

Short History of Evanton Wood

Roy's Map (c 1750)

Woodland either side of the Blackrock Gorge

Bishop Forbes 1762

Up from this Throat (*of the Gorge*) is one continued Thicket of Wood on each side, arising out of the Openings or Fissures of the Rocks. In the compass of 6 or 7 yards of Circumference you can see Ash, Oak, Birch, Roan-tree, Allar, Hazle, Plane-tree etc. Box-wood likewise grows naturally here: And it is one continued Dove-Cote or Pigeon House; so that there are thousands of Doves constantly here Summer and Winter, and they would be many more were it not that the Hawks prey upon them.

1790s

Old Statistical Account (Rev Harry Robertson) The fine groves of pines which majestically climb the sides of a beautiful eminence that rises immediately from the brink of the chasm.

1806

Estate of Inchcoulter (Balconie) is sold by the Mackenzies to Alexander Fraser, late of Grenada, who made his money on slave plantations in Trinidad and Grenada (and names 3 streets of his new village Evanton after them: Camden, Livera, Hermitage).

1830

Fowlis Legal Case. Plantation at Knockrash 70 Scotch Acres lies close to the estate of Inchcoulter.

'Evan Fraser sold Balconie about 1830 and the village then lost 130 acres of common grazing extending towards the Black Rock' (Wm. Munro, Evanton Oral History Project 1992)

c. 1818 Planting of the wood (as per below)

(Novar Estate Records – Inverness Archives) Evanton Wood including Culags Belts 172.153 acres (D538/B/2/3/i)

March 1882 The wood is now about 64 years old and composed of Scots fir, larch, and patches of hardwoods: Beech, Oak, Ash & Elm and also a few clumps of Spruce.

1883 There were 3 lots sold in this wood during the year to Messrs Morrison & Laurence, Timber Merchants Inverness. One piece 25 to 30 acres was clear cut opposite and adjoining Cnocrash and Drumour fields another piece about 8 acres in extent nearer to Blackrock, and thinnings throughout all the wood. The total numbers were as follows: 5584 Larch trees 2311 Scots fir 140 Spruce Fetched [total] £3295-0-0 Other sales 112 trees £30-15-4 Paid for forming roads and clearing drains £29- 1-8.

Storms of 1893 & 1895 During this year the following trees were blown down by wind and were sold to Mr John Ross Culcairn Mills: 919 Scots Fir Sleeper (?) trees, 146 Scots Fir Spar trees, 75 Spruce and sold for £260 Other sales of blown wood were: 74 Larch, 11 Beech, 569 Fir, 5 Larch, 48 Larch = £189-8-10 1894-5 Planted in Evanton Wood during the season: 82.000 Larch plants £61-10-0 34.000 Fir £20-14-0 22.400 Spruce £11-4-0 Cost of planting £27-15-0.

The estate has suffered very severely from violent gales, blowing, usually, from directions ranging between north-east and northwest. During the years 1893-94 these winds did great damage, overthrowing no less than 55,000 trees, or more than half the number now estimated to stand in the older coniferous woods, and causing an immediate loss of £2000, owing to a fall in prices consequent on the Hooding of the market. The woods which suffered most were Cnoc Duchaire, Moultaivie Belt, Contullich Wood, Cnoc Fyrish, Creag Ruadh, Cnoc-na-Coille, Meann Chnoc, Badger Hill, Dail Gheal, Evanton Wood, Blackrock Brae and Inchcholtair. As a precaution against the recurrence of such serious calamities, the outer margins of all woods, especially on the sides from which experience has shown that danger is most to be feared, should be strengthened by permanent shelter-belts, comprising Austrian, Corsican, Mountain or Cembran Pines, Norway Maple, Sycamore, Beech, Birch, or other wind-firm trees, according to locality. (Woods of the Novar Estate 1899/1900. Plan or Scheme of Management of the Woods)

The more lightly stocked portions of Evanton Wood, which have been closed for three years, show a very promising natural growth of Scots fir and larch; and a portion of this wood, which has been closed for one year only, is already beginning to fill up with natural seedlings of these species. (Woods of the Novar Estate 1899/1900. Plan or Scheme of Management of the Woods)

1907-08 Evanton Wood: Provisions of Working Plan Cuttings: 20,000 Intermediate Cubic Feet Results of Working Plan Cuttings: 22,499 Intermediate Cubic Feet Remarks: 'Cut to save natural regeneration'

Plantings: 1913, 1960, 1965, 1966, 1990, 1997 = 65 ha. (of which 40ha. in 1913)

From 1950s: Continuous Cover management

Evanton Wood Heritage

Notes for EWCC by Cameron Ross

Although predominantly a coniferous woodland, the management of Evanton Wood over the last century has resulted in a stand structure that is atypical of conventional conifer woodland in Scotland and the UK. In many respects it represents the type of woodland that the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006 aspires to create with its wide range of species and age classes creating an environment that is visually pleasing and has a higher biodiversity value than a conventional coniferous plantation.

Whilst maintaining stands of productive conifers capable of producing a sustainable supply of quality timber, the woodland provides a wide range of habitats and micro-habitats attractive to a range of species including European Protected Species (EPS) and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) species.

Tree cover of varying degrees will have existed on the site for many generations and there will have been many influences over the previous century that have resulted in this diverse woodland but there are two principal factors that stand out as highly influential.

Evanton Wood has a unique connection to the early years of professional forestry training and the implementation of systematic forest management in the United Kingdom and it is one of

only a few examples where continuous cover forestry techniques have been applied over a prolonged period.

The present structure of the woodland is a result of the forest design principles implemented by Sir William Schlich who prepared the first written plan for the woodlands on Novar Estate for Viscount Novar in 1899.

2003

Scotland's Finest Woods Awards

Novar Estate for Evanton Wood

Hunter Blair Trophy for Silvicultural Excellence

2007

Establishment of Evanton Wood Community Company (SC332678) in response to offer of sale by Novar Estate

Early 2012

Selective Thinning by Novar Estate

Sept. 2012

Fund-raising target achieved. 5-Year Activity Plan approved by Board and Heritage Lottery.

Community Purchase by Evanton Wood Community Company

Appointment of Education & Outreach Coordinator (Simon Harry)

2013

Registration as a charity (Ref SCO 04025)

2013-17

Planting of around 3,500 native broadleaf trees

Pond development; paths improvement; building of woodland cabin and composting toilet; play area

Schools programme and other outreach activities

2015

Scotland's Finest Woods Awards

The Crown Estate Scotland Schools Trophy for school-based projects

Dingwall Academy and Evanton Community Wood

Nov 2015: Pilot project (with NHS and Forestry Commission) Dementia Project

2016

Scotland's Finest Woods Awards

Evanton Community Wood: Tim Stead Trophy for Community Woodlands: Winner of Healthy Lifestyles competition

2016

Highly Commended Award at the RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards (Community Initiative category)

2017

Finalist in the National Lottery Awards

2018-19

Building of octagonal shelter at Mag's Wood area; also new composting toilet

Life Changes Trust funds Dementia programme

March 2019

Launch of Evanton Community Wood as the (Paths for All) First Dementia Friendly Woodland

Mid-year: Simon Harry moves on.

Inaugural series of concerts at the Mag's Wood shelter (initially funded by The Northern Meeting)

2020

Improved walkway access via Knockrash vennel (KCC funded)

June 2021

Visit by HRH The Princess Royal

Sept. 2022

10th Anniversary Celebration

Year of Stories – throughout the year in the woods and Kiltearn Primary School

2022-4

Highland Health and Wellbeing Fund funds Dementia Programme

2024-6

Age Scotland funds Dementia programme

Aims & Objectives

Key Community ownership outcomes:-

- Evanton Wood will remain **a special place** for people and wildlife (something that could not be guaranteed under private ownership)
- The woodland will be **more than just trees** as biodiversity flourishes and increases
- **Room to enjoy** as the woodland offers more low-key informal recreation to all
- **Improving knowledge** within the Community in a woodland learning environment
- **Looking after our woodland heritage** with many management operations being carried out by volunteers
- The woodland will be **part of a network** of habitats and village paths linking woodland places in Ross-shire

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