·DORNOCH·
HERITAGE·SOCIETY

Talk

Skibo and the Great War

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'The First World War impacted all aspects of life in Britain: across the country the routine of daily life altered beyond recognition and life on the Skibo estate was no exception. While the Carnegie family returned to America following the outbreak of war, life on the estate continued. Indeed, like many of the Highland estates, Skibo played a significant role in the British war effort. Overseen by Factor James Hardie, the estate increased food and timber production, all the while struggling with a dramatically reduced labour force as many of the men who lived and worked on the estate enlisted in the armed forces.'

Dornoch Council Chambers (Carnegie Buildings)

March 17th 7.30 pm

Open to all....£1 entry to non-members
Refreshments

Forthcoming events: Campaign for Women's Suffrage in the Highlands Susan Kruse April 21st

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Skibo and the Great War

Before I begin with the talk proper, my discussion of Skibo and the Great War, I thought it was probably advisable to give a very, very quick potted history of Andrew Carnegie and how he came to Skibo. So I'm sure everyone in the room is already well aware of this, but just to refresh our memory, so here we have Andrew Carnegie posing for a postcard in the Skibo Library with a book. Now Andrew Carnegie was born in 1835 in Dunfermline.

He was the son of a weaver. He had some very humble beginnings, and his mother repaired shoes. They lived in a one-roomed cottage, and they really struggled financially.

The Industrial Revolution and factories meant that machines were able to do his parents' work an awful lot faster and cheaper than they could, and so they were really put out of work by

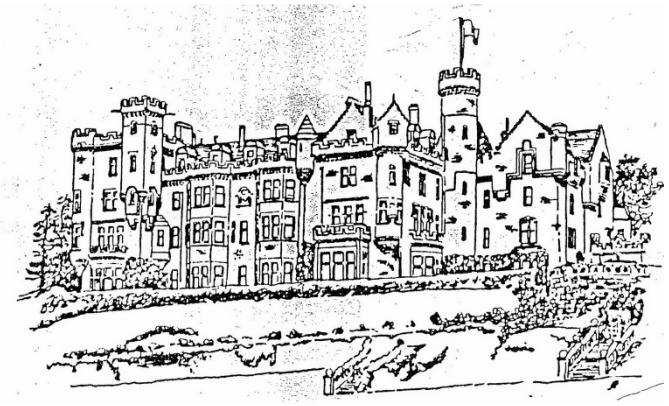
the Industrial Revolution. And so the family decided to emigrate to America in search of a better life, and they're so poor they can't even afford passage for the ship, and they have to borrow that money from a family member. So at age 13, Andrew sails for America.

The family settle in Allegheny City, now part of Pittsburgh, and he gets his first job. He has to leave full-time education, has to go out and help support the family. He gets a job as a bobbing boy in a factory. He works his way through various industries, he works in telegrams, he works in railways, before he settles on steel, and that's where he makes his fortune. When he sells his Carnegie Steel Company in 1904, he sells it for what would be the equivalent today of $13.6 billion. He becomes one of the richest men that the world has ever seen, and he really has the funds to do anything that he wants in life, and he decides, or he's already decided, that what he's going to do with that fortune is he's going to give it away.

Andrew Carney writes that a man should spend the first third of his life being educated, the second third of his life making money, and the last third giving it all away, and that's what he decides to do. Now, he has bought Skibo a few years previously to his selling of Carnegie Steel Company in 1904. He comes to Skibo in 1898.

He employs an Inverness architectural firm called Macbeth and Ross to redesign the castle. It's been previously owned by Edward Charles Sullivan Walker, and it's much, much smaller. So Andrew Carnegie triples the size, and it's this that is his base here in Scotland.

Original castle



Later addition by Andrew Carnegie

He shares the castle every summer with his wife Louise. She's an American, and their daughter Margaret, and so that's just a little bit of background about who Andrew Carnegie was, and who's living at Skibo during the First World War, because that's obviously the focus of the paper today. So to begin our talk proper, on the 28th of August 1913, Andrew Carnegie attended the inauguration of the Palace of Peace at The Hague in the Netherlands.

It was a momentous day for the industrialist-turned-philanthropist. Carnegie truly believed that the establishment of an international court of law was crucial to the attainment of world peace, a cause that he had championed for decades, dedicating his time, energy, and wealth to the cause. He had donated $1.5 million to finance the court, and that's the equivalent of $40 million today.

Now this was, of course, small change to a man whose fortune would be worth in the region of $13.6 billion. It does not mean, however, that the money that he gave to fund the Peace

Palace was given without thought. He was a huge proponent of peace, a regular attendee at international peace congresses, and he even travelled to Berlin in 1912, as he's pictured here, to meet with the Kaiser in the hopes that he could somehow prevent future conflict.

I have to say, if you read his biography, he does, at the time after meeting the Kaiser, he writes that he's an awfully nice chap, seems very sensible, and that Carnegie really doesn't have any worries for the future. So I think we can tell that he's got a bit of hubris, there's going to be a downfall coming here. And so on that day, the 28th of August 1913, standing alongside delegates from countries around the world, Carnegie must have thought that his dream of world peace was finally within reach.

His ambition was, however, not to be realised. Within a year, war would be declared across Europe, and the countries whose representatives who had sat side by side at the opening of the palace would find themselves on opposite sides of a bloody conflict that would spread across the globe, and ultimately claim the lives of an estimated 17 million people. Just 12 months after the triumph of the opening of the Peace Palace, Carnegie was with his wife Louise and their daughter Margaret at Aultnagar, pictured here, the lodge on the Skibo estate that the family would use for two weeks every summer to escape the torrent of visitors who constantly filled the many bedrooms in the castle.

It was at Aultnagar, Carnegie's place of refuge, that on the 1st of August 1914, he first heard the news that Germany had declared war on Russia. It was one of the worst days of his life, and a shock that he reportedly never recovered from. All my castles, he cried, have fallen about me.

Carnegie's dream of world peace was shattered. With the outbreak of war, the Carnegie family began to make arrangements for their early return to America. Now, they were normally able to witness the changing of the seasons from summer to autumn, but in 1914, everything was different, and arrangements were made to sail very early in September, and the family's last weeks at Skibo were markedly different to usual.

Carnegie wrote to John Ross in mid-August that we are in perilous times. Our horses and traps commandeered, our territorials ditto. All the household, servants included, steadily at work, sewing and knitting for the army.

It is all too sad to contemplate. Skibo was no longer a grand country retreat, home to Edwardian house parties, host to a unique mix of businessmen, politicians, artists, musicians, and philosophers. Instead, it was transformed, like the other Highland estates, into a vital part of the British war machine.

While the war was being fought on the battlefields of Europe and beyond, it was also being fought on the home front, and the Skibo estate played its part in providing men, horses, food, and timber to aid the war effort. And it's these contributions that my paper tonight will focus on. In the Carnegie's absence, life at Skibo was left in the hands of Factor James Hardie.

We have in the Skibo archive the Factor's letter books, which record Hardie's outgoing correspondence, and that gives us a fantastic insight into the everyday machinations of estate management in the period. These, combined with contemporary newspaper accounts and publications, as well as more recent academic scholarship, help us build a picture of what day-to-day life at Skibo was like during the Great War. As a caveat before I begin, this paper only offers an overview of what was happening during the period.

There's still an awful lot more to uncover. Hopefully, though, you'll find what has been discovered thus far of interest. So I'm going to focus first on the men from the Skibo estate who played their part in the war.

Now over the course of the Great War, almost 5 million men would serve in the various branches of the British Army. Of these, almost 2.6 million would enlist voluntarily, and close to 2.3 million would be conscripted. It's difficult to know, however, just how many men living and working on the Skibo estate joined up during the Great War.

Many of the attestation papers which recorded the enlistment details of each soldier, including their addresses and occupations, were destroyed when the War Office record store was bombed during the Second World War. Of the records that survived, many which had been only damaged by the initial bombing were then destroyed by the fire extinguishers and the water used to extinguish the fire, and they became known as the burnt documents. So this means that an examination of Skibo soldiers is a rather piecemeal exercise.

So I've used contemporary newspaper reports and cross-referenced the names of known Skibo employees from the letter books, alongside soldiers' service records, roles of honour, and the Commonwealth Graves Commission, to gather the names that I'll be discussing tonight. Now the list of soldiers that I have been able to link to Skibo is by no means exhaustive. It's only the tip of the iceberg.

I will share, however, the stories of a few of the men that we've been able to trace thus far. Now among the men who had enlisted at the beginning of the war that worked at Skibo were two gentlemen called Alexander Aird and William Smeaton. They were both apprentice gardeners.

T.D. Finlay, also a gardener, and Simon Bain, who was employed on the home farm, also joined up. We know that many of the men from Skibo who enlisted were killed during the war. Among them was Private George Ross of the Seaforth Highlanders who had been underkeeper at Skibo.

He died of his wounds on 15 May 1917 in France. Trooper Thomas Murray of the Lovat Scouts had worked as a gardener at Skibo before the war and was killed in action on 6 December 1916 at Salonika in Greece. In 1916 it was reported that Private Alexander MacGregor of the Seaforth had been wounded in the left thigh and sent to hospital in the UK.

He had enlisted in September 1914 with a gardener at Skibo Castle. We've got an awful lot of gardeners coming through. Skibo had a huge, not fleet of gardeners, but a huge team of gardeners which we think maybe numbered about 40.

So it's unsurprising that gardeners are a profession that crop up again and again here. Now William Smeaton, the apprentice gardener that I mentioned, he was also killed and died as a result of his wounds. He was actually in the Northern Times from our files.

If you're familiar with that feature, in the 4 March issue just passed, an account of his injury was related from our files. Now the men who remained at home had to watch their sons head off to the front. The son of William Munro, who operated the electric station on the estate, saw his son Corporal Hugh Munro killed in action on 13 November 1916.

That date marked the Battle of the Anchor, the last battle of the British Somme campaign. It was one of the bloodiest days of the war and its impact was felt keenly on the Skibo estate and the local community as the 5th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders suffered heavy losses and many of the men from the area had enlisted in that particular battalion. Of course we all know that one of the most tragic aspects of the war was that brothers, friends, workplaces who enlisted together served in the same battalions and therefore if they were sent to the front and suffered heavy losses, a community was absolutely devastated as it saw its young men picked off one by one.

Also on that day, 13 November, reported wounded was 30-year-old Private David Cowie. Now James Hardie, who was the Factor for Skibo, wrote to the MP A C Morton on 26 December on behalf of David's parents, who were James and Isabella Cowie of Clashmore, who had asked him to seek information about David as, following the report of his wounding on 13 November, they had heard nothing more about their son and were, quote, *"naturally very anxious to find out whether he is seriously wounded and what hospital he is in".* The Cowies who had believed that their son had escaped the slaughter that fateful day were to discover the terrible truth. David died on 13 November and was buried in Hawthorne Ridge Cemetery, number one.

Now another father on the Skibo estate who anxiously saw his son go off to war was Factor James Hardie. In January 1915, he wrote to Andrew Carnegie in America to update him on the situation at Skibo and told him*, "all our young men are off this morning, eight from the gardens, three from the home farm and two from the kennels. There are three others from the village. Altogether, 22 young men, including our own boy from here, have joined the army since the middle of August. So now we scarcely have a young man left in the place".*

The our boy he refers to is Thomas Hardie and it's unsurprising that he's the enlisted man that we know the most about and we know that through James's letters. He's often updating the Carnegie family and the other correspondents that he's communicating with about his son's progress. Tom had worked in the estate office at Skibo under his father for two years until in May 1914 when he emigrated to Argentina at the age of 22. Tom's time in South America was, however, brief. Like many expats following the outbreak of war, he returned to Britain to enlist in the armed forces.

On the 28th of November 1914, his father wrote to Colonel Naismith telling him that we've just heard from our son that by this time he's on his way home from South America along with other young men to help defend his country. Tom joined the Lovat Scouts at the

beginning of January 1915 and attended the regiment's training camp at **Beauly**. Now this worked out well for the Hardies because as James wrote to Arthur, his father, the proximity meant quote *"we have him home occasionally for a weekend"*. So it was an easy start to the war for Thomas after he returned to Scotland.

In March that year James wrote to Colonel Bailey of the Lovat Scouts:

> *"Dear Sir, I hope you will forgive my approaching you on a personal matter. My son who was in the Argentine and at once came home on the war breaking out and joined the Scouts at Beauly at the beginning of January. He is in his 24th year and accustomed to horses and has now seen something of the world. I am very anxious that he should get a commission in the Corps if there should be any vacancies and I accordingly take the liberty of bringing his name before you. I may add that my son is well known to Major Barclay."*

James's request was evidently followed by a request for more information about Tom because on the 15th he writes again and lets him know a little bit more detail, he lets us know his son's name for example which he has failed to convey: *"T.J. Hardie who enlisted in the Scouts in January is at present in the Beauly depot"*, Hardie writes. Despite his father's efforts Tom remained a private for the time being at least.

In April that year James wrote to Hugh Morrison who was the chief librarian at the Carnegie Library in Edinburgh and a very close friend of the Carnegie's and a frequent visitor to Skibo. James lamented in his letter that a great many of the young men are getting away from this part and the authorities are apparently not yet satisfied, as they are again busy getting the names of those remaining. He added Tom "is still under training at Beauly, he expects or should I say wishes however to be off very soon now". He would get his wish.

In September Tom was under orders for the Dardanelles. James wrote quote *"we have not seen him for about five months, however he writes cheery letters and is very well"*. A month later in October he wrote to Louise Whitfield, Carnegie, Andrew's wife telling her that *" Tom is quote well I am pleased to say but they are not permitted to give any particulars about anything and so we know very little about him. As he says himself it's no use attempting to describe a place when you're not allowed to give names".* In 1916 Tom was stationed in Cairo. In February James wrote that *"our boy came through the Dardanelles and thankful we are to see without a scratch although the hardships they had to endure were awful".* In March he wrote to the Dornoch Minister, Reverend C.F. Bentick whose own son George was serving in France and would later be awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action, and he told him *"Tom is still in some part of Egypt. We had a letter from him a week ago. I hope you were having good news of George They appear to be having it pretty hot in France right now which is probably a slight understatement".*

CIn May Hardie wrote again to Hugh Morrison and told him "*we heard from Tom about a fortnight ago. He is still in the desert and says the heat there is something awful"*. In early 1917 Tom was hospitalised for five weeks as a result of a respiratory infection attributed by his father to the Egyptian climate which is very different to the changeable one that we usually have. Now despite this illness and it's here that Hardie stops being quite as frequent in his updates and so we're still tracking down exactly where Tom went after his stay in hospital. But despite his illness we know that Tom survived the war. He became a lieutenant in the

Cameron Highlanders and later in the King's African Rifles and later he would emigrate to South Africa. Now I know that Historylinks hold a number of James' family albums as well which reveal him to be a very healthy looking adult gentleman who indulged in fishing particularly as a favourite pastime.

Historylinks Cat No. 2003_084_17

Now it was not only the men who found themselves on the front. In 1914 the War Office was tasked with sourcing horses for the war effort. Horses were required on the battlefield for the mounted cavalry, for transporting supplies weapons and artillery as well as wounded troops and the Government quickly mobilised to requisition horses. It raised 115,000 within 12 days of the outbreak of war. Margaret Carnegie Miller, Andrew's daughter, would later recall in her journal that quote, *"horses were needed to pull the artillery and all ours were taken. Adela and Codelta, the pair I enjoyed driving so much, were allowed to stay until we left. It was a sad afternoon when I drove them for the last time"*. Of the 1 million horses sent from Great Britain to the battlefields of Europe in the four years of conflict only 60,000 returned and certainly we have not found any evidence thus far in the Skibo records that Adela and Codelta returned. It would be frankly amazing if a horse that was requisitioned in 1914 survived the duration of the war.

Now horses were needed on the Western Front but they were also needed at home for one simple reason, food production. Before the outbreak of war Britain produced just 35% of the food it consumed. The naval blockades and submarine attacks on merchant ships following the outbreak of war severely impacted the volume of food imported and this continued as the war progressed.

At the same time as demand for homegrown foodstuffs increased agricultural production was faced with huge labour shortages as the fit young men who had previously worked the farms enlisted. This lack of manpower coupled with the requisitioning of the horses required to pull farm machinery meant that estates like Skibo were severely understaffed. In 1916 James Hardie wrote that *"none of our farm hands asked for exemption. Three of the men voluntarily enlisted in 1914 and we had to depend on two or three men from the garden staff who are considerably over military age. In May last we got a married ploughman aged 40 years who was medically rejected before coming here. The farm grieve or foreman is 45 years of age. The shepherd's age is 63, cattleman's 55 and a labourer 73 years old. Now this piecemeal workforce worked 338 acres between them. They looked after nine horses, 92 head of cattle, 195 sheep and a few pigs".*

In 1915 whenever Hardie advertised in the People's Journal and the John O'Groats Journal for a ploughman for the Skibo home farm it was with the proviso that he should not be eligible for military service. The estate really did struggle to fill those gaps in the workforce left by the men who were fighting for the British army and they were not the only ones.

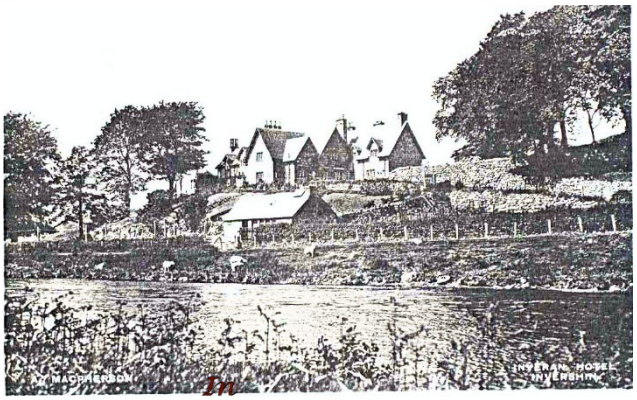
In June 1916 John Morrison, factor at Dunrobin, complained to Hardie about *"the scarcity of men to help with repairs to Astle Bridge"* and Hardie wrote back that *"I find that we are in a similar position. We can scarcely get our farm work done this year for want of men".*

In addition to the labour shortage petrol was rationed and licences issued to conserve fuel.

Hardie requested 30 gallons of petrol a month but was granted only eight. Writing to the Petrol Control Committee he expressed the impossibility of overseeing the 20,000 acre Skibo estate on such meagre rations, noting that *"all our horses are commandeered and I am obliged to use a car"*. Despite his pleading his allowance was only increased by two gallons so increased to 10 gallons a month.

Now despite the reduced workforce the Skibo estate was expected like all farms and estates to increase food production and Hardie noted that "*it is right that everyone who can should do all in their power to help in these terrible times*". He ordered that at the home farm additional land was ploughed for corn, the potato area was to be doubled and an additional 22 acres of oats sown. Even the grounds around the castle were utilised for food production as every spare yard in the gardens was planted with potatoes.

And here we can see an illustration of the work which was done by Thomas Mawson who was the garden designer around 1904. You can see these beautiful gardens. Some of the features do remain at Skibo today, the terracing, the fountains but the majority of the gardens were turned over to potato production. And Hardie also encouraged a gentleman called Angus Macpherson who was manager of the Inveran Hotel to increase food production to help the war effort.



Inveran Hotel

Now the Inveran hotel, which was destroyed by fire in 1949, was on the Skibo estate at the time and Angus Macpherson was very familiar with James Hardie because before he had taken up the position as manager at the Inveran Hotel Angus Macpherson had actually been the Carnegie family piper at Skibo. One of his jobs was to patrol around the outside of the castle every morning at eight o'clock and play the bagpipes to wake the guests, whether they wanted it or not! One of his other jobs for the Carnegie family was to act as ghillie. He was a very keen fisherman, he was a very, very talented bagpiper and very famous but he was also a very keen fisherman as was Andrew Carnegie. So whenever they headed up the River Shin to do some salmon fishing Angus Macpherson would accompany him to act as ghillie. One newspaper report does suggest that Macpherson would take his bagpipes and play them because it would encourage the salmon to leap higher. I don't know if there are any fishermen amongst you and you can tell me whether that sounds like complete nonsense or not afterwards.

So we have this gentleman called Angus Macpherson and the accounts for the Inveran hotel suggest that he was perhaps a better bagpiper than manager but despite that he ploughed on and during the first world war Hardie is in frequent correspondence with him regarding

various issues regarding the horses, the chestnut mares requisitioned by the army. Then it becomes an issue of how to increase agricultural production in the grounds of the hotel. Hardie writes to him and says as there is sure to be a great demand for potatoes *"plant as great an area as you can so that you may be in a position to help the food supply of the country*". And Macpherson writes back or evidently writes back and says something along the lines of '*well I can't turn over this field because I've got my sheep in it'*. So Hardie comes up with what he obviously thinks is a great solution.

He says a number of the sheep could be grazed elsewhere as for instance 'we could put some on the golf course here which is very good grazing'. Now the Skibo course was certainly not the first nor the last to host a flock of sheep during the war and I'm not sure how the golfers would necessarily feel about that!

Now agricultural production is one strand of the of Skibo's contribution. The other would be timber. Timber was another vital resource in the war effort. It was used to build trenches, camps, roads and railways across theatres of war. In 1913 Great Britain produced just 900,000 tons of homegrown timber. By 1918 this had risen to 4.25 million tons. A Joshua West calculates that about 450,000 acres of land, equivalent to almost half the productive forested land in Britain at the time, were planted during the 1916 to 1918 period alone. This sudden rise was the result of the requisition and logging of large swathes of private woodland, including large sections on the Skibo estate.

But we can immediately see that there's going to be an issue here. We have a huge demand for timber and yet all our foresters are going to be away fighting in France or logging on the continent. With many of the nation's forestry workers in service the need for timber felling on an unprecedented scale presented a huge problem for the British government.

Now the solution came in the form of lumber men from North America who were drafted in to fill the to fell the timber necessary to the war effort. The British War Office requested skilled lumber men on April 16th 1917 and New England responded quickly. Less than two months later around 315 men would sail for Scotland.

The $130,000 required to fund the 10 sawmill units provided were funded by a combination of the six New England states and private concerns. According to a report published in 1931 contributions were sought and received from 72 corporations, firms and individuals in New England and five interests having head offices in New York. Headquarters were established at the state house. This is the state house in Massachusetts.

Many experienced men volunteered their services and the support of the governors of each of the New England states was promptly secured. Rhode Island sent $6,200 and the others $12,000 each. Private contributions amounted to $53,000. The rest was contributed by the committee on public safety. This funded 10 portable sawmills, 120 horses and around 350 men.

The 10 forestry units were dispatched to Britain on the ***Justica*** which departed New York on the 15th of June 1917. The ship first sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia where 5,000 Canadians of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Corps (NOFU) troops boarded before the treacherous journey across the Atlantic. On the 3rd of July just off the English coast the ***Justica,*** according

to published reports, met a German submarine and disaster was avoided only by the quick action of the man at the wheel. It arrived safely in port the following day and upon landing the foresters were transported by 'special train' to Scotland, unlike the enlisted men of the Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC), which was also active in the area, with Company 117 and 1209 both based here in Dornoch.

The men of the NOFU were civilians under contract to the British government. This means that, unlike the CFC, no war diaries exist for the NOFU so we have to look for alternative sources of information about their experiences here in the Highlands. Thankfully several accounts were actually published in their hometown newspapers and they often were based on letters that the NOFU men sent their parents who proudly presented them to the editor of the local paper, who then printed them almost in their entirety, so it gives us a great insight into how they felt about Scotland and some of the cultural shocks they perhaps experienced which we'll get to in just a moment.

Now the NOFU was headed by a gentleman called Edgar C Hurst. Not a great quality photo I'm afraid it's from his passport application but it's as good as I think we're going to get for the moment. Now Edgar C Hurst was manager of the NOFU and he was assisted by H M Hackett who was general engineer, George Matthew Shea who was the accountant, Elliot S Boardman who was the general purchasing agent and Chester A Pratt who was general secretary and stenographer.

Now this staff or executive staff resided in the Balnagown Arms in Ardgay, which burnt down in 1940. The rest of the men were divided into units of approximately 30 men each and each unit had its own foreman, bookkeeper and cook.

Though he was aged just 32 Edgar Hurst was well suited to act as manager of the NOFU. He was a graduate of Ohio State and Yale and in 1909 he had been appointed as the first state forester of New Hampshire and in that role he had established a statewide fire warden system to fight forest fires, the first of its kind in America. Following the war Hurst wrote an account of the NOFU's experience in Scotland for the journal 'American Forestry'.

The headquarters of the New England sawmill units was at Ardgay, Ross-shire, Scotland, a village close to the Bonar Bridge Station on Highland Railway about 50 miles north of Inverness. A storehouse was built for the supplies needed for the mills and camp kitchens. Here the headquarters was located and the supplies for the men and horses were checked out to different units each week. All mills were located within five miles from headquarters, three operating on a timber tract purchased from the government from Andrew Carnegie in Sutherland shire and seven operating in a tract bought from Sir Charles Roth in Ross-shire.

These tracts were estimated to carry about 6 million and 18 million board feet respectively. Now a letter sent from James Hardie to Andrew Carnegie in July 1917 conveys the volume of timber felling on the estate being done by the NOFU just a month after their arrival. He writes: *" I know you will wish to hear how matters on the estate are getting on. The only outstanding feature at present is the timber cutting by the government. As I told you in a previous letter, the long stretch of felling fir from the top of Creich Hill right on to Bonar Bridge*

and the part from Whiteface on to Larachan School on the north side of the road. Also the whole of the plantation on the south side of the road right on to the top of Spinningdale is commandeered. On the east side of the estate again the whole of the fir from the Evelix including a part further north and west is also commandeered. The Creich part is now being cut. There are three sawmills in that part and the work is being done by American lumbermen. It is a great pity that the best of our timber is going but it cannot be helped".

Now as much as he's lamenting the going of the timber I would note that they got very good prices from the government for the requisitioned wood so he's not quite as hard done by it as he's perhaps suggesting there. Now whenever it came to the men of the NOFU, some of them struggled to adjust to life in Scotland. Though they might fell timber back home the trees in Scotland were different species and the method of felling was also very different. He wrote that *"logging is also differently operated particularly this true regarding stumps. The government requires us to cut the trees well down in the roots whereas at home we cut the swell of the root. This makes the operating expense higher but this is offset by high price received for lumber".* If we remember he was of course the unit accountant so it should perhaps come as little surprise that he's focused on the economics of difference. Other men however noted more practical differences between the Highlands and New England.

James M Smith from Wilmington Vermont was 48 when he volunteered to join the NOFU. Not long after his arrival in Scotland he wrote to his wife back home offering his first impressions which were then reprinted in the Vermont Phoenix. He wrote that *"despite it being summer we'll remember it was June and July whenever they arrived. The weather is cold and we are compelled to wear our heaviest clothing. One of the funniest experiences is seeing the farmers working in their fields at 10pm and the sun's still shining. At this time of year there are only four or five hours of darkness and even then not so dark but one can plainly distinguish objects for long distances. Going to bed at nine with sun still two hours high creates a queer feeling".* He however added that *"the people are very kind and hospitable and the clear cold air agrees with us".* So it wasn't all bad.

Another gentleman of the NOFU Herbert J Benson wrote home with details of his experiences in Scotland. Herbert was a bachelor so his letter is addressed to his mum. He writes:

> *"Dear Mother, I meant to have written more often but you know how I hate to write. I've seen most of the north of Scotland now as we have had a week's vacation and when we have a week's vacation Christmas I intend to visit Dundee, Perth, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh so it's going to be a busy week. I have been in Wick three times and met some nice people and have gotten quite well acquainted. I was something of a curiosity the first time I was there as I was the first American to go and I went alone. I have never felt better than I have here and the work is a snap as it rains half the time so all I have to do is kill time. Now do not worry about me for I have everything I need and a good place to sleep and plenty to eat better than expected on account of the war. I spent my 26th birthday in Wick the very north of Scotland. The proprietor's daughter in the hotel where I'd stopped had a birthday the same day. Well the year is almost half up and the lot of timber we are cutting is half done. We will just about finish in the year. Our unit is second in sod lumber and first in pit lumber*. The units were incredibly competitive and it was always who had cut the most lumber that week. We are going to have a turkey dinner here Thanksgiving, but I would like to be

in Town's End". (His hometown.*) "I expect to be in Glasgow on Christmas Day as the fellows in this unit are going to meet there for dinner. Enough for this time. Will try to write more often in future with love to all. I am as ever your loving son.."*

Herbert Benson was a lumberjack by trade but James Smith our 48 year old volunteer was a poultryman. According to published accounts between 325 and 350 men sailed for Scotland and worked the sawmill units here. The number that you get depends which newspaper you read. By combing through the passport applications for June I've been able to identify 264 of them. It's not a complete list yet but hopefully I'll get there.

I'm not able to offer a statistical analysis of the kind of men that were volunteering. What I can tell you from what we've discovered so far is that there's a huge range of ages and, while the vast majority work in the lumber trade either as choppers or in sawmills back home as foremen or in transporting lumber, there are some quite unusual professions that crop up. Aside from our poultrymen we've got a jeweller and there's a couple of car salesmen in as well. Although they're all American citizens, naturalised Americans, not all of them were born in America. There's a large number of Canadians. We've also got a Greek and a Welshman in there as well. So quite an interesting assortment of gentlemen come across and are settled either on the Skibo estate or in the lands belonging to Sir Charles Ross.

Now almost as soon as the NOFU arrived in Ardgay so too did the YMCA and according to '1922's Service With Fighting Men' an account of the work of the American young men's Christian associations in the World War quote: *"within two weeks of their arrival in July 1917 the Association pitched a marquee at Ardgay near the centre of operations and later erected smaller huts in each of the isolated camps of the 10 units. For 10 months the industrious lumbermen felled trees with a rapidity that outdistanced any other unit in per capita production With no other resources for material or social comfort within 1600 square miles".*

I think the local people might have something to say about that, quite insulting

Association service contributed largely in keeping the men contented in their isolated camps. The marquees and huts all had well-stocked canteens, billiard tables and libraries were installed. American newspapers and magazines were furnished weekly. Entertainments, vigorous athletic programmes and first-class lectures were provided. Services were held every Sunday in various units with 95% of the men attending and at Christmas the YMCA offered the men of the NOFU a 10-day holiday in London of which apparently 135 men availed themselves and they were furnished with free tickets to the theatre and other metropolitan places of amusement.

Now during the 12 months that the men of the NOFU were contracted for they cut an astonishing 20 million board feet of lumber and pit-hood, which was a record rate and was widely reported in the newspapers. Their work complete the NOFU disbanded in June 1918 and contemporary newspapers reported that within two hours after disbandment almost all the men in the unit had enlisted in the American Forces, 140 in the Army Engineers and 100 in the Navy and the remaining men would leave shortly for the United States to enlist in various branches of the service. We know that among the men that returned to America following the disbandment of the units were the executive staff, Hearst and Shea and the rest of the gentlemen that had been based at the Balnagown Arms in Ardgay. They obviously

went in order to finish the job but they did not return to New England. You can see from their World War One American attestation cards, which were not bombed and thus their records are more intact from the period, you can spot that many of them arrive in New York, check into an hotel and the next day they're enlisting in the Army. So even though the men were returning to America it was not to avoid service necessarily. they returned to America to join up.

One of the NOFU lumbermen to enlist directly from the units here at the end of their contract was Whitney J Bent. He was in unit three of the forestry units and when he finished his work there he went to Winchester England to train with the American expeditionary forces. He then went on to France with the 31st company of the 20th engineers and was soon made a corporal. I'm happy to say and he survived the war and what's interesting about Whitney is that he was a mason and his membership card record suggests that he actually joined the while he was in Scotland. The first lodge recorded on his cards is the St Duthas number 82 in Tain and he was initiated on the 29th of April 1918, passed on the 13th of May and then raised on the 31st of May that year. And there's lots and lots of other stories about the gentleman and their histories kind but I'm afraid that we shall have to move on today at least.

Now aside from food and timber production which we've covered in quite a lot of detail here and the Skibo estate also contributed to the war effort in less obvious ways gifting game and produce from the estate including grouse, hare, eggs, gooseberries, grapes, peaches, plums, pears and flowers from the castle to local military hospitals, including those in Cromarty, Strathpeffer and Inverness. Responding to requests by a Reverend in Galsby in 1914 Hardie offered to donate one turkey and two brace of pheasants for the Christmas dinner proposed to be given to the territorials and in Golspie on Christmas day. The men in Golspie were being spoiled somewhat by Skibo because they were also recipients of scones, jams and cakes etc sent from Mrs Hardie, James's wife on behalf of the Skibo and Clashmore Ladies Work Party. She wrote in the accompanying note to Colonel Buick, I trust the pleasure it will give them in disposing of the contents will equal the great pleasure it gives us in sending them.

The Ladies Work Party were incredibly busy through the war. They were raising money for the Belgian refugees and they were also knitting furiously for good causes, including those refugees and Belgian soldiers. Unlike other big houses around the country Skibo was never used as a military hospital or similar. A letter from 1915 from Hardie to Archibald Barrow, who was Louise's private secretary, suggests that the family either offered the Red Cross use of Skibo or offered to fund a hospital in the vicinity of the castle. Hardie's letter to Archibald reads:

> *"Dear Mr Barrow, Would you please tell Mrs Carnegie so far as I can gather there is no need for a convalescent home in this part. I consulted the heads of the Edinburgh branch of the Red Cross and they say that apart from anything else the climate would not be suitable as it runs from one extreme to the other. I know that Mrs Carnegie would like to assist and this can be done in a much simpler way by giving a monthly subscription of say £50 or, if I may suggest, give a motor ambulance. These are in great demand and I know that one from Mrs Carnegie would be highly appreciated. The cost of these wagons complete is from £800 to £1,000. Of course I merely make these suggestions for Mrs Carnegie's kind consideration".*

In the end the Carnegie's did indeed fund an ambulance giving £1,000 to the Red Cross for this purpose and the vehicle was named 'Skibo Castle' in honour of its donors. One of the estate buildings was however used by the military during the conflict, temporarily at least. The Cameron Highlanders used the farmhouse, which was a hunting lodge on the estate, in 1915 when they were in charge at the Invershin railway bridge.

Now, aware that his master's health had been in decline since the outbreak of war - if you remember in the interdiction I suggested Carnegie cried "all my castles have fallen about me" - biographers have suggested it was a shock that Carnegie never truly recovered from. Hardie was aware of this and he tried not to trouble Andrew with the difficulties that now faced Skibo. Instead his letters across the Atlantic are full of comforting phrases. *"Despite the war all goes well at Skibo and the new dark bread is quite good which is maybe damning with faint praise. In response to the new lighting order the electric station was closed down during the summer months"*. But James had found a man who made things quote "very easy".

Entering the last years of his life, his health failing, Andrew was largely shielded from the struggles his Highland estate faced. In 1916 however Hardie was forced to reveal that estate finances were in trouble and you spot this emerging again and again as the war progresses.

He writes to Andrew:

> *" I have to my very utmost endeavoured to run the estate during your absence without having to trouble you for financial assistance. I now find however owing to the shootings being unlet, which curtailed the estate revenues considerably, also to the greatly increased price of all supplies and the additional high taxes, that my resources are nearly exhausted. To make ends meet at the close of the financial year I would require £2,000 as per the accompanying list. The wages to of the remaining employees had to be increased to allow them to live in comfort as the price of food is now practically doubled".*

Now those unlet shoots might have caused Hardie more than a few headaches but it was a boon for the army officers in the area. Invitations were extended to various officers including Colonel Afford and Lieutenant Pape of the 11th Gordon Highlanders in Dornoch and Second Lieutenant Gilmore of the Seaforth Highlanders in Tain to shoot the moors with Hardie. So even though the shoots went unlet the grouse and pheasants did not go unshot.

At 11am on the 11th November 1918 the armistice came into effect. The end of the war was celebrated across the country. The end of hostilities was though bittersweet.

The allies may have won the war but at great cost. Memorials of the fallen were erected by public subscription in every community in Britain. The great war had kept Andrew Carnegie from Skibo for four years but even after the armistice Carnegie was prevented from returning to Scotland, this time due to his declining health and he knew that he would never return to his beloved fairyland of peace.

When Louise told him in 1918 she hoped that next year they could visit Skibo he replied there won't be a next year for me. Andrew Carnegie died of pneumonia on the 11th of August 1919 aged 83 at his mansion Shadowbrook near Lennox Massachusetts. The Carnegie family would not return to Skibo until 1920 when on July 30th Louise returned as head of household.

She was greeted on return by James Hardie the factor who had expertly guided the estate through the difficult years of the war and who would remain in her service until his retirement at the age of 76 in 1936. Later that summer Louise's daughter Margaret who had spent her childhood summers playing in the grounds of the Castle arrived at Skibo with a husband and child of her own. Louise Carnegie Miller was recorded in the Skibo visitors books as being just six weeks five days old when she made her first visit.

The granddaughter of Andrew Carnegie once the richest man in the world entered Skibo carried in a laundry basket and in the aftermath of the war that had blighted Europe and beyond a new era had begun at Skibo.

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