

The Royal Northern  
& Clyde Yacht Club



# A Short History of Ardenvhor, Clubhouse of the Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club

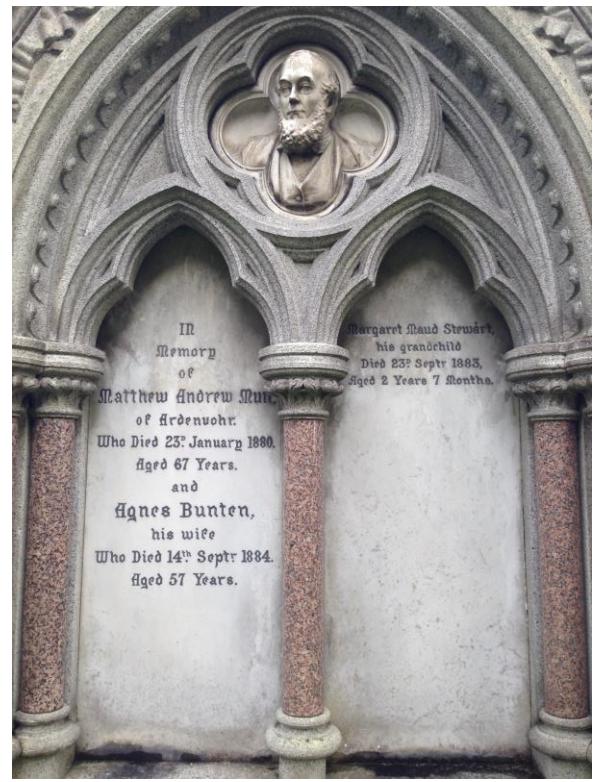
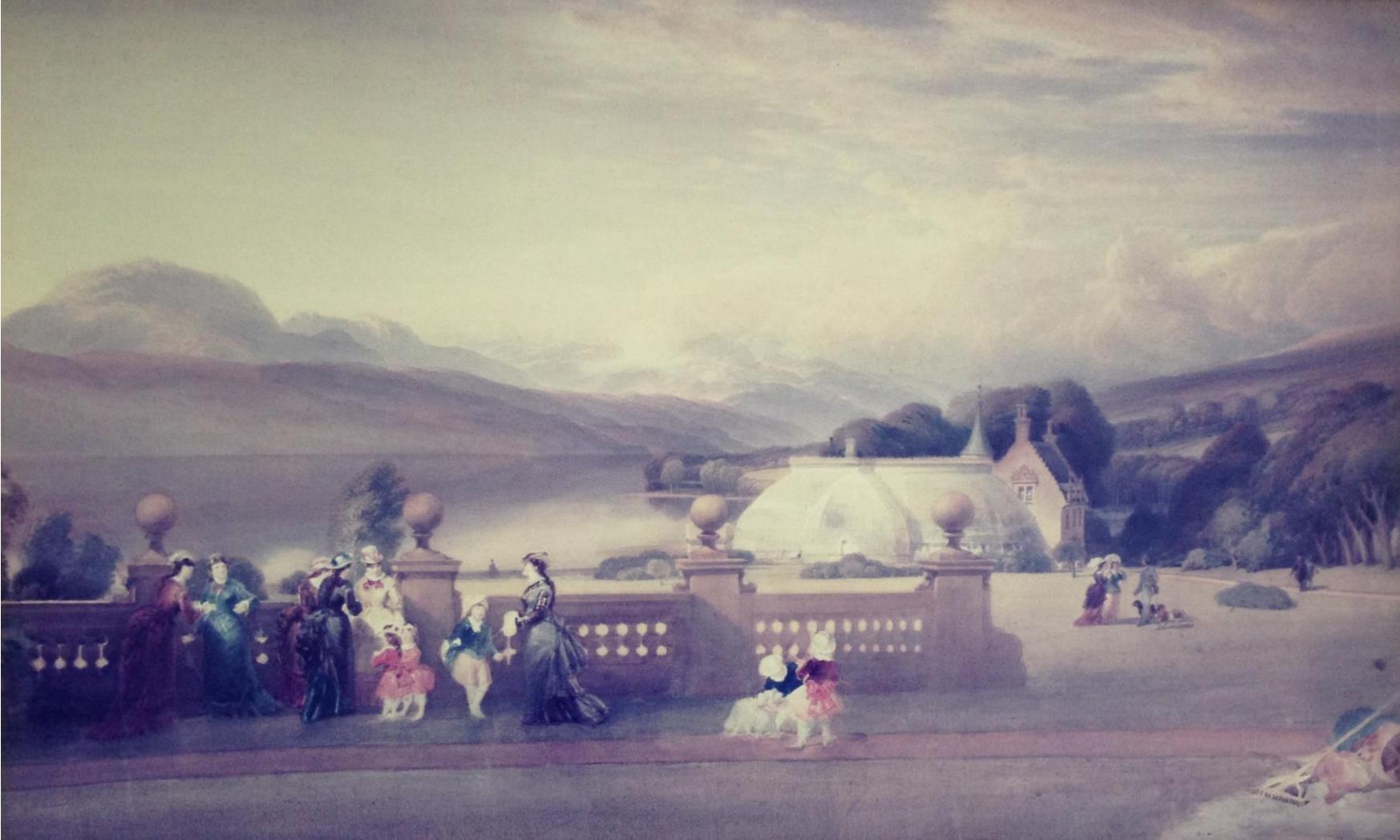


Ardenvohr is a large and well-detailed example of a grand mid-19th century baronial villa built for Daniel Walkinshaw of the merchant family in 1857. The architect was Thomas Gildard who formed a partnership with Robert Hutchison Murdoch Macfarlane between 1853 and 1864. Ardenvohr was a major residential commission during their partnership. The 6-acre estate also included a gatehouse and stable block.



These 2 prints of photographs from the Club's archives are undated but must have been taken soon after the house was built. Some details are not yet added and the grounds sparsely planted. The walled garden can be seen in front of the stable block

Sometime prior to 1867 the house was bought by Matthew Andrew Muir, proprietor of the Anderston Foundry. The house was listed as 'Ardenvhor' in Battrum's Guide and Directory to Helensburgh and the Neighbourhood. Five years later the name had changed to 'Ardenvohr' and listed as comprising of 6 acres at a gross annual value of £240. By 1880 the house had passed to Muir's widow, Agnes. According to the 1881 census she lived in the house with her daughter Clara and her son Matthew Andrew. Mr and Mrs Muir were buried in Rhu churchyard.



**'Mr Muir's House On the Gareloch'**  
Watercolour by William Leighton Leitch  
1804 – 1883  
A copy hangs in the clubhouse by the window from which this view was probably taken. The balustrade is still there. Trees now obscure much of the rest of the view of the grounds. The glasshouse shown was added after the house was built and gone by the 1930s.

By 1887 the house was in the ownership of David Henderson then by 1899 John and the Misses Hoggan. The house remained in the ownership of the Hoggan Family until 1930 when it was purchased by Mr G R Balance. The photographs shown on this and the next slide were taken around 1913.

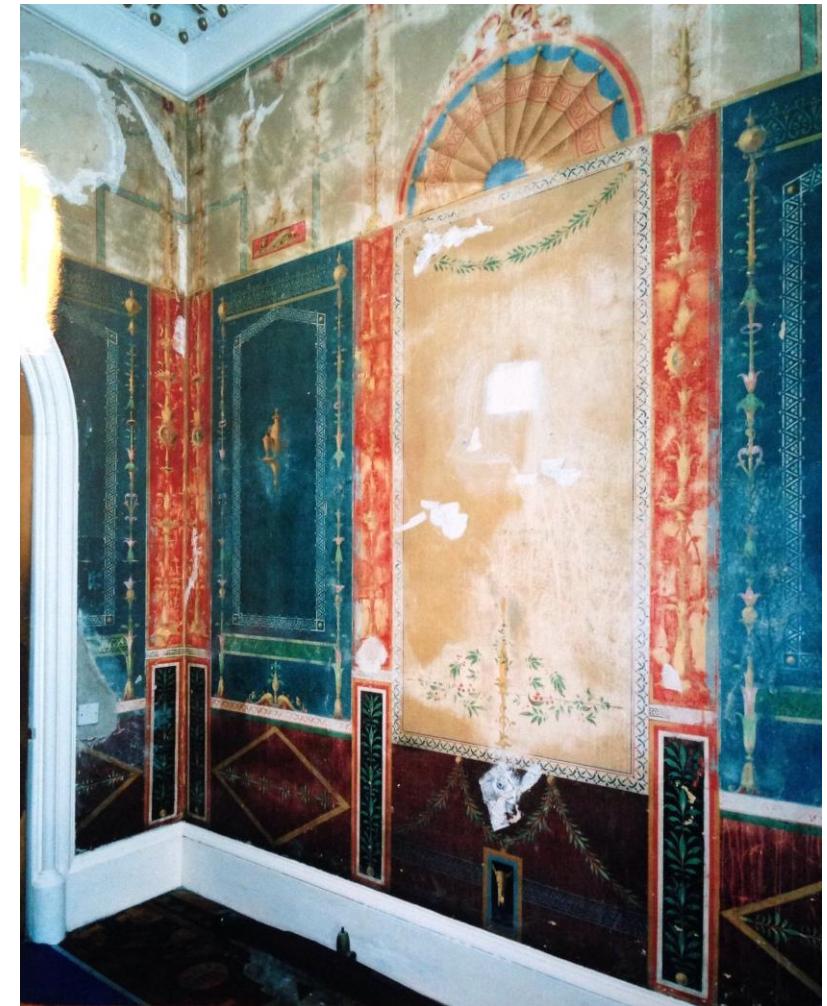


The drawing room. The large mirror on the back wall and fire surrounds are still in the room today.



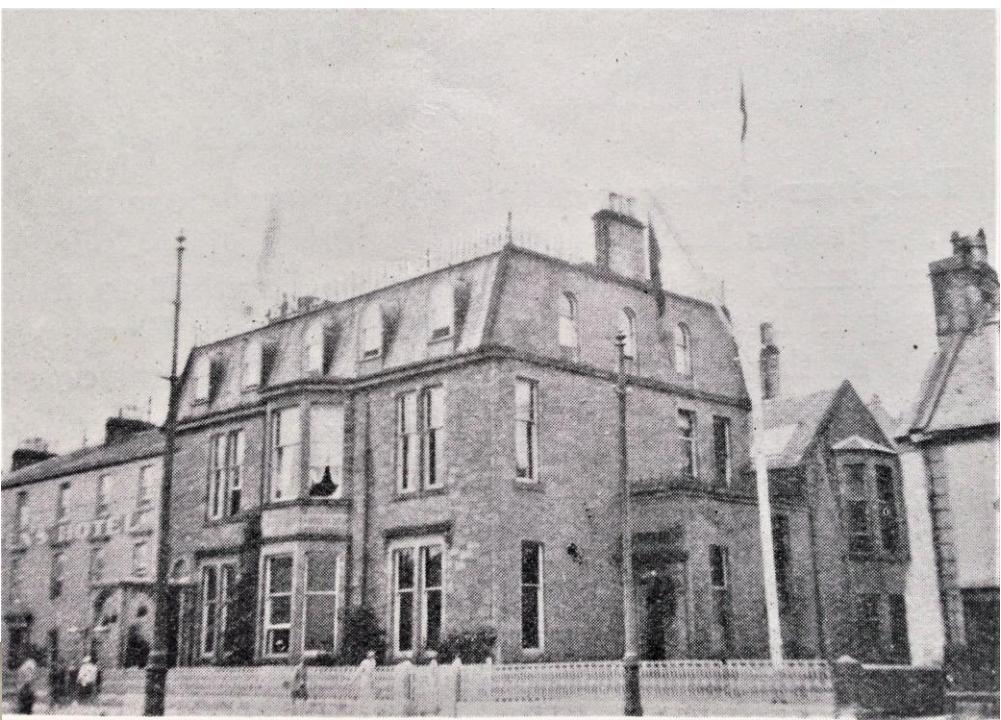
A large conservatory had been added at some point. The spire on the tower disappeared sometime before the 1960s

This photograph of the inner porch in 1913 shows the original Roman style wall painting. It was later covered by wall paper. The original decoration was revealed during redecoration in the 1990s and remains hidden beneath William Morris style wallpaper.



1990s

The original clubhouse of the Royal Northern Yacht Club was a leased section of the Queens Hotel in Rothesay. The majority of the membership were based in Glasgow often with a villa on the Clyde coast. Rothesay had been chosen because it was a good anchorage and close to the open area of the Firth where the large yachts of the time raced. After WWI the reduction in steamer services made it less convenient and the club spent several years considering alternatives.



Photograph of a race during the club regatta of 1905. At that time the Clyde was arguably the leading yacht racing area of the UK.

# The Royal Northern Yacht Club buys Ardenvoehr in 1936

## STATEMENT BY COMMODORE

In a circular issued to members by Mr Claud A. Allan, commodore of the club, it is stated that in making this decision the committee have had in mind the facts that the membership of the Club has been declining for many years, and that the clubhouse at Rothesay appears to be too far away to be of value to most of the members, except on those week-ends when regattas take place there.

They have also noticed the outstanding success of at least two English clubs and one Irish club which have headquarters near large towns, accessible therefrom by train, car, or bus, with facilities for the sailing of small boats in afternoon and evening racing, and comfortable clubhouses with some bedroom accommodation. They feel that there is a definite opening for a club with such facilities in the neighbourhood of Glasgow.

With these considerations in mind the committee secured an option on the house known as Ardenvoehr, at Rhu, and they recommended that it should be purchased by the club.

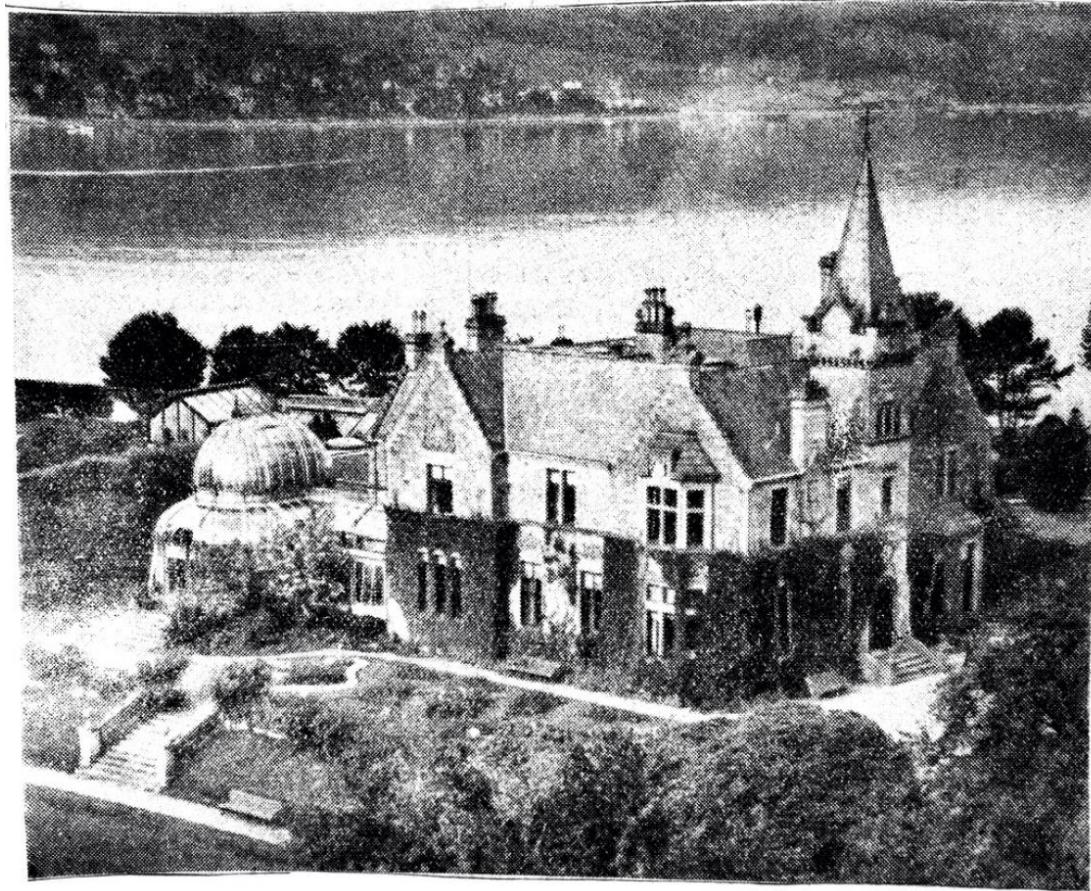
## A SUITABLE SITUATION

Ardenvoehr is situated on Rhu Point, to the westward of the main road. It stands in attractive grounds, with frontages both to the Gareloch and to Rhu Bay, and with good views in both directions. Rhu Bay provides good anchorage for yachts of all sizes, while the Gareloch provides excellent water for the sailing of small boats. Buses in connection with the Glasgow trains at Helensburgh arrive at and start from a point about 100 yards from the gate.

The house is stated to be suitable for conversion to a club house, with all the necessary public-rooms and bedrooms, and it is proposed to lay down two hard lawn tennis courts.

An estimate of the approximate cost of conversion of the house and grounds which has been prepared shows that, over the purchase price of £1000, a sum between £4000 and £5000 will require to be spent.

It is also estimated that the probable cost of running the house will be between £600 and £800, which compares with the cost of £430 for the Rothesay clubhouse in 1935. In recommending a change to more expensive quarters, however, the committee believe that in the new quarters the club will be able to attract more than enough new members to meet the increased cost.



Excerpts from The Glasgow Herald, October 1936

In 1936 the Royal Northern Yacht Club was an exclusive club with about 210 members including aristocracy, captains of industry and prominent Glasgow area citizens.

The internal existing layout of Ardenvoehr generally fitted the needs of the club.

Only a few small modifications were made to the support areas on the ground floor leaving the main room layouts and features as they were.

A set of plans detailing the 1936 changes are in the club archives.

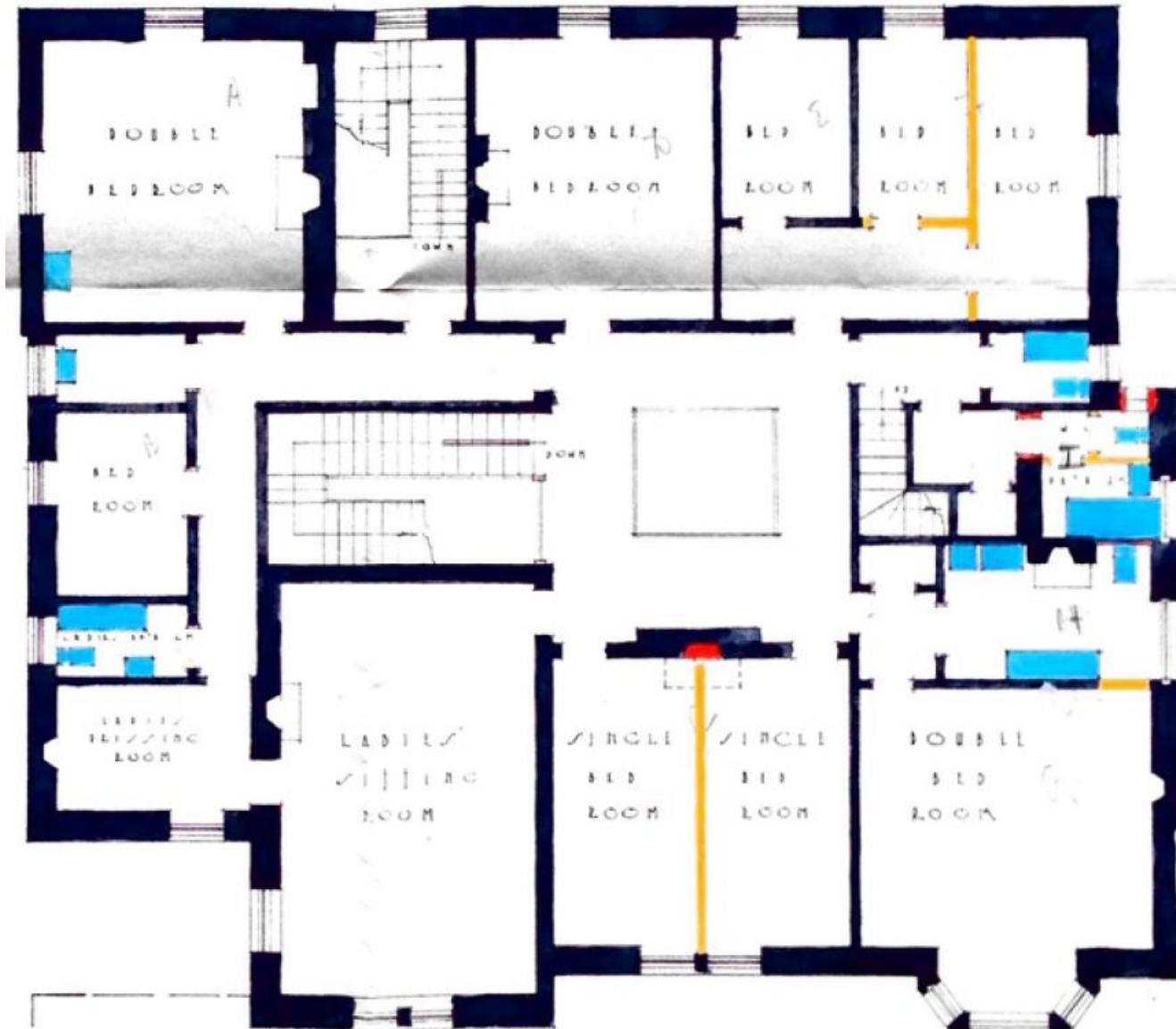
The drawing room shown on an earlier slide became the main 'club room' (think 'Gentleman's Club' atmosphere). No photographs currently exist from this period.



The first floor and attic were mainly bedrooms for the use of members. There was also a Ladies Sitting Room. The photograph below shows an example bedroom from the 1960s. The rooms are now used as offices, meeting rooms and for storage.

Staff accommodation was in outbuildings on the estate.

A squash court was built behind the house.

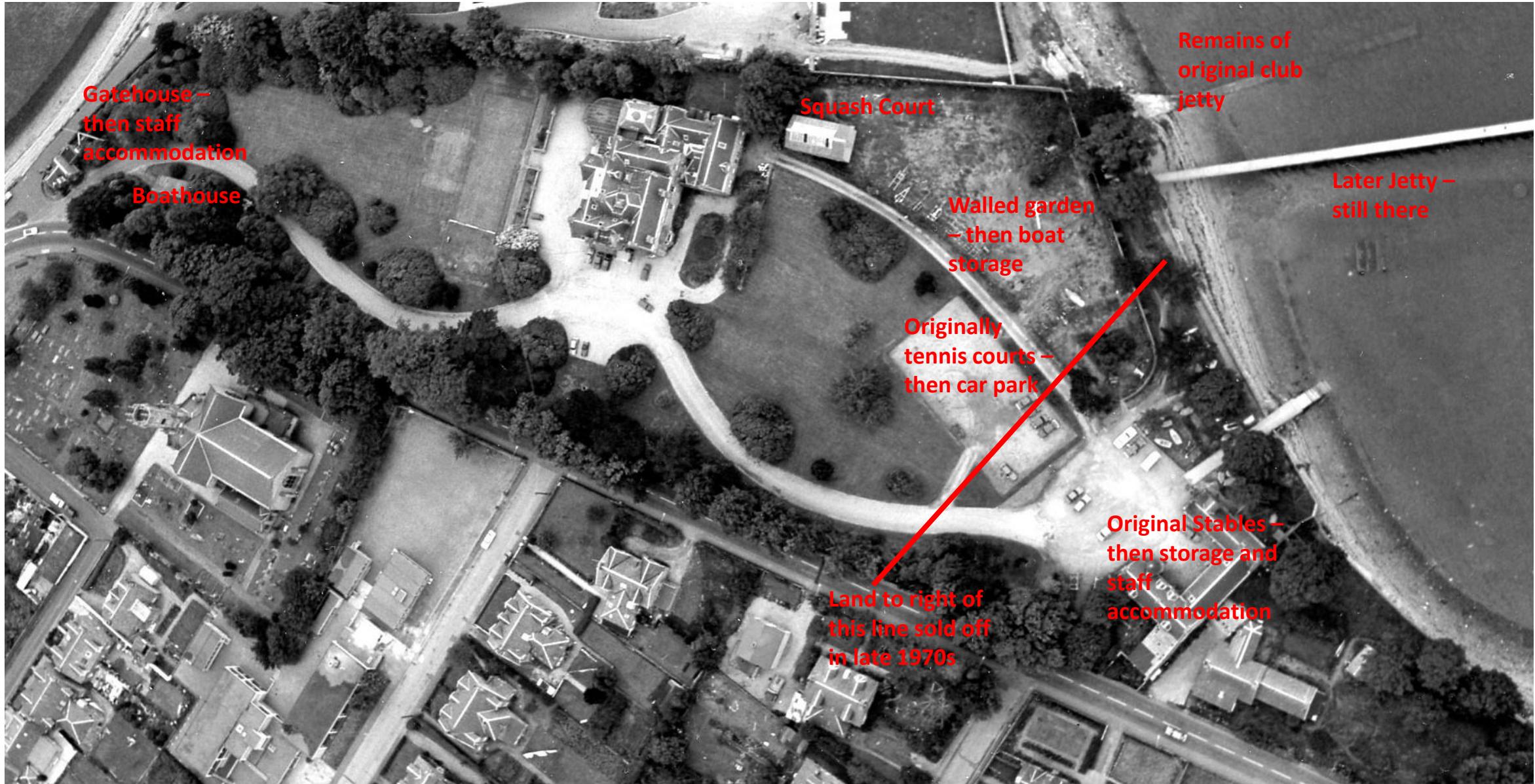


Between 1939 and 1945 the house was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force as the officers' mess of the Marine Aircraft Experimental Establishment (MAEE). This had no obvious long-term impact of the building but the post-war world brought major changes to Clyde yachting. By 1950 the membership had increased to 500. Racing yachts became smaller and more numerous.



By 1960 the conservatory was beyond repair so it was replaced by a room with a similar footprint. This became the club's first permanent bar. The photograph on the left shows the bar in the 1960s. It is decorated with burgees from other yacht clubs and crests of submarines. Officers from the Faslane base were regular visitors to the clubhouse

# Aerial View of Ardenvoehr Estate in Late 1960s



As part of the club's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1974  
the club was visited by the Queen and Prince Phillip.

Unveiling commemorative plaque in the Library



Signing the visitor's book in the entrance hall



On the way to the jetty. In the background is a tower which forms part of the stable block.



Royal Yacht Britannia on the Gareloch with sail past of club yachts

In 1978 the Royal Clyde Yacht Club merged with the Royal Northern to form the Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club. The membership peaked at around 1400. The bar was not adequate so was replaced by the current larger structure in 1979.



Current lockdown view of bar showing part of the club's historically important collection of yacht models



Also in 1979 - the wall between the 'club room' and library was removed to provide what became a large function room. Thankfully the ceiling remained intact.



The club room in the early 1970s. The door to the library can be seen in the background.



The current layout in lockdown mode. As well as being used for club events this space became available for hire as a function venue.

In the late 1970s two plots of land forming the northern half of the estate were sold (see line shown on aerial view on earlier slide). A modern bungalow was built in what was the pleasure ground of the estate and is now hidden behind a line of trees. The stable block and tower were not developed by the new owners. They are now in a ruinous state and on the buildings at risk register.



Stable block tower in 1990 when it still had a roof

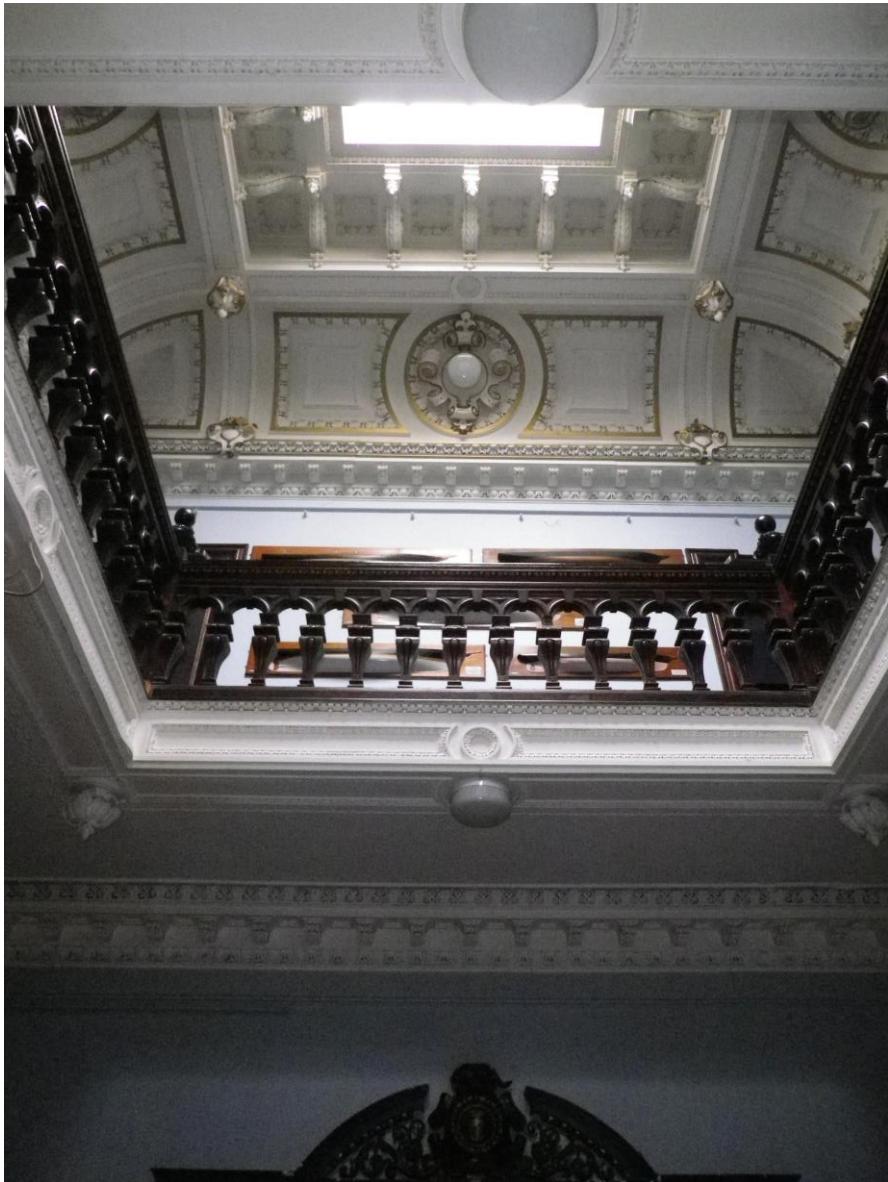


Stable block in 2009

The club named the clubhouse rooms after famous yachts associated with the club. The entrance hall, 'Inismara', remains one of the most impressively original areas.



Looking up from 'Inismara' to the first floor landing with spectacular cornice, ceiling decoration and ceiling light.



# Thanks for looking!

I hope you found this interesting

If you have additional information or images or have any questions  
please contact me:

Jon Reid

Hon Archivist, RNCYC

[archive@rncyc.com](mailto:archive@rncyc.com)