sell having come out for the Jacobites just before Culloden. He left 8 surviving children two estates each; the eldest getting the Dee and Don "holdings" (along with the "holdings" went the title of Earl Fife) plus much land in Banff and Moray.

In 1784 the son, Earl Fife, acquired Inverey estates complaining that he paid far too much and that the inhabitants were poachers and layabouts.

Land around Braemar at that time was owned by the Farquharsons of Invercauld. What is now Mar and Mar Lodge estates were fued to the Mackenzies of Dalmore, the Farquharsons of Inverey, the Lamonts of Corriemulzie, and many others. Due to the lack of wealth reaching Scotland, many feuds erupted.

Not much changed until 1829 and the year of the "Muckle Spate" when Dalmore House, the first Mar Lodge, was rendered uninhabitable. Down south things had changed. The "Industrial Revolution" had arrived and that meant money, as previously mentioned, and it did reach here.

In 1832 Sir Harry Goodriche rented the Mar Estate for £2,000 per year, in addition he undertook to rebuild Dalmore plus paying all costs; his purpose for this was "stalking".

Sir Harry Goodriche died soon after and the lease was taken on by his friend, The Duke of Leeds. Glen Ey was cleared. Of 6 families there, 4 were moved to new farms in the Dee valley, 1 kept on as keeper, of the remaining 1 there is no trace. This the only evidence I (MN) have seen of clearances, but for deer and not sheep ranching.

The Duke of Leeds employed a new keeper from Ardverikie, called Catanach. He was a deer man and greatly increased numbers. 100 harts a year were shot, often in drives with as many wounded. The Duke of Leeds left in 1857, which seems to coincide with the building of Corriemulzie Cottage, the second Mar Lodge. The estate was taken back by the Fifes, perhaps because Prince Albert and Queen Victoria had bought (from them) and rebuilt Balmoral. Royal Deeside as we know it, was born. Stalking continued. Grouse were walked up and salmon were fished: the Earl Fife used a trident!

Earl Fife became a friend of Queen Victoria; things moved quickly. Duff, Invercauld and Balmoral highlanders were formed (where is the kit?).

Great parties were held at Corriemulzie. Tourists followed. The hotels Fife and Invercauld were built. Braemar took shape with smart houses let for the summer, while the family lived in a backhouse. Shops appeared, with a travel/shipping agent, cobbler and hairdresser located in Chapel Brae.

Mar Estate was closely involved giving land for churches, the village hall, the Games park etc. a

relationship was formed with the community, which still exists today. Affordable housing became an issue; the estate introduced a site rent system, administered from Banff, which worked until 1979.

In the 1880s Sir Sigismund Neumann, a very rich Bavarian banker who had amassed a fortune from South African mining interests, rented Invercauld House. Now Siggie did not stalk, shoot or fish, but he did do lavish lunches on an enormous scale. Wrapped from head to toe in tartan astride a pony, Siggie would lead his guests to a remote glen where a tented village had been erected with every food imaginable laid out for the party. His social aspirations reached a height when the Prince of Wales accepted an invitation to one of these affairs. The balmoral party duly arrived to be led by a triumphant Siggie to a distant glen. But sadly he got the wrong one, and the distinctly unamused royals did not arrive for their lunch until 5 O'clock. Siggie's social ambitions went no further.

During 1889, the Earl Fife was raised to the (GB) peerage, becoming the Earl of Fife, married Louise, daughter of Prince of Wales. 2-days later he was created Marquess of Macduff, and later 1st Duke of Fife.

Corriemulzie Cottage was burnt down in the 1890's, resulting in the building of a New Mar Lodge in its present location, which the Duke of Fife, funded from money he made as chairman of the British South Africa Company (a Cecil Rhodes venture) Queen Victoria did not build it!

World War 1 marked the end of Braemar's fame. The Duke and Duchess of Fife were shipwrecked off Morocco, on their way to Egypt in 1912, he died of pleurisy shortly after; she survived a further 19 years and as a widow died in 1931.

They had two 2 daughters; Alexandra, born 1891, the oldest daughter and 2nd duchess of Fife, in 1913 married Prince Arthur of Connaught, son of Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, who was her first cousin once removed, the third and favourite son of Queen Victoria.

They had a son, Alastair, born 1914, died unmarried in Canada during World War 2 in 1943. In 1942 he had succeeded his grandfather as 2nd Duke of Connaught and Strathearn.

The younger daughter Maud, married the Earl of Southesk. They had one son, James, the present and 3rd Duke of Fife. He is Vice Patron of the BRHS and lives at Kinnaird near Brechin.

Alastair was left by his mother all the Duff estates in Scotland before he died, and in will he left these to his first cousin on his father's side, Captain Alexander Ramsay, son of his father's sister, Princess Patricia of Connaught, who on marriage became Lady Patricia Ramsay.

Alastair's mother had a life interest; when she died in 1959 she left her estate to her nephew James, the present Duke of Fife, and the Scottish land went to Captain Ramsay, who also got the death duty bill, consequently land had to be sold. What is Mar Lodge was sold to an Eagle Star subsidiary, then to Gerald Panchaud, then to John Kluge, and finally to the National Trust Scotland. The Dalvorar beat was sold in 1984 to enable Inverey House to be built, where Lady Saltoun, captain Ramsay's widow, lives today.

After World War 1, Mar Lodge was used for summer sporting parties; the family living in London. In 1924 Glen Ey was let to Stanley Bond, who also took Braemar Castle from Invercauld. He emerged as a binding figure in Braemar village; became close to Head Keeper Munro, who died in 1935, when his

motor bike hit a telegraph pole on the Linn road, just outside Braemar village. Bond and monro put in the grouse butts that we use today. Bond never recovered from Munro's death and he gave up Glen Ey in 1939, but kept on Braemar Castle. Bond died in the London blitz leaving a wife and 2 young boys, Ian and Mark, who were brought up in Braemar until 1952 (does anyone remember them?).

After World War 2, Mar Lodge was only visited once by the Duchess of Fife, this because of severe arthritis. Her death in 1959 brings us to the modern day.

Mark Nicolson
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