

ABOUT SCATWELL HOUSE

From a document of the Archeological Soc. of N. Scotland we have:

Sin servicio

12:13

90%

Each feature was given its own three figure number. We anticipated finding many, possibly hundreds of features, and this method had proved least confusing on previous NOSAS projects. All associated features would then be grouped together for entering on the record.

Copies of the full report are to be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (Highland Council), National Monument Record of Scotland, Historic Scotland, Dingwall Museum and the North of Scotland Archaeological Society.

3.3 Historical Background of Scat well and the Lower glen

The name Scatwell has Norse origins and is thought to mean a place for paying tribute or tax - "skat" meaning tax and "vollr", a field, but another theory is that it derives from the word "skati" meaning large timber or logs. Whatever the meaning, no evidence for settlement by Norse people has ever been found and it is generally thought that the area of Ross-shire was visited by Norse peoples from Sutherland and Caithness for the purpose of exploiting the timber resources only. Many of the Norse placenames in the Ross-shire area seem to be connected with trees and timber.

Land Ownership

The majority of Phase 1 of the Strathconon Project comprises the present Scatwell Estate. However the estate has changed considerably over the years, in former days it was much more extensive. Comrie in the lower glen was part of the estates of Mackenzie of Coul and Achonachie, in Urray Parish, was part of the Fairburn Estate. Most of the Phase 1 area is in the Parish of Contin with only a small part, to the east, in the Parish of Urray. The present boundary is the Allt na Fannaich.

Scatwell is first mentioned, together with Strathconon, in a royal charter of land made to the Mackenzies in 1528. Kenneth Mackenzie, second son of Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Coigeach, tutor of Kintail, was the progenitor of the cadet branch of the Mackenzies of Scatwell.

Kenneth Mackenzie, 1st of Scatwell, had a sasine of Little Scatwell in 1619. He died at Lochluichart in 1662 and 3 sons succeeded him in turn. The 3rd son, also Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, 4th of Scatwell (d1729) was created 1st Baronet of Nova Scotia (and Scatwell) in 1703, he acquired lands on the Black Isle at Avoch and at Findon. A dwelling house was built at Findon and the family moved there from Lochluichart in 1696, the Mackenzies of Scatwell were never to reside in Strathconon again. In the 1790s they built a new mansion at Avoch, the original Rosehaugh House. James Wemyss, 5th Baron of Scat well (1770 - 1843) succeeded to the title in 1811 and became MP for the County of Ross in 1824 and Lord Lieutenant of Ross in 1826.

The first half of the 19th century was a difficult time for the old order of landowners and from 1831-32 the lands of Scatwell and Lochluichart began to be broken up. Meikle Scatwell, on the south side of the river, was sold in 1832 and eventually passed to Mrs Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth c.1844. Little Scatwell and Lochluichart, on the north side of the river, were still owned by Sir James John Randall Mackenzie (1814 - 1884), 6th Baron of Scatwell and Rosehaugh, son of Sir James Wemyss, but he had an extravagant lifestyle and following improvements to both Scatwell and Rosehaugh Estates incurred considerable debts. He sold Little Scatwell c.1849. Kinlochluichart and Glenmarksie followed in 1853 and he was declared bankrupt in 1864. In 1849 the estate of Meikle Scatwell had been bought by Capt John Douglas who, in 1850 built Scatwell House, adapting it, it is thought, from the old Drovers Inn built before 1800. He died in 1852 and his widow, Jemima, continuing at Scatwell House, extended the estate by purchasing the lands of Auchonachie, Cabaan in Glen Orrin and Little Scatwell in 1853. For a time the two estates were united again. Mrs Douglas established a school and "made generous distribution of comforts to her tenantry". In addition she was responsible for the schoolmaster's salary and house. But in 1857 the two estates were split again when John Murray of Touchadam and Polmaise purchased Little Scatwell. In 1853 Kinlochluichart and Glenmarksie had been bought by William Bingham Baring, Lord Ashburton, (son of the founder of Barings Bank). His wife Louisa, Lady Ashburton, was the daughter of Mary Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth.

Perhaps the owner who left the most impression on the estate over the next part of the 19th Century was Dr

William James Bell. He had possession of Scatwell House in 1864 through to 1892 and was responsible for introducing one of the earliest hydro electric schemes to the Highlands. He establishing a system of electric light in Scatwell House in 1889 (see Appendix) and may also have established a field telephone system, over the hill to Cabaan Lodge in Glen Orrin (*local knowledge*). We do however know for certain that he built a new bridge in 1890 3 kilometres east of Scatwell House, the Black Bridge.

More recently Scatwell has had a variety of owners which have included Sir James Buchanan, Lord Woolavington, from the 1890s to 1920s, he laid out the woodland and formal garden in their present form, Sir William Cross (Coates Cross Family of Paisley), owner in 1930s, and the family of Macdonald Buchanan in the 1950s (the wife was the daughter of Lord Woolavington)

Settlement and population

Unfortunately no early estate plans, documents or rentals for the Scatwell Estates could be traced; the Mackenzie of Scatwell papers in the British Library referred only to the Black Isle properties of the family. The earliest detailed evidence for settlement in the Scatwell area is the Roy map of c.1750, it gave a good idea of the location of the settlements at that time. On this map much of the valley floor was given over to cultivation strips and interestingly there was only a limited amount of woodland in the main glen. There are 12 settlements in total, mostly on the valley floor. The only other document that gave information on settlement and population in the pre-improvement period was a list of male inhabitants, between the ages of 15 and 60. It was compiled under the settlement names and was collected by the minister of the Parish of Contin in 1798. The settlements on this list roughly concur with those on the Roy map. The 1798 list reports that "the tenantry have only garrons or small oxen" (Sir George Mackenzie of Coul has the only draught horses, oxen and wagons in the parish) It describes the occupations of the people, with an equal number of tenants, labourers and cottars - a few weavers, a miller, a shoemaker, a wright and a smith.



