

The Drummond Arms Hotel is by far the most prominent building in St Fillans, towering over its neighbours and providing a focus for the village, especially when seen from the approaches to the village and across Loch Earn. It is an important example of a hotel, which evolved from a small inn in the earlier 19th century through a series of additions and includes the original hall of the St Fillans Highland Society, a rare survival. The hotel, the evolution of which reflects the growth of the village of St Fillans, was significant in the development of tourism in the area and reflects the popularity of Loch Earn as part of carriage tours.



rear a series of outbuildings.

The modern day building consists of a central 5-bay 3-storey piend-roofed block with a square Italianate belvedere tower and prominent wall-head stacks. Along the base is a long glazed porch. To either side of this are advanced blocks; 2-storey to the left (W) and 2½ to the right, with canted 4-light bay windows. To the NE is a long ballroom extension and to the

The development of the Drummond Arms is complex, but a good series of early illustrations and photographs allow for a better understanding.

In 1810 a small inn originally known as The Star Inn was constructed at Port Mohr later renamed Walkers Inn and eventually it became the Drummond Arms. It appears on a drawing of the earlier 19th century as a 3-bay 2-storey building with a small gabled central verandah. The village of St Fillans, known as Port Mohr or Meikleport, was renamed by Lord and Lady Gwydyr (of Drummond) in 1817.



In 1819 the foundation of the St Fillans Highland Society led to the construction of a 2-storey hall with a tall piended roof at the E end of the hotel. An early photograph of c1844 has the hall, built of rubble with rubble relieving arches over the openings, projecting slightly from the central block, with a door facing west.

In 1867 the hotel was extended further. 3 bays the same height as the main block were added to the W, with a further large piend-roofed 3-bay 2-storey block built to mirror the Highland Society hall (albeit slightly higher).

Between 1870-80 the hotel was substantially remodeled. The central 2-storey portion was demolished and rebuilt in its present form. This regular and symmetrical 5-bay 3-storey block has a central balustrade porch with square pillars, with bipartite windows on the central bay, a dominant squat belvedere tower with tapered corner pillars, and heavy shouldered wallhead stacks to the front and sides.

Towards the end of the 19th century, a large polygonal-ended ballroom was built at the NE corner. At the same time, or slightly later, the windows on the ground floor of the end wings were replaced with wide bay windows. Later still, the Highland Society hall was raised to its present 2-storey plus dormer height. In c1960 a large glazed lean-to porch was added along the front elevation. This has since been replaced with a segmental-arcaded flat-roofed equivalent.

To the rear of the hotel a long pitch-roofed 1-1½ storey range extends north. and probably is related to the 1860s phase of building.

Interior: some original features survive. This includes 5-panel shouldered-arch doors, timber chimneypiece, plain plaster cornices, timber stair with turned balusters and acorn newel. The ballroom, a large open space, with cast iron or steel beams supporting the upper floor, has simple decorative plasterwork. Flag floors survive in the kitchen. Upstairs, the rooms, arranged off wide central corridors, have mostly been modernized.

Materials: squared whin rubble with sandstone dressings. Rough rubble with pinnings to the former Highland Society Hall, rubble with cherry cocking to west wing. Grey slate roof; stone wallhead and ridge stacks, clay cans. Timber sash and case windows, plate glass and 4-pane. Rainwater goods are cast-iron.

Ancillary Buildings: to the rear of the hotel is the principal outbuilding, the substantial coach house and stables of c1880. 3 long parallel single-storey bays, with altered openings - segmental arch on the East bay.

The architect of the central block is uncertain. 'Prominent Perth Architect Andrew Heiton' is known to have worked at the hotel in 1872 but the extent of his work is unknown. Drummond Estate Archives hold drawings of 1880 of the executed substantial alterations and new stables, apparently drawn in one of the estate offices (Beechlea, Muthill). Crieff Architect GT Ewing was at the time carrying out work for the estate, laying out a feuing plan for the village and the design of the villa now known as Ard Choille and Dundurn Parish Church.

In December 1987: The hotel and outbuildings were designated grade C listed building status.

More up to date history

Since **2006:** the property has changed hands on a number of occasions *sadly mostly unsuccessful*. At one stage a developer suggested turning it into a distillery using water sourced from Loch Boltachan.

In 2013: The hotel was bought by Arran Brewery with the intention of setting up a Cider Shack: producing 1,000 litre batches of cider: A beer brewery was to be added with the potential to brew 3,500 litres a day - they were never installed or commissioned. We were told at the time plans were in place to add a further three buildings and open both a whisky and local produce shop along with a visitor centre. *‘Locals were encouraged to invest and many did; although no one lost their shirt they saw no return on their investment.’*

Arran Brewing then set about refurbishing the bedrooms *in stages*, but works were halted by a fire in 2016. Arran Brewery Managing Director Gerald Michaluk said: *“A bathroom fan went on fire and fell into the bathtub, causing it to burn. Because the decorators had been painting, the smoke alarm was covered with masking tape. “Eventually the smoke fed through and set off an alarm but the night manager switched it off, and in doing so might have saved his life. The bathroom was internal and the fire was only being fed through the fan duct. Had he opened the door the sudden rush of oxygen would have produced a back draft that might have killed him. The toilet had an old fashioned high level cistern and eventually it burned through, which sprayed water everywhere and put the fire out.”*

Insurers claimed the hotel was under-insured and only paid out 20% of the company's claim. “Making up the shortfall used up the funds we had earmarked for renovation and led to the works being halted,” Mr Michaluk said. *“We are looking to move our focus into distribution and away from the hotel industry so we have decided to put the hotel on the market. It's a beautiful building and it is the right thing to do by the hotel to have new owners come in and carry out the restoration work.”* The hotel was being marketed through Christie & Co. The business agent Tony Spence in **2021** said: *it has traded to limited capacity during the past eight years, opening for cafe and public bar service only, as the current owners are presently focusing on other business interests.”*

In August 2021: A deal was reported stating that the Crieff Hydro had signed an “associate hotel agreement” with the new owners of the property stating that efforts are under way to breathe new life into the vacant hotel and provide a timely boost to the area's local economy: Stating that they would soon have a watersports centre and café up and running. Sadly, *whilst the villagers were rejoicing*, this never materialized.

In February 2025: It's once again on the market:



This time advertised: as a unique opportunity to acquire a large former hotel with 38 letting rooms: The agents advise ***“Our client has owned the property since 2021 and is now selling to focus on their main business interests. Since acquiring the property, our client has achieved planning to convert the existing building to 22 serviced apartments.”*** Stating the property is

ideally situated and offers fantastic views across Loch Earn. The building previously traded as a hotel with bar, restaurant and brewery and although will now require significant investment, the potential to reinstate to its former use would be extremely rewarding for the right developer/operator. They again advise: Our client has recently obtained planning permission for change of use and refurbishment of existing hotel (Class 7) to form 22 serviced apartments (sui generis) for holiday use. Along with: refurbishment of existing ancillary building as manager's accommodation.



Now whilst the roof has mostly been replaced and the interior of the building stripped back to the brickwork, interference from **‘desktop surveys’** by SEPA and Transport Scotland along with indifference from the Planning Department at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park *‘who only last year, assured us they were prioritising this application’*,

have no doubt influenced the owner's decision to walk away after four years of frustration and delays.



Sadly over the years I have seen the old D.A. slip slowly into a deeper and deeper big black hole with little or no prospect of resurrection.

Unless a new buyer comes forward quickly this once majestic building will end up falling down.

Now is the time for action, not tomorrow!
Before he moves on, let's insist that the present day owner at least cleans up the grounds.

J. B.

