

Freeland Estate

Harry Riley opened his new premises at Forgandenny for business in September 1920.

He had spent a lot of time and money in order to realise his plans; plans that had been formed some years before. The idea of a move to Forgandenny was prompted by the success of the school over the years at Bridge of Allan. Harry Riley's Strathallan School was housed in rented buildings that were literally miles apart in Bridge of Allan, and his dream of a more centralised situation, under financial control was a natural result of the growing success and size of his enterprise. He spent some time during 1919, visiting many locations, the names of which were kept from the rest of the staff.

One of those locations was Freeland House in Forgandenny, just to the south of Perth. The house was the centre of a 3185 acre estate, which had been built up by Collingwood Lindsay Wood who originally purchased the Ruthven estate in 1873, and had added considerably to its wealth and size. If his only son, born in 1877, had lived, he would have inherited it all on his father's death in 1906. However, Lindsay Wood's wife, Francis, and their daughters stayed in residence for some years after his death, but the eventual decay of the estate and increasing debts forced the trustees to consider a somewhat forced sale.

In 1917, the sale of the whole estate was made to Mr. Edwin Martin Stewart for £80,000. He was chairman of the Carntyne Iron and Steel Co., Ltd., in Glasgow, and lived in Stirling with his family. He never moved to Freeland nor do we know if he ever intended to, as he fell ill and was unable to continue his venture. Still a relatively young man, he unfortunately died at home in 1921, aged 51. In his time, the low part of the estate was changed forever. The beautiful, mature trees of the drives, parks and woodlands of the estate were demolished for their timber. The estate planting had first begun in 1730, and had continued for a hundred years, when large parts of the estate were replanted with a wide variety of trees. The estate had been famous for its drives and walks, and Lindsay Wood had continued the tradition by further planting.

The decay of the estate and the removal of so many old features were sad times for the area, but probably went fairly unnoticed in the sadder times that were being experienced by all. A large part of the future prosperity of the estate would have depended on woodland management as much as on agriculture, and so it was inevitable when the whole estate was put up for sale in Perth at the Salutation Hotel on Tuesday, 28th October, 1919 at 2 pm. There were no offers for the estate as a whole and it was on the Wednesday afternoon that the newspapers reported 'a large and representative gathering' was present to see the estate offered in 41 lots.

Mr. Burroughs, the auctioneer, of Knight, Frank, and Rutley, then had a most traumatic afternoon but we do not know if Harry Riley was present to witness events. We do not even know

if Harry Riley was contemplating a purchase at this time. What did happen was that, with reportedly slow bidding, lot after lot failed to reach their reserve price and were withdrawn. Only six lots actually sold, 5 cottages in Forgandenny and the house at Kirkton Orchard. It is unlikely that Harry Riley would have considered bidding for Lot 1, the 165 acres of the Freeland House, its policies, 9 cottages, and the parks.

Lot 1 was later bought for £12,500 by Mr. Miller on behalf of Alexander and James Duncan who also bought Gallowmuir, the home farm of the estate. They registered the purchase of the farm, along with Forgan Boat, in May 1920. The May papers

carried a notice that Messrs Mitchell and Logan, solicitors, Perth had purchased the mansion house of Freeland and policies on behalf of Mr. H. Riley. This amounted to 60.5 acres of the original lot. The event was reported to have given great satisfaction to the community who were looking for 'a return to the pleasant activities to pre-war times in the village'.

Other lots were sold bit by bit over the next 5 years, in many cases to the occupants themselves. By the time the whole estate had been settled, Harry Riley was well established in the new school premises, and the realisation of his dream of one unified building housing his school, complete.



The Picture Gallery - one of a series of photographs taken in 1880 by Magnus Jackson.



The new front entrance, on the north of the house, built in 1880 as part of extensive refurbishment.



An 1873 photograph of Freeland showing the original William Burn designed mansion house, completed in 1829

