

FINTRY - The Story

Fintry is a pretty village lying at the head of Strathendrick. This is the valley of the Endrick Water as it flows down from the Fintry Hills, part of the Campsie Fells, the high ground that provides such an abrupt edge to Scotland's central lowlands north of Glasgow.



The story of Fintry is closely tied to that of nearby Culcreuch Castle. This started life as a three story tower house in the 1400s. In 1796 the castle and its estate passed into the hands of Alexander Spiers. At about the same time he built a water powered cotton mill on the Endrick Water just to the east of where the centre of Fintry stands today. This was an ambitious enterprise, designed to employ a thousand people.

There was a settlement here called Culcreuch by the early 1600s, complete with an older mill: and a church was built in 1642. But the need to accommodate workers in the new mill caused the rapid growth of the village.

In 1823 a new church was built as a shell surrounding the existing church, which continued to be used during construction. When what is now Fintry Kirk was complete, the earlier building contained within it was demolished. The bell from the old church continues in use in its replacement today.

By 1890 the 1796 mill had closed and the village was in decline. The arrival of the motor car combined with Fintry's beautiful setting and its relative proximity to Glasgow led to a revival in recent decades. Signs on the village hall proclaim Fintry's success as Scotland's Best Kept Small Village in 1989, and Scotland's Best Kept Village in 1990. As you look around it is clear that the village continues to put great store on making the most of its attractive environment.



Population

The population of Fintry has fluctuated over the years.

Around 1660 it was a remarkable 1,000 plus. They largely lived in the old village area surrounding the church, known as the Clachan of Fintry, or hamlet. Clearly many signs of housing from back then have long gone. Many would have lived on around 40 small farms within the wider boundaries of Fintry.

By 1780 it had shrunk to 550. Then with the coming of the larger mill around 1800 the population peaked once again at over 1,000. The 2011 census declares it at 717 which includes the wider rural area.



Today's Fintry stretches intermittently along the Endrick Water. The main settlement lies around the junction where the road to Kippen departs to cross the substantial bridge over the river. Here you find the Fintry Inn and a well established village hall. Further east is an outlying part of the village focused on Fintry Kirk and the Clachan Inn.

Culcreuch Castle is still in use. After extensive changes and extensions it has served a Culcreuch Castle Hotel, hosting many weddings. Highlights include hand-painted Chinese wallpaper dating from 1723. It is also said to house, in its roof space, one of the largest colony of bats in Britain.

The bats compete for attention with the three ghosts also said to be in residence. These include the Phantom Harper of Culcreuch, dating back to 1582. In that year a member of the family died of wounds suffered in a fight, and his widow played a Gaelic harp to mark his passing. This can still be heard at night in a number of parts of the Castle. Less clear is the origin of the ghostly animal head that has been seen around the ramparts of the castle; or the "grey man" who has been seen at various times and in various parts of the castle.



The Fintry Loup waterfall. About 3 miles up the Road to Denny.



The Clachan – an inn for over 300 years.
Now a family home.

David Smith