

F I F E A R M S

A NEW LIFE FOR THE FIFE ARMS, BRAEMAR: A FIRST CLASS HOTEL IN THE HIGHLANDS



“We often say that Braemar is the most famous village in the world. It has this extraordinary history, the Braemar Games have been happening for over 200 years. They draw a huge crowd, and I am always amazed at how international yet humble these games are, how authentic. And it is this spirit that has inspired our restoration of The Fife Arms. If people are looking for an authentic, deep and almost spiritual experience, with great food in an extraordinarily comfortable place, with the most astonishing light and landscape, I hope they will find all that at The Fife Arms.”

Iwan Wirth

August 2018 – Since the 19th century The Fife Arms has been at the heart of Braemar, the town famous for the annual Highland Games (or Braemar Gathering as it is known locally), which draws visitors from around the world. Reopening at the end of 2018, this Victorian coaching inn has been reweoven for the 21st century by its new owners, Iwan and Manuela Wirth, co-Presidents of the international gallery Hauser & Wirth. Inspired by a deep sense of place, the colourful stories of Braemar, and the dramatic landscape of the Cairngorms, the hotel brings together a profound respect for local history, a love of nature and strong sense of community.

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Driven by Iwan and Manuela Wirth's wish to create a truly exceptional hotel, The Fife Arms is a celebration of craftsmanship which has brought together architects, designers and artists, many of whom have strong links to Scotland. The interiors by Russell Sage feature a thoughtful collection of historic objects, whimsical curios, artwork and artefacts, as well as newly commissioned contemporary works. A strong Scottish narrative, often local to Braemar itself, runs throughout the entire hotel making it a repository of stories and anecdotes.

The Fife Arms will offer accommodation across 46 sumptuous bedrooms, each with unique furnishings and decorations. Every room is dedicated to a local place, person, event or theme which have all been meticulously researched and dressed to tell these local stories and share them with guests. The celebrated figures include Robert Louis Stevenson, who began to write *Treasure Island* in Braemar whilst on holiday; Lord Byron, who spent time in Braemar recuperating from scarlet fever in 1796, subsequently writing the song 'Dark Lochnagar' inspired by his stay in the area; Mrs Frances Farquharson, (1903-1991), stylish editor of *American Vogue*, who married Captain Alwyn Farquharson of the local Invercauld estate, and who had a penchant for wearing the haute couture clothes of her favourite designer Elsa Schiaparelli, even in Braemar; as well as homages to local characters such as *The Highlander*, *The Stalker*, *The Crofter* and *The Mountaineer*.

In keeping with Iwan and Manuela Wirth's decades-long dedication to contemporary art, The Fife Arms will also feature prominent works by internationally-renowned artists specially commissioned for the hotel, including Zhang Enli, Guillermo Kuitca, Subodh Gupta, Bharti Kher and James Prosek, who designed the hotel's coat of arms and the logo for the public bar.

The hotel is also home to an outstanding collection of mainly Scottish art, purchased especially for The Fife Arms. In the front hall, guests will be greeted by a monumental 19th century mahogany and pine chimneypiece over 3 metres high. The piece hails from Montrave House, Fife, and is carved by Gerrado Robinson with depictions of various scenes from the work of the poet Robert Burns. Other notable Scottish works include pieces by Archibald Thornburn (1860-1935) one of Scotland's finest wildlife painters and a painting by John Maclaughlan Milne, from Dundee who exhibited alongside the Scottish Colourists. These will hang alongside a 1991 lithograph by HRH The Prince of Wales of nearby Balmoral. Guests will also find installations and curios, old and new, all carefully curated to enhance the authenticity and integrity of the experience of staying here. The result is a winning combination – born of boldness, confidence and quality.

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Overseeing the refurbishment, Moxon architects, based in Cathie and London, is an award-winning, cross-disciplinary architecture practice, with a reputation for aesthetic versatility and an inquisitive collaborative design process. The firm is headed by Ben Addy, who grew up in Aberdeenshire and is a Director of the Cairngorms Trust and a member of the Braemar Mountain Rescue team. Moxon has executed a careful, sensitive and craft restoration of the listed building, including sympathetic alterations to ensure the key areas of the hotel have been opened up, to give easier access to both locals and visitors.

The house tartan and tweed have been designed by Araminta Campbell, who grew up in Royal Deeside. Now based in Edinburgh, her inspiration for both were the changing colours of the local landscape around Braemar. The Drawing Room walls will be adorned with The Fife Arms tartan while the bespoke tweed will decorate the walls of The Snug and the bedroom corridors.

The garden has been designed by Jinny Blom, Chelsea Flower Show medallist for HRH The Prince of Wales, Laurent Perrier and The Duke of Sussex's garden for Lesotho. The grounds overlook the River Clunie and links the main hotel to the spa, which will offer treatments inspired by the Scottish landscape.

The hotel team is led by General Manager, Federica Bertolini. She joined from the Hotel Tresanton in Cornwall where Federica carefully nurtured personal relationships with the guests, the staff and the community. She brings this philosophy to her role at The Fife Arms and has been living in Braemar for over two years.

The Fife Arms sits within the majestic grandeur of the Cairngorms, where the rhythm of the seasons will be reflected in the menus offered in the restaurant, public bar and drawing room, which have been created by Executive Chef, Robert Cameron. Ros Evans, the hotel's Ghillie, who knows the area well, will enable guests to discover the surrounding ancient castles, whisky distilleries, romantic coastlines and sublime walks that lie on The Fife Arms' doorstep and beyond. In addition, Ben Carter, a trained gamekeeper, has been working with the hotel to allow guests to fully experience the seasonal outdoor activities that have taken place on the on the neighbouring estates for hundreds of years.

However, the project's embrace of the local is perhaps best illustrated by the restoration of the hotel's original public bar. An integral part of the hotel, it has been sensitively reimagined for the next stage of its life, with the local community very much in mind. As long-term resident of Braemar, Doreen Wood explains: "*all the ghillies down off the hill would go there, it was where everyone went. If you were looking for someone, you'd go there and ask, have you seen them? Everyone went to The Fife public bar, that's just what it was about.*"

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This much-loved public bar will once again be the first stop for the residents of Braemar, whether they are coming for a full meal or a pint and a pie for under a tenner. This will be a place where locals will rub elbows with visitors, at the oak bar hewn by Tom Addy, local building contractor, and brother to architect Ben Addy. As Tom says, “*this is a pretty unique project, for more than a hotel in Braemar: it’s an arts centre, a community hub – and really rather an incredible set of circumstances.*” The hotel will host regular cultural events centred around heritage, tradition, local craftsmanship and contemporary art. This calendar will help to ensure that The Fife Arms continues to be part of the warm community of the village and the wild splendour of the landscape.

When it opens later this year, The Fife Arms will delight and surprise visitors from all over the world but will still feel, as it always has, lively and welcoming to locals. The Fife Arms is a spot that will be enjoyed year round by all, from outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers to those seeking inspiration or simply some time out. The hotel will be a reflection of its special location, which is at once wild, yet also sophisticated and natural but above all authentic.

The Fife Arms, Mar Road, Braemar, Aberdeenshire, Scotland
Telephone +44 (0)1339 720200 Email: mail@thefifearms.com
www.thefifearms.com

Opening rates from: £250 for guestrooms and £795 for suites
(rates are inclusive of breakfast and VAT)

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Editor's Notes

The History of The Fife Arms

Built in the 19th century by the Duke of Fife, The Fife Arms Hotel is a large and highly distinctive part of the streetscape in Braemar. It dominates with its imposing scale and displays many of the traditional architectural characteristics of the area with its timber bargeboards, pink and grey granite and its multi-gabled principal elevation. Its distinctive regional style is also reflected in the Aberdeen-bonded stonework. The building has retained all of its timber sash and case windows with their distinctive Arts and Crafts multi-paned upper sashes, and a large number of original chimney stacks. The building is evidence of the expansion of the tourist grade in Braemar in the wake of Queen Victoria's visits and purchase of Balmoral, and the coming of the railway to the area.

Plans of the hotel by A Marshall Mackenzie (undated) are held by the National Archive of Scotland. Mackenzie was an architect of national repute. A member of a major architectural dynasty, he began his career in the office of David Bryce. The majority of his work was undertaken in northern Scotland – among many other projects he was responsible for the rebuilding of Marischal College, Aberdeen. Royal patronage demonstrated his ability and fame; he was responsible for the design of Crathie Kirk in 1893 and was subsequently chosen by the Duke and Duchess of Fife for the new Mar Lodge in 1895. Mackenzie was also the Architect for two prestigious projects in central London, the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and Australia House. The Fife Arms is a category B listed building.

About Braemar

Surrounded by the majestic Grampian Mountains and ancient woodlands, Braemar is a delightful village and a year round destination. The striking countryside, nearby castles and whisky distilleries makes it an ideal base for exploring the Cairngorms National Park. Situated on Royal Deeside the village offers an abundance of activities for residents and visitors, it is a paradise for walkers, climbers or wanderers. The local estates offer excellent stalking, shooting and fishing for sportsmen, and in the winter months nearby Glenshee provides the best skiing in Scotland.

About Iwan and Manuela Wirth

Iwan and Manuela Wirth are co-Presidents of the leading international art gallery Hauser & Wirth, and founders of a hospitality enterprise that combines art, culture, food, family, community and sustainability. Hospitality projects include: Roth Bar & Grill and Durslade Farmhouse at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, The Bull Inn at Hardway, Manuela restaurant at Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles, and The Fife Arms Hotel in Braemar, Scotland, opening in 2018.