

SOME NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF LECKIE ESTATE

(Mainly from a booklet "The Lairds of Leckie" which was a reprint of an article in the *Stirling Sentinel*, published in 1906, but with some more modern additions)

The Leckies of Leckie.

The lands of Leckie were Crown Property until the reign of Robert the Bruce. The oldest title deeds are dated between 1352 and 1359, during which period the lands of Wester Leckie (probably west of the Leckie Burn) were transferred from the Crown to Malcolm de Leky, who was a descendant of the Earls of Lennox. Easter Leckie passed through a number of hands, and was not transferred to the Leckies of Leckie until 1617, when both Easter and Wester Leckie came into the possession of Alexander Leckie. By that time it is thought that Old Leckie House (Leckie Castle) had been built on Wester Leckie.

Up to this time the history of the Leckie family had been a turbulent one. The Laird of Leckie was one of those responsible for the safety of the infant Queen Mary, lodged in Stirling Castle in 1545, and he lost his life at the battle of Pinkiecleugh in 1547. There were constant feuds with the Grahams of Menteith, culminating in a battle at Ballochleam on the hills behind Leckie and on the march with Boquhan. In 1601 the Laird's son was murdered by the Laird of Dundrod, probably in collusion with the Laird of Calderwood, thereby starting yet another family feud.

The murdered man's grandson, Alexander Leckie, inherited Wester Leckie while still a minor. By 1617 he was of marriageable age and the combined estate of Easter and Wester Leckie was registered in the joint names of himself and his wife, who was Grizzel Murray of Polmaise. He died about 1643, while his son, John, was still minor and John Leckie inherited the property in 1643. He was apparently a strong Presbyterian, and took an active part in the Civil War. In 1661 he had married Jean (or Janet) Buchanan, daughter of Sir George Buchanan of Buchanan, by whom he had a son, John, who was baptised in Gargunnock church on 27th November, 1666. Only two years later, in 1668, financial difficulties resulted in the estate being taken over by David Moir of Craigarnhall, Sheriff Clerk of Stirling, probably in settlement of a loan or mortgage. This was the end of the line of Leckies of Leckie.

Most of the family seem to have emigrated to America, Canada and Australia from which their descendants occasionally appear to visit Leckie.

The Moirs of Leckie

David Moir, the Sheriff Clerk of Stirling, lived in a house at the bottom of Broad Street, which is still preserved and listed as "Moir of Leckie's House".

It is not known whether he actually lived at Leckie, but his grandson, George, succeeded to the property in 1739 and married Anne Montgomery of Kirktonholme in Dumfriesshire. There were no children of the marriage, which ended in separation. In the meantime, however, George Moir became an ardent Jacobite supporter.

When Prince Charlie landed at Glenfinnan in 1745 he came south to Leckie, crossing the Forth at Fords of Frew, near Kippen. The English

Governor of Stirling Castle, General Blakeney, had got wind of the Prince's intention to stop at Leckie and arrested George Moir the night before and held him in the Castle, but in spite of that Mrs. Moir entertained the Prince to dinner in Old Leckie House on 13th September. (A letter written by the Prince from Leckie to Glasgow City Council asking for £15,000 is on view in the Glasgow Museum) He went on to spend the night at Touch on his way South.

In the following year, after his defeat, the Prince sent his baggage to Leckie, and collected it before re-crossing the Fords of Frew on 1st February 1746.

After the break-up of his marriage George Moir handed over the Estate to his nephew in



Old Leckie 1874 by 21 years old James Marjorybanks MacLaren the Scottish Arts and Crafts architect who influenced both C.F. Voysey and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. His work in Scotland, particularly on the Forthingall estate, and in London is indicative of an exceptional talent that was to remain largely unfulfilled by his early death at the age of 37 in 1890.



One of the Moir's horse-drawn vehicles in Leckie Estate, here driven by the father of the late Jenny Brown, McNeil Crescent.

1787. This was Dr. Robert Graham, son of his sister Isobel, who had married John Graham of Boquhapple. Dr. Robert Graham changed his name to Moir. He married Anne Stewart of Ardsheal and had a large family. Plans for major alteration and extension of Old Leckie House were drawn up in 1793 but never implemented.

He was succeeded in 1820 by his son, Dr. Charles Alexander Graham, who took the name of Graham-Moir. He married Henrietta Hay of Drumelzier, who was related to the Erskines of Cardross and the Earls of Elgin. In 1830 they built the new house, which later, after the second world war, became Watson House following its conversion to a Church of Scotland Eventide Home. He died in 1845 and was succeeded by his son, Robert Graham Moir who died in 1864, and by his grandson, Alastair Edward Graham Moir, who sold the estate in 1906, and died unmarried in 1918.

The Younger family

In 1906 the estate was bought by Mr. George Younger, a member of the brewing firm in Alloa.

He was aged 55 and had been Convener of Clackmannanshire. He had stood for Parliament unsuccessfully three times in Clackmannan and Kinross and had just been elected as the Member of Parliament for Ayr Burghs, which he held for 17 years. He had married, in 1879, Lucy Smith, daughter of Dr. Edward Smith F.R.S. of Derbyshire and London, by whom he had three sons. The second of these, Edward John, was an officer in the 16th Lancers, and was killed in the South African War at the age of 19. The third son, Charles, was to be killed in the First World War in 1917.

George Younger became a Baronet in 1911 and a Peer in 1923, with the title of Viscount Younger of Leckie. His wife had died in 1921.

He held many public and business appointments and was Chairman of the Conservative party. He died in 1929.

His wife did a great deal of entertaining at Leckie in the summer months, with tennis on grass courts in front of the house. She was an accomplished pianist, and had many amateur concerts in the large drawing room.

The big walled garden beyond Old Leckie House was famous for its flowers and fruit, including carnations and exotic plants grown under glass. At that time, Old Leckie House was fully occupied by staff in three separate flats.

In 1929 he was succeeded by his eldest and only surviving son, James, the second Viscount. He had been educated in England at Winchester and New College, Oxford. He was a keen athlete and sportsman, rowing twice for Oxford in the Boat Race, and being a first-class golfer and good tennis player. He was also a first-class shot.

He worked in the family brewery in Alloa, except for the duration of the First World War, when he served with the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry in Gallipoli, Palestine and France, being severely wounded on the Somme in 1918. He had married Maud Gilmour, daughter of Sir John Gilmour, Bt., of Montrave in Fife, and they had two sons and two daughters. They lived in what is now Watson House from 1930 until the Second World War.

During the War the house was used first for evacuated school children and then as an Auxiliary Hospital. When Lord Younger died in 1946 it was still in use as a hospital and when it became vacant was sold to the Church of Scotland. The sale included the walled garden, which was subsequently re-sold to Mr. Robert Erskine.

The estate had been substantially reduced in size by the sale in 1936 of six farms on the carse. Since then it has been further reduced and now extends to some 1700 acres, of which 1000 acres are hill grazing and 200 acres are woodlands.

In 1961/62 the third Viscount and his family built two new houses on the hill south of Watson House. Lord and Lady Younger occupied Leckie House, and their eldest son, George (now deceased) and his family in Easter Leckie House further up the hill. Their third son, Robert, and his wife, Helen, restored Old Leckie House in cooperation with the Historic Buildings Council and made it their home in 1975.

During the war years, Watson House (or Leckie House as it was then) was a military hospital, catering for convalescing wounded servicemen.

On at least one occasion, shown here, that resulted in a concert being held in the Church Hall, in aid of Red-Cross funds. And it seems to have been thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A report in one of the local newspapers said...

Variety Concert - The concert given in the church hall on Thursday night of last week by the Leckie "Boys in Blue" was unique in its variety and kept a packed audience spellbound from start to finish.

It was produced by Messrs Fulton, Gove and Collins and reflects much credit on their thoughtful preparation of a most enjoyable programme. Mr Collins acted throughout as compere. The full company appeared in the opening chorus and the finale. The "Darkie Land Scene," also comprising the full company, proved a great attraction with its songs and dances.

Songs at the piano were pleasing given by Miss Leslie and the Leckie Troubador. Mr Fulton also contributed songs with great efficiency, Miss Hunter gave a good exhibition of a Russian dance and Miss Warner gave some fine readings.

The recitation entitled "Airborne Verse," by Mr D.H. McKenzie was most impressive. A first class pianist, Mr Gove, gave some very fine selections on the piano and played the accompaniments. The harmonica waltzes by Mr R. S. Gerrard on his mouth organ were very well done.

There were also a few short sketches. The "Fight to a Finish," by Messrs Hayer, Crick, Probert, Graham & Rainsbury and "A Bit of Flotsam," with Miss Duffy taking the role of Mrs Mopp, were screamingly funny and caused much laughter.

The programme closed on a fine note. "Think on these Words," which were the verses of Hymn 646, spoken by Mr McKenzie.

In proposing a vote of thanks to the concert party Colonel Connal-Rowan of Meiklewood voiced the thoughts of a grateful audience when he expressed the great pleasure that had been given by the splendid entertainment. He also spoke of the untiring labours of the promoters in providing the concert in aid of the most worthy of objects. He further spoke of the good work being done everywhere by the Red Cross.

Tis five years now since first we came
And made Gargunock our domain,
We found a people kind and true
Ready to welcome our "Boys in Blue"

The Padre lent a helping hand,
He and his wife were simply grand.
Miss Phepps at work in the G.P.O.
A leading light behind every show.

Lieutenant Orr of Home Guard fame
Brought honour to Gargunock's name
With M.B.E. so richly earned
Congratulations. 'Twas well deserved.

At Meiklewood a gracious lady
Made our every want her hobby.
Sympathetic to our needs,
Interested in all our doings.

Miss McFeat and Brownie Troop
Miss McKechnie's little group.
Scores of other people too
Welcomed our "Boys in Blue".

We'd like to thank you, one and all
Gathered in this Village hall
And if my verse is not quite clear,
Please believe, it's most sincere.

Our little effort here tonight
Has helped to put the balance right.
With our appreciation
We thank the Red Cross your donation.

Here's a little Red Cross Nurse
Bringing you our greeting,
Hopes that you will like our show
And thanks so much for coming.



'Variety Concert'
By The Leckie Boys in Blue.



PRODUCED BY: MESSRS. FULTON, GOVE & COLLINS

OPENING CHORUS

PLAIN STUPID

LECKIE'S LARRY ADLER

IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

FOUR DEUCES

HOT PLATES

DARKIE LAND

INTERVAL

SONGS AT THE PIANO

FIGHT TO A FINISH

HISLAN' MARY

AIRBORNE VERSE

FUGITIVE FROM BANNOCKBURN

BABE WARNER

LECKIE TROUBADOUR

DIZZY FINGERS

A BIT OF FLOTSAM

FULL COMPANY

MESSRS. FULTON & COLLINS

MR. GERRARD

MISS LESLIE & MESSRS. FULTON, GOVE & RAINSBURY

MESSRS. GIBSON, O'MARA, GIBSON & RAINSBURY

MISS HUNTER

FULL COMPANY

INTERVAL

MISS LESLIE

MESSRS. HAYTER & CRICK, PROBERT, GRAHAM & RAINSBURY

MISS HUNTER

MR. MCKENZIE

MR. GOVE

MISS WARNER

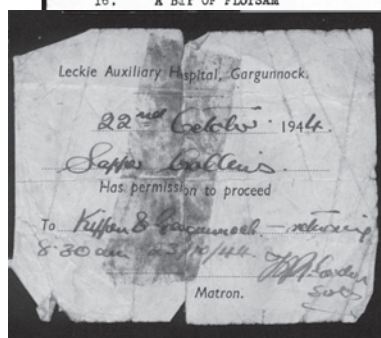
MR. FULTON

MR. GOVE

MISS DUFFY

MR. MCKENZIE

FINALE - FULL COMPANY



Remember the Leckie Loonies ?

MEMORIES of concert parties organised by the patients at Leckie house Auxiliary Hospital, Gargunock, in late 1944 and 1945, have reached the Observer via one of those principally involved, 75-year-old Sapper Daniel Collins, ex-Royal Engineers.

Originally calling themselves the Leckie Loonies and subsequently, The Leckie Boys in Blue, the patients and a number of the nurses produced concerts in the church hall in aid of the Red Cross.

Mr Collins, who was wounded in France, now lives at Grassington, Macclesfield, in Cheshire. He played a major part in organising the variety

concerts, and his wife was also involved in designing the programme.

Sketches and turns with titles like, 'Plain Stupid', 'It Could Happen to You', and, 'Leckie's Larry Adler', provided the laughs and welcome money which enabled the Red Cross to fund more "comforts for the troops".

Among Mr Collins' souvenirs is a letter to the matron at Leckie House from Mrs Connal-Rowan, of Meiklewood House, Gargunock, thanking her on behalf of the Gargunock Red Cross and War Work Party, for the wonderful donation of £30, "the proceeds of the concert given by The Leckie Boys in Blue". Wounded servicemen were given blue suits when they were up and about and convalescing, hence the 'Boys in Blue'.

The programme for the Leckie Loonies' grand concert of December 28, 1944, carried the advice,

"Anyone wishing to sleep during the performance, should apply to matron for an extra cushion".

A little poem on the back of a Boys in Blue concert programme, paid tribute to all who had made their recovery successful —

*The Padre lent a helping hand,
He and his wife were simply grand.
Miss Phepps at work in the G.P.O.,
A leading light in every show.
Miss McFeat and Brownie Troop,
Miss McKechnie's little group
At Meiklewood a gracious lady,
made our every want her hobby".*

These concerts obviously provided glimpses of the indomitable spirit which spread throughout wartime Britain.