

America's Oldest Society Journal

Palm Beach Life

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1967

75 CENTS



'on the scene wherever society goes'



Mrs. Agnes MacRae Morton and son Julian in doorway of Croft House. Pet goat trims green-grassed roof. Note native stone walls, chimney pots, leaded windows.

Invershiel . . . A New Old World

By BETTY R. RAVESON

There is nothing really new under the sun . . . not even the A-frame of modern hillside architecture. It was created out of necessity in the early 1100's when the Scandinavians invaded the Hebrides .

Beaching their boats, the invaders turned them keelside up and dug out living quarters below.

Necessity may be the mother of invention, but the MacRae-Morton family of Wilmington, North Carolina have been creating livable history in that state for four generations.

Today, high up in the Blue Ridge Mountains, in the township of Linville (population 500), history is repeating itself with a truly American prestige-flair.

Turn left on Route 184 at the Linville Gap sign and the heart skips a

beat. There, before the eye, lies a meadow and mountainsides . . . some 4,500 acres . . . so reminiscent of the Scottish Highlands that it appears as in a dream.

However, it is for real, a community named Invershiel, a modern day transplanting of a 16th Century town . . . Invershiel is Scotland . . . complete to chimney pots, roofs of sod, slate, thatch or buff pan tile.

Lord of this manor is Julian Morton, a six foot five inch football physiqued, sandy-thatched young man whose sharp eyes belie a romantic yet practical business mind.

Ever since childhood Julian had a dream . . . to build a home away from home (in this case Wilmington, N.C.) with Old World charm but with 20th Century conveniences.

His first such hideaway was a Hansel and Gretel type cottage on the family's famed Grandfather Mountain at Linville which overlooks the mountain peaks and valleys far below.

This was way back when he was eighteen. "Anvil Rock" still stands today and is used as a guest cottage for friends. It is the backdrop for the annual council meeting of the Scottish Clans which follows the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games held in early July.

Thus, after several trips with his mother, Mrs. Julian W. (Agnes MacRae) Morton, to their magnificent ancestral home, MacRae Castle on Eilean Donan near Invershiel, Scotland, Julian Morton became convinced he could transplant the 16th Century charm and unbelievable livability of those Scottish



Guests at Julian Morton's town house enjoy cocktail party before the step-up stone fireplace with its great polished copper fireguard. From left, are, Mrs. Hugh Morton, Mrs. William Uhlhorn and daughter, Linda Finney; Mrs. Samuel Greene, architect Charles Hastings, the N. J. MacDonalds, Mrs. Morton and Julian.

homes to the Linville domain . . . the mountains, meadows, flora and fauna of this American Highland area being exceedingly similar.

After ten years of planning and accompanying architects to Scotland's Highlands to study the ancient villages, work began last Autumn in the shadow of one of the Mortons' own mountain peaks, "Dunvegan," which reaches 5,050 feet into the blue yonder.

Now, one drives through the stone gates of Invershiel, U.S.A. to enter a new Old World. First view of the village is quite unbelievable. Julian Morton's town house atop a hill is of native stone, a replica of one of the main towers of Claypots Castle near Aberdeen. Its leaded glass windows are faithful copies of Sterling Castle near Glasgow.

Up the road snuggles Mrs. Agnes MacRae Morton's "Croft House," also of native stone with emerald-green sod roof and curved, stone-walled terrace.

In the Old Country rock houses were prevalent because wood was at a premium and had to be imported from Scandinavia. Leave it to Julian Morton. There was plenty of native stone here as well as a legion of skilled stone masons with imagination; excellent carpenters, all born and raised in this area.

"It's a long-range project, Invershiel," says Mr. Morton. "At present there are 62 home sites averaging a little more than two acres apiece and three and a half miles of road up and down the rhododendron-laden mountainsides."

Sherman Pardue and Associates of Charlotte, N.C., justly famed for their

replicas of French country homes, are having a ball at Invershiel. An Associate, young Charles A. Hastings "makes space work, which the Scottish sure did 400 years ago," grins the Mayor of the mountain, Mr. Morton.

About to take shape here is an actual reproduction of a 16th Century village. Built on a mountain slope, it is the Invershiel Arms with some 150 beds and 25 shops below.

"The Scottish village will have a proper Scottish Inn as well as cobblestone streets where pedestrians can walk at peace," muses Julian Morton.

South of the entrance to Invershiel a steeplechase course is being laid out. Riding stables, grandstands, hunt course and a large show ring will round out this complex.



Mountainside view of Julian Morton's town house at Invershiel is a reproduction of one of the main towers of Claypots Castle in Scotland. Stairs at left lead to guest quarters. The dwellings seen at left, below, are grouped around a large compound.



Seen from the driveway of Agnes Morton estate, this panoramic view shows Grandfather Mountain, which is owned by Hugh Morton.



Julian Morton's Invershiel residence in North Carolina is a faithful replica of Scottish native stone dwellings built in the 16th Century.

Plans call for a year-round community; heretofore Linville proper has been strictly a summer spa. Now, at Invershiel there will be a curling rink, a ski run for residents, tennis and paddle tennis courts and miles of bridle paths; many here own their own hunters and jumpers.

Invershiel is smack in the middle of the ski resort area of North Carolina. It is three miles down the road from Seven Devils which was formerly part of the Morton domain; five miles from Hound Ears Lodge and Club; nine miles east of Blowing Rock and four miles from the new Beech Mountain complex at Banner Elk.

So President Julian Morton and Board Chairman Mrs. Agnes MacRae Morton have planned Cabin Gap, a col-

All Photos by Hugh Morton

*“ . . . Here is a modern-day
transplanting of a
Sixteenth Century town . . . ”*

ony of ten A-frame chalets for snowbirds.

Already in residence at Cabin Gap are ski-great Herbert H. (Sandy) Frazier formerly of Atlanta, with his pert blonde wife Bonnie and their Golden Retriever pup "Honey." They fell in love with Invershiel; now Sandy is general manager of the vast domain.

Greensboro, North Carolina's young Dick Schoonman, Medical Plastic Corporation president, is building a castle atop a knoll above Invershiel Arms.

Frank Bynum of Birmingham, Alabama has his own hillside acreage which adjoins Mrs. Morton's permanent home-away-from-home now on the planning board.

"Home is a castle" rings true for Mrs. Morton. Her new home will be a three-level, castle-like design, with the innovation of a flagstone-floored four-car garage.

This room can be converted into a party room in case of inclement weather . . . huge glass doors lead onto a terrace that overlooks a valley and Mt. Mitchell, some 50 miles away as the crow flies.

Mrs. Morton's present Croft House is a delight to the eye. A "croft" being a farm, this is surely a storybook farmhouse. Native stone exterior walls and bright green sod roof, a flagstone front terrace with views of fertile valleys and in the distance her son's internationally known mile-high Grandfather mountain.

Once inside Croft House the Morton coat of arms (created by son Julian in a combination of steel, lead and pewter) beams a welcome to the cathedral-ceilinged living room with its huge hand-hewn beams, stone fireplace and mantel. Leaded glass windows provide a warm light for family heirloom furniture, paintings and memorabilia.

Piece de resistance here is a hand-carved stair rail with a large thistle atop the newel post. It is a labor of love turned by Julian who seems to be a man of many artistic capabilities.

A narrow staircase leads upward to the Croft's Loft, a dream come true guest room that looks upon the serene living room below.

Meanwhile, Julian Morton's Tower House has so many facets, old and new, one can only describe it as being livably unique. Even to "Buckwheat," a five year-old Golden Retriever whose glossy coat matches the interior Circassian walnut trim of his master's Rolls Royce convertible which is used much like a station wagon. The car climbs mountainsides as easily as "Bill," the pedigreed goat, climbs Mrs. Morton's sod roof for afternoon *hors d'oeuvre* of tender green grass shoots.



Wormy chestnut paneling in a corner of the Julian Morton living room opens by spring latches to reveal the "bachelor's bar." The leaded glass windows are a faithful reproduction of those in Sterling Castle.



A partial view of the house-wide living room at Croft House with Mrs. Morton, her son Julian, granddaughter Catherine Walker Morton, and retriever, "Buckwheat." The fireplace is built of native stone.

All closet space in the Julian Morton abode is hidden as was customary 400 years ago. Press the right place in the beautiful wormy chestnut paneling and a panel either slides open or folds out.

Take for example the bachelor's bar near the entrance way. Seemingly, it is a paneled wall whereon are hung beautiful etchings and age-old prints. Presto, a panel opens to reveal a complete miniature bar-room, similar to a Jacobean era Pub, even to heather growing in a quash (a Scottish drinking vessel).

Although this is essentially a bache-

lor's haven, nothing to add to comfort and happy, gracious living has been denied. Opposite the small bar in the living room area is a corner enclosed by retractable wooden, hand-turned columns. Sliding into the wall and completely out of sight, the area revealed is a Cordon Bleu chef's dream kitchen.

No refrigerator is apparent. It is paneled in wormy chestnut, the tall doors opening outward to reveal ice-making equipment with freezer and storage space large enough to feed an army. And as this out-going young man loves

people, friends come from miles around to sample his spur-of-the-moment snacks such as creamed curried crab soup. "I'm not a very good cook, but a very good critic," says Julian.

The master bathroom leaves nothing to be desired. Of living-room size and high ceilinged, it too is paneled in wormy chestnut, incorporates a shower, tub and steam bath along one wall. Huge mirrors on the opposite wall slide back to reveal an immense walk-in closet with built-in shelves, clothes racks, shoe racks at above-the-waist level, "So I don't have to bend down," he grins.

This home may be called "small and compact," but it creates the illusion of limitless space. The guest apartment is reached atop by a wide outside stone staircase and is complete to kitchenette, again with refrigerator concealed in wood paneling.

The windows of the livingroom-bedroom area came from Grandfather Hugh MacRae's fabulous 42-room Wilmington, North Carolina mansion designed by Henry Bacon. Throughout this exquisite little town-house-in-the-country are many fine pieces of the Jacobean and Carolean (Charles II) era which came from the great house, now demolished to make way for a new world of mass movement.

Entrance hall floors in both the Morton homes and guest bathroom sink tops are deep blue-gray slate turned upside down so as to show the beautiful texture.

Scottish (of the MacKay Clan), the Morton family surely is, and a bit of the ancient fay has rubbed off on this towering hunk of man . . . comes out when he tells you the name of his dwelling place is "Thistle Dubh", pronounced This-Will-Do and actually meaning Black Thistle.

The background of the Morton family requires volumes to explain, but suffice to say Julian Morton is a great-great grandson of Alexander MacRae who was behind the Wilmington and Weldon Railway, once the longest railroad in the world. He is the great-grandson of Donald MacRae whose interests included textile mills, real estate development, timber.

Grandfather Hugh MacRae organized the Tidewater Power Co., had more financial interests than ten average human beings and of him it has been said; "Hugh MacRae, Francis Smithers and the Wooden Indian were the only honest men on Wall Street" . . . this circa 1910.

It was Hugh MacRae who loved the Highlands climate of this area, came every summer to camp in the open and



A section of the rugged and handsome stairway to the Croft loft guest quarters of Mrs. Agnes MacRae Morton's home. Newel post and stair-rail were designed and hand-carved in thistle motif by son Julian.

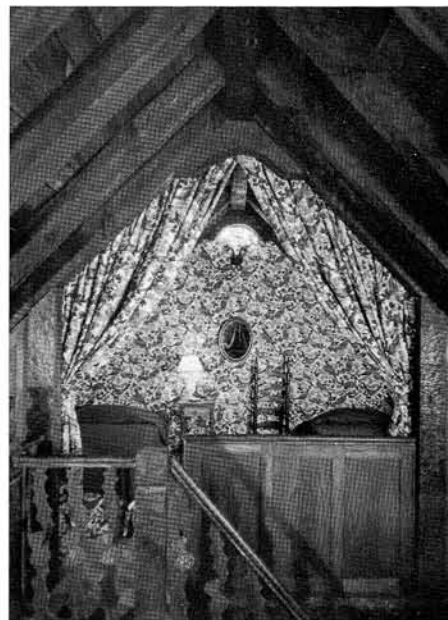
wound up purchasing 16,000 acres of forest land in the late '90's.

It was this quite unbelievable character who built one of the few "planned" towns in the state . . . "a cottage colony for the carriage trade", Linville. The Linville Improvement Company owned the town lock, stock and barrel until 1945 and as of the past few years the family happily reports they now "Only own one third" of this haven of the upper echelon folk.

It was left to father Julian W. Morton, Sr. (who died in 1945) to manage all the Linville and Wilmington properties and this he did with much success.

Today, Julian Morton has joined the rest of the family in boosting the year-round population of Linville township. Brother Hugh Morton owns and has developed Grandfather Mountain into one of the nation's top scenic attractions. He is known nation wide for the many prize photos of his beloved mountain area

Brother Tommy Morton of Wilmington, owns Grandmother Mountain nearby and spends much time at Invershiel these days. Sister Agnes Morton Cocke is now up to her pretty neck building a \$2-million 18-hole championship golf course and club, "Glen Dornie" near Invershiel. Agnes for many years has been a well-known figure in Carolina



View of delightful Croft loft guest room showing heavy oaken beams, fine hand-carved stair rail.

golfing circles having won both state championships time and again.

All in all, Invershiel, its environs and its scenery are rare sights . . . not only because of the easy to breathe dry, clear air, but for the heart-warming atmosphere of Old World charm and its wonderful collection of congenial folk.



Another Way of Life....

Not just another
YEAR-ROUND RESORT.

You don't want to
MAKE this decision until
you've seen Invershield.

Julian Morton,
PRES.



Invershield, Incorporated - Box Eight, Linville, North Carolina