



## The Grants of Rothiemurchus

The Grant family have been stewards of Rothiemurchus for over 400 years. It is very unusual for a family to own an estate which is virtually intact with the same boundaries and in unbroken succession for such a long time. Part of the reason that this has occurred at Rothiemurchus is due a plentiful supply of male heirs, as well as good judgement, or clever politics! The first to style himself Grant of Rothiemurchus was James, Chief of Grant and third laird of Freuchie, who died in 1553. From 1585 Rothiemurchus became distinct from the Grants of Grant whose power became consolidated further down the Spey.

After a time the 8th Laird of Rothiemurchus, also named Patrick, passed a deed of entail over Rothiemurchus in 1787, which meant that it was impossible to sell the Estate and so subsequent Grant heirs became life tenants of their land. The entail proved a bonus in the 1790s when John Peter, Patrick's nephew, inherited the Estate. John Peter had trained as a lawyer and spent some years as an MP in the House of Commons. He amounted huge debts as a politician in the unreformed parliament and effectively became bankrupt in 1827, but because of the entail creditors could take only his personal possessions to pay back his debts. John Peter and his family, which included his daughter, Elizabeth Grant, The Highland Lady, fled to India to escape this hardship where he became a successful Chief Justice of Calcutta but died 21 years later while returning to Rothiemurchus.

Rothiemurchus therefore found itself in the hands of trustees until 1842 when William Patrick, 10th Laird, regained control of the Estate and the debts were almost paid off from timber sales. William Patrick was a blessing for Rothiemurchus, returning home to carry out vital improvements of the land, repairs at the Doune, build bridges, improve roads, fence off the forest from domestic animals and build flood banks along the Spey. In 1874 William's younger brother John Peter took over the running of Rothiemurchus. John Peter was both very able and of the highest probity and had a long and extremely successful career in the Imperial Service in India, ending as Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, effectively deputy Governor General of India, before being sent to Jamaica as Captain General with the responsibility of creating its code of civil laws. He was awarded a knighthood - KCB in addition to his GCMG and returned to Rothiemurchus to make significant additions to the Doune House, most of which have been removed by the present laird!

The next five successive lairds were also called John Peter. John Peter, 14th Laird, was awarded the Zoological Society of London's silver medal in 1893 (designed by Landseer), for attempting to secure the Osprey population on Rothiemurchus and grandson, Colonel Grant received the RSPB silver medal in 1960 for his work in helping the Ospreys re-colonise Speyside. 15th Laird, Sheriff Substitute of Inverness was an outstanding expert on piping, particularly spirochete and a noted judge of piping.

Johnnie Grant 17th Laird currently owns and manages Rothiemurchus, supported by his mother the 12th Countess of Dysart, wife Philippa, son James Patrick and a dedicated staff.

References: Rothiemurchus - Nature and People on a Highland Estate 1500 -2000 Edited by TC Smout & RA Lambert. pub. Scottish Cultural Press