

From Craigowrie to Strathspey House



On the 25th August 1907, Christine McCook, married to Frank McCook from Grantown-on-Spey, signed legal documents to lease land, from the Earl of Seaforth, in Aviemore. Within the next twelve months a substantial Edwardian villa and outbuildings, including a bakery, were built. The house design incorporated the village grocery store and Mr McCook ran the bakery. The house was typical of the Edwardian era with more restrained architecture than the earlier Victorian style. The truncated corner, a feature of some Edwardian shops, contained the grocery at ground level which faces south down the main street. The remainder of the house was the private residence for the McCook family who later purchased and extended their land. The new arrivals to thriving were quickly at the centre of village life.

Some years later, Mrs McCook closed the grocery store in the house and opened a small haberdashery shop in the railway station and Mr McCook moved the bakery nearer the centre of the ever expanding village. During the Second World War, Rothiemurchus, by Aviemore, had military camps and the main railway lined passing through Aviemore became a major stop-off point for soldiers. The McCook's bakery was thriving as they served the village and the many hundreds of soldiers passing through and basing themselves near Aviemore.

There are quite a few interesting stories with the McCooks, perhaps one of the most amusing concerns the family "pets". The McCooks owned a few pigs which, unfortunately, escaped occasionally and chose to eat some of the plants in the well kept garden at Cairngorm House across the road! Once the pigs were spotted all the neighbours would be out to try and catch the greedy "pets" before the garden was ruined!

The house left the McCook family in the 1980s. A local businessman who owned the Red MacGregor Hotel and developed the village shopping mall on the main street now owned Craigowrie. As often happens, the passing of time necessitates change. Craigowrie was not immune to this and underwent some change in the early 1990s. A conservatory was tastefully added to the north gable end. An office studio was constructed as an annexe, to the mezzanine wing, on the east side of the house.

In the late 1990s the house exchanged ownership for the second time and was opened as a guest house named Craigellan. Once again, the house doors were open to the public. The guest house ceased trading in 2004.

The Armstrong family purchased Craigellan in October 2005 and re-named it Strathspey House, inspired by the beautiful valley that Aviemore nestles in. The following Spring, Strathspey House opened as a high quality Bed & Breakfast adding another piece of history to the house which has seen many a change in the Highland village of Aviemore.