

F I F E A R M S



THE FIFE ARMS, BRAEMAR A HOTEL FOR THE HIGHLANDS

OPEN THURSDAY 20TH DECEMBER 2018

Since the 19th century The Fife Arms has been at the heart of Braemar, the Aberdeenshire town famous for the annual Braemar Gathering, the most famous highland games in Scotland, which draws visitors from around the world. Deep in the Cairngorms National Park, within the valley of Royal Deeside, this Victorian coaching inn has been rewoven for the 21st century by its new owners, **Iwan and Manuela Wirth**.

The transformation of The Fife Arms is inspired by the dramatic landscape, colourful stories and rich cultural connections of Braemar. When it re-opened on Thursday 20 December 2018, the hotel brought together a profound respect for local history, a love of nature and strong sense of community. With 46 bedrooms and suites infused with stories, a restaurant overlooking the rushing River Clunie, a jewel box of a cocktail bar, wonderfully original public spaces, a Library, playroom, spa, garden and a much-loved village bar - The Fife Arms has been reimagined to fill visitors with a sense of delight and discovery.

Driven by Iwan and Manuela Wirth's passion for the heritage and craft of the region, The Fife Arms' renovation has brought together an extraordinary cast of architects, designers, craftspeople and artists, many with deep ties to Scotland. The interiors, by **Russell Sage Studio**, bring a strong Scottish narrative, often local to Braemar itself, through a deft layering of specially designed tweed, tartan, hand-printed wall coverings, rare specimens of the natural world, obscure treasures and whimsical curios, carefully

chosen important antiques - and an extensive art collection that includes newly commissioned contemporary works, all weaved into the hotel's décor and architecture.

Each bedroom and suite at The Fife Arms offers its own one-of-a-kind furnishings and décor, each one a homage to a place, person, event or activity integral to the life and legacy of Braemar. All of these stories have been meticulously researched with the help of consulting historians from Aberdeen University – and translated into design elements, to tell these local stories and share them with guests. The celebrated figures include **Robert Louis Stevenson**, who began to write *Treasure Island* whilst on holiday in Braemar, staying in a house a stone's throw from the hotel; the poet **Lord Byron (1788-1824)** who as a child, lived for a while at a farm just east of Ballater with his Scottish mother, Catherine Gordon of Gight. The stay had a profound effect and local landmarks feature in his works, such as 'Dark Lochnagar' written in 1807; and **Mrs Frances Farquharson, (1903-1991), stylish editor of American Vogue**, who married Captain Alwyn Farquharson of the local Invercauld estate – she had a penchant for wearing the haute couture clothes of her favourite designer Elsa Schiaparelli, even in Braemar. Other rooms celebrate local characters such as The Highlander, The Stalker, The Farmer and The Mountaineer.

Art at The Fife Arms

In keeping with Iwan and Manuela Wirth's passionate, decades-long dedication to modern and contemporary art as co-founders of the acclaimed global gallery Hauser & Wirth, art is central to The Fife Arms experience and an integral part of the design story. More than 14,000 works of art, antiques, and *objets* have been thoughtfully integrated into its every room, corridor and corner. Each piece is placed not merely to provide visual pleasure but also to tell stories and enhance the experience of staying here.

Among these works are large-scale site-specific commissions by internationally-renowned artists – **Zhang Enli, Guillermo Kuitca, Subodh Gupta, and Bharti Kher**. American artist, writer and naturalist **James Prosek** has designed the hotel's striking coat of arms and the logo for the public bar, now named The Flying Stag. These contributions are complemented by an outstanding array of mainly Scottish artworks collected for the hotel, from important paintings and drawings to prints, pamphlets, caricatures and a delicate watercolour of a stag's head painted by Queen Victoria. In the main entrance hall guests are greeted by a monumental 19th century mahogany and pine chimneypiece over 3 metres tall. This tour de force treasure, discovered at Montrave House, Fife, was carved by **Gerrard Robinson (1834-1891)** with depictions of various scenes from the work of Scottish lyricist and poet Robert Burns (1759-1796). Other notable Scottish works include numerous paintings by **Archibald Thornburn (1860-1935)**, one of Scotland's finest wildlife painters, and a canvas by Dundee artist **John Maclauchlan Milne (1885-1957)**, who exhibited alongside the Scottish Colourists.

During the hotel's renovation, a number of other artists were invited to take up residence in Braemar and to immerse themselves in the local landscape and the community. Among them was Scottish luminary **Alec Finlay**, who was commissioned to create "Gathering," a poetic guide to the Cairngorms that

uses place-names and their underlying meanings to explain the landscape, ecology and lives that have been lived in the area. Words and lines taken from this book have been carved into the custom-made wooden bedheads in some of the guestrooms of The Fife Arms. **Gideon Summerfield**, a recent postgraduate from London's Royal School of Drawing, has drawn portraits of many of Braemar's several hundred residents. A selection from his resulting "Characters of Braemar" series now hang in The Flying Stag bar, complementing a collection of equally evocative black and white photos of the Braemar Gathering by local photographer **Steven Rennie**.

The era-spanning spirit of The Fife Arms is perhaps best expressed in the beguiling contrast between two monumental chandeliers made expressly for the hotel: one has been fashioned according to longstanding Scottish tradition from hundreds of magnificent antlers ethically sourced by **Gareth Guy of The Horn Shop in Braemar**, while the other has been created by Los Angeles-based American artist **Richard Jackson**, whose joyful interpretation this Scottish decorative classic is an assemblage of cast glass antlers lit from within.

Design and architecture

A graduate of Central Saint Martins, designer **Russell Sage** was an established and acclaimed fashion designer when he founded **Russell Sage Studio** in 2005. Since then, he and his firm have received acclaim and awards for authentic, compelling interior schemes that engage and surprise. The Studio's expertise has been deployed at dozens of classic homes and country estates, hotels, restaurants, bars and other projects. Sage's portfolio includes such high profile commissions as The Goring Hotel, The Royal Automobile Club, The Savoy Grill, as well as The Royal Exchange, The Zetter Townhouse, and restaurants for chefs such as Gordon Ramsay and Jason Atherton. Sage has been named one of the London Evening Standard's *Progress 100* and he has received numerous awards.

Master planning the refurbishment, **Moxon architects**, based in Crathie 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 garden has been designed by **Jinny Blom**, Chelsea Flower Show medallist for, amongst others, HRH The Prince of Wales, Laurent Perrier and a garden commissioned by Prince Harry's charity Sentebale, which supports children in the African nation of Lesotho (Chelsea Flower Show 2013). Overlooking the River Clunie, her graceful garden for The Fife Arms links the main hotel to the spa, which will offer treatments inspired by the flora of Scotland.

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 are adorned with The Fife Arms tartan, while the bespoke tweed will decorate the walls of The Snug in The Flying Stag, as well as the bedroom corridors upstairs

The Fife Arms in-house team

General Manager, Federica Bertolini joined from the Hotel Tresanton in Cornwall. She is dedicated to building personal relationships with guests, staff and the community. In order to ensure this level of connection at The Fife Arms, she moved to Braemar three years ago and has become an active participant in the life of the village.

The rhythm of the Highland seasons will be reflected in the menus offered in the restaurant, The Clunie Dining Room, The Flying Stag and the Drawing Room. These menus have been created by **Executive Chef, Robert Cameron**, who returns home to Scotland, after working abroad for many years. Much of the cooking in The Clunie Dining Room takes place over the open flames of a fire pit, designed by the ground-breaking Swedish Michelin-starred chef Niklas Eckstedt. **Ros Evans, the hotel's Ghillie** (or concierge), a resident of Braemar who knows the area well, will enable guests to discover ancient castles, whisky distilleries, romantic coastlines and sublime walks that lie on The Fife Arms' doorstep and beyond. **Ben Carter, a trained gamekeeper**, has also 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.

Welcoming the community

The project's embrace of the local is perhaps best illustrated by the restoration of the hotel's original public bar, now re-named as The Flying Stag. An integral part of the hotel, it has been sensitively reimagined, 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."*

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 simply 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.**

The hotel will host regular cultural events centred around heritage, tradition, local craftsmanship and contemporary art. This calendar, including some events conceived in collaboration with locals, will ensure that The Fife Arms continues to be part of the warm community of the village and the wild splendour of the landscape.

The Fife Arms opened on 20 December 2018, to delight and surprise visitors from around the world whilst still feeling like the lively and welcoming home for Braemar locals, as it always has.

The Fife Arms is a spot that celebrates Scottish stories – to be enjoyed year round by all, from outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers, to those seeking inspiration - or simply some time out.

The Fife Arms, Mar Road, Braemar, Aberdeenshire, Scotland

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**Opening rates from: £250 for guestrooms and £795 for suites
(rates 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 he was 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 year round destination. The striking countryside, nearby castles and whisky distilleries makes it an ideal base for exploring the Cairngorms National Park. 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 maintain a beloved family retreat in the vicinity of Braemar. They are co-Presidents of Hauser & Wirth, founded in Zurich in 1992 and today admired as one of the world's most important and influential galleries for modern and contemporary art. They also are founders of a new hospitality enterprise that combines love for art, culture, and food with a dedication to building community and fostering environmental sustainability. Their hospitality projects to date include the Roth Bar & Grill and Durslade Farmhouse in Bruton at Hauser & Wirth Somerset; The Bull Inn at Hardway in Bruton; Manuela Restaurant at Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles; and The Fife Arms Hotel in Braemar, Scotland, opening in December 2018.