

Search for history of Rhu mansion

Written by Donald Fullarton and Alistair McIntyre - Last Updated Monday, 12 November 2018 10:50



A SEARCH has been launched for information about one of the stunning mansions in Rhu, Laggary House, and its occupants.

The B-listed building which towers over the Laggary Park development in what was originally its grounds is an Italianate house with towers, in honey-coloured sandstone, and now contains four flats.

The spacious site on which it stands was feued in 1831 by Alexander Colquhan, but it was about 1850 before the mansion was built for Greenock merchant Robert Kerr. A decade later its grounds comprised 24 acres.

At the request of Laggary Park resident Susan Miller, local historian and Helensburgh Heritage Trust director Alistair McIntyre has looked into the property's past, but he says that he would welcome any further information.

Robert Kerr and his family moved to Edinburgh in 1861, and the property was sold to Robert

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Farquhar Shaw Stewart, a Captain in the Scots Fusilier Guards.

It is possible that Captain Stewart was related to the Shaw-Stewarts of Ardgowan, an ancestor of whom had once owned the land on which Helensburgh was built.

Alistair said: "It is worth reflecting that this was an era when big houses employed a full retinue of staff, and in 1861, apart from the 25 year-old Captain Stewart, his wife, and young son, there were twelve domestic servants in residence, and quite a number of staff to maintain the grounds.

"Some staff were married, with their own families, and they had their accommodation outwith the big house. At the time of the 1871 census, when the proprietor appears to have been absent, staff living-in included a cook, housemaid, laundry maid and kitchen maid.

"The butler had a cottage in the grounds, along with his wife and children, and the coachman and his family had their quarters at the stable block. The lodge also provided home for another member of staff, along with his wife and children."

In 1866 Laggary was bought by John George Hamilton from Dunoon, who had some alterations and additions done to the design of the later very prominent architect John Honeyman, but he died soon after.

Other members of his family, including Colonel Christian Monteith Hamilton of the 92nd Highlanders, lived at the house until 1894, when it was sold to the Wallace family, whose members included Sir John A.A.Wallace and another Colonel, F.J.A.Wallace.

From the 1920s until the mid-1930s, Laggary was owned by Nicol Paton Brown CBE, a patron of the arts, who died on July 20 1934 in the house in his 81st year, a few years after he retired from business.

