

Kinnaird

Hotel, restaurant & sporting estate



A BRIEF HISTORY

Up until the early 1600's the history of Kinnaird is rather vague. Henceforward, Kinnaird Estate was acquired by a family by the name of Stewart. The family owned Kinnaird until 1773, when debts forced them to sell to a Mr Colquhoun Grant. Mr Grant then passed it to his brother, Dr Gregory Grant, an Edinburgh physician, who in turn sold it in 1798 to Mr Chalmers Izzet, an Edinburgh hatter.

It was during this period that the first part of Kinnaird House was built. This consisted of the present South West Corner overlooking the gardens and was two storeys and basement.

Mr Izzet owned the Estate and House until 1824. He then sold it to a Mr James Stewart, who was probably connected to the Stewart family who had owned the Estate in the previous Century. This Stewart sold it two years later to John, the 4th Duke of Atholl.

The House was then leased until 1840 when the next full time occupant arrived. She was known as Lady Emily Percy of the Northumberland Ilk. Lady Emily was married to Lord James, the first Lord Glenlyon, the second son of John, the 4th Duke. When Lord James died his son became Duke and took a Duchess, after which Kinnaird became a Dower House

Lady Emily, an artist, whose sketches of the surrounding buildings and countryside, left a vivid account of life in this area during the latter part of the 19th Century. During this time the central part of the House was constructed.

After Lady Emily's death, the House and Estate remained in Atholl hands and was leased to various occupants.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the Atholl Estates were slimmed down for the first time in centuries and in 1927 the then Duke sold the Kinnaird estate to Sir John and Lady Ward.

After this Kinnaird was primarily a shooting estate and lodge, with the Ward house parties being legendary.

In 1928, extensive remodelling of the house was carried out by WA Forsyth of Forsyth and Maule under the commission of Sir John Ward. They added a new main entrance, and new smoking room and billiard room to the north. They also removed later accretions to reveal the front of an 18th century house.

The Arabesques in the dining room were painted in the 1860s and are listed as historical. The same painter also painted the Howard hotel in Edinburgh.

In 1960, the Estate passed down to Reginald Ward who, in 1975, married Mrs Constance Cluett. Unfortunately, before the idea of Kinnaird being turned into a Hotel could be realised, Reginald Ward died, leaving Mrs Constance Ward to execute the renovation. In 1990 Kinnaird opened to the public.

Kinnaird has sheltered two of Scotland's most significant nineteenth century literary figures at important points in their careers. One of these was James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, and his time at Kinnaird is best described in a memorial to him:-

In the summer of 1814, when making a tour in the Highlands, Hogg caught a severe cold. He remained till convalescent at Kinnaird House in Athole, the seat of Mr Chalmers Izett. Mrs Izett took a great interest in the poet, and entertained a high opinion of his genius.

During his residence at Kinnaird, Mrs Izett one morning proposed that he should write something to "prevent his mind from rusting." The poet was not a man to flinch when thus put on his mettle, and the result was "Mador of the Moor."

Hogg set down this imitation of Lady of the Lake, which later became forgotten, although it contains much beautiful poetry, and shows descriptive power of a very high order.

In 1823, Kinnaird was rented for several years by the Buller family of Edinburgh. At this time Thomas Carlyle spent two years as tutor to Charles Buller, who later became a highly distinguished Liberal MP.

It was also at this time that Carlyle wrote his first important book, a biography of Schiller and completed his translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship. In his own words, Carlyle described his life at Kinnaird as follows:-

"I lodged and slept in the old mansion, a queer, old-fashioned, snug enough, entirely secluded edifice, sunk among trees; hither I came to smoke twice or thrice in the daytime; had a good oak-wood fire at night and sat in seclusion, in a silence not to be surpassed above ground".