

III.

THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HUNTLY CASTLE.

BY W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON, M.A., F.S.A.ScOT.

Huntly, or Strathbogie Castle, situated in the angle formed by the confluence of the Bogie with the Deveron, a short distance northward from the town of Huntly, ranks among the noblest old baronial ruins in Scotland. In former times it was celebrated far and wide as "a full fayre house" — "the best furnished of any house I haue seen in the country" — to use the words of an English ambassador in 1562.¹ Repeatedly injured during the civil broils of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, the castle, phoenix-like, rose each time from its ruins in greater splendour than before. Under the first Marquess of Huntly, in the reigns of James VI. and Charles I., it reached the summit of its political consequence and architectural glory as the residence of the "Cock o' the North," the chief of the great Gordon family. But in the downfall of the Gordons during the Civil War the fortunes of the castle were involved. During the vicissitudes of the struggle it suffered plunder and defacement; and, after the execution of the second Marquess in 1649, it ceased to be regularly occupied as the messuage of the family, and thereafter its decay was rapid.

As might be expected in a building with so long and stormy a record, the existing ruins bear the mark of several periods. Hence the architectural history of the castle is somewhat complex. Though sufficiently patent to instructed observation, it has been misunderstood by the majority of writers. Most of these — misled by the frequent references to total demolishings, "razing," and "cassing down," indulged in by the old chroniclers — have assumed that on each occasion little was left of the former structure, and that afterwards the castle was rebuilt practically from its foundations.

The chief feature in Huntly Castle is the great oblong keep (fig. 1), about 76 feet in length and 36 in breadth; having a large round tower, 38 feet in diameter, attached to its south-west corner, and, diagonally opposite to this, another tower, also round but far smaller and slighter. As it now stands, the keep thus falls into the Z-class, but the smaller round tower is a late addition, has extremely thin walls, lacks shotholes, and is altogether inadequate to perform the flanking defence which is the *raison d'être* of the three-stepped plan. The keep cannot, therefore, be deemed a true example of this class; and to place it in this category is wholly to ignore the main structural features of the building, which

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission, 1st Report*, p. 114.

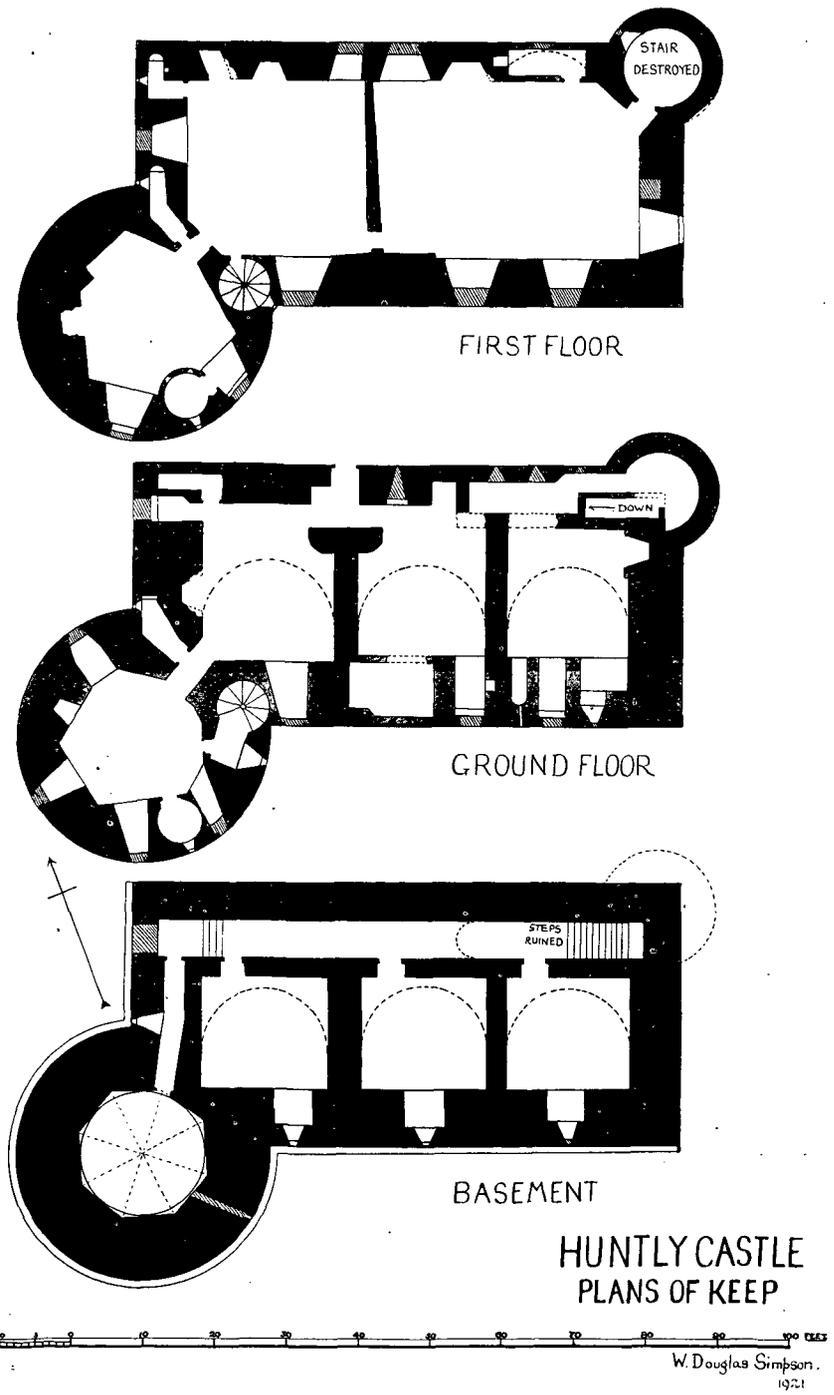


Fig. 1. Huntly Castle: Plans of Basement, Ground Floor, and First Floor of Keep.

betoken an antiquity higher than the later sixteenth century, when the Z-plan of castle flourished.

The keep is four storeys high, and at the basement its walls are more than 8 feet thick. The basement is a *souterrain*, and is barrel-vaulted throughout. In the main building it contains three large, dark cellars, with a corridor along their north face, entering by descending steps at the east end. From the opposite end of this corridor a narrow mural passage in the thickness of the west wall gives access to a terrible dungeon in the great round tower. At both ends the mural passage has



Fig. 2. Huntly Castle: End of Long Corridor in basement.

[Photo W. Norrie.]

been defended by a door or "yett." The dungeon, 19 feet in diameter and 15 feet 7 inches in height to the apex of its octagonal vault, has been aired rather than lit by a loophole rising through the vault on the east side, but now built up inside. The door from the mural passage opens at the springing of the vault, 7 feet above the floor. Altogether this is one of the worst examples of a feudal prison or "pit" in Scotland. The cellars in the main building are entered through doorways whose upper ends terminate in three sides of a hexagon (fig. 2), wrought with a plain chamfer, which is continued down the jambs. The long corridor was lit by a window at the west end, which has been built up, but still retains part of its ancient iron "grille." As usual, the mode of intersection of the bars is reversed in opposite quarters. This basement is plainly much older than the upper floors of the keep.

The ground floor proper is at present entered by a service door in the

north wall. The main entrance, now built up, is in the small north-eastern tower, 15 feet 7 inches in diameter, which contained the grand stair to the upper floors. This tower with its door and stair are late insertions, but the arrangement of the plan on this floor, and the steps down to the underground vaults, indicate that the main entrance has always been in this quarter. Like the basement, this ground floor is vaulted. In the main building is a kitchen, fitted up in the usual manner, with a cellar on either side; and the large round tower contains a good bedroom. Each of the two cellars has a fireplace, and the west one a garderobe. These features prove that the cellars have been remodelled as living rooms, doubtless when additional storage was provided by the extension of offices round the courtyard. From the bedroom in the south-west tower two newel stairs lead to the upper floors. Though still vaulted and of massive structure, these rooms on the ground floor contrast strongly with the ancient basement, and their domestic arrangements bespeak the advanced requirements of the sixteenth century.

It has been already stated that the main stair of the keep, in its latest form, was in the small round tower at the north-east angle. This stair is now destroyed, and the upper floors of the keep are reached at present only by the two mural stairs in the south-west tower. One of these stairs is carried to the summit of the tower, while the other reaches the first floor only. On this floor the great hall, with a drawing-room adjoining, occupies the main house, and there is a bedroom in the south-west tower. Originally the whole area in the main house was one large apartment; the thin partition is an obvious insertion, being set obliquely, while a large window in the north wall has been divided, one portion lighting each room; and the partition engages with the inserted masonry. On both sides of this partition, at the level of the hall ceiling, are fragments of a fine seventeenth-century cornice in stucco (fig. 3). The hall measures 37 feet by 25, and the drawing-room 25 by 20. The bedroom in the tower contains two remarkable squints from the adjoining newel stair. One commands the door and the other the fireplace, so that these spy-holes were doubtless inserted for the convenience of an attendant occupying the bedroom made out of the cellar below. All the rooms on this floor are well finished, the quoins and depressed rear-arches of their large bay-windows being beautifully wrought, with half-engaged rolls set on a broad chamfer.

The remaining floor, over these apartments, was situated partly in the roof. It contained an additional stateroom over the hall, a private apartment over the drawing-room, and a bedroom in the tower, which, being carried up a storey higher than the main house, contains thus

an additional room. As all the wooden floors have perished, the rooms above the hall level are now quite empty and inaccessible.

The upper portions of the keep differ greatly from the solid massiveness and unadorned severity of its basement. On the south front the wall-head finishes in an exquisite composition of ornamental parapets, graceful oriels, cornices, turrets, and sculptured chimneys (fig. 4) which, even ruined as it is, remains unsurpassed in Scotland—"one of the most charming," it has justly been said, "of the architectural relics left to us."¹ The oriel windows in particular afford a noble specimen of early



Fig. 3. Huntly Castle: Plaster Work on partition wall.

[Photo H.M. Office of Works.]

Renaissance work. Three of them stand out boldly from the main front of the keep; a fourth, more highly ornate in its bracketing than the others, seems almost to cling—so cunningly is it contrived—to the swelling face of the great round tower. Between the oriels on the keep are tall, oblong windows, one of which is a dummy. The mullion of this window is wrought as two thistle heads. Over this dummy a tall, slender chimney carries another mock window, surmounted by a pediment having a defaced shield with the heraldic bearings of the first Marquess. On the apex of the pediment is a wasted sculpture, shown by Billings as a crowned female bust, perhaps a portrait of Princess Anne of Denmark, Queen of James VI. The south-west tower is capped by a very massive and bold corbelled cornice of exceedingly rich design supporting the parapet, within which, from the rear-wall, rise tall coped

¹ *Castles of Aberdeenshire*, p. 76.

chimneys¹ and fine pedimented dormer windows, one of which has on the tympanum a crowned female bust. The parapet is 65 feet above ground on the south front. Over the stairhead is formed a pentagonal cape-house or lookout, with small windows on all fronts. The roundway is paved in the ancient manner, with alternating ridge stones and gutters drained by cannon-shaped gargoyles. The two end gables of



Fig. 4. Huntly Castle: South Front. *[Photo H.M. Office of Works.]*

the main house are corbie-stepped. On the south-west spur stone are the initials of the fourth Earl, George Gordon, and his wife, Elizabeth Keith, with H for Huntly and the date, AÑO 1553, this last having become much weathered in recent years. The north-west spur stone has the initials G. G., entwined with a knot; and on the south-east spur stone are the arms of Gordon impaled with those of Keith Marischal.

Right across the whole south front, at the top and base of the windows, runs a double band of inscription in raised letters 20 inches high :

¹ The largest chimney, facing the front, is keeled to accommodate with the rotundity of the tower.

“GEORGE · [GO]RDOVN · FIRST · MARQV[I]S · OF · HV[N]TLIE · 16]
HENRIETTE · STEVART · MARQVESSE · OF · HV[N]TLIE · 02.”¹

This inscription is beautifully wrought in plain Roman characters, the words separated by mullets. On each band a carved hand points to the inscription. In the centre bay of each oriel, above the lower inscription, is the monogram of the Marquess and his wife, and on each lateral bay are, in the west oriel, a boar's head; in the central oriel, a *fleur-de-lis*; in the east oriel, a rosette. There are remains of a similar ornamentation on the upper stage. At the south-east corner of the keep has been a rectangular corbelled turret, along the shoulder of which the great inscription returned; and the fall of this turret has truncated the legend. An inscription in smaller letters was carried round the other faces of the turret; the letters Q and T survive on the south and east faces respectively.²

All these ornamental portions are built in the local red freestone, in pleasing contrast to the rubble of surface boulders which composes the rest of the keep. Along the whole front, and round the tower, runs a bold offset at a height of about 10 feet, approximately level with the ground on the opposite or courtyard side, and marking the position of the vaulted roof of the *souterrain*. This offset plainly indicates a stage in the construction of the building—the work above being, as its interior characteristics show, of a more recent date.

The inner or northern front of the keep is less ornamented. Nevertheless, it exhibits a couple of string courses near the wall-head,³ and above these the moulded sills of dormers: two tall chimneys are intaken near the base in a couple of short stages. In the centre of this wall, on the lower string course, is the coat of arms of the first Marquess and his wife. The grand stair in the north-east tower, the empty well of which is 10 feet in diameter, stopped at the wall-head of the main house. Above this the tower was enlarged by corbelling into a square capehouse with two storeys of living-rooms, served by a newel stair in a corbelled turret at the re-entrant between the capehouse and the north wall of the keep.

When complete the whole building must have been a most imposing and magnificent structure, combining remarkably the characteristics of massive military strength with lightness and elegance. The extraordinary skill with which the south front is managed reflects the highest credit on the architect. Yet the most remarkable piece of ornament is not this south front, but the noble doorway (fig. 5) in the staircase tower

¹ The letters in brackets have fallen.

² *Castles of Aberdeenshire*, p. 76.

³ The upper of these string courses appears also on the gable-ends, and is continued round the south-west tower.

at the north-east corner. It is indeed difficult to convey by mere description an adequate idea of the peculiar beauty of this unique design. The doorway itself is straight lintelled, with a most elaborate suite of Renaissance mouldings—the jambs being worked up into a series of shallow rolls and hollows, separated by fillets, while the lintel, resting on narrow classical pilasters with intermediate caps, has grotesque animals and heraldic ornament, scarcely now distinguishable.¹ At this level a string course binds the tower. On the lintel rests an oblong panel, rising to the third-floor level and standing on a stilted base which encloses a saving arch to the lintel beneath. The panel is flanked by moulded shafts, the capitals of which have supported sculptured figures in niches that remain. An eagle is shown by Billings in one of these niches. Between them the panel terminates in an ogee arch, the point carrying a bracket for a third statuette, without a niche. Now wasted almost to nothing, this statuette represented St Michael triumphing over the dragon—the father of the first Marquess having been created, in 1545, a Knight of the French Order of St Michael.² At the level of the capitals of the flanking shafts a second string course encircles the tower. Within the ogee arch is a circular plaque with scalloped border: it contained a representation of Our Lord's Passion, which was chiselled away by a Covenanting officer during the Civil War. Within the panel itself are, from the door upwards: (1) the arms of the first Marquess, impaled with those of Lennox in right of his wife, and surmounted by the Gordon and Lennox mottoes, BYDAND, and AVAND DARLY; (2) the Royal arms impaled with those of Denmark, supported by the Danish dragon and the unicorn of Scotland, and surmounted by a crown with lion *sejant*, and the motto IN DEFENS, with the initials I. R. 6. and A. R. S. (Jacobus Rex Sextus, Anna Regina Sua). The Marquess, of course, placed the Royal arms over his own as a tenant *in capite*. Over all is a square panel in a richly-moulded frame: but the design which it contained has been defaced,³ like that of the circular plaque in the ogee arch overhead. The way in which this whole composition is worked into the tall panel, and the immense amount of care devoted to the details of the ornament, make this doorway one of the finest in Scotland. As elsewhere, the carved work here is in Old Red Sandstone.

In the two upper storeys the internal fittings of the house are on

¹ The lintel has four shields, which are now much weathered, but seem to have exhibited (from left to right of the observer): (1) arms of the first Marquess; (2) monogram of himself and wife; (3) arms of the Marchioness; and (4) the date 1602—of which the last two figures only remain.

² Sir Robert Gordon, *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, ed. 1813, pp. 112-3.

³ Shearer (*Huntly Castle*, p. 13) states that this panel bore a long inscription, commencing: *Non nobis. Domine. gloria.*

the same lavish scale as the exterior. The two fireplaces on the hall

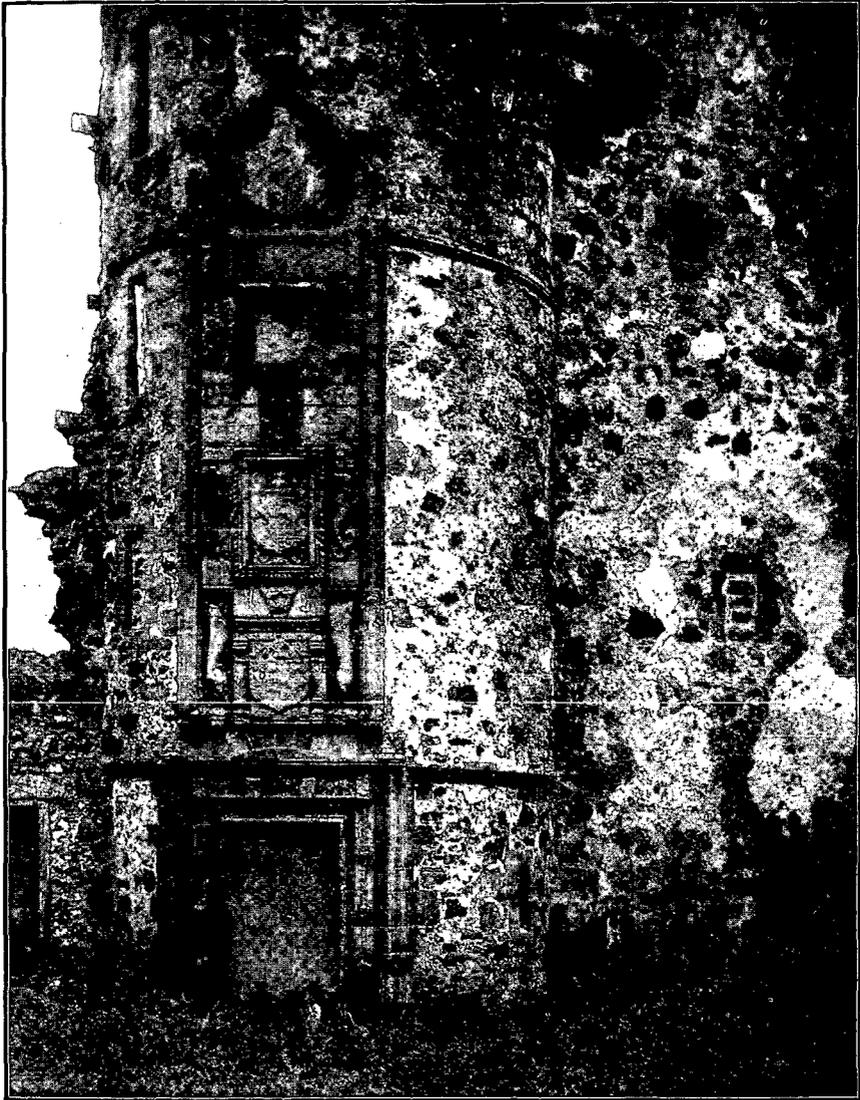


Fig. 5. Huntly Castle: View of Great Door.

[Photo H.M. Office of Works.]

floor, now destroyed, are described as of great richness; and those which still exist in the rooms above are unsurpassed by anything of the kind in Scotland. The largest of these (fig. 6) is in the stateroom. Its lintel,

which is bored for two candelabra, bears the insignia of the Marquess

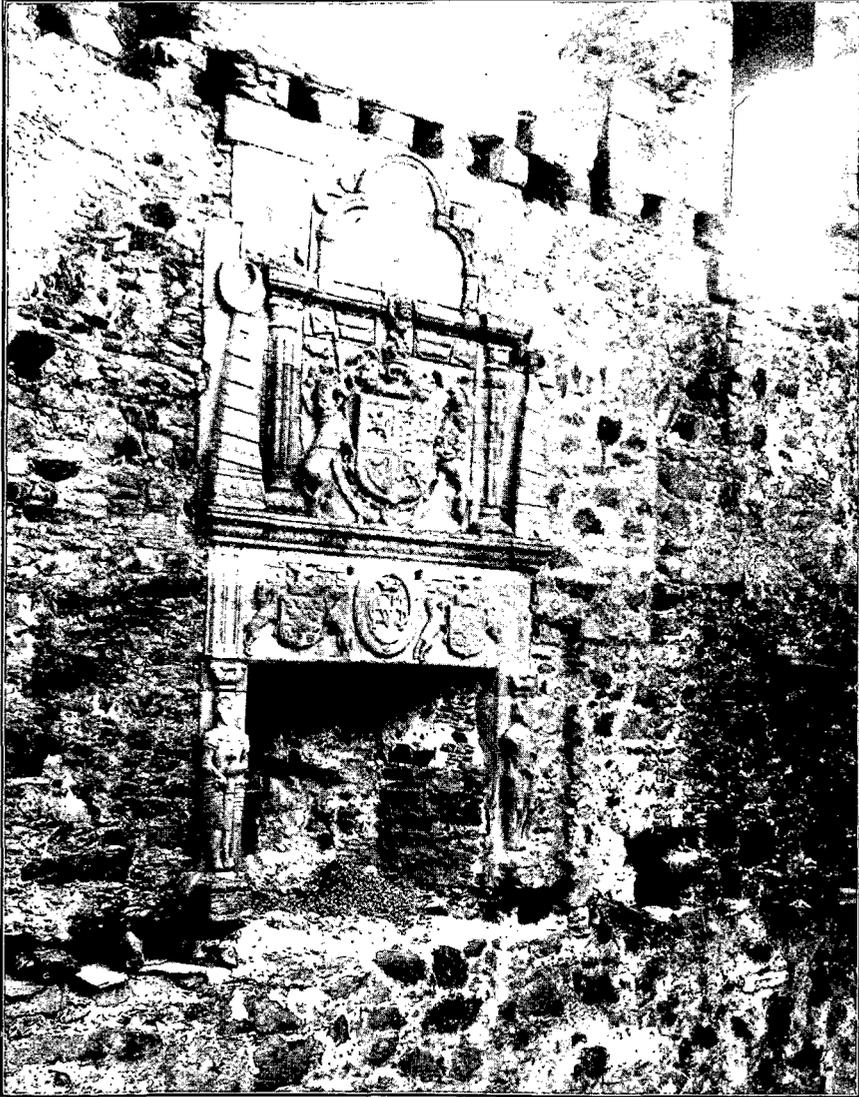


Fig. 6. Huntly Castle: Great Fireplace.

[Photo H.M. Office of Works.

and his consort on either side of their monogram, which is surmounted by a coronet and enclosed in an oval border with the inscription:

“SEN · GOD · DOTH · VS · DEFEND · VE · SAL · PREVAIL · VNTO · THE · END.”

This lintel is supported by mailed figures, of which one holds a sword and the other a halbert: their helmets are crested with Corinthian capitals bearing the lintel. Above these capitals the ends of the lintel are wrought as pilasters with classical imposts, between which, forming the upper border of the lintel, runs the text:

“TO · THAES · THAT · LOVE · GOD · AL · THINGIS · VIRKIS · TO · THE · BEST”
(Romans ch. viii. v. 28).

Above this again, resting on each pilaster, tall triangular obelisks support a crescent and a trefoil respectively. Each obelisk is entwined with a scroll, of which one bears the legend:

“GEORGE · GORDOVN · FIRST · MARQVIS · OF · HVNTLIE,”

and the other that of his wife, now much weathered. Within these obelisks two fluted pilasters, with moulded bases and foliated caps, enclose a square panel, which supports a magnificent presentation of the Royal Arms of Great Britain and Ireland. Above all is an empty panel, formed by shafts supporting a round-lobed trefoil, with scrolled ornaments on the extrados. The subject of this panel, probably devotional, has been erased, as have also those of two plaques on either side, on the left one of which a female head, looking towards the central panel, is just traceable. At this side a stone bears the date “ANNO 1606 MAR.” A remarkable feature about this mantel is the virile boldness which characterises its carved work.¹

Two other fine fireplaces are preserved. The first (fig. 7), in the private room on the top floor, has medallion portraits of the Marquess and his wife, with their arms and mottoes between: the other (fig. 8), in the topmost room of the great tower, lacks portraiture and heraldry, but the heavy lintel, which rests on thin pilasters with broad bases and imposts, is worked up into a series of narrow horizontal mouldings broken by vertical members. This lintel is bored for a single chandelier.

Masons' marks abound everywhere on the freestone dressings of the keep. Out of scores of individual marks, my friend Mr James E. Smith has collected a dozen types (fig. 9), which appear to be all the varieties traceable upon accessible portions of the building.

We may well have cause to be thankful for all that remains of this stately keep; but old descriptions make keen the regret for what has perished. Thus the old *Statistical Account* (1794) speaks of “the ceilings, which are ornamented with a great variety of paintings, in

¹ From a measured drawing by Mr J. J. Joass, published in *Building News*, 1st February 1895, the following approximate measurements may be deduced:—width of void, 5 feet 6 inches; height of void (to base of lintel) 4 feet 3 inches; length of lintel, 7 feet 4 inches; height of lintel (to top of text) 2 feet 5 inches; total height (to apex of trefoil) 14 feet 6 inches.

small divisions, containing many emblematical figures, with verses expressive of some moral sentiment in doggerel rhyme."¹ More details are given by Cordiner (1780). "Some of the apartments, and in particular the curious ceilings, are still preserved pretty entire. They are painted with a great variety of subjects, in small divisions; a few lines of poetry under each describe the subject of the piece. In these the virtues, vices, trades, and pursuits of mankind are characterised by emblematical figures which, though not the most elegant, are expressive. In the chamber which was appointed for a chapel, the parables and other sacred subjects are represented in the same style."² Where this chapel was, no detail of the existing ruins discloses.

Through the kindness of my friend Dr Thomas Ross, Edinburgh, I have been privileged to consult copies made by him of three unpublished drawings of Huntly Castle, done by John Claude Nattes on 19th October 1799. The originals are in the possession of Messrs Douglas & Foulis, publishers, Edinburgh, to whom thanks are due for kind permission to reproduce one of them (fig. 10). These three drawings, and a fourth in Nattes' published collection, indicate the sad decay which

has overtaken the castle in modern times. They show the high-pitched roof of the main house, and the tall conical roof of the great round tower, with its fine dormers. On the octagonal capehouse is a pointed roof. Magnificent as are the remains of the oriel windows on the south front, they represent only half of the original design, which is shown by Nattes to be of two levels, the upper portions of the oriels forming large dormers lighting the garret, and finished off with pediments and finials. The upper mock window on the chimney had ranged with and still preserves the appearance of these dormers, as the lower mock window ranges with the oriels. One drawing of the north or court-



Fig. 7. Huntly Castle: Fireplace with Medallions.
[Photo W. Norrie.]

¹ *Statistical Account of Scotland*, ed. Sir J. Sinclair, vol. xi. p. 478.

² C. Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland*, pp. 9-10.

yard front shows two dormer windows in good preservation, and indicates also that the summit of the capehouse over the staircase tower was finished with a groined vaulting carrying a stone roof—some fragments of which, indeed, still exist.

This great keep forms only one portion of the whole pile of buildings (fig. 11) that constituted the castle. It is continued eastward by a range of two storeys, now greatly dilapidated, but having three vaulted cellars, which together with the keep forms the south front of a great quadrangle. The east side of this quadrangle is closed by another range,

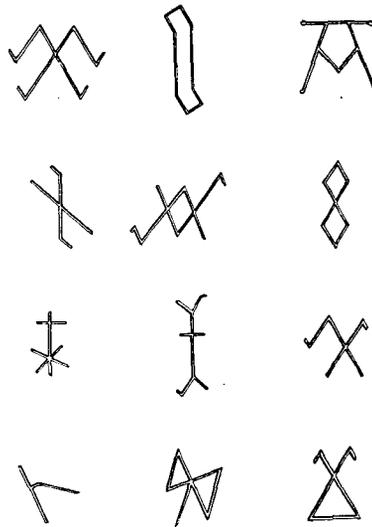


Fig. 8. Huntly Castle: Fireplace in Round Tower.
[Photo W. Norrie.]

also two-storeyed, but unvaulted, and likewise greatly ruined. Of the buildings on the north side only two cellars remain, while the west side of the courtyard is at present open, although Nattes shows an extensive range here. The exterior face of the south range engages with the middle line of the keep, the south-east angle of which forms a great shoulder in the general front—hence, doubtless, its defence by a large corner turret above. The recessed space has later been filled with a lean-to building of three floors, having a flat roof to which access was obtained through a window or door from the hall of the keep. This lean-to structure has disappeared. In the old *Statistical Account* it is stated that “many people still in life remember to have seen a range of pillars, supporting an arched roof, which seemed to have been intended as a cover for such as inclined to take the air, or a view of the garden which lay before the castle; there being a door that led to it from the upper hall on a level with it.”¹ The east front

¹ *Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. xi. p. 477.

of the courtyard is set at right angles to, and ends flush with the south front, and at its south-east corner there has been a large square tower. In this east front are remains of the great gatehouse, being the inner end of a trance about 9 feet wide, with traces of guardrooms. South of the trance a cross wall has run out into the court. The two cellars of the north range are set obliquely, showing that the line of this range must have been indrawn at an acute angle. In the exterior wall of the east cellar is a fireplace belonging to a room adjoining. The other cellar has a shoulder in the south wall, carrying the jamb of a door to further buildings which have disappeared. At its junction with the north-west angle of the keep, the foundations of the west enclosing wall show that the *enceinte* on this side sprang from the keep at an obtuse angle. The courtyard must have been about 120 feet in greatest breadth along the east or entrance front, by about 160 feet in length along the north or rear. A "backe gate over a lowe walle of stone" is mentioned in 1562.¹ In the centre was the well, of which the square enclosing wall, with a door to the north, is shown in a view by Nattes.



J.E. SMITH, 1922.

Fig. 9. Huntly Castle: Masons' Marks.

On the west and north sides of the castle area the ground falls away towards the rocky channel of the Deveron. Westward the declivity is somewhat steep; and niched into the slope here is a large circular mound or motte, 80 feet in diameter at the summit. It rises to a height of about 5 feet above the platform occupied by the castle buildings, from which it has been separated by a ditch. On the other sides the height of the motte varies from 18 to 30 feet above the hollow into which it sinks. The summit area is level, and there are no traces of circumvallation or inner buildings. To this motte the castle area has formed an appended bailey, and is surrounded by the remains of a bank and ditch, enclosing a space measuring upwards of 270 feet from north to south by 200 feet from east to west. On the east side, opposite the motte, is a strongly-constructed barbican or forework in

¹ Randolph to Cecil, *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, vol. i., No. 1144.

the form of a lunette, consisting of a segmental mound about 75 feet across at the root and 70 feet in length to the point. This mound is surrounded by a ditch about 40 feet broad and 10 feet deep. These earthworks are the remains of a very powerful Norman castle of the mound-and-court type, forming one of the best-preserved and most fully-developed specimens of this kind in Scotland. Generally these early earthworks have been little affected by the later stone buildings,

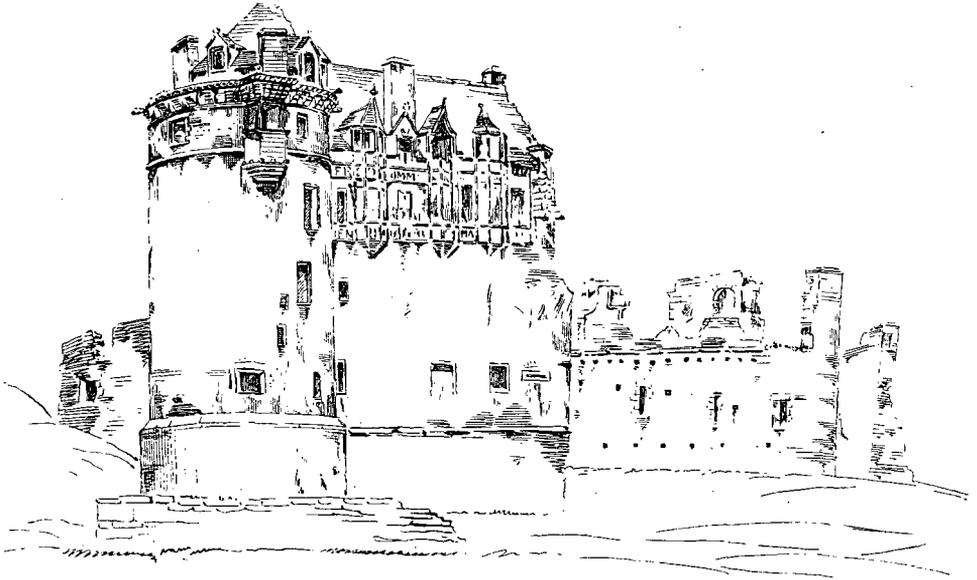
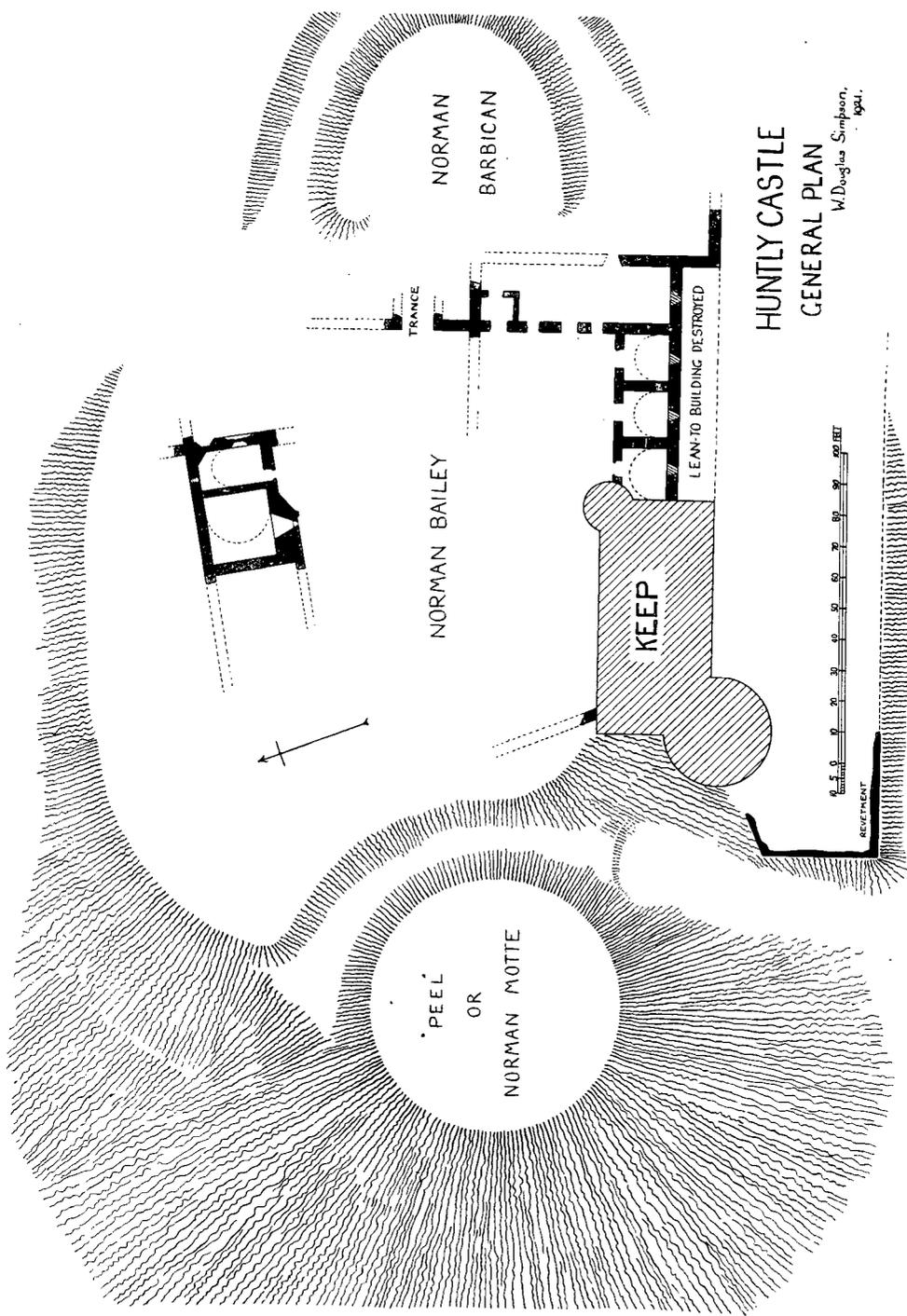


Fig. 10. Huntly Castle: Nattes' View.

but along the south front the enclosing bank of the bailey has been converted into a terrace by a stone revetment, of which fragments remain.¹

From an early period there has been a castle at Strathbogie. Nor is this remarkable, for the vale was one of the main routes by which armies crossing the "Mounth," either by the Fir Munth Pass at Aboyne and the Capel Munth Pass at Braemar, or by the lower passes at Cryne's Cross and Cairnamounth, proceeded northward to Moray, the last stronghold of irreconcilable Celticism; and the castle of Strathbogie formed one of a series of fortresses which assured that this

¹ In a plan of the castle and policies, dated 1766, now in the keeping of Mr T. A. Duff, factor, Gordon-Richmond estates, the mound is marked "moté." This plan also exhibits the lay-out of the *pleasance* by which, in the seventeenth century, the castle was surrounded, with the gatehouse at its south end, about the spot now occupied by the Gordon schools.



HUNTLY CASTLE
 GENERAL PLAN
 W. Douglas Simpson,
 1891.

Fig. 11. Huntly Castle : General Plan.

master route was always in friendly hands.¹ The introduction of Anglo-Norman feudalism into this region dates from the reign of William the Lyon (1154-1214). This King made a grant of Strathbogie to Duncan, Earl of Fife, one of the old Celtic nobility who had conformed to Norman usages. For the site of his castle or chief messuage Earl Duncan chose the very strong position formed by the confluence of the two streams, Bogie and Deveron. Here he built the mound, with its appended bailey, which still remains on the west side of the later castle, and which was called the Peel of Strathbogie (Latin *palum*, a stake, from the palisade which crested the mound). In the same way the moated mound which defended the east flank of the great Durward lordship on Deeside was known as the Peel of Lumphanan.

Duncan de Strathbolgia was succeeded in 1204 by his third son, David, who, having harried some lands belonging to the Bishop of Moray, stoutly maintained himself in his castle until forced to yield by an apostolic letter, dated xiii Kalends May, 1224, of Pope Honorius III. It is stated that David "planted himself in the Peel of Strathbogie"; and this is apparently the earliest notice of the castle. All outstanding questions between the Bishop and the Lord of Strathbogie were settled by a compromise agreed upon in 1232. In this document, Muryno, Seneschal of Strathbogie, is mentioned.²

Strathbogie Castle played but a minor part in the great struggle with the Plantagenets. In 1307, during his campaign against the Comyns, King Robert fell sick at Inverurie, and was brought for better security to "Strabogy,"

"And swa lang thair maid sojornyng
Till he begouth to cover and ga."³

In the thirteenth century the lords of Strathbogie had become by marriage also Earls of Atholl. On the victorious conclusion of the war with England, David de Strathbolgia, Earl of Atholl, lost his lands for adhering to Edward II.; and the lordship of Strathbogie was granted

¹ By the middle of the thirteenth century there were Bissets at Aboyne; Durwards at Lumphanan, Strachan, and Coull; the Normanised Celtic lords of Mar at Kindrochit, Migvie, and Kildrummy; Normanised Celtic earls of Fife at Strathbogie; de Moravias at Boharm; and De Pollocs at Rothies.

² See *Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis*, pp. 28-30, 78-80; also D. Shearer, *Huntly Castle: being Sketch of the various Castles on or near the site of the present ruin since the thirteenth century*, Huntly, 1885, reprinted 1906, p. 1. It should be stated that the records as printed in the *Registrum Moraviense* contain no reference to the Peel of Strathbogie.

³ Barbour's *Brus*, ed. W. M. Mackenzie, p. 152. It may be noted that the Comyn Earls of Buchan never had any connection with Strathbogie, although the castle has often been described as in their demesne. The error has doubtless arisen from the fact that David de Strathbolgia, whom Bruce deprived of his lands, was married to Joan, daughter of the Red Comyn, lord of Badenoch, slain by Bruce in 1306.

by Bruce to Sir Adam Gordon of Huntly in Berwickshire—from which place the old fortress of Strathbogie was ultimately to receive a new name. But it was not until 1376 that the Gordons settled down in unchallenged occupation of the lordship, as the Earls of Atholl retained certain claims until their extinction at this date.

In 1408, Sir John Gordon, last in the male line of the Gordons of Huntly and Strathbogie, was succeeded by his sister Elizabeth, who, in that year, married Sir Alexander Seton. In 1436 Sir Alexander was created first Lord Gordon; and in 1445 or 1449¹ his son, also Alexander Seton, was made first Earl of Huntly, receiving shortly afterwards a grant of the lordship of Badenoch. This Earl became involved in the bitter struggle between the royal house of Stewart and the great baronial family of Douglas; a struggle which reached a climax in the murder of Earl Douglas by James II. at Stirling Castle on 22nd February 1452. In the civil war begotten by this deed of blood, Huntly was appointed Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, with full powers beneath the Mounth. He at once mustered an army, and hurried to aid his master, but was intercepted by the "Tiger" Earl of Crawford, at the battle of Brechin (18th May 1452). The royalists held the field, but unwelcome news from the north soon recalled Huntly to his own lands. In his absence, Archibald Douglas, Earl of Moray, had descended on Strathbogie, wasted the vale, and given the castle to the flames. Arriving quickly on the scene, Lord Huntly cleared his barony of the invaders, followed them up into Moray, and ultimately succeeded in breaking the Douglas power in the north.²

On the conclusion of these troubles the destroyed castle was rebuilt by Lord Huntly. "Three years later," writes Shearer, "Earl Alexander proceeded to rebuild Strathbogie Castle, rearing a larger and more stately one in the place of that which had been burnt, and spent the remaining years of his life in adding to and beautifying it."³ There can be no doubt that it is to this reconstruction, commencing in 1455, that we owe the design of the great keep with its huge south-west tower, and it is also clear that its *souterrain* is still the original work of this period, although all the upper portions have been reconstructed or rebuilt. The doorways in this basement, with their three-sided heads,

¹ For the disputed date, see *Records of Aboyne*, ed. Charles, eleventh Marquess of Huntly, p. 383.

² See *Historical Work of Sir James Balfour*, ed. J. Haig, vol. i. p. 181. "The Earle of Huntley, immediatly after the batell of Brechin, marches north to oppose the proceedings of Archibald Douglas, Earle of Murray, quho had inwadit his landes, and brunt the Castell of Strathbogie: him he chasses out of Murray, and burnes the town of Elgyne, and he againe defaultts his army at Dinkinty boge." Cf. Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Chronicles*, ed. Æ. J. Mackay, vol. i. p. 99; also Sir Robert Gordon, *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, p. 73.

³ *Huntly Castle*, p. 3.

are paralleled in other buildings of the fifteenth century, notably at Borthwick Castle, erected in 1430, at St Salvator's Church, St Andrews, founded in 1456, and at the church of Torphichen. And the general plan of the keep, with its great round tower, also points to this period. During the fourteenth century—a period of national depression incident to the prolonged struggle with England—most of our Scottish castles, great and small, had been built on the plan of a simple rectilinear tower or keep, attached to which was a walled barmekin, enclosing the out-buildings. But, in the fifteenth century, when the country began to recover its prosperity, these plain rectangular tower-houses begin, in some of the larger castles, to develop into extensive and complicated structures, in which the general idea of a self-contained keep or strong house is conserved, but with the addition of wings or towers for flanking defence, and to supply the increased domestic accommodation now required. The simple square tower, as it were, undergoes a process of lateral expansion beneath the stress of improved social standards. The castles of Crookston, Doune, Ravenscraig, Hermitage, Morton, Sanquhar, Tullyallan, Balvenie, Rait, and the Bishop's Palace at Kirkwall, are well-known examples of these fifteenth-century extended keeps. In all of them the main idea is that of the old keep or strong house, carried out on a large scale, and modified by one or more flanking towers. The great keep at Huntly, with its massive round tower, closely resembling the design of Balvenie, Rait, and Kirkwall, plainly belongs to the same class of building, and the evidence of plan is confirmed by the fifteenth-century character of the doors in its basement. This underground range is clearly part of the castle erected by Earl Alexander, although everything above, or over the offset on the south front has been rebuilt in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The terrible underground prison, like those at Spynie, St Andrews, Dirleton, Tantallon, and other castles of this period, is also very characteristic of an age when feudal tyranny in Scotland reached its utmost license of unbridled power.

At this point emerges an important question. What was the nature of the castle which the Douglas marauders burned in 1452? Was it still the old timbered mount and bailey of the early thirteenth century? Or had the earthwork, in the prosperous days before the English war, been superseded by one of the grand stone buildings, with their high walls and massive towers, of which the neighbouring castle of Kildrummy is so splendid an example? Macgibbon and Ross, who were aware of the existence of a castle at Strathbogie in the thirteenth century, but did not concern themselves with the earthworks, were inclined to believe that there was here a great stone castle at this

period. "The great size of the south-west tower, and the thickness of the walls," they write, "tend to support that view. The existing round tower may, in that case, be erected on the foundations of a thirteenth-century castle, and the south wall of the main building may be on an ancient wall of *enceinte*."¹

At first sight this seems a tempting hypothesis; but a close examination of all the facts will, I think, seriously diminish its likelihood. If, during the thirteenth century, the earthwork had been replaced by a stone castle of such consequence as the dimensions of the round tower and south wall of the present keep must postulate, is it likely that so important a castle would have been left unvisited by Edward I. on the two occasions (1296 and 1303) when he passed through the strath? On each occasion he called at the neighbouring castle of Kildrummy, yet there is no mention of Strathbogie in the itineraries. Again, if the outlines of an *enceinte* castle of the thirteenth century are preserved in the south wall and south-west tower of the present keep, it becomes very difficult to explain the thorough destruction of the ancient building. For be it remembered that no part of the keep can possibly belong to this supposed stone castle of the thirteenth century. Thick as they are, the west and south walls of the keep are yet no thicker than the others, and with them simply form the outer walls of the house. They have nothing of the detached character of the great curtains or screen walls of the thirteenth-century castles, which are never absorbed in the interior buildings against them. We must therefore conclude that, if a stone castle of the thirteenth century existed, it has been pulled down to the foundations. On the face of it, such an utter demolition of so extensive a pile is highly improbable. In the vast majority of cases, where a first-class fortress of the thirteenth century has existed, portions have contrived to survive down to our own time—even where the records most abound with destructions and rebuildings. Even at Bothwell and Dirleton, where the deliberate demolition has been most severe, very large portions of the original work remain. Yet at Huntly, if an early castle of *enceinte* has existed, it must have been pulled down absolutely to the base course. But when was this done? If during the War of Independence, it is surprising that no record exists of a demolition so unexampled, or indeed of any military operations connected with a castle so formidable as the thirteenth-century stronghold must have been, if its outlines remain in the great round tower and south wall of the present keep. It is equally unlikely that the demolition was the work of Archibald Douglas' hasty raid in 1452.

¹ *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 278.

Nor can we assume that, instead of repairing the burnt-out castle, Earl Alexander decided to rebuild it wholly, and so razed the stonework to its very foundations. Certainly he would have retained, and utilised in his new buildings, at least a large portion of such powerful fortifications. Nor, if it be conceded that he did utterly efface the old castle of *enceinte*, is there adequate reason why he should have retained its plan in his new building. The design of the great keep, as we have seen, associates itself with a well-known class of fifteenth-century structure; and there is nothing in the dimensions or relationships of its south wall and round tower to warrant the idea that these conceal the form of a thirteenth-century predecessor.

On the whole, I think, the probability is decidedly that there never was a stone castle of *enceinte* at Strathbogie, and that the earthwork remained in use until it was destroyed by Archibald Douglas in 1452. The continued use of such early strongholds down to this late period is well attested. At Lochmaben the motte remained in use until finally demolished in 1384: the stone castle on a different site belongs to the fifteenth century, and was completed only in the reign of James IV. The stonework at the motte of Duffus is also of this century, previous to which its defences must have been in timber. Even in England parallels occur: thus the motte of York Castle still retained its timbered superstructure as late as 1324.¹ After the wooden defences of his motte had been burnt in 1452, Lord Huntly probably decided that the time had come for a stone castle more befitting the growing dignity of the Gordon family. His general circumstances fully warranted this step. By recent vast acquisitions of land, by his services to the royal cause, and by the overthrow of his rivals, the Douglasses, he had become "the greatest power in the north of Scotland."² Besides the lordship of Strathbogie, his enormous territories included the lordship of Badenoch; the barony of Aboyne, with which went practically the whole of the upper Dee valley; the lordship of Enzie; and other lands, not to speak of the ancestral Gordon domains in Berwickshire. High in favour, great in power, such a man might well desire to replace the humble motte by a splendid castle in the new fashion of extended keeps. We are told that building operations occupied him for the rest of his days; in the new castle he died on 15th July 1470, and was buried in Elgin Cathedral, where his fine monument remains.

The grandeur of the new castle secured numerous visits from royalty and others of distinction. At the beginning of June 1495, the marriage

¹ Mrs Armitage in *Eng. Hist. Review*, vol. xix. pp. 443-7; quoted by Hamilton Thompson, *Military Architecture in England during the Middle Ages*, p. 55.

² W. Watt, *History of Aberdeen and Banff*, p. 87.

between the pretender, Perkin Warbeck—whose cause was quixotically championed by James IV.—and the “White Rose of Scotland,” beautiful Lady Catherine Gordon, Lord Huntly’s daughter, was solemnised at the castle in the Scottish king’s presence. In 1501, 1503, 1504, and 1505, James renewed his acquaintance with Strathbogie, each occasion being commemorated by items of expenditure in the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer. Two of these entries, in 1501 and 1505, record the payment of drink silver to masons, which is so far satisfactory in proving the existence at this date of a castle in stone.¹ Sir Robert Gordon, in recording the death of the second Earl in 1500, states explicitly that he “finished the house of Strathbogie verie statelie and sumptuouslie, which his father Earle Alexander had begun.”² In 1506 Alexander, the third Earl, received a charter under the Great Seal, confirming to him his lands, and providing, *inter alia*, that their “chief messuage, which was formerly called Strathbogie, be in all future times named the Castle of Huntly.”³ But the old territorial designation died hard. In 1544 the fourth Earl “caused the palace of Strathbogie to be called Huntlie by act of Parliament.”⁴ Spalding in the seventeenth century calls it indifferently by both names: Patrick Gordon refers to it once as “Huntly, of some called Straithbogie.”⁵

George, fourth Earl of Huntly, had travelled in France and knew its splendid *châteaux*. Between 1551 and 1554 he rebuilt the castle in sumptuous fashion. Indeed the modern aspect of the building is almost entirely due to this Earl, for he reconstructed the keep and round tower practically from above the basement, whose dark vaults and grim dungeon were almost the only portions suffered to remain of the fifteenth-century castle. Although the upper floor of the new building was again re-modelled, as the great inscription tells us, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the date 1553 and the initials and arms of this Earl and his wife still remain on the gables. It is thus to the fourth Earl, and not to his successor the first Marquess, that we must award the real credit for the stately palace whose ruins remain; although the later nobleman has been more generally identified with it by reason of his great inscription and the beautiful architectural details of oriel windows, mantels, and frontispiece which he introduced into his father’s work. How much of the fifteenth-century outer walls may have been left above the basement it is impossible to say. The

¹ See *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, vol. ii. (1500–1504), pp. 124, 401, 464; vol. iii. (1506–1507), pp. 165, 168.

² *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, p. 82.

³ *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1424–1513, No. 2909.

⁴ *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, p. 110.

⁵ *Britane’s Distemper*, ed. J. Dunn, p. 18.

west gable, which bears the date 1553, has been rebuilt almost from the foundations, if we may judge from the uniformity of the freestone quoins. The north angle of this gable engages with a different kind of masonry on the north front of the keep, into which it is very irregularly coaxed.¹ This masonry, being older than that of the gable worked into it in 1553, must belong to the fifteenth century; and doubtless a considerable part of the north wall—which being in rear of the keep was not subject to the ornate incrustation that has been applied to the south front—may be a remnant of the original structure. The courtyard buildings also belong in the main to this period, though the unvaulted east range, with the trance, was probably refashioned in the seventeenth century.

Under the fourth Earl the power of the Gordons in the north, which had been rising steadily since the fourteenth century, achieved its zenith. "From central Aberdeenshire to the western sea lochs," it has been said, "he was lord of the land, and to his hereditary earldom of Huntly he added for a time the other historic earldoms of Mar and Moray. He was Lieutenant of the North, or Viceroy of trans-Grampian Scotland; he was Chancellor of the realm, and the most influential as well as the wealthiest Scottish nobleman of his day. There was no force that could cope with him apart from the royal authority, unless it were the growing power of Argyll in the West Highlands."²

The magnificence of this great lord was strikingly evinced when in 1556 he received at his newly-finished palace the Queen-Regent, Mary of Guise. She was met with a guard of honour of a thousand men, and the splendour of her entertainment was such that, after a few days, she wished to depart in order to relieve the burden on her host. Huntly assured her that his cheer was within his means, and astonished her by displaying the spacious vaults crammed with provisions. A large force of hunters, it was explained to the Queen, was employed day and night, and daily, even from the most distant corner of his vast domains, the spoils of their weapons were sent into Huntly Castle. So profound was the impression created by the Earl's magnificence that the French ambassador, D'Oysel, who was Mary's confidential adviser, hesitated not to suggest that an early opportunity be found to "clip his wings."³

¹ On the first floor (fig. 1) is an oblique recess in the north wall at this point. This recess is in alignment with the fragment of the barmekin wall visible below (fig. 11); and there can be little doubt that it represents a stopped passage to the parapet walk.

² Watt, *History of Aberdeen and Banff*, p. 130.

³ See Dr J. Robertson's *Inventories of Queen Mary's Jewels*, pp. xxv, 53; *Hist. MSS. Commission, 1st Rep.*, p. 114; C. A. Gordon, *A Concise History of the Ancient and Illustrious House of Gordon*, ed. A. M. Munro, pp. 37-38. Gordon (whose work was originally published in 1754) speaks of Huntly Castle as "a new expensive stately building, which he had joined to the old castle and rendered a very convenient palace."

Such ostentation brought many enemies in its train, and Huntly's position throughout his career was embarrassed by his steadfast adherence to the ancient faith. At last the unfortunate nobleman was goaded into rebellion, and was defeated at the battle of Corrichie (28th October 1562). Lord Huntly himself, a corpulent man whom his armour vexed, died woundless on the field. The castle was pillaged, wrecked, and burned. Its plunder was prodigious, and the detailed enumeration in Queen Mary's Inventories impresses us like nothing else with the splendour of this northern castle and the opulence of its potent lords. It is enough here to note that the furnishings taken from Strathbogie sufficed to recondition the Earl of Moray's castle at Darnaway, and to furnish completely the fatal house at Kirk o' Field; that the loot included more than 140 lbs. of silver plate; and that within its walls had been stored all the choice vestments and treasures of Aberdeen Cathedral, including the tent in which Edward II. had slept the night before Bannockburn.

Precisely what damage was done to the castle by the events of 1562 is hard to say; and there is certainly no existing masonry that can be proved to date from the restoration, which took place in 1569. A note in the Lord High Treasurer's Accounts of money disbursed to pay the wages of twenty "men of weir remanand in Strabogie"¹ indicates that the house was garrisoned after its capture; and in 1566 the embalmed remains of the dead Earl were conveyed to Strathbogie—a procedure hardly likely had the castle then been in hopeless ruin. The only portion which might be thought to date from the reconstruction in 1569 is the round stair tower at the north-east corner. Its thin walls prove this tower an insertion; the beautiful decorated doorway belongs to the last reconstruction of the castle about 1602; and it is suggested by the writer on Huntly in *Castles of Aberdeenshire* that this doorway is an addition to the tower.² If that is so, the tower, being older than 1602 and yet inserted in the main house of 1553, would naturally be assigned to the restoration of 1569. But structural evidence proves that the doorway is of the same date as the tower, both belonging to the final reconstruction in the seventeenth century. The face of the tower is flattened to accommodate the tall frontispiece, and above it the flattening is corbelled out in a manner clearly original. This proves that the stair tower was designed at the outset to receive the ornate door. Moreover, the string courses on the tower are distinctively seventeenth century in style. It is thus clear that the damage wrought in 1562 can have little harmed the solid stonework of the building.

¹ *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, vol. xi. (1559-1566), p. 214.

² *Castles of Aberdeenshire*, pp. 73, 76.

In 1594, however, Huntly Castle sustained a far more serious blow. Having become suspect through his alleged connection with the "Spanish Blanks," George, fifth Earl of Huntly, joined Lord Erroll in a mad revolt. After some initial success the rebel barons were put to flight by the royal forces under the personal command of James VI. Slains Castle was first blown up, and then the victors arrived before Huntly. Struck with the beauty of the palace, the King was unwilling to visit it with the drastic fate of the ruder Erroll fortalice; but Andrew Melville, who was present and—so his nephew proudly tells us—"ware a corslet at the dinging down of Streabogy," "when be maniest vottes it was inclyning to spear the hous, he reasoned and bure out the mater sa, be the assistance of the guid Lord Lindsay and Capteans of horsmen and futmen, that at last the King takes upon him, contrar to the graitest part of the Counsall, to conclud the demolishing of the hous, and giff command to the maister of wark to that effect; quhilk was nocht lang in executing be the souldiours. When all was done, lytle sound meining and small effect fordar was productit."¹ In spite of this remark by the chronicler, of the date 1553 still visible on the west gable, and of the whole character of the existing remains, many writers have assumed that this destruction of 1594 was absolutely complete, and that the main house was thereafter rebuilt from its foundations, the whole of the existing fabric being alleged to date from this restoration. From the Act of the Privy Council, dated 28th October 1594, "anent the demolishing the Earl of Huntly's house and fortalice of Strathbogie," it appears that the "dimolissing and casting down of the same place and fortalice, als weill new as auld werk thairof," was entrusted to "William Shaw, his Hienes maister of werkis," who received instruction "to caus entir workemen for dimoleissing and casting down of the same place and fortalice to the ground, with sic expeditioun as convenientlie may be."² Two days after the King's arrival "nothing was left unhocked save the greate olde tower which shall be blown up with powder."³ It is thus clear from all evidence that the demolition of 1594 was a much more thorough-going attempt permanently to dismantle the building than the destruction of 1562. As to the actual damage our authorities

¹ *Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melville*, ed. R. Pitcairn, pp. 314, 319. If the zealous Andrew had got his way, the noble pile of Glasgow Cathedral, as a "monument of idolatry" (l) would have received a doom similar to that meted out to Huntly Castle—see Dr J. Robertson, *Scottish Cathedrals and Abbeys* (reprinted Aberdeen 1891 from *Quarterly Review*, June 1840), p. 64.

² *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol. v. (1592-1599), pp. 185-86. Twenty stone weight of powder, together with "certane mattokis, gavillokis, and utheris werklumes and materiallis for dimolissing and casting down of houssis and fortaliceis" were lent to the King by the Provost and Council of Aberdeen; *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84.

³ *Advertisements from Strathbogie*, 29th October 1594; *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland*, vol. ii. (1589-1603), p. 29. See also *Records of Aboyne*, p. 521.

are silent. Fortunately architectural evidence leaves scant doubt on this important question.

We have already seen that the round staircase tower at the north-east corner of the keep, with its splendid entrance, dates from about 1602. In addition to this tower, a length of some 27 feet of the adjoining north wall of the main house is also an insertion in the older fabric. This portion of the wall is a mere screen, in places barely 2 feet thick, whereas elsewhere the walls at this level reach a thickness of about 6 feet. It is clear, therefore, that the staircase tower, and the thin strip of wall to the west, close a great gap in the main house blown by William Shaw in 1594. In all probability there was here, before the destruction, a wing extending northward, the complete erasure of which was the means taken by the engineers of James VI. in order to render the building untenable. The castle of the sixteenth century was thus probably a great keep on the L plan, modified by the addition of the immense round tower at the south-west corner—a relic of the fifteenth-century castle rebuilt in 1551-4.

The destruction of a wing in order to render a house untenable is paralleled by Cromwell's treatment of Neidpath Castle, Peeblesshire, in 1650.

In 1597 Lord Huntly made his peace with King James, and two years later was created first Marquess of Huntly. Forthwith the Marquess began the restoration of his ruined home, a task substantially finished, as the inscription on the south front informs us, by 1602, although one of the fireplaces is dated so late as 1606. In 1601 the castle must have been habitable, for in that year "the General Assembly arranged that certain ministers should visit Strathbogie in succession, and that one of their number should be 'planted' at the Castle, to instruct the Earl and keep off mass priests"—a striking example of those meddlesome qualities which unenviably distinguished the "reformed" Scottish clergy. One of these "planted" ministers in 1607 reported that Huntly had announced his intention of restoring the chapel in his mansion "seeing he was rebuilding his house in Strathbogie."¹

The work of this latest restoration of the castle is clearly defined by inscriptive and architectural evidence. The chief structural alteration was the insertion of the staircase tower with its magnificent frontispiece; but the upper portions of the keep were also extensively remodelled, the beautiful cornice, oriel windows, coped and carved chimneys, and great inscription being all of this date. At the same time the old hall was subdivided by a partition, providing a withdrawing room; the splendid fireplaces, three of which remain, were inserted; and the ceilings were

¹ Shearer, *Huntly Castle*, pp. 10-11.

painted as described by Cordiner. The two cellars flanking the kitchen were converted into dwelling-rooms, and the room adjoining in the round tower, which may have originally been a cellar, was also remodelled for living in, large windows being slapped through the ancient walls—one of which windows, on the north side, has been cut through the offset on the exterior.

Extensive alterations were also made in the "laigh building" round the courtyard. The end cellar of the range prolonging the keep eastward shows very evident rebuilding in its vault, the masonry of which is in two parts, markedly distinct in character. The part towards the court is built of much smaller stones than the rest, and resembles very closely the masonry of the unvaulted east range which it adjoins. All this is clearly seventeenth-century work. The two detached vaults on the north side of the close are massively built in coarse masonry, and, doubtless, belong to the time of the fourth Earl (1551-4).

With these great changes the castle assumed its final shape, and the remainder of its architectural history is one not of development but of decay. At this point we may, therefore, consolidate the results of our investigation. These may be tabulated in five propositions.

1. The original fortress, in the thirteenth century, was a timbered mound-and-court earthwork of the Norman type, which continued in use until burned by the Earl of Moray in 1452.

2. Therefore the earthwork was abandoned, and a great stone castle built beside it. This castle was of the extended keep plan, and there remains of it to-day, in recognisable form, the basement of the present main house, with the dungeon in the south-west tower. Doubtless considerable portions of the outer walls in the superstructure, particularly on the north side, are in substance fifteenth-century work.

3. In 1551-4 the stone castle was rebuilt. The whole of the keep and great tower, above their fifteenth-century basement, date in effect from this rebuilding—although the upper floors and interiors generally were recast at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This sixteenth-century castle had a wing projecting to the north, in the position now occupied by the small entrance tower. With the exception of the east range, the buildings round the courtyard appear to date from this time.

4. In 1562 the castle was dismantled, and repaired in 1569. No stonework is assignable to this date, and, doubtless, the destruction affected only roofs and woodwork.

5. In 1594 the castle was again damaged, the chief destruction consisting in the removal of the north wing of the main house. In the first decade of next century the building was restored for the last time. The work of this period comprises: (a) the staircase tower and thin wall

adjoining; (b) the remodelling of the upper floors; (c) the decorating of its interiors; (d) the conversion of the vaulted apartments on the ground floor (except the kitchen) into living rooms; (e) the partitioning of the hall; and (f) the east range of the courtyard, in its present form.

At the site of the present Gordon schools, on the drive leading from Huntly to the castle, there was formerly an exterior gatehouse with two square towers giving access to the policies. This gatehouse was, perhaps, also a work of the first Marquess, or its date may have been even later. On at least two occasions subsequent to the restoration about 1602, we know that building was in progress at the castle. In 1639 Parson Gordon, describing the sequel to the "Trot of Turriff," states that the castle was then being repaired, and "not in conditione to be made tenible."¹ And in the spring of 1643 it is recorded that the Marquess was personally superintending building work at the castle.² Messrs MacGibbon and Ross note that in 1633 mention occurs of Ralf Raleine, a carver, working for the Earl of Huntly, and suggest that this craftsman may have wrought some of the sculpturing at the castle.³

The days of the restored palace were few and troubled. In 1636 its builder, the first Marquess, died. His successor, George, stood for the King in the Civil War, and ended on the scaffold. Needless to say, Huntly Castle suffered for the loyalty of its lord. To begin with, the second Marquess preferred Bog o' Gight or Gordon Castle, and Spalding, who chronicles his movements with minuteness, records but fleeting visits to Strathbogie. Worse than neglect was to follow. On 9th July 1640, the Covenanting Major-General Munro, along with Earl Marischal, occupied Huntly Castle for a month. Spalding tells how their troops destroyed its policies to build themselves huts, and plundered the castle bare, without, he adds, "doing any offence or deid of wrang to that statelie pallace"; though in regard to the surrounding district he

¹ *History of Scots Affairs*, ed. J. Robertson and G. Grub, vol. ii. p. 210.

² "For he was so much taken up with his newe buildings, from four hours in the morning until eight at night, standing by his masons, urging their diligences, and directing and judging their worke, that he had scarce tyme to eate or sleep, much less to wreat"—*A Breiffie Narration of the Services done to Three Noble Ladyes*, by Gilbert Blakhal, ed. J. Stuart, p. 170. From a reference in Spalding (*Memorialls of the Trubles in Scotland*, ed. J. Stuart, vol. ii. p. 187) we gather the interesting fact that the master-mason or architect employed by Lord Huntly to design these works was George Thomson, who rebuilt the lantern of King's College steeple, Aberdeen, after it was blown down on 7th February 1633. Spalding says: "Setterday, 10th of September [1642] George Thomsoune, maister measone, new cum from Strathbogie to Abirdene, suddantlie fell over Thomas Thomsons, burges of the toun, his stair, and with the fall becam senses and speichles, and departed this life upone the Thursday thairefter; an excellent mesoun, of singular devise. He booldit sindry brave booldings; amonges the rest, he reedifeid the stepill of the college kirk of Old Abirdene." Although no ascertainable remains of Thomson's work exist now at Huntly Castle, his reconstruction of the "crown" at King's College amply supports the encomium bestowed on him by the old annalist.

³ *Cast. and Dom. Arch. Scotland*, vol. v. p. 552.

laments that the Covenanters "left that countrie almost manless, moneyless, horssless, and armless, so pitifullie was the same borne down and subdewit, but ony mein of resistans."¹ The Parson of Rothiemay tells a different story about the treatment of the castle. "The house," he writes, "was made patent to him, and all the keyes delyvered: yet, by his civilitye, was preserved from being rifled or defaced, except some emblems and imagerye, which looked somewhat popish and superstitious lycke; and therefor, by the industry of one captain James Wallace (one of Munroes foote captaines), wer hewd and brocke doune off the frontispiece of the house; but all the rest of the frontispiece, containing Huntly's scutcheon, etc., was left untwoched as it standes to this daye."² The carved work thus destroyed comprised the circular plaque with crucifixion, and the inscription over the royal arms, both of which remain just as they were left by Captain Wallace's sacrilegious tools. What a strange creed that condemned to destruction as "superstitious imagery," the reverend representation of the central fact in Christian faith!

In September 1644 Strathbogie was plundered by Argyll, who destroyed the "hail rawis of Strathbogie"—the village of Huntly—but (apparently) left the castle untouched. On 19th October Argyll was followed by Montrose, who, after beating back his timid foe at Fyvie, returned to Strathbogie, where for some days the rivals faced each other: Montrose, says Patrick Gordon, "having the house, the gardenes, and the villages that ar joynd to it," while Argyll encamped about a mile to the south. On 6th November Montrose broke up from Strathbogie, "and to the hillis goes he." Argyll at once occupied the castle, and, unable to worst his adversary in the field, fell back on the more congenial occupation of "eitting wp" the wretched countryside for the second time.³ After the collapse of Montrose's adventure, the castle was gallantly held against General Leslie by Lord Charles Gordon, but was starved, into surrender (1647). Savage treatment was meted out to its "Irish" garrison, who were hanged, and their officers beheaded. In December of the same year Huntly himself was captured at Delnabo, and on his way to Edinburgh was detained, by a refinement of cruelty, in his own palace. His escort were shot against its walls. The castle was again apparently subjected to outrage, for the General Assembly in 1647 appointed "some brethren to visit the Idolatrous Monuments brought from the late Marques of Huntlie's house"; while a later minute remits "to the Ministers of Edinburgh to take course

¹ Spalding, *Memorialls of the Trubles in Scotland*, ed. J. Stuart, vol. i. pp. 297-8, 305-6, 314-5.

² *History of Scots Affairs*, vol. iii. p. 211.

³ Spalding's *Trubles*, vol. ii. pp. 417, 424, 428. Gordon's *Britane's Distemper*, p. 93.

with the Monuments of Idolatrie brought from the North.”¹ At the end of June 1650 the castle received a brief visit from Charles II., on his way to defeat at Worcester.

After the Civil War the castle was no longer inhabited by the Huntly family, and early in the eighteenth century was in great decay, and providing material for predatory housebuilders in the village. In 1746 it was briefly occupied by Government troops. Its final destruction dates from 1752, when the widow of the third Duke of Gordon, having married again, rebuilt her jointure house at Sandiestone as Huntly Lodge out of the ruins of the ancient pile. Thereafter it became a common quarry for the countryside: for example, Shearer records that “the fine sandstone steps of the great staircase were carried off, and made into corner stones for a miserable granary in Huntly,” while the remains of the courtyard buildings were “dug up and built into park walls.”²

In recent times a considerable amount of repairing has been intermittently effected, thanks to which, and the enduring masonry, the ruins generally are in fair condition. Nothing, however, has been done since before the war, so that the buildings are in urgent need of attention. Some of the chimneys and wall-heads are in a dangerous condition, there are one or two serious cracks in the side walls, certain lintels and rear arches are breached, the main vaults are leaking, and, in particular, the beautiful carved work sorely lacks protection. Now that the castle, by the gift of its noble owner, has become the property of the State, it is to be hoped that steps will be taken to ensure the preservation of this historic pile and splendid relic of ancient Scottish architecture.

It is a pleasure to conclude this paper by expressing my warm thanks to Mr T. A. Duff, factor, Gordon-Richmond Estates Office, Huntly, who kindly granted access to the castle; to my friends Mr W. Norrie and Mr J. E. Smith, Aberdeen, for valuable assistance in making the measured drawings; and to Mr Norrie and Mr J. Wilson Paterson, M.B.E., A.R.I.B.A., F.S.A. Scot., of H.M. Office of Works, Edinburgh, for their beautiful photographs.

¹ *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. A. Peterkin, p. 482, Nos. 109, 133.

² *Huntly Castle*, p. 15.