

S. G. M. 1911

Historical Notes on Glenfinart

Name Now Known as Glenfinart Forest, Ardentimby

The name is derived from the name of the Estate of Glenfinart which was broken up and sold in lots, the actual Forest area was part of Lot 2. The word Glenfinart taken from the gaelic Glean fineard

lit. Gathering place.

Geographical Glenfinart Forest occupies a site on the north shores of Loch Goil and Loch Long, Argyllshire - stretching some seven miles from Gairletter Point on Loch Long to near Carrick Castle on Loch Goil. Taking in the rocky and steeply rising ground from shore to skyline.

~~roughly~~ The now known Forest area is part of what used to be the estates of the Earls Dunmore which occupied the most of this almost peninsular land, bounded by Lochs Long and Goil to the south, the Holy Loch to the east, and in the north by Loch Eck and the outlet therefrom, and in the west across country from Loch Goil towards Loch Fyne.

Changing hands through years the area was gradually reduced to smaller estates, until 1860, when the then Glenfinart Estate was contained in the land bounded by overland line from Gairletter Pt, on Loch Long, to Whistlefield on Loch Eck, and thence to Carrick Castle on Loch ^{Goil} ~~Long~~, after further reductions the total area amounted to some 13670 acres. This was sold in lots, the lot purchased by the Forestry Commission amounted to some 8712 acres, this again being reduced by the disposal of the Mansion House and 8.7 acres of policy ground.

leaving a balance of 8704 acres as Glenfinart Forest.

Previous Owners From the Earls Dunmore, to the Douglas family, via Archibald Douglas, John Douglas, and Charles Douglas, to the Pice-Laschalles family, via John Pice-Laschalles to John Hendry Pice-Laschalles, until sold in 1922.

During the time when the ownership rested with the Douglas family, interim tenants rented the estate for sporting purposes, notable amongst tenants being the Allan family (Allan Line) and the Seaton-Kerr family.

Topographical

The Forest has, in the main, a southern exposure with some southwest aspects, giving fairly early in the year, and reasonably early and late day sunshine. The land rising on the south and southwest slopes, is rather precipitous and liable to erosion, rising from sea level to heights of 600 and 1500 feet to a notable peak, Am Binnein at 1560 feet. Made up of rocky ridges and rising glens to rather poor and eroded tops. The more or less gradual but constant erosion of soils from surrounding valleys and glens during the passing years has provided alluvial flats on low ground, particularly in the Finart Bay area, Policy ground, and again at Gairletter. Alluvial areas now provide the main pasturage and arable cropping lands for the farms of Craighoyle, Stronahullin, Barnacabber, and Ardentinny.

Rivers

The River Finart flows from its source on the east bounds down through Glen Finart being fed by the tributaries Allt Kas-Mor, Allt Garbh, and Allt Cuil, and joins Loch Long at Finart Bay. The Gairletter River flows down Stronahullin Glen fed by numerous tributaries until it joins L. Long at Gairletter Point. Small Allts or Burns are found at the foot of all the small gullies intersecting the rather hilly landscape.

Roads

A rather poor nine foot way with passing places, serves as the main transport route, serving the area from Dunoon and intermediate Piers, to the landward Dunoon/Glasgow road at Whistlefield Loch Eck. Railways, due to the general inaccessability, are intirely unkown in this area. Previous transport was effected by sea lochs, but now mainly by road. Various small roads and paths serve the farms and other habitations. Forest service roads are being built, being difficult and costly, progress is small, and the area remains comparatively inaccessible.

Ferries

At one time Ardentinny/Coulport was used as a main route to Gourock, custom started to fade out with the advent of steamers, when David Napier started plying a regular service from his pier at Blairmore (Portinstuck Pier) about 1830-1840. The original Ferry House and stone slipway, now disused, are contained in the Forest area. The Old Ferry House being the oldest building in the district.

Farms

The farms within the Forest area are - Stronahullin Farm with 70 acres arable, and considerable hill grazings. Craighoyle Farm was the smallest, with about 20 acres arable and some hill ground, this was enlarged by the inclusion of the remnants Sligrachan Farm lands, after the bulk of hill ground had been requisitioned for afforestation. Ardnahain Farm has a small arable area on the shores of Loch Goll, but a rather large sheeprange. Ardentinny Farm now consists of two fields totalling about 16 acres. Baranacaber Farm, originally the estate home farm, contained some 200 acres arable, also hill grazings. The original hill grazings are now afforested and the arable ground depleted by the requisition of land for Forest Workers Holdings, Nurseries, Building sites for Swedish Houses, and other purposes. The balance of land and buildings now provide dairying facilities, providing a local milk round. Sligrachan Farm, at time of sale was rated as 2146 acres, but was reduced to the status of small tenancy by the requisition of land for afforestation and the remainder of hill grazings being transferred to Craighoyle Farm. The whole area of farm land, contained in the estate was used mainly for the upkeep of B.F. Sheep and hill cattle, with the bulk of arable in hand as a Home Farm, for domestic requirements and general cropping. With the increase of plantations, sheep stock has been greatly reduced, and hill cattle now rather a rarity.

Woodlands

The various woodlands on Glenfinart Estate would seem to date around 1800-1862 mainly, with the then standard species Douglas Fir, Norway Spruce, and European Larch. The bulk of woods were planted by the Earls Dunmore, with other small plantations added by the Douglas family. Prior to the 1914-1918 war there was a resident Timber Merchant (Stalker) who had an office at Drynain, he operated from this point and purchased timber from various estates in Coval and Lorne, purchasing odd lots, and employing imported seasonal labour. He had a fairly good trade at that time, in working scrub Birch, for clog soles (mainly used in the Paisley and other Mills), and Birch Faggots for steel smelting, this material (Birch) coming from Clunie and Acanach Woods. A profitable sideline to his conifer fellings, was the supply of Larch bark, mainly disposed to Tanneries for the tanning of hides, his main work ofcourse was the supply of logs to City Mills, and the supply of quality Larch to Clynder, Sandbank and the various other yacht yards.

Woods

The Estate had a private sawmill, worked by pond and waterwheel here timber derived from odd fellings and blows was utilized for estate and farm purposes, with some local sales. Quite a lot of damage was caused by various flood periods, notably 1912, when Drynain and Barnacaber woods were dispoiled. Other fellings through the ^{later} years were carried out various other wood merchants, mainly, Halliday, Methven -Wilson Troon- and Murray-Larbert, all having sawmills sited in or near the woods. At the present time, only odd patches of large scots pine, and spruce remain with the odd isolated larch tree. The original Arboretum now contains but few of the various specimen trees planted there, Durmast Oak Cedar, Walnut, Cryptomeria, and a varied assortment of Cypress. With the depletion of 1929-40, and the general neglect during war years of 1940-46, Rhododendron ponticum overran felled areas of Portdornaige and other woods, making a rather impenetratable mass.

Population The population was in the region of 200/250 (in this area) occupied as estate, household, and farm workers with their families. since the 1800s some 20 houses have become disused or demolished, and up to the present a like number have been built or reconverted, the population remains much as before.

Buildings At the out set main administrative buildings were a joined by workers houses or bothies, i.e:- Gardens with Gardeners, Stables with Coachmen, Kennels with Gamekeepers, Gas Station, Sawmill etc all now in ruins or demolished, shepherds houses and croft buildings at Craighoyle, Blaveary, and Knap have suffered a like fate. Two or three houses were washed away during the 1912 flood, mainly at Drynain and Barnacaber. The mansion house at Craighoyle fell derelict in 1913 and is now in ruins. The area called "The Grotto" to the west end of Finart Bay was used to build a labour camp during the depression of the 1930s this camp was added to and utilized by the Royal Navy as their shore base H.M.S Armadillo, in turn this was passed to the F.C at the cessation of hostilities (1946) and then used to domicile a Forest Workers Training Scheme, later partially demolished, until only a few huts remain, 3 huts being reconverted to 6 rather second rate temporary dwellings presently occupied by workers or other tenants. One hut presently purchased and used by a childrens club

Glossary

Ardentinny	Ard-an-tinne	Mooring Ring Field	Ferry
Glenfinart	Gleann-a-fineard	Glen of Gathering	Meeting Place
Stronahullin	Sfon-a-cuailen	Point like lock of hair	Gairletter Pt
Craighoyle craigcoll	Creag- Coille	Wooded Rock	Craighoyle
Barnacabber	Barran-a-caber	Fence of Stakes Topping a wall	
Sligrachan	Slighe-racan	Noisy Path	near weaning field or waterfalls
Tom Buic	Tom-buic	Rockier Knoll	
Cuil	Corner		
Knap or Cnap	Small Hill		
Ardnahein	Ard-na-Aighe	Field on Creag Aighe	
Creag Aighe		Smiling Rock	