
AHSS Tayside & E Fife Group Study Day, Saturday 10 August 2013
Abstracted and amended from the tour notes for AHSS Spring Study Tour
4th to 7th May 2012 *The Fair Lands of Gowrie*

The original tour notes were written by Simon Green and Adam Swan, edited and produced by Adam Swan and culled from a variety of sources, especially the RCAHMS and the Buildings of Scotland: *Perth and Kinross*, 2007 by John Gifford; and the RIAS Guide to *Perth and Kinross* by Nick Haynes 2000 and numerous websites and publications.

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BLACKCRAIG CASTLE

This has been described as the 'Baronial dream house' of the artist and amateur architect Patrick Allan Fraser and his artist wife Elizabeth. Blackcraig should be seen as a shooting lodge version of their spectacular and highly idiosyncratic principal residence Hospitalfield in Arbroath.

Patrick Allan (1813-90), son of an Arbroath manufacturer, had trained as a painter in Edinburgh, then spent time in Rome and Paris, establishing a studio in London. He returned home and met Elizabeth Fraser (1805-73), widow and heiress, they married in 1843 and he set about putting her estate of Hospitalfield to financial order, including successful legal action for compensation from the railway, which released substantial funds. Land in Perthshire was cheap and Patrick

acquired croftland on the west side of the Arde, which he drained and improved and built a small shooting lodge at Blackcraig with just a few rooms, about 1846 (ref. the Book of Hospitalfield) Whether anything substantial was already on the site is not clear; Timothy Pont shows something more like a small farm here in the 1580s/90s, with both Blackcraig and Wester Blackcraig named. Canmore says: *Incorporated at the rear of Blackcraig Castle, a mansion of 1856, there are the remains of a substantial tower-house. It stands three storeys in height and has a stair-tower extruded on the NW; the masonry is of lime-mortared random rubble and is readily distinguished from its 19th-century ashlar superstructure. Blackcraig was probably the property of the Maxwells who were in possession of the barony of Ballmacreuchy by 1550*".

Patrick appears to have built the first part of Blackcraig before Hospitalfield, where he started work by adding the picture gallery in 1849. As at Hospitalfield, Patrick clearly continued building (note the watercolour showing a much smaller centre range), often changing his mind mid project, or redoing something built earlier. After 1851 when Elizabeth's mother died, Patrick and Elizabeth inherited her family estates near Coventry and these generated funds which they invested in the Scottish properties. The Bridge House of c.1870 is an obvious example, he acquired more ground across the river to provide an access road and he built a substantial timber bridge, only to

replace it later. Various recently published sources date Blackcraig at 1856, probably the date of a later phase.

The architectural style is baronial but not the robust style seen in contemporary buildings such as Balmoral or the work of David Bryce. Here inspiration is taken from more modest tower houses of the 16th and 17th centuries and this is very advanced for 1856 (let alone 1846!). This is a fascinating precursor of the approach



to baronial architecture taken by late 19th century architects such as Robert Lorimer or even Mackintosh...

Clothe Blackcraig in harl (mentally!) and these overlapping forms, turrets and towers produce intriguing sculptural effects which could stand comparison with Argkinglas. This building is worthy of serious study. It now forms a loose Z-plan but no one seems to have got to grips with its complex form. Amongst many questions: why are there two service courts?

William Gladstone rented Blackcraig for at least one summer (1893). This is definitely the 'country cousin' of the more sophisticated almost 'metropolitan' baronial of Hospitalfield but, in the history of Scottish Baronial Architecture, it is of at least equal importance in that it is a herald for the late flowering of the style at the end of the 19th century.

A walled garden with pavilions lies to the south of the castle and the gate lodge, up on the main road, presumably also by Patrick Allan Fraser of c. 1856 is a worthy if modest exercise in the baronial.



BLACKCRAIG BRIDGE HOUSE

Another baronial fantasy realised by Patrick Allan Fraser c.1870. A relatively simple bridge over the River Ardlie is transformed by the addition of a two storey gatehouse. This covered and enclosed bridge adorned with substantial turrets, bartizans and gables provides a fitting prelude to the castle. Accommodation is provided on the floor above the roadway linked by another bridge to an adjacent lodge.

This is a unique adaptation of Scots Baronial Bridge lodge. Somewhat different and less robust examples can be seen at Ardverikie and Monzie.



BLACKCRAIG GATE LODGE

The little gate lodge at the main road is reckoned to date from about 1856, the date usually given for the castle. It is plain, with crowstepped gables and with a canted bay window which has similarities to the oriel at the castle. The gatepiers are surmounted by carved dogs' heads over pipes of leaves. These were a favourite motive and carved dogs appear everywhere at Hospitalfield.

BRIDGE OF CALLY HOTEL

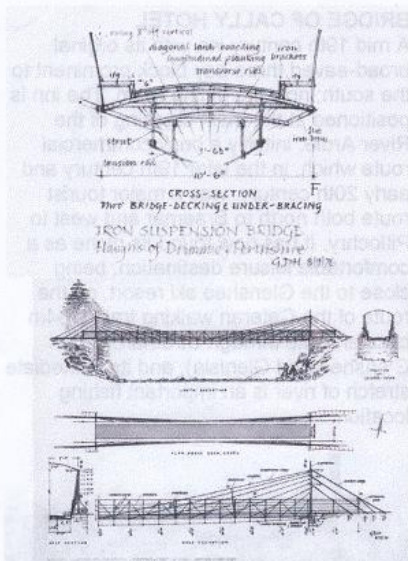
A mid 19th century inn with its original broad-eaved three bay block prominent to the south; now the dining room. The inn is positioned at the main crossing of the River Ardlie, initially a busy commercial route which, in the later 19th century and early 20th century, was a major tourist route both north to Braemar and west to Pitlochry. It has now found its niche as a comfortable leisure destination, being close to the Glenshee ski resort, on the route of the Cateran walking trail (a 64m circular route through Strathardle, Glenshee and Glenisla), and its immediate stretch of river is an important fishing location.



In the later 19th century the inn was extended to the east and north to enjoy the views of the meeting of the Ardlie and the Black Water which, further east, form the 'ireful' Ercht. This included the addition of the large glazed veranda along the river side, which is now a distinctive architectural feature of the building.

HAUGHS OF DRIMMIE SUSPENSION BRIDGE

A beautifully delicate wrought-iron suspension bridge over the River Ercht by John Justice Jnr. of Dundee. It was built c.1835 for Colonel Chalmers (later Sir William) to provide a western drive crossing the river to his house Glenelich Lodge. Its pylons are anchored to the riverbank and the bridge deck is suspended on rod-stays. It is an enlarged and modified version of the Kirkton of Glenisla footbridge by the same firm. There is a small gothic lodge adjacent, similar to the gate lodge up on the main road.



GLENERICHT HOUSE

Gleniericht is an old estate, bought sometime in the late 1700s by William Chalmers (1742-1817), who was son of a prosperous Dundee merchant and who long served as Town Clerk of Dundee. His son Sir William (1785-1860) was a distinguished soldier, but Sir William's family all died young and the Gleniericht estate was inherited by the Brown-Constable nephews of William Chalmers's third wife, Barbara Brown, Lieut. Col Charles Brown-Constable (1807-1887) inheriting from an older brother in 1852.

The 18th century house lies at the core of this much enlarged shooting lodge, which occupies a magnificent site looking west over the wooded glen. The house is now entered from the south through a large top lit hall and into a stair hall which retains Glasgow style glass. The reception rooms are ranged along the west and north sides with a service wing to the east. The house was very substantially enlarged in 1900-01 when owned by Alexander Dick Grimond, (1823-1903, d. unmarried), who had acquired it by at least 1880, and again in the 1930s for his successor.



Blairgowrie and adjacent Rattray are important in the history of textile manufacturing, with at least 12 mill complexes existing on the Erich and its tributary burns through the 19th century. Lorny Mill was among the earliest, being built on the site of a snuff mill by David Grimond (d.1835) in 1814. The Grimond family evolved from Dundee cloth merchants to become flax spinners, with David's brother James (d. 1862), owner of Oakbank Mill further down the Erich in Blairgowrie, credited as being the first to experiment with jute spinning, around 1832 (though jute didn't take off until after



1850). David Grimond's eldest son David (1816-89) built Brooklyn, succeeded to Oakbank and bought Ashbank. The younger sons Joseph (1821-94) and Alexander Dick (1823-1903) established the firm of J & A D Grimond, flax and jute spinners at Maxwelltown Works, Dundee in 1847, adding nearby Bowbridge Works in 1857. By the end of the century, they and the Cox family at Camperdown Works, owned the world's two largest jute processing companies. Dundee became more important as the need for water power lessened, it had the harbour and cheap labour. Lorny Mill closed in 1904 following A D's Grimond's death; Oakbank survives, now boarded up and in deteriorating condition. Keathbank Mill, on the river opposite Oakbank, from 1830, continued until 1979, became a heritage centre until 2004, and was recently converted into housing.

A D Grimond's Dundee house was Dunmore Hall (demolished) in the west end, designed for him by John Carver jnr of Meigle c.1865 and extended by him in 1873. However his elder brother Joseph, turned a modest Broughty Ferry mansion into the colossal Carbet Castle in the 1860s and 70s using Thomas Saunders Robertson of Edwards and Robertson (Joseph also owned Kinettles, Forfar). Carver died in 1896 whereas Robertson was still practising until 1904 and was originally from Blairgowrie. Could he have designed the 1900-01 extensions? Blairgowrie architect Lake Falconer jnr of L & JG Falconer is recorded as having carried out further additions sometime between 1902 and 1912. The walled garden lies further to the east on a higher level.

Glenericht Lodge Gatehouse

An early 19th century, delightfully eccentric, gothic gatehouse with pinnacles, niches hoodmoulds and quirky glazing. Can be seen from the Bridge of Cally to Blairgowrie road.

Sir Walter Scott's The Antiquary

There's a curious coincidence connecting Blackcraig and Glenericht.

As a young man, Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) had known Edinburgh solicitor George Constable, who had bought the estate of Wallace Craigie, just east of his home town of Dundee, in 1789. Constable had an inclination for 'antiquarian pursuits'. Scott had stayed with Constable at Wallace Craigie and explored the neighbourhood, which he later used as locations for his 1816 novel 'The Antiquary' and he based his central character Jonathan Oldbuck of Monkbarons on his friend George, who had died in 1803. George's nephew and namesake is the novel's Captain McIntyre. George Constable was unmarried and his estate was inherited by his great nephew, Laurence Brown, thereafter known as Brown-Constable. It was Laurence's sister Barbara Brown, who married William Chalmers, Town Clerk of Dundee, and owner of Glenericht. Through this marriage, the Glenericht estate later merged with that of Wallace Craigie, passing to Laurence's sons Laurence, then William, then Charles Brown-Constable.

The commission to illustrate a new edition "The Antiquary" is what brought Patrick Allan back to Arbroath. He visited the original of the novel's house of Monkbarons, which is Hospitalfield, and met and married its owner, Elizabeth Fraser, merging their names after they inherited her mother's estates in 1851.

So although neither Blackcraig nor Glenericht feature in the novel, in each case the principal houses belonging to the respective families have very strong connections.