

Grantown's Musical Tradition Revived

Following up last year's highly successful Grantown 250 festival, which included the revival of the traditional music competitions with the "Fiddler of Strathspey", the Estate was pleased to be able to support this with the introduction of the Reidhaven Quaich for the open competition.

The Family has a long association with these competitions. Annual violin competitions were started in Grantown in 1883 and, according to the Aberdeen Weekly Journal, attracted a very large audience in the Public Hall.

In the late 1920's Grantown held a very popular competition, as the Dundee Courier of 11 April 1931 reported, "From the appearance of Grantown streets it seemed that the whole district was interested in the competition for the silver cup presented by Lady Seafield for violin playing of strathspeys and reels. Hundreds of people came to the town from rural areas."



Fiddler of Strathspey competition winners Xander Johnston, Iona Craig, Eilidh Anderson and Rhiann Matthew, with guest fiddler Maggie Adamson and Paul Anderson.

(Courtesy of Strathspey & Badenoch Herald)

Wildlife Estates

One of the first in Scotland, and indeed in Europe, to achieve accreditation under the original Wildlife Estates label in 2010, Strathspey Estate has successfully renewed its status with Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) becoming the latest rural business to be awarded the coveted accreditation recognising its outstanding work on wildlife, habitat and conservation management.

Since Seafield Estates originally achieved accreditation, WES has been established, building on the foundations set up by the European Landowners Organisation. WES assessment takes into account best practice guidance, for instance in respect of deer and moorland management, and national legislation, such as the Wildlife and Environment (Scotland) Act of 2011. It also seeks to identify examples of proactive management to encourage the best environmental conditions alongside rural economic activity. WES applications are independently evaluated by Acoura, who administer a wide range of assurance schemes across the food and farming sectors. Commenting on the success of the Estate's application, Ross Macleod, Head of WES, observed: "Quite often, individual properties will demonstrate strong management in certain key areas of the WES application

process. The most striking feature of the Estate's application is that it has scored well right across the board. In particular, the focus on public benefits and community engagement whilst operating across a variety of rural enterprises is clearly evident. In its overview of the application, Acoura commented that the Estate sets a very good example of how contrasting challenges are managed for the benefit of local communities, tourism, sporting visitors and the wildlife."

Remarking further on the application, Ross also noted that work in the public interest and forging strong links with the communities in which they are based will become increasingly important to landowners and managers in demonstrating their good work to the Scottish Government. "Strathspey Estate unquestionably delivers in these respects" he added.



From left to right are Ross Macleod (WES), Fergus Ewing MSP, Andrew Norval Property Director and Frank Law Sporting Supervisor at the presentation at the Moy Game Fair. (Photo courtesy of John Paul Photography.)

Retirements

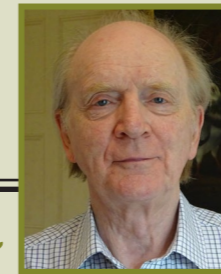
Aison Sandison, one of our admin assistants joined us as a junior in 1971 and with a short break from 1974-1976 stayed with us for 42 years. Her role changed gradually over the years to reflect the alteration in Estate business seeing staff numbers reduce and computerisation increase with managers doing more of their own secretarial work but she remained at the heart of Estate administration and was very much the "go to" person for information or assistance.

Ronnie Urquhart our Farm Manager also started in 1971 as a Groundsman in the Estate gardens. His talent and commitment was quickly noted by the management in charge and one early appraisal stated "Good worker, conscientious and intelligent,

capable of absolute minimum supervision, excellent tractorman - Important to keep this man". The Estate did manage to keep him for 44 years with that perceptive early comment resulting in him rising from Groundsman to Grieve and, with the creation of Cullen Farms, he became Farm Manager taking over the control of all of the Family's in-hand farming operations in 1987. With his attention to detail, knowledge and enthusiasm he saw the operation increase in size to over 4,500 acres and yields and efficiency increase with the introduction of new systems and machinery. Through this he also found time to put something back into the industry by supporting farming initiatives, particularly in the field of education. However sad we are to see them leave we wish them a long and happy retirement.



News Review



Foreword by Lord Seafield

Managing an Estate is not just a job, it's an all-encompassing way of life. The high costs involved mean that it has to be executed as a commercial enterprise or, like any other business, it will fall into decline and ultimate collapse.

Modern estates are businesses which have had to diversify in order to survive. Where location allows, some have gone down the route of hosting music events, festivals, country fairs, weddings, gift shops and visitor centres. Other enterprises can include hydro power and wind farms, sports and tourism. Here at Seafield and Strathspey Estates our activities are primarily farming, forestry, sporting, residential and commercial letting and renewable energy.

With such a broad base it would seem reasonable to assume that the business was unlikely to be concerned with impacts from national and international politics. However, our farming financial return is influenced by global grain prices and the EU Common Agricultural Policy, our forestry production by global trade and exchange rates and, as with all businesses, the one thing that makes investment decisions difficult is uncertainty.

Just as the rural sector was coming to terms with the result of the Independence referendum and the introduction of further land reform legislation we now find ourselves subject to more uncertainty with the result of the referendum on withdrawal from the EU.

It seems difficult to understand as the referendum result has no binding legal effect and no immediate impact on UK

Running an Estate in Challenging Times



or Scottish legislation, indeed the law remains as it was on 23 June 2016, yet we all see the turmoil this has caused in national and international politics and markets.

Long before there was an EU, there was an acceptance that agriculture and land management require specific support. The benefits of this support have been recognised as stability of supply in a fluctuating world market and reasonable price to consumers. As the UK heads towards an exit from the EU, those needs are as relevant as ever.

UK farmers are a crucial part of the chain of production which provides us with a safe and secure supply of food. Farmers and other land managers also have a vital role to play in improving biodiversity, securing our vital natural resources and helping meet the challenges of climate change. They also manage the landscape that defines the UK and provides the recreational opportunities people value so much. Any policy changes must be prompt and clear and support and incentivise farmers and land managers to ensure they can continue to fulfil these important roles.

These objectives will not be delivered through existing markets and cannot be achieved without government support. The sector is diverse, made up of a multitude

of businesses, including thousands of small and micro businesses, which must cope with natural processes, pests and diseases, increasingly unpredictable weather and volatile global markets. Even with subsidy a substantial number of these businesses are operating with very low margins and take time to react to changing regimes. It is unfortunate that so many resources will be diverted from addressing important rural issues to concentrate on the implications of the EU exit.

Throughout all of this we continue to operate, plant and machinery have to be purchased, repaired and renewed, roads and bridges have to be looked after, forests, plantations and fences have to be attended to, properties and farms have to be maintained, and staff have to be motivated and trained in order to carry out these day to day tasks. Our obligations to safeguard the welfare of the land, environment, wildlife, tenants and staff are not taken lightly and we work with Government and Agencies to ensure we achieve best practices.

We strive to achieve these aims through responsible management and well planned long-term policies. For the benefit of us all, that is something we would implore our politicians to consider in terms of national and international policy as these negotiations develop.

CONTACT US - If you have any comment on the content of this news review, or wish to contact Seafield or Strathspey Estates on any relevant issue please telephone or write to our offices:

Will Anderson, Chief Executive;
Andrew Norval, Property Director;
Seafield Estate Office, Cullen, Buckie, Banffshire AB56 4UW.
T: 01542 840777 F: 01542 841413
E: mail@seafield-estate.co.uk
W: www.seafield-estate.co.uk

Strathspey Estate Office,
Old Spey Bridge Road,
Grantown-on-Spey, PH26 3NQ.
T: 01479 872529 F: 01479 873452
E: mail@strathspey-estate.co.uk
W: www.strathspey-estate.co.uk

Cereal success

The Royal Northern Agricultural Society (RNAS) is a prominent agricultural institution in the north east, and every year organises the spring show at Thainstone Mart, which includes a presentation event for the best of farming produce in the area.

At the 2016 show, Stuart Riddoch, the Estate tenant on Seafield and Tochieneal Farms, Cullen, won not only the Pauls Quaich for the best sample of grain for malting barley, but also the RNAS Tray for overall champion for all cereals.

The sample was entered on his behalf by W. N. Lindsay, Grain Merchants, Keith.

Stuart's family connections with the Estate go back over 100 years when his great grandfather first took on a farm tenancy in the Cornhill area. Stuart, having farmed Seafield Farm with his father for many years, also took on the tenancy of the neighbouring unit of Tochieneal 7 years ago. He concentrates on growing malting barley and rearing store cattle.



Stuart receiving his award from Lynne Anderson of Brodies, Aberdeen, sponsors of the awards

Operation Osprey

The Estate has good links with the Highland Foundation for Wildlife (HFW) and our Golden Eagle satellite tagging has featured in previous newsletters. What is less well known is the work that has been done to protect and encourage Ospreys on the Estate. The photos show one of this year's chicks being held by HFW volunteer Emily Joachim after being ringed and the young bird being replaced in the nest.

Since the return of Ospreys to the Estate in the 1970's we have had a total of 134 chicks fledged from five nest sites with 81 birds being ringed. We should not underestimate the efforts of the game keeping staff that rebuilt nests and protected the sites from egg thieves, particularly in the early years; thankfully this is no longer an issue. Our thanks also go to HFW and in particular Roy Dennis for the assistance with this work.



Stock success

Father and Son, Gordon and Edward Chalmers, joint tenants of Thriepland Farm, Whitehills, have enjoyed significant success in a prime (fat) cattle competition run throughout 2015 by the Mackintosh Donald abattoir at Portlethen. Over the year their cattle had the highest percentage of classification of all the cattle graded for beef quality.

Fattening cattle forms a major part of their farming enterprise along with growing cereals, mainly barley of differing varieties either for feeding cattle or for malting for use by the whisky industry on Speyside.

The Chalmers family are long established tenants on the Estate; Gordon's father first took on a tenancy in the 1940's, since when Gordon and 2 brothers, Neil and Stuart, took on separate tenancies in their own right. More recently Gordon's son Edward has joined him as tenant at Thriepland, harnessing a continuity of mutual benefit both to the family and to the Estate.



Land management for students

Over 50 students of geography, forestry, environmental sciences, agriculture and gamekeeping came to Strathspey Estate in March as part of a conference to encourage students to develop an integrated approach to land management.

Organised by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), this was the fifth Integrated Land Use conference to be held in Carrbridge, with field trips to Allt Lorgie and Dalnahaitnach. As well as participating in team projects, the students were also given presentations from Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA, the RSPB and Scottish Water. Dr Sue Engstrand, subject network leader for environment and rural resource management at the university, believes that it is important for students from a diverse range of land-related disciplines to get together and develop a unified approach.

She said: "Our aim is to encourage these students, who are studying at many different levels, from vocational programmes right through to PhD, to develop skills and understanding to work together across discipline boundaries with external stakeholders to develop an holistic and integrated approach to land management."

Will Anderson, Chief Executive of Seafield and Strathspey Estates said: "It is important for land managers to understand each others viewpoints on complex environmental issues. Kinveachy is an excellent site to explore these matters and the Estate is pleased to be able to, once again, provide a demonstration site to help UHI bring together students of the many land management disciplines to exchange knowledge and learn from practising land managers."

The Integrated Land Use conference was supported by Scottish Natural Heritage, The RSPB, Forestry Commission Scotland, the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Land and Estates and SEPA.



Courtesy of Tim Winterburn, University of the Highlands and Islands

School visit

25 children from P6/7 at Grantown Primary School spent the morning with three of the Estate's ghillies to complete the class project on The River Spey.

Lionel Main, our Head Ghillie, spoke about the Salmon's life cycle, different methods of fishing and the river ecosystem its flora and fauna and, in particular, the Freshwater Pearl Mussels. A local bird expert, Brian Bates, gave an insight into the birds on and around the river.

The children were very enthusiastic and Lionel was pleased to receive so many individual handwritten letters of thanks. We are pleased to be able to help the children learn about an important part of their local environment and maybe we have encouraged some future anglers too!



Energy efficiency in traditional buildings

While we strive for energy efficiency in new buildings we have to accept that a significant part of the country's houses are of considerable age.

It is not always easy to bring these up to modern energy standards and as part of its on-going programme to carry out energy-efficiency research in traditional buildings, Historical Environment Scotland is working with the Estate to test and monitor improvements in one property in Strathspey.

The objectives of this project are:

1. To establish the cause of mould growth and condensation on walls and its links to insulation and ventilation.
2. To establish the effectiveness of vapour permeability insulation measures in reducing these problems.
3. To provide records and other project material to allow Historic Environment Scotland to develop a refurbishment case study.

To achieve these objectives, monitoring will be undertaken both pre and post intervention. This will include before and after measurements of humidity and moisture within the building and building fabric and airtightness tests.

Ancient beauty spot being restored

Castle Hill and motte is a historical site of national importance, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which today overlooks the Seatown and old railway viaduct on the edge of Cullen. In times gone by, the 11th century hilltop fort played an important part in protecting the town from invaders, as its position at 200ft above sea level offered views over the sea and surrounding countryside. However, over recent years the gorse bushes have taken over the site, blocking the footpaths and obscuring the panoramic views.

With the support of the Estate and Moray Council Community Services, the Cullen Past and Present Volunteer Group have now cleared the site of gorse as the first phase of a project to restore public access to the hill. Due to the designation of the site, only hand tools could be used, and we congratulate the volunteers who have achieved a fantastic result following many long hours of hard, and prickly, work. Their continuing enthusiasm will hopefully see the paths reinstated and this once popular walk re-established.



Cairngorm Nature Farm Award winner

Wading birds, including Lapwing and Curlew, are benefiting from the efforts of Reidhaven Estate farm tenant Neil Gordon, Gallovie, Dulnain Bridge, under an Agri Environment Scheme with grant assistance from the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

Work to improve the birds' habitat has included reducing stock grazing, cutting silage in a wildlife friendly manner and making "scrapes" which provide areas of shallow wading water.

The success of Neil's scheme has been acknowledged by winning the Cairngorm

Nature Farm Award 2015. The awards, run by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, are in recognition of farmers and crofters who, within the course of their business, maintain and enhance the outstanding wildlife in the Park.

Neil has farmed on the neighbouring Estate of Muckrach for many years, and in 2011 also took on the tenancy of Easter and Wester Gallovie under a new lease, on the retirement of the former tenant.

His enterprise includes a suckler cow herd, fattening lambs and growing barley.