

Lonach Hall

Alexander Walker

strathspey

LONACH HALL.

Walker: *A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Marches, &c.*, 1866; No. 64, pg. 23.

Scottish, Strathspey. C Major, AAB.

i. Theresa Morrison, CD, 2003. ii. Allie Bennett, CD, 2013.



Lonach Gathering c.1900 with Lonach Hall in background

The origins of the Lonach Hall date back to 1823, when King George IV honoured Charles Forbes with a baronetcy, Sir Charles Forbes Bart of Newe and Edinglassie. Later that same year, to mark his son John's coming of age on 15th December, a bonfire was lit on the Lonach Hill, and the Lonach Highland and Friendly Society was founded to preserve the Highland dress and the Gaelic tongue. In 1836, the Society agreed to hold a Highland Gathering.

In 1844, a circular was posted by the Society's Hon Secretary, encouraging subscription to build a meeting hall, and the following year the original Hall was built "*combining with the charitable and beneficial intentions of the Society, the opportunities and locality for a building wherein both business and recreation may be pursued*". As the years passed and membership of the Society increased to nearly 300, a bigger hall was required, and in 1896 the Main Lonach Hall, with caretaker's flat, was added, costing nine hundred and ninety-seven pounds and

seventeen shillings. That same year, Strathdon's Dr Howie took delivery of Scotland's first motor car and supported fundraising for the Hall by driving passengers from Newe to Bellabeg for sixpence.

In 1927 Castle Newe was demolished, and many targes, swords and portraits, as well as busts of the first Baronet and his two sons, were put on display in the Hall. They can still be seen today thanks to Colonel and Mrs Tuck, direct descendants of the Forbes family

In 1999, a two-phase restoration project started. Phase one added a new community hall (the Upper Hall), a multi-purpose room (Committee Room), kitchens and lift, as well as artistic decorated banisters created by local sculptors Helen Denerley and Louise Gardiner. Phase two undertook the complete restoration of the magnificent barrel-vaulted Main Hall and was completed in 2006.

The original Hall was built in 1845 to provide "*the opportunities and locality for a building wherein both business and recreation may be pursued*" and the Main Hall was added in 1896. Today, the Society continues to flourish, drawing its members from the Strathdon community, and the annual Lonach Highland Gathering.

Alexander Walker Connection

Alexander's employer Sir Charles Forbes was at the forefront of encouraging the setting up of Highland Societies to support and preserve Highland culture. Alexander himself was deeply involved with the Lonach Society, The Highlanders and the Highland Games. In fact with his mathematical skills he became Auditor for the Society – see below.

THE LONACH HIGHLAND AND FRIENDLY SOCIETY.—The annual general meeting of this Society was held at the Newe Arms Inn, Culquhonnig, on 15th of last month, when the following business was transacted:—

Election of Councillors, &c.

Patron—Sir Charles Forbes, Bart. of Newe.

President—Col. John Forbes, C.B., of Inverernan.

Vice-Presidents—Chas. John Forbes, Esq., yr. of Newe; Geo. Stewart Forbes, Esq. of Asloun; Gordon S. Forbes, Esq., late H.E.I.C.S.; Alex. Leith, Esq. of Glenkindie; Capt. Chas. Leith Hay, R.A.W.; the Duke of Athole.

Committee—Messrs Robert Philip, Garchory—Ordinary President; John Forbes Mechie, Forbes Lodge—Ordinary Vice-President; John Duguid, blacksmith, Parkvilla; Alex. M'Hardy, Dunfiel, Corgarf; Alex. Moir, cattle-dealer, Auchernach Lodge; Wm. Dickson, Rhinavoir, Glenkindie; Alex. Cullen, Crofte, Deskry-side; John Edward, Belnagauld. Extra—Chas. M'Hardy, Bellabeg; and John Wattie, Mill of Newe.

Honorary Secretary—A. G. Anderson, Schoolhouse.

Treasurer—Alex. Kellas, Mains of Glencarvey.

Clerk—Wm. Ross, Little Tolley.

Officer—Joseph M'Grigor, Boathouse.

Auditors—The Rev. John Watt, The Manse, Strathdon; and Alex.

Walker, Castle Newe.

Tuesday 09 January 1866