



Grete Hobbs – Previous Owner

When Joseph William Hobbs died in 1963, Inverlochy Castle was passed on to his son Joseph, Jnr who kept it going as a private home for six years, but it was barely used. It was a baronial pile that required much maintenance and incurred great costs, so it was decided to earn its keep by converting it into a Country House Hotel in 1969. This required an enormous investment which Ben Nevis Distillery, the family's current business of the day had to endure. Joe, Jnr was not a Hotelier, but a Whisky Distiller and it was soon apparent that his wife GRETE, had to take on the role of running the newly founded Country House Hotel.

GRETE HOBBS was born in Copenhagen, Denmark and spoke little English when she arrived in Britain in the early 50's. After raising a family of two children, the task of taking on Inverlochy as a hotel was huge but she was up to the challenge and it became her third "baby", so to speak.

Grete entered the profession as a complete amateur but her mantra was "the guest is always right" and "the guest is King", catapulted her to the top of the tree. This was aided and abetted by Miss Mary Shaw, MBE whose culinary prowess was exemplary, and together, they formed a formidable duo. They always had a glass of white wine together at 10 o'clock to discuss next day's menu. One couldn't do without the other and Mary Shaw became a legend in her own right. Grete received many famous guests throughout her tenure, with the first being Charlie Chaplin but it was, ironically, the then hotel manager, Donald Currie in 1970, who was also employed at the Ben Nevis Distillery, who gave her the biggest break as he recognised a Rolls Royce turn up at the Castle Gates with an Advanced Driving Certificate label stuck on the windscreen. He concluded the car belonged to Egon Ronay, himself an advanced driver, who had come to inspect the hotel and so the cat was let out of the bag. As a result, Inverlochy maintained the highest recognition by Egon Ronay Guides for several years earning Grete "Hotel of the Year" as well as "Hotelier of the Year", the first woman to receive such an honour.

Grete always maintained that to be a good employer, you had to be firm but fair and always kind. In the early days when she started out, she noticed Donald, a man arriving for a job Interview from her office window and observed how he spent 5 minutes petting the family pet, Pancho, an adorable yellow Labrador. He must be a kind man, she thought, and hired him on the spot.

Grete retired in December 1996 upon the sale of Inverlochy to a Malaysian Entrepreneur. She felt that she could go no higher than what she had achieved, as she always strived to maintain the highest standard. Her Scandinavian beauty and continental flair have been appreciated by many of the guests that came to know her. Her love for Inverlochy was never ending, and thanks to Dr Chai and the Inverlochy Castle Management Team, she was able to celebrate her 90th birthday in the Private Dining Room, also known as the Business Room, her former office.

Grete died on April 4th 2020, at the age of 92 and is buried in the family cemetery in the grounds of Inverlochy.