

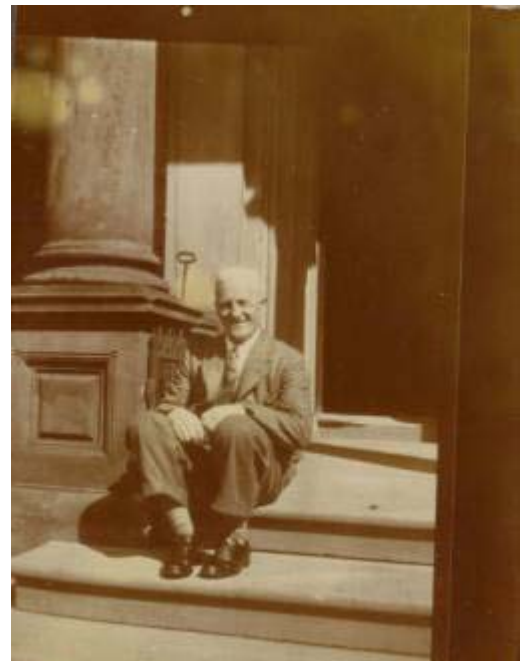
The KERSE, Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire

James Gilchrist was living with his wife Jean Ann Hepburn at Arthur's Craig, Hazelbank when after the birth of his second child (about 1912) Jean Ann complained that the house was too small for a growing family, so James bought Kerse, a twenty roomed grand grey-stoned house.



The family kept Arthur's Craig at Hazelbank with its orchards on the bank of the Clyde River. James put the deeds in Andrew (his eldest son's name) and they continued with the family business of fruit growing with expansion at Kerse by installing green-houses on the 10 acre property. They also owned a farm nearby.

The Kerse was a popular spot to visit. For a period Jean Ann's brother, James William Hepburn lived there and would later visit often with his children. When James Gilchrist died, Andrew (his heir) was well into his diplomatic career and living at various locations around the world, so "Little Jim" (the only other son and youngest child of five siblings) took on the family business. He had been living at Kerse whilst he grew up and when he married he bought his wife to live there and their three children were born there. His mother Jean Ann continued to live there after her husband's death with Little Jim and Alice. Before Andrew retired from Iceland (his last post) business had declined and Kerse was sold. Little Jim and



James W. Hepburn on the steps of Kerse House

his family moved into the lodge-gate cottage, and Andrew returned to Arthur's Craig.

In 1987 on his first ever visit to Scotland by train Sirdar Iqbal Singh saw Kerse and recognised it's potential as an investment; it was being used as storage for the farm as barns, although the fire-places and the cornices were mostly in place. At that time he was looking for a house in London but after only 2 hours in Scotland he bought it from Mr. Anderson for 1,500,000 and completed the sale in four days. When he told his wife she said "You live there I'll live in London." The first building had been burnt down and this one is rebuilt 12' lower than the entrance gate to shelter from the cold winds. It's heated by oil and set into the slope of the land to minimize the cold winds and maximize the warmth of the sun and the views. There was only one bathroom, 6-10 bedrooms and no kitchen.

In 1989 the market crashed and Mr Singh had to slow down on the renovations. The Kerse has now been renamed "Little Castle". The main reception rooms have been superbly renovated. At the top of the stairs is a graceful display cabinet obtained from Lord Louis Mountbatten estate. In the reception hall and the drawing-room there are ceiling height (20') mirrors and a full size original hand-made Persian carpet. Also the library is presented. The bedrooms are undergoing renovation slowly. Mr. Singh comes from a small village 200 miles north of Deli, his grand-father, father and Mr. Singh were heads of the village and his family are very well respected. His grandfather owned the village and his father had 18 acres of gardens. His wife, Gertrude, is Swiss and has not lived in India, so they obviously met later in London. In 1992 when the Swiss Ambassador was due to visit Scotland the Singhs contacted the Swiss Embassy and offered the use of Kerse for a reception. After it had been checked out they used it for a grand reception for 50 couples. When the Prince and Princess of Wales were on their trip to India (probably in 1991) Mr. Singh was chosen to partner Princess Diana in leading the dancing. Unfortunately he wasn't a good dancer and had to have extensive dance lessons. He has an Island off the West Coast of Scotland, which he has renamed "Burns Island".



Betty and James (Little Jim) Gilchrist
children of James and Jean Ann
in front of Kerse House.



Mr Singh models his new clan colours at his home near Glasgow. "I remember thinking 'I'm in Scotland, so why not have my own tartan?'" he said

IN MODERN Scotland the curry is as much a national dish as the haggis, and the country's national dress has caught up with its eating habits with the launch of the first Asian tartan (Shirley English writes).

The Singh tartan has officially taken its place alongside the plaids of the clans Campbell and MacDonald. It was commissioned by Sirdar Iqbal Singh, a retired Indian businessman and Robert Burns enthusiast, who renamed his Hebridean island of Eilean Vacsay after the bard. Lochcarron of

Singh adds spice to the history of tartan

Scotland, the world's largest tartan manufacturer, designed the new plaid.

Mr Singh, 67, who lives in Little Castle, a turreted Elizabethan mansion in Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, and holds the title Lord of Butley Manor, Suffolk, said that

he was proud of his new family colours which he invited all Singhs to wear. "I remember thinking 'I'm in Scotland, so why not have my own tartan?' I'm particularly pleased that it has been launched in same year as Scotland celebrates devolution and the Sikhs celebrate the tricentenary

of our religion," he said. The new plaid, which is on display at Paisley Museum, incorporates the Singh family colour of blue, yellow for peace, green to represent the landed gentry and red as a tribute to Gertrude, his Swiss wife. There are also smatterings of white.

The Singh tartan has been registered by The Scottish Tartans Society. Keith Lumsden, a society researcher said: "One should not be surprised that the Indians take to tartan. The Gurkhas wore tartan as did many other Indian regiments."