

# Castle Newe

strathspey

Alexander Walker

## CASTLE NEWE.

Walker: *A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Marches, &c., 1866; No. 3, pg. 2.*

Scottish, Strathspey. A Major, AAB.

- i. Jerry Holland, cassette, 1987.
- ii. The Barra MacNeils, CD, c.1994.
- iii. Howie MacDonald, CD, c.1994.
- iv. Allie Bennett, CD, c.2004 (in raised bass tuning (AEae)).
- v. Dawn and Margie Beaton, c.2009.
- vi. The Cape Breton Fiddlers Association, current repertoire



Castle Newe was the home of Sir Charles Forbes, Alexander Walker's employer.

John Forbes of Bellabeg, “Bombay Jock”, Sir Charles uncle, as born at Bellabeg Strathdon in September 1743. In early life he went to Bombay and engaging in trading. He became one of the most extensive and distinguished merchants in India. Having realised a large fortune he repurchased Newe, the estate of his ancestors, besides other lands in Strathdon, and the whole of his rental was laid out in improvements. He died 20th June 1821 unmarried, and was succeeded by his nephew, Sir Charles Forbes, eldest son of the Rev. George Forbes of Lochell.

Sir Charles was created a baronet on 4th November 1823. He sat in parliament for upwards of twenty years. He died 20th November 1849, and was succeeded by his grandson, Sir Charles, second baronet, born 15th July 1832 who died on 23 May 1852 at age 19, unmarried. The title then devolved on his uncle, Sir Charles Forbes, third baronet, who was born at Bombay 21st September 1803, and educated at Harrow school.

What “Bombay Jock” did for Strathdon at the end of the eighteenth century in fact provided the pattern for the Prince Consort was to do for upper Deeside 50 years later, and the parallels with Balmoral, with the Forbes demonstrating how it could be done a good half century in advance, are really quite striking.

Charles Forbes had been working in the House of Forbes in Bombay until 1811. When he returned to this country he stood as MP for Beverley from 1812 to 1818 and for Malmesbury from 1818 to 1832. He was also elected rector of Marischal College in Aberdeen – a fact of significance when one remembers that Archibald Simpson, whom he chose to design Castle of Newe, also designed the new Marischal College in 1837.

Archibald Simpson, in 1811 his first Country House commission from the Forbes family on Donside – designing a neo-baronial mansion to replace Putachie for James Ochoncar 18th Lord Forbes, the modern Castle Forbes near Keig on the left bank of the Don,(See tune Castle Forbes) and a neo classical wing for the medieval Forbes stronghold of Druminnor, near Rhynie.

So it was not altogether surprising that Sir Charles Forbes, following the example of the chief of his clan, chose Simpson as the architect of Aberdeen first, “palace of the peak, the new Castle of Newe on the southern slopes of the Ben. Eighteen miles west of Alford and 13 miles from Dinnet on the Dee, the site was 898 feet above sea level fronted by a lawn sloping down to the river and backed by many fine trees, including ash, elm, sycamore, birch and rowan as well as numerous Scots pines.

Eight years after the Castle was built the main road was diverted south to ensure Baronial privacy. To achieve this, two new bridges were built, Bridge of Buchaam at the east end of the Castle grounds and Bridge of Newe at the west. (See Tune ‘*Bridge of Newe*’). Unfortunately, the ethereal beauty of Castle Newe proved to be the more transitory of the two. When Sir Charles Stewart Forbes fifth of his line succeeded to the Baronetcy in 1884 he gave warning that, however much against his inclination, it might be necessary to dispose parts of his inheritance in Strathdon.

In 1900 there was a series of sales of estates, Delnadamp, went to J.J. Moubray, Candacraig to A. F. Wallace, and Deskry to Col Leith of Glenkindie. In 1908 Edinglassie was sold to H.J. Tenant and in 1911 part of Newe itself was sold to A.F. Wallace. The final blow came in 1924, when the Castle of Newe and the remaining lands were sold to Provost Donald Munro, Banchory, timber merchant and close friend of Sir Harry Lauder.

Munro sold three farms, Buchaam and Mill of Newe, and much of the timber on the estate and eventually Castle Newe itself was sold to Charles Brand Dundee for demolition. On March 15th 1927, the Press and Journal carried this notice: “Demolition of Castle Newe”

### **Alexander Walker Connection**

Alexander was employed as gardener at New Castle between 1850 and 1870 when he left for America. As well as being Sir James’s gardener he was also the leader of the Newe band played in the Balmoral band. Sir Charles had close contact with then Royal Court at Balmoral and as such Alexander no doubt met many famous and distinguished people. Alexander lived in the gardener’s cottage at Newe which can be seen in the picture above just to the right of the castle.