

Morangie

HOUSE HOTEL



A BRIEF HISTORY

As you enjoy your morning cup of tea here in the Morangie House Hotel it may amuse you to learn that it was upon the Tea Trade, between India and Great Britain, that the house was originally built.

Mr Joshua Taylor, a Victorian tea-planter and a bachelor who had made his fortune in India, left much of his wealth to his two nieces, the Misses Annie and Joanna MacDonald.

Joanna, who was later to marry a Tain chemist, Mr Donald Fowler, Provost of the town between 1898 and 1910, used her share of the fortune to build the lovely Mansfield House in Tain, completed in 1902 by A. Maitland and Sons, Architects.

This family firm was founded in 1842 by Andrew Maitland of Keith, in Banffshire, the first architect of note to work in and around Tain and the man responsible for a number of fine buildings in the town, including the Royal Hotel, the Town Hall, the Parish (former Free) Church and the Tudor-gabled shops along the High Street.

Not to be outdone, Annie, by now the widow of local farmer Mr Abner Gallie, decided to construct her own villa and commissioned the Maitlands to build Morangie House, which they completed a year later to her specifications, including a handsome square tower.

Over the years there has been speculation that the two houses were the manifestation of some ill-feeling between the sisters. A local businessman, who knew the family, suggests that this was not the case and that, whilst there may have been some natural sibling rivalry between them, rumours of a grand 'feud' were grossly exaggerated. The sisters, in fact, kept in touch all their lives.

Whatever the truth of this, Joanna, who liked to entertain well, responded to the completion of Morangie House with a fine tower of her own and a new dining room to boot.

Annie Gallie was to enjoy Morangie House for only four more years before her death on the 29th. of April, 1907. The house, however, remained in her family's hands for a further fifty years or so until 1960 when her son John George moved out and into a nearby bungalow which he named 'Morangie'.

The big house, which had eight bedrooms, remained empty for two years when it was bought, in 1962, by Mr Robert Reid MacLaren and his wife Monica as their family home. Five years later it became a guest house before the MacLarens turned it into an hotel with its first Liquor licence and small bar.

In 1976 the hotel was sold to people who, sadly, proved to be asset strippers, removing many of the fine old ornaments, paintings and items of furniture. They even tried to tear the fine original brass fireplace from the wall of the lounge bar on the night before they left for good.

Over the years the hotel has changed hands several times and its fortunes have ebbed and flowed.

In 1988, Morangie House was acquired by its present owners, John and Avril Wynne and their family, who have dedicated themselves to restoring to this fine old building its unique sense of space and graciousness, of comfort and hospitality. Their continued success in this endeavour can be measured best, perhaps, in the visit of Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, who came here to dine on the 27th. of August, 1991.