

Castle Fraser: a seat of the antient family of Fraser

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Within 5 miles of the Cluny cross-road on the bye-way from Kemnay to Sauchen lie 11 of the great homes of Aberdeenshire. Five of them – Fetternear, Kemnay, Monymusk, Corsindae, and Tilliefour – claim no greater title, if indeed they claim any title at all, than that of *Place* or *House*. The other five – Pitfichie, Tillycairn, Cluny, Midmar and Castle Fraser – have greater pretensions: these are *Castles*. The first two are in ruins; Cluny is encased in what is perhaps the most shocking misuse of granite and architectural effort in the whole county; Midmar sleeps away amidst its woods under the shadow of the Hill of Fare; Castle Fraser stands open and proud in its late 18th-century landscape, one of the finest and least known examples of the splendid Scotch Baronial houses of the late 16th early 17th century.

With the exception of Fyvie no house of its period can approach Castle Fraser in grandeur, and at Fyvie the sureness in the massing, the perfect sense of scale and proportion, and the disciplined control of detail never quite rise to the level displayed here. These qualities have largely been ignored for Castle Fraser, like Fyvie, has not been widely accessible for the last hundred years, and both houses have seen the palm of public approval go to Crathes, and even more to Craigevar: two houses which in spite of many admirable qualities and for all their great interest, are, architecturally, remarkably formless. This architectural quality in Castle Fraser is the more surprising as it is the result of five separate building periods before 1640, and not the product of one architect.

HISTORY

Traditionally the family of Fraser is descended from the Norman family of Frisel, a representative of which came over in some capacity with William the Conqueror ('For', as Charles Dickens observes, 'it is a remarkable fact in genealogy that no De Any ones ever came over with Anybody else.').

Whatever truth there may be in that, or wherever they had landed, the *Frisels* or Frasers had moved north through England, the Border, and the Lothians, until by late in the 13th century they were confusingly and extensively settled in central Scotland. The two branches which concern Castle Fraser are those of Cornton and Lovat. The Lovat Frasers, descended from a cadet of the Frasers of Oliver (in Peeblesshire), do not enter the story until the 18th century, by which time one branch had become '*of Inverallochy*'. The Frasers of Cornton (in Stirlingshire) are supposedly a cadet branch of the Frasers of Touch Fraser; it is from this branch that the Frasers of Castle Fraser descend.

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Although Cornton seems to have been the principal estate of the family there was nevertheless an early connection with Aberdeenshire, for, some time after 1366, Thomas Fraser of Cornton had a charter from William de Keith of the lands of Kinmundy in that county, and either he or his successor was acting with Sir Alexander Fraser of Philorth in 1388 to compose a quarrel which had arisen between John of Forbes and the Bishop of Aberdeen.

In the next century the connection with Cornton came to an end. As early as 1428 the widow of Thomas Fraser of Cornton, who had married, as her second husband, James Skene of Skene, was bringing to him the yearly sum of £6 13 4 from the Crown for her interest in the lands of Cornton. It was presumably her son, also Thomas Fraser, who received £20 annually from 1435 to 1450 for the Crown's possession. From 1451 until 1454 this payment was exchanged for the rents of Muckwale (Muchall) which had formed part of the estates of the Earldom of Mar. When the Erskine claimant died in 1453 James II was able to begin the break-up of this great base of semi-independent Celtic power, and amidst the general dispersal, on 29 October 1454, the lands of Muchall and Stoneywood, were formed into a united barony, and granted by charter to Thomas Fraser. This was in exchange for the lands of Cornton, which he had resigned to the King on the previous day.

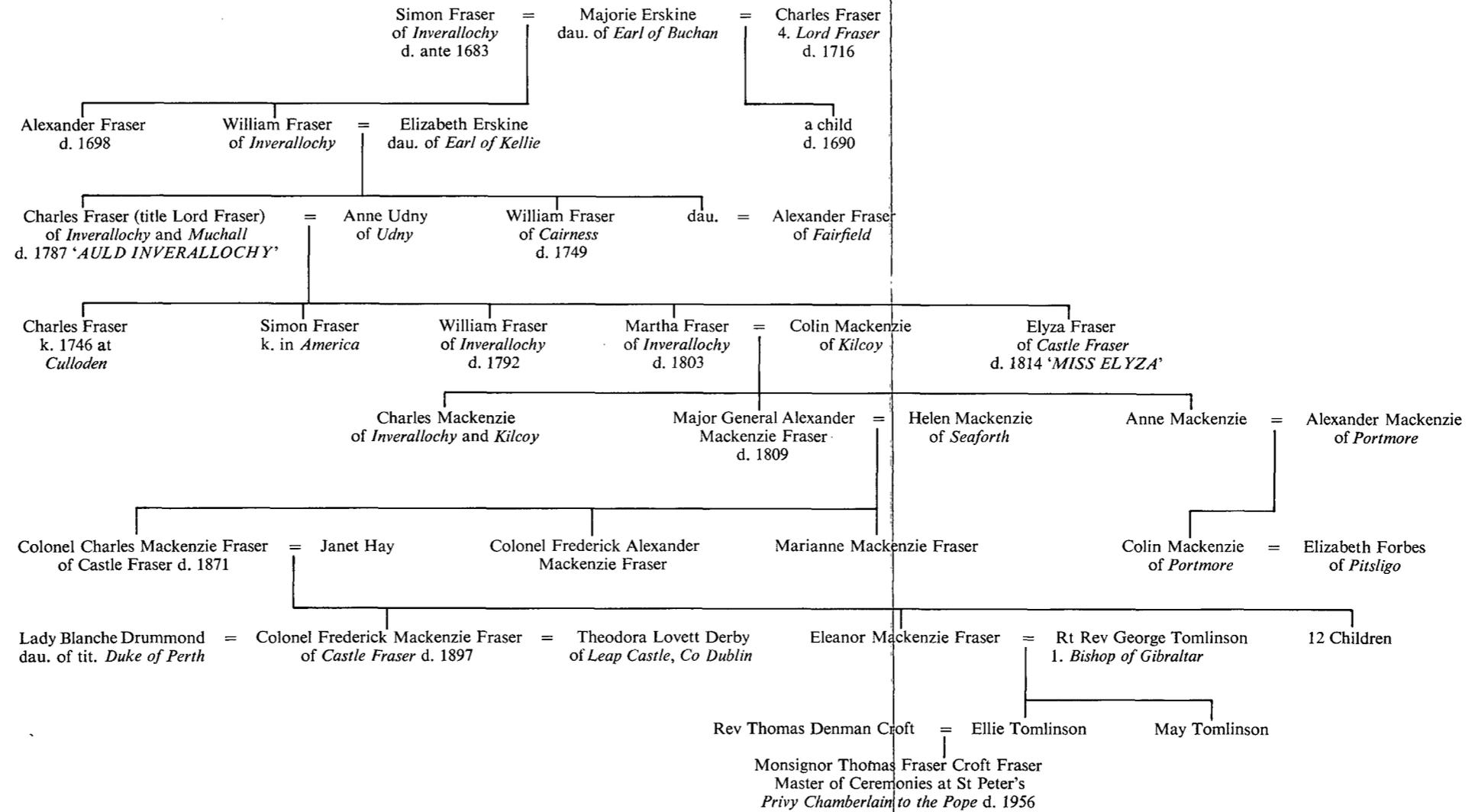
Thus, like many other families on Donside, the Frasers rose to riches, power, and position on the ruins of the ancient Celtic Earldom of Mar.

There may already have been a house on the site before Thomas Fraser settled there, or he may have built anew himself. From the evidence, which suggests that the genesis of the present house is a substantial mid-15th-century stone tower, either might have been the case.

The Frasers of Stoneywood were now firmly based in Aberdeenshire, where their new Barony of Stoneywood and Muchall had been added to their existing lands of Kinmundy. They married their neighbour's daughters, added to their estates, absented themselves from their duties in the wars on the borders, and generally seem to have led uneventful and respectable lives as country lairds until the death of Andrew Fraser in 1565, and the succession to the family estates and dignities of his second son Michael.

By the standards of the NE this particular branch of the Frasers was an incomer and was only just beginning to establish ties of relationship with the local families. Michael Fraser's great-grandmother had been Gillies Arbuthnott of Arbuthnott, but she was from Kincardineshire, and it was his grandmother, the daughter of Lord Forbes, who provided the first real link with the older Aberdeen families. In his mother, Margaret Irvine of Drum, and his wife, Isobel Forbes of Monymusk these links were finally forged. It was perhaps as much subconsciously to mark this *arrival*, as the changed architectural fashion, greater wealth and the demand for increased comfort of the period, that led Michael Fraser in the mid 1570s to embark on the massive re-modelling of his house. The evidence suggests that he may have used Thomas Leiper, who was later greatly to extend Tolquhon Castle for William Forbes, for this work.

The work involved transforming the old tower into a new Z-plan house with the addition of a round tower at the SE corner and a square tower (now known as the Michael Tower) at the NE corner. This work was not carried higher than the second floor and on Michael's death in 1588-9 was still unfinished. Michael Fraser was succeeded by his son Andrew, created 1. Lord Fraser in 1633. He was to hold Castle Fraser for 48 years, and it is to him that it owes its present splendid form. His first work was to complete and improve the Z-house. This involved demolishing the W end of the 15th-century tower and extending it westwards. Together with this went the adding of two further floors to the whole house with an extra floor in the round tower, and the crowning of the whole with an extremely elaborate upper work. For this he seems to have employed as his master mason John Bell, whose monogram appears on the N front. This structural and



external work was probably finished by 1618, which date is carved on the gable overlooking the courtyard, but the internal finishes were still in hand in 1622 when James Leiper was employed to pave the Hall. Although the accommodation had been enormously improved it was still not adequate and further low service wings to the N, and enclosing the courtyard, were added between 1621 and 1636. The W wing was added before 1631, together with the new kitchen and dining room, but the E wing was not built or at least not completed until after 1633 in which year Alexander Fraser had been raised to the peerage.

His son Andrew, who succeeded as 2. Lord Fraser, had already suffered one of those terrible tragedies which so mark the histories of most Scottish families during the 16th and 17th centuries. During his father's life he lived at Faichfield, a house on the Kinmundy property with his wife Margaret Elphinstone and their young family. A quarrel developed with a neighbour, Sir William Keith of Ludquharn over seats in the new kirk of Peterugie, and on the night of Christmas Day, 1621, the followers of Ludquharn sacked the house of Faichfield, so roughly handling the inmates that his eldest son, Andrew, died shortly afterwards, 'of the extraordinary fear and fray given him'.

After his succession in 1636 the 2. Lord Fraser played an active part in the politics of the unsettled period of the Civil War. As early as 1638 he was in opposition to the King, refusing to ensure that the people subscribed to the King's Covenant, and he was amongst those who protested at the public proclamation of the Confession of Faith at the Mercat Cross in Aberdeen. In the January of the following year he was amongst the Protestant nobles and lairds meeting at Turriff to choose Commissioners to represent them in Edinburgh. He followed this by entertaining the Protestant leaders, including Montrose who had not yet deserted to the King, at Castle Fraser. He took the field with the Lords Kintore and Erroll, and the Master of Forbes in March, and on 10 May saw the first action of the Civil War, when an attack on Towie Barclay by the Lairds of Banff, Gight, and Cromartie was repulsed. One man, David Prat a servant to Gight, was killed.

On the 13 May the Covenanting Lords were again in Turriff where they were surprised whilst they slept. For a while the skirmish was indecisive as both sides had difficulties with their cannon, but eventually as Spalding very nicely puts it

'At last ane uther was agane schott, the feir quheirof made thame all cleirlye to tak the flight. Follouit the chace. The Lord Fraser was said to hev foull farldinges; he wan away'!

Ten days later he was in Aberdeen assisting at the sack of the Bishop's house, 'bot they gat none of the bischopis plenishing to speik of, becaus it was all convoyit away'. After this it seems hardly unfair that on 12 June Lord Aboyne should attack Castle Fraser. The barns and policies were sacked, but the house was defended and Aboyne withdrew to the Mearns. Lord Fraser 'wes fled fra hame' at the time.

The story of the murder of the Gordons by the Frasers probably dates from this period. In an attempt to bring peace between the warring factions 20 Gordons sat down to dine with 20 Frasers in the Great Hall at Muchall. 'Hospitality or no' said Lord Fraser 'if I smell treachery I'll touch my beard. Then stab every man!' Inadvertently he did, and 20 dead Gordons lay stretched on the floor. An identical dinner party is said to have been given by Lord Forbes at Druminnor with similar results. Probably such a grisly feast never took place – but the story rose from the general tenor of the times and the fact that many people thought that there were at least 20 Gordons who would be the better for the letting of a little life out of them.

After this the North-East grew quieter as the war moved away, and it was not until 1643 with the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant between Scotland and England that war

came back to Aberdeenshire. By early 1644 the Royalist forces – with the Gordons prominent amongst them – were harrying the Covenanting party, and Spalding comments unkindly that ‘The Lord Fraser also, being under feir . . . doun to Cairnbulg gois he out of the get, leaving sum men to keep the place of Muchalls’. He was off to the safety of Cairnbulg again in April, but this seems not to have told against him, for in July he was appointed one of the Parliamentary Commissioners for the suppression of the rising in the North. This was the summer when Montrose changed sides and allowed his name to be forever stained by the brutal Sack of Aberdeen on 13/14 September. He followed this by moving up into lower Deeside and Donside, destroying the property of his former friends and allies, the Covenanting lairds, and on 18 October ‘He brynt the ritche corne yairdes of Muchall, pertening to Lord Androw Frazer, and spolzeit his ground as a pryme covenanter’. Once again the house escaped.

Lord Fraser continued to play his part in public affairs; in 1645 he became a member of the Committee of Estates, and in 1649 he was one of those responsible for ‘Putting the Kingdom in a Posture of Defence’. He died between 1656–8 probably in his early sixties (he had been first married in 1618). He played a more active part in public affairs than any of his forebears or successors; unremarkable as a soldier, although he led two cavalry charges before the fall of Aberdeen on 13 September 1644, and (if Spalding’s laconic remarks are anywhere near true) a man of only moderate courage, his political ability was, nevertheless, highly valued by his own side, and he had the notable distinction of never wavering in his principles, or in his devotion to the Covenant.

His son, also Andrew, 3. Lord Fraser, was of rather less distinction. Two contemporary descriptions of him – ‘The handsomest person of all the nobility as I judge’, and ‘One of the prettiest noblemen in the Kingdom’ – are not impressive. Judging by an Act of Parliament 24 June 1662, in which it is declared that ‘the Lord Fraser is, according to his patent, to have and enjoye the tittle of *Lord Fraser*, and discharges all His Majesty’s subjects that none of them presume in discourses, writings, or otherways to give him any other title or designation, as they will be answerable at their heist peril’; he had either been laying claim to be called by titles enjoyed by other branches of the family, or adorning a perfectly good Baron’s title with some species of ‘*Papalcounterfeitery*’. Both his marriages were on an equally noble scale; his wife Catherine being the daughter of Lord Lovat and the widow of the Viscount of Arbutnott, whilst his second wife, Jean, was the daughter of Lord Seaforth, and widow of the Earl of Mar.

His only son, Charles 4. and last Lord Fraser succeeded to an impoverished estate. Probably the noble pretensions of Andrew Fraser had led to an expenditure far in excess of his revenues: certainly by 1689 James Moir had acquired the lands of Stoneywood, and in 1682 the estate of Muchall was disposed to the Earl of Mar in consideration of Lord Mar’s having settled debts of the 3. Lord Fraser equal to its value: it seems however that Lord Fraser continued to live at the Castle. In 1683 Lord Mar disposed Muchall to John Keirie of Gogar, a disposition confirmed by Lord Fraser in 1693. After Keirie’s death in 1703 Fraser attempted to buy Muchall back, beginning by leasing the estate. The lease was broken in 1712 as the purchase money had not been forthcoming, and Lord Mar again disposed the lands and Barony of Muchall, this time to William Fraser of Inverallochy, Lord Fraser’s step-son.

Perhaps because of his position as a broken and landless peer Charles Fraser’s political career was equally unstable. He refused to attend the Parliament of 1689, but following the Jacobite collapse in 1690 he surrendered to Major General Mackay at Ayr, being allowed home in December as his only child was dying. In 1692 he was in trouble for proclaiming the exiled King James at the Mercat Cross at Fraserburgh – it seems to have been more in the nature of a drunken spree than a serious political act for he was only fined £200 (sterling not Scots) for drinking treasonable healths. His conscience was sufficiently quietened in 1695 for him to take the

oaths. He was involved with his cousin, Simon Fraser (later 11. Lord Lovat), in the latter's abduction of the heiress of Hugh 9. Lord Lovat, in a successful attempt to prevent her marriage with the Master of Saltoun (yet another Fraser cousin). Although arrested and questioned he received no punishment for his part in this disgraceful affair.

After voting in support of the Act of Union he took little part in politics until 1715, when abandoning his duty he came out for the Pretender. This was to be his end, for although he escaped capture, and by remaining in hiding he avoided attainder, he was forced to wander about from place to place. In the course of these wanderings he was clambering over the cliffs at Pennan in company with James Farquharson of Balmoral, ADC to the rebel commander. Both fell over the precipice; Farquharson survived to fight in the second rebellion, but Lord Fraser was killed. Why he joined the rebel forces is not clear: he may have seen it as a last hope for the rescue of his shattered fortune; he may have been forced into it by Lord Mar. Mar was prepared to burn his own wretched tenants into rebellion, and may have been equally brutal with a man who was financially helpless, and in part dependant on him.

The collapse of the '15 and the death of Lord Fraser brought a second branch of the family to Muchall, or Castle Fraser as it was now generally called. The Frasers of Inverallochy were cadets of Lovat, being descended from Sir Simon Fraser of Inverallochy, younger son of Simon Fraser 6. Lord Lovat. Sir Simon had a grandson, also Simon, who had married Marjorie Erskine, daughter of the Earl of Buchan. Simon Fraser must have been dead by 1683 as in that year his widow married Charles Fraser, 4. Lord Fraser, who would have been very much younger than his wife.

At this point there arises no little confusion. By 1717 Charles Fraser of Inverallochy (known as '*AULD INVERALLOCHY*'), following the death of Lord Fraser, was in possession of Castle Fraser. According to *Burke* Charles was the third son of Marjorie Erskine's first marriage. Even allowing for the fact that he was always known as '*AULD INVERALLOCHY*' this would have been absurd. It would mean that on his death in 1787 he would have been 105, and even then he would have had to have been a posthumous child, and his own father would have needed to die, and his mother to have re-married within three months of his conception. Sir Alexander Leith-Hay says that Charles succeeded his father William, whilst the *Scottish Peerage* states that in 1713 Lord Mar had disposed the lands and Barony of Muchall to William Fraser, son of Simon Fraser, and grandson of Simon Fraser, Marjorie Erskine's first husband (this is quoting MS documents held by Sir W Fraser's Trustees). According to MS notes at Castle Fraser Charles had an elder brother, William, who was killed at Sherriffmuir, and a father named Alexander. In *Burke* he is given two brothers; William with no date of death, and Alexander who died in 1698 (Appendix A).

Although Charles Fraser lived until 1787 he seems to have left little mark on Castle Fraser. It did not suffer in the '45 for he made no overt attempt to support the rebels in spite of having been created titular Lord Fraser in 1723 by the Old Pretender: though it is noted that 'on Lord Pitsligo's resolution being known, amongst those who appeared to join him was Fraser, brother to Inverallachy'. If the house did not suffer the family did, for the eldest son, Charles, who was only 21, commanded the Fraser Regiment at Culloden, falling wounded on the field. The following day he was seen as he lay there by one of the Government Commanders, who ordered his immediate murder, an order which the future General Wolfe refused to obey. Nor was any other officer willing so to degrade himself. Eventually some wretched creature was found prepared to despatch the unhappy sufferer. The story is generally told to the detriment of the Duke of Cumberland who is credited with personal responsibility for every atrocity which followed in the aftermath of the rebellion, but it is more likely that the perpetrator was General Hawley, a man despised and

execrated by his own officers and soldiers as much as by the enemy. Such an action is in keeping with his cowardly and bullying nature. The fact that Wolfe was serving at the time on Hawley's staff and not on that of the Duke makes this more likely.

Charles Fraser had married Anne Udny, daughter of the laird of Udny, and there were four other children of this marriage, two sons and two daughters. One son, Simon, was killed in America, the other, William succeeded his father and died in 1792. After this the properties were divided, Inverallochy going to Martha Fraser, who had married Colin MacKenzie of Kilcoy, and Castle Fraser to her younger, unmarried sister Elyza – the *Miss ELYZA* who was something of a character.

Miss Elyza had been born in 1736, so she was 56 when she inherited in 1792, living for another 22 years. She was bedridden for the last years of her life, and it is said that the Castle was plundered during this time by her friends, servants and kinsfolk.

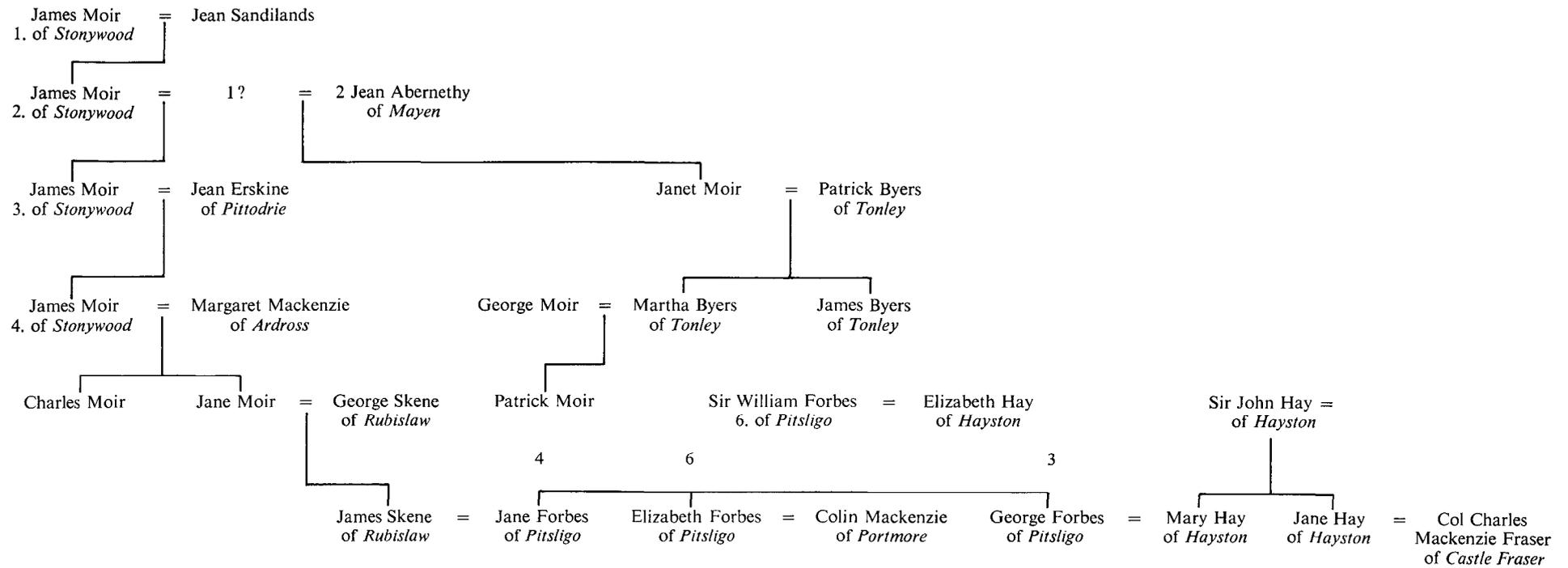
The year before she came into the estate there had been repairs to the Castle, principally to roofs to the tune of £552; but Miss Elyza prided herself on her own efforts, and preserved at the Castle is a note in her handwriting, which records that:

‘This
Castle was begun
By Fraser laird of Muchall
Added to in the Reign of King Robert Bruce
The Wings were built by the First Lord Fraser
In the Reign of Charles the First
And the whole Restored
And Beautified by
Elyza Fraser
1795.

Much of her work was connected with the policies and the new stable court, which was designed for her by John Paterson. He also prepared a drawing for a new hall, or vestibule in 1794, which was never built. In fact Miss Elyza's alterations and additions were slight. The extensions for which she has subsequently been blamed, and which have now been removed, were in fact the work of her great-nephew Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser.

Miss Elyza was supposed to have been in love with her uncle, the Laird of Udny, but her father, disapproving of this, sent her abroad. When she returned she brought with her a maid who was not known by any of her family or by any on the estate. For many years they lived together in the rooms over the Great Hall until this maid died. Gossip having been at work suspicion was aroused, and on the coffin being opened it was found to contain the body of a man. (This story was told by the late Miss Violet Arbuthnot Leslie.) Certainly Miss Elyza travelled abroad a considerable amount, and it was whilst in Italy that she may have renewed her friendship with James Byres of Tonley, with whom she is also supposed to have been in love. James Byres, who was three years older than Miss Elyza, did not finally return to his Aberdeen estates until 1790, although he may have been in Scotland in 1756-58; indeed he had been largely abroad since his father went into exile in 1747, and before settling in Rome in 1758, he had served some years in France in Lord Ogilvie's Regiment. Though he and Miss Elyza may have known each other as children, their better acquaintance must have developed in later years in Rome, and been maintained on his return to Aberdeenshire, just before she inherited Castle Fraser. The friendship was certainly a close one; he kept her portrait at Tonley and in her will she left him 'my carriage and best pair of horses with the harness and the Finestone Snuff Box presented

CASTLE FRASER: The *Moir*, *Byers*, *Skene*, *Mackenzie* and *Forbes* connection



(Note: only those names directly relevant to the connection have been included.)

to me by Lord Gardenstone . . .’) In Cluny kirkyard is perhaps the most magnificent classical tomb in the north of Scotland which he designed for her in 1806, a copy of which he wished to have built for himself.

Having no children of her own she intended Castle Fraser for her sister’s eldest son, Charles Mackenzie, younger, of Kilcoy and Inverallochy. That this failed to come about was entirely the young man’s own fault. His aunt asked him for a pet dog, and instead of ‘some sweetly pooty pug or poodle’ he sent her – a Bulldog! This so enraged the old lady that she immediately disinherited him in favour of his soldier brother, later Major General, Alexander MacKenzie, who assumed the additional surname of Fraser. He did not survive his aunt, and the next proprietor was his eldest son, Colonel Charles MacKenzie Fraser – the estate being the subject of an extremely complicated entail.

Colonel Charles was a Peninsular veteran having lost a leg *and* had his hat shot through at the Battle of Burgos. For the next 35 years his effect on the Castle was immediate, incessant, and disastrous, although he must have made it in many ways a more convenient place to live in. In the process he destroyed every vestige of the 17th- and 18th-century interiors that had survived, and by filling the courtyard with an enormous domed staircase hall, and with access galleries and passages completely ruined the appearance of the north side.

His activities were greeted with that fulsome praise which the provincial press reserved, indeed still reserves, for such subjects:

‘We have said Miss Elyza died in 1813, and was succeeded by her grand-nephew, the present proprietor – Colonel Charles Fraser – who in his youth saw, and had a part in much active service during the French war. In comparing the past aspect of this property with the present, one cannot fail to remark the energy and refined taste of the proprietor in the many extensive and substantial improvements.’

Some of his friends were a little less enthusiastic, and Mr J J Stephens writing from Lisbon in 1825 suggest that ‘. . . you will spoil the old Castle by destroying its ancient walls. Do arrange it so as to preserve its antiquity, and avoid explosions of gas!’. This is sad, for the Colonel, as his correspondence with James Skene of Rubislaw, and his own notes on ancient Castles show, was deeply interested in antiquities.

His architectural activities were aided at different times by both William Burn, and John Smith, and his efforts at re-furbishing the interiors engaged the interest of two of his aunts. His Aunt Eliza, whose affairs seemed to have been permanently entangled offered to sell him her china as ‘being more suitable to yr Castle than my Cottage’, whilst her sister, Lady Gibbs – wife of the Chief Justice – wrote from Kent:

‘. . . Having saved King Charles and the Pheasants from the wreck of my poor imprudent Eliza’s affairs I wish to give them to you. I think they are worthy to hang in your Castle, and you may view them as Old Family Relics, and also my last keepsake.
. . . Marianne tells me His Majesty is safe landed at the Castle, of which I am glad, for mine, your Grandfather’s (who brought him from China, having had him painted from a print of Van Dike’s) and his *own*, for I have a little touch of the Jacobite *yet*’.

On another occasion in a letter accompanying the present of an old portrait she added:

‘. . . it will show you had a Grandfather, which the Parvenues often want you know’.

Her keen delight in the ridiculous was no doubt responsible for transmogrifying her highly respectable husband, Sir Vicary Gibbs, into *Sir Gibberish Vicks*, a name which, thinly disguised by the pen of Anthony Trollope, won immortality as the eminent old lawyer, *Sir Ricketty Giggs*.

Colonel Charles lived until 1871, when he was succeeded by his only son Colonel Frederick, MacKenzie Fraser. In his lifetime the Castle was virtually closed to any but private visitors, even the redoubtable David MacGibbon and Thomas Ross being denied access. When he died in 1897, Colonel Frederick left the estate in the hands of Trustees, with his second wife enjoying a life rent, but the eventual male heir was his great nephew, Thomas Fraser Croft Fraser grandson of the 1st Bishop of Gibraltar. Mrs MacKenzie Fraser had been born Theodora Lovett Derby of Leap Castle, Co Dublin, and the heir was to end up as a Privy Chamberlain to the Pope and Master of Ceremonies at St Peters. Such a combination when joined with Trustees and an Agricultural depression would ruin any estate. By the end of the First World War it was clear that there must be a sale and negotiations were entered into with Lord Cowdray. These dragged on through 1919 and 1921 but without success, and in 1922 the whole estate was put up for public auction. It, together with many of its contents, and the whole of the Muniment Room, was bought by Lord Cowdray for his second son, the Hon Clive Pearson.

When the crash came it came in true Irish style with Miss Arbuthnott Leslie saving Mrs MacKenzie's prize stallion *Simon Fraser*, from the Sheriff's Officers by riding him across country to Warthill in the dead of night – a matter of 12 miles as the crow flies.

Weetman Pearson, 1. Viscount Cowdray was one of those slightly larger than life-size figures thrown up at the end of the 19th century who carved immense fortunes out of half a continent. In this case the fortune was particularly immense and the carving was by way of harbours, railways, tunnels, canals, dams and drains – for he was the greatest contractor of his age – and Mexican oil. As the trusted friend of President Diaz he was largely responsible for the economic revival of that unhappy country before the revolution of 1911; similarly the prosperity of the Sudan rests on his work, the Sennar Dam, which made the Gezira possible.

Most men of this type have some besetting weakness, and in the case of Lord Cowdray it took the amiable form of saving old buildings, which fortunately his fortune was well able to sustain. Through his efforts the ruins of Cowdray House and Dunnottar Castle, together with the vaults of St George's Chapel and the setting of Colchester Castle, as well as Castle Fraser were saved from inevitable decay. His charities were on an even more splendid scale, for in apparent contradiction he combined the roles of a great capitalist and employer of labour, with those of a radical industrialist and thinker, who applied his principles to his own employees. In this he was considerably in advance of the Liberal party of his day, in which interest he represented Colchester for 14 years. Only once does he seem to have been baulked in his aims, and that was when he approached Lord Sempill with a view to buying Craigievar. The answer was short and to the point. But Lord Cowdray was as determined as Lord Sempill was irascible, and shortly afterward Lord Sempill, looking out of the Hall window at Craigievar, was enraged by the sight of a party encamped in *his* drive. The party consisted of Lord Cowdray, his lordship's chauffeur, his lordship's factor, his lordship's man of business, and his lordship's architect, Sir Robert Lorimer, who was engaged in what used to be known as 'taking a prospect of the house'. The ensuing meeting was not friendly but the outcome was striking. Before very long a pair of magnificent lodges, looking for all the world as if Craigievar had pupped, were built at the entrance to Dunecht on the main Aberdeen-Alford road, where it was impossible to avoid seeing them. And Lady Cowdray is supposed to have said ever afterwards that 'It was difficult to see what the Sempills had to be so proud about'.

Castle Fraser became the home of Clive Pearson, Lord Cowdray's second son, and a long period of restoration began. Sir Robert Lorimer was appointed architect in 1922. Reading the correspondence between Sir Robert and his client which lasted for six years one feels that Mr Pearson's powers of resistance were quite remarkable. From the outset the enthusiasm was all on Sir Robert's side. Two weeks after being commissioned to undertake a complete survey of the castle (which still exists) he wrote 'The Fraser family, though they may have been proud of the place, cannot have possessed a vestige of taste'. By the May of the following year, when the survey was largely finished, in letter to Mr Pearson, he was writing, 'I have looked at the plans a good deal, and it would be very easy to spoil the place, but to convert it into a pleasant and easily worked Country house and yet preserve its character will be a difficult, but uncommonly interesting problem'.

This was shortly followed with suggestions that yet more of the courtyard should be filled in, in order to provide even further halls and staircases, and a new external stair should be built from the Great Hall to the Garden. Sir Robert's feathers could be ruffled; they were by the chance remark of Clive Pearson's 'what terrible fellows these architects are', and a letter apologising for this apparent tactlessness was quickly forthcoming. Nevertheless a client who would say 'what about knocking a hole here' ('here' being nearly ten feet of solid masonry) or 'can't we stuff the footmen in there', or whose rather vague letters of instruction were written on the point of departure for, or even on shipboard en-route to Chile or Mexico, can induce a state of near frenzy in any architect. Sir Robert was then at the height of his career with a notable tally of castles re-arranged behind him, and he must have found it intensely frustrating to see such a plum as Castle Fraser constantly eluding his grasp.

By 1927 nothing had been decided and on 12 March Mr Pearson wrote a letter which made it very clear that there were to be no more grandiose schemes, and which contains a passage of the soundest common sense . . . 'Actually I feel very doubtful whether we shall wish to commence work up there. I have the impression that our scheming has been too drastic. It is in my mind that we have endeavoured to fit the Castle into what we pretend would be our necessities; whereas we ought perhaps to proceed on the basis of fitting ourselves into the Castle as she is with the very minimum of disturbance.' . . . Poor Sir Robert! he was very hurt.

But by now there was another figure at Castle Fraser: Dr William Kelly the Aberdeen architect and antiquarian was beginning his long and careful association with the Castle. In June 1928 Mr Alan Marshall, the factor to the Castle Fraser estate writing to his employer included the following note . . . 'Dr Kelly has said that some of Sir Robert Lorimer's proposals are *entirely wrong*. Dr Kelly and Sir Robert are very good friends and of course Dr Kelly would not like Sir Robert to *know* that he had been criticising his suggestions, only I thought it advisable to inform you'.

Sir Robert Lorimer died in 1929, and from then until the war the history of the castle was the history of the careful unpicking and restoration of the Michael Tower and parts of the Hall under Dr Kelly's direction. After the war thieves stripped the lead from the roofs of the 19th century additions filling the courtyard and the opportunity was taken to demolish these and restore the courtyard to its original form. Clive Pearson, who died in 1965, had made Castle Fraser over to his second daughter, Mrs Lavinia Smiley, in 1947 and it was under her direction and that of her husband, Major Michael Smiley, that the restoration continued until the end of the 1960s.

In 1976 a new chapter began in the history of Castle Fraser. Four hundred years after Michael Fraser set up the Royal Arms on his new tower, the castle passed into the care of the National Trust for Scotland.

THE ARGUMENTS

For a hundred and fifty years now antiquarians have been exercised over the dating of Castle Fraser: it has been the subject of comment and query by James Skene of Rubislaw, and John Stuart; it has been described by both R W Billing, and MacGibbon and Ross; Dr William Kelly, and Dr W Douglas Simpson have each published papers on it; and Stewart Cruden has drawn attention to its composite nature. To add to all this scholarship must seem a work of super-rogation, but there is evidence which has come to light and may have been ignored: it has certainly been overlooked. There was also one student of the Castle during the 1930s – Mr Alan Marshall, the factor – whose work both on the 16th- to 17th-century buildings, and on the development of 19th-century extensions has neither been published, nor acknowledged, although Dr Kelly was, and Dr Douglas Simpson, should have been aware of it, and it in fact formed the basis of the former's later thinking.

At the risk of being prolix it is necessary to attempt to rehearse the arguments that have been put forward in support of the various dates favoured by these different authorities.

On 12 February 1838 James Skene wrote an involved and rambling letter full of several extremely quaint theories about the dating of medieval structures to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser, but it contains the following interesting passage:

'The first James were very jealous on the subject and would suffer no castles to be built without special royal licence asked and obtained, therefore few are of that era. About the middle of the 15th century a great many then in ruins were restored and many new ones erected. I take your small square tower to be of this date, and the first part of the building . . .'

Here is the recognition that the castle is of different dates, and that part must be earlier than the exteriors suggest. At the time of this letter the 19th century additions were in full swing and Skene may have seen some of the evidence that has become visible again. Presumably by '*your small square tower*' he means the Michael Tower, which at first sight appears to be the oldest part of the building.

In 1841 the Spalding Club published in its *Miscellany* the letters of Simon Fraser, 2. Lord Lovat, which were at Castle Fraser. When writing to Colonel Charles about these, John Stuart, the Secretary of the Club, touched on other matters to do with the family, and wrote:

'I think I mentioned that James II in 1454 exchanged the lands of Stoneywood and Muchalls with the representative of Corntoun (Fraser) for the Lands of Corntoun near Stirling. If it should be found that Muchalls were royal lands up to the time of James II it might account for the more venerable part of Castle Fraser which is undoubtedly of great antiquity. In this case the Square Tower, as at Hallforest and elsewhere might have been the Royal Keep while the King pursued the favourite diversion of hunting the Wild Boar. On this subject however I hope further research will throw additional light.'

Again there is the anxiety to date the earliest part of the castle to the mid-15th century; although in this case it is supported with argument rather more rational than Skene's. The Square, or Michael Tower still figures as the earliest part of the building.

When R W Billing published *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, between 1845 and 1852, he too was exercised over the ancient date of Castle Fraser. After describing the ornate character of the upper works he comments on where the round tower joins the central square mass; 'Of that mass the upper will be seen to be of a different character from the lower architectural department, which probably was the unadorned square tower of the fifteenth cen-

ture'. This is, of course, perfectly true; much truer as it can be shown than Billing knew. But as a general application the theory is faulty, for until well into the 17th century the lower stage of the tower or Z-house was treated plainly in contrast to the upper works. What is interesting is that Billing either instinctively or by false reasoning identified the 15th century core of the castle.

This view was vigorously controverted by MacGibbon and Ross in the second volume of *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, 1887. They argue, quite correctly, that in the 16th and 17th century the plain lower part and ornate upper part were typical, but apply this general rule to a particular case which is an exception, and cite the Z-plan as conclusive evidence of the later date. This view was a perfectly reasonable one to hold, as none of the evidence which contradicts it had at that time come to light. Nor, of course, had they visited the castle.

There the matter rested until 1931 when Dr Kelly published his paper 'Castle Fraser, or Muchall-in-Mar' in *The Deeside Field*. He had been studying the Castle since 1928 and had come to the conclusion that it was a composite building, the earliest part, the Michael Tower with possibly part of the central block, dating from c 1576 and perhaps the work of George Bel of Midmar. The castle was then extended and transformed into a full Z plan between 1598 and 1618 by John Bel for Andrew, 1. Lord Fraser.

Dr Kelly continued working at Castle Fraser for many years and was supported in his research by the encouragement of Mr Pearson, who had a deep curiosity about his very complex house and with even greater enthusiasm by Mr Marshall. Alan Marshall had come to Castle Fraser as factor in 1922 but it becomes quite apparent from his letters and memoranda that the castle itself was his great love.

By 1937 Dr Kelly had revised his views very considerably and in a letter of 17 December he explained them to Mrs Pearson. The most radical revision was his opinion that the Great Hall dated from the mid-15th century and that the Michael Tower was added to it. This addition necessitated the demolition and rebuilding of part of the western end of the Hall vault. He still considered that the round tower was part of the 1617 build. This theory, although it answered many questions, raised many new ones, for the more the structure was cleared of later work the more confusing the junction between the Michael Tower and the main block became. This confusion did not suit Mr Pearson who bore with it for another year until 6 Jan 1939 when he wrote to his factor 'I greatly hope that Dr Kelly will shortly be giving us his solutions of the outstanding problems. If Dr Kelly can have produced the drawings of his solutions within the next fortnight or so, I will endeavour to come up to Castle Fraser for a day with a view to taking up with you how we can best proceed with the work.' Mr Marshall's reply contained the information that before Dr Kelly could proceed he would need to take further measurements – but it also contained something else of very much greater interest: 'Recently I have been trying to evolve a new theory which might help to explain the different stages of the evolution of the Castle, and I arranged to fetch Dr Kelly out in the afternoon to explain my theory to him and give him an opportunity to pick it to pieces. As a matter of fact I think he is rather impressed. The enclosed sketches will give you an indication of my theory.'

Mr Marshall's theory was that the Great Hall was of the 15th century, but that it was of less length than at present. When built the Michael Tower had abutted against the W gable, and that subsequently the Hall had been lengthened to the W. Dr Kelly saw the plan and believed it approximated very closely to the facts, but he had certain reservations, especially as no evidence could be found for either the internal service stair or the entrance to the early Hall, which he suggested should be at first floor level. Because of this lack of evidence he placed them both in the demolished W wall.

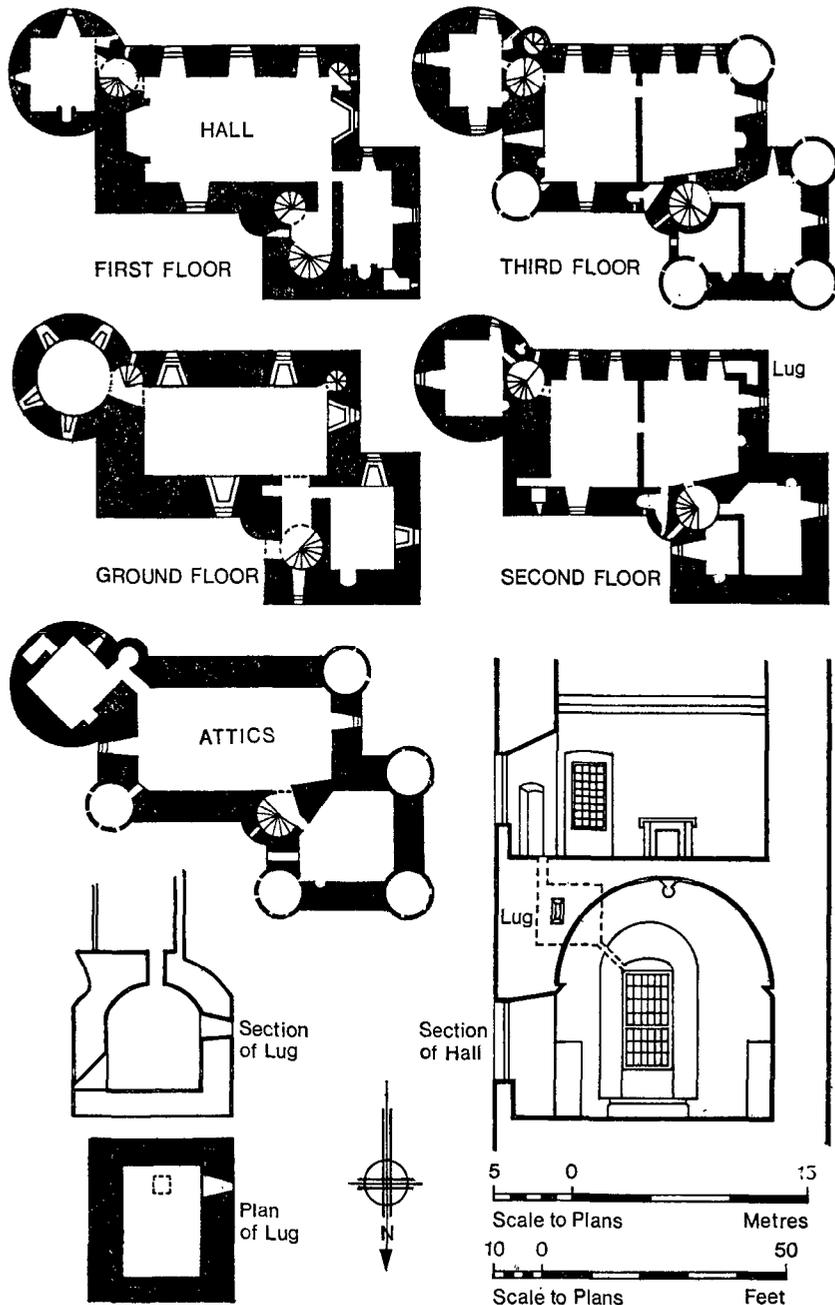


FIG 1 Castle Fraser: Plans and details of the 'Lug' (after MacGibbon and Ross and James Skene)

Nothing further was published on Castle Fraser until 1950 when a paper entitled *The Development of Castle Fraser* by Dr W Douglas Simpson appeared in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*. He did not care for radical or revolutionary theories – unless they happened to be his own. His paper was long and detailed, and dealt firmly with any points at variance with his own views, and his views coincided largely with those put forward by Dr Kelly in his paper of 1931. He did not accept the mid-15th century date and declared roundly of Dr Kelly that ‘Had he been spared to devote further consideration to the Castle, and had he been able to weigh up the fresh evidence that has since become available, I am certain that he would have abandoned his 1937 idea that the central mass was part of a fifteenth century tower-house, and would have reverted to his first and sounder view that the oldest portion is the Michael Tower’.

In Dr Simpson’s view the Michael Tower was built, and then at a later date the Hall block was started. This was built from E to W. The building stopped at the construction line in the vault so that the SE corner of the Michael Tower could be demolished and the Hall completed. Whilst accepting c 1576 as the date for the Michael Tower he suggests, . . . ‘that the entire ground floor of the three-stepped castle, central building and round tower included followed on with no great interval of time, though doubtless in successive stages, is strongly urged by the remarkable ornate triplet gunloops which are fully evident in the basements of all three compartments . . .’ In rejecting the 15th-century theory he argues, quite rightly, that all the evidence points to the W gable of the Hall being of later construction than the Michael Tower. This is true of the wall as it stands at present, but it means that he ignores Mr Marshall’s theory that the original W gable stood further E and had been demolished. How this came about is clear: in reading through the notes and papers Dr Simpson was looking for material by Dr Kelly – he specifically mentions the notes of 1939. Now these notes were written after Mr Marshall’s theory, and were intended to be read in conjunction with it, and with his sketches. Dr Kelly refers to both the W gables, but in such a way that they appear to be the same, and he makes no mention of the demolished gable because this is understood by implication. Read on their own however these notes are extremely confusing, and do not appear to support the argument for the 15th-century building.

Dr Kelly does not mention Mr Marshall’s name in his own notes or letters, so it is unlikely that Dr Simpson would have considered that any letters or notes of the factor would have been of either interest or relevance.

After Dr Simpson’s paper Castle Fraser continued to be included in various anthologies and glossy publication devoted to instant appraisals of important building of which journalistic ability, snobbery and ignorance are the principal ingredients. Its next serious notice was in 1963 when Stewart Cruden in *The Scottish Castle* drew attention to its composite nature and to the change in the technique of construction shown in the upper stages, which the stripping of the harling had revealed. He however considered that the round tower had been added in the 17th century to the already existing Michael Tower and Hall.

From this it emerges that Castle Fraser is a house with a more than usually complex sequence of building, but it is possible now, with the evidence that has emerged in the last 20 years to establish that sequence. This has been brought about partly by a considerable amount of internal stripping, and partly by the refusal of Major and Mrs Smiley to completely re-harl the exterior of the castle after it too had been stripped. It can be argued on structural grounds that this is ill-advised; on historical grounds, that it is unwarranted, and on aesthetic grounds that it is reprehensible, and no doubt all these arguments have and will be advanced; but one fact is clear; that with harling a vast deal of invaluable evidence would have been hidden unrecorded, and there would still be large gaps in our knowledge of this building.

James Byres has been described as ‘one of those gentleman who, with a little income, a little learning, a little knowledge of art, and a full capacity for speech, wander from gallery to gallery, delivering opinions on the works of genius with a confidence that passes with the world for the offspring of refined taste’.

Possibly Scott had Byres in mind when in *St Ronan's Well* he drew the picture of Mr Winterblossom; ‘. . . a civil sort of person, who was nicely precise in his dress. . . . In his heyday he had a small estate, which he spent like a gentleman, by mixing with the gay world. . . . To conclude he was possessed of some taste in the fine arts, at least in painting and music, although it was rather of the technical kind, than that which warms the heart and elevates the feelings’.

Where, or if, Scott met Byres is not known: it could have been in Aberdeenshire when Scott was staying with Alexander Leith of Freefield in 1796, or it could have been in Edinburgh. Byres was too well known for Scott to have been ignorant of him – but he is I think the least likely source of the information.

By far the most likely sources of Scott’s knowledge of Castle Fraser and the Frasers (if that is he had a knowledge and it is not a series of coincidences) would have been James Skene and Colin MacKenzie, the former for the building and the latter for the family. He had known both men since they were volunteers together, and both men had married sisters, Jane and Elizabeth Forbes, daughters of Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, whilst their brother, George, had married Mary Hay, daughter of Sir John Hay, and sister of Jane Hay, who was to marry Colonel Charles MacKenzie Fraser. Colonel Charles was Colin MacKenzie’s cousin; and for good measure Colin MacKenzie had been General MacKenzie’s man of business; the General was Colonel Charles’ father, and had commanded the 78th in 1794–5 when Sir Walter’s brother, John, transferred into the 2nd Bn of that regiment.

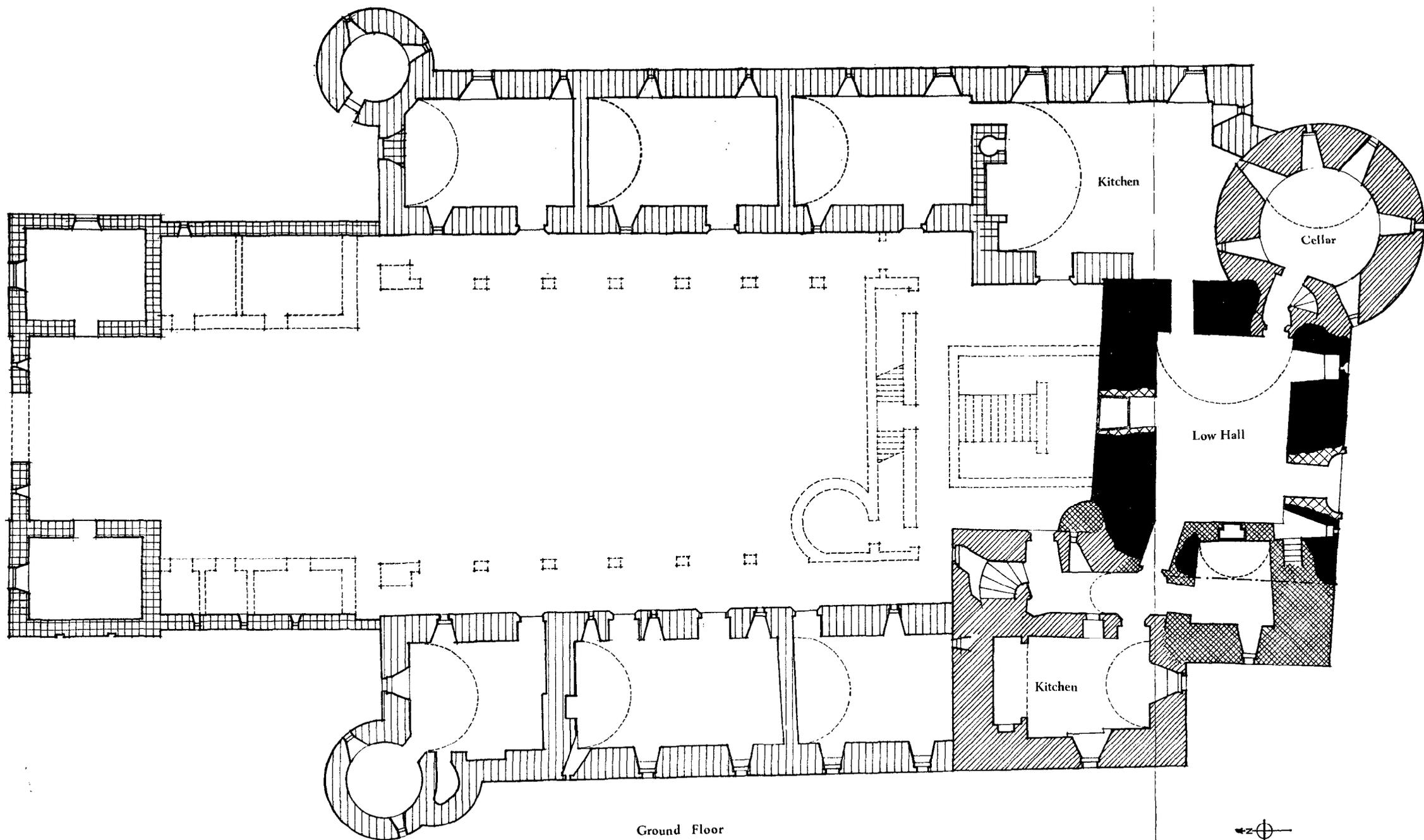
When the *Antiquary* was published in 1816 it contained three passages which could be related to Castle Fraser. The first of these it could be argued could be based on the great Frontispiece, and the dangers of over enthusiastic antiquarian attribution. The letter IBMMF have been translated as ‘John Bell, Master Mason, Leal to Fraser’ and it would not be too difficult to draw the parallel with the scene at the Kaim of Kinprunes in which Jonathan Oldbuck explains to Lovel the significance of the stone which had been found on the site ‘. . . and the third day we found a stone which we transported to Monkbarns, in order to have the sculpture taken off with plaster of Paris; it bears a sacrificing vessel and the letters ADLL which may stand without much violence for *Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*’.

‘Certainly, sir; for the Dutch antiquaries claim Caligula as the founder of a lighthouse, on the sole authority of the letters CCPF which they interpret as *Caius Caligula Pharum Fecit*.’

‘. . . Mair by token, Monkbarns, if ye howk up the bourock as ye seem to have begun, ye’ll find, if ye hae not fund it already, a stane that ane o’ the mason-callants cut a ladle on to have a bourd at the bridegroom, and he put four letters on’t, that’s ADLL – *Aiken Drum’s Lang Ladle* – for Aiken was ane o’ the kale – suppers o’ Fife’.

The two other passages are both connected with the Glenallan tragedy: this hinges on Lord Glenallan’s mistaken belief that his wife, and the mother of his son, was his illegitimate half-sister and that he was therefore guilty of incest. He and Miss Neville were in the words of old Elspeth ‘owre sib’; but not much more so than Miss Elyza Fraser and her uncle, the Laird of Udney. And when Eddie Ochiltree sees the Earl, at Glenallen House in his black hung apartment – the ancient form of mourning – this is the same story that is told of Lady Betty’s black chamber at Inverallochy, and of Lady Fraser’s at Castle Fraser.

The question of the Lug however is more complex. The two best preserved examples in Scotland are both in Aberdeenshire, at Craigston and Castle Fraser. Skene makes no mention of



Ground Floor

- c1454
- ▨ 1563-1576
- ▩ 1588-1617
- ▧ 1621-1633
- ▦ 1796-1806
- ▤ 1814-1847
- - - 1796-1847 (destroyed)

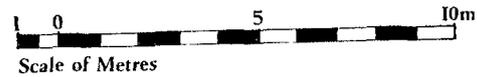
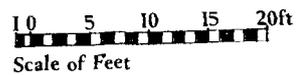
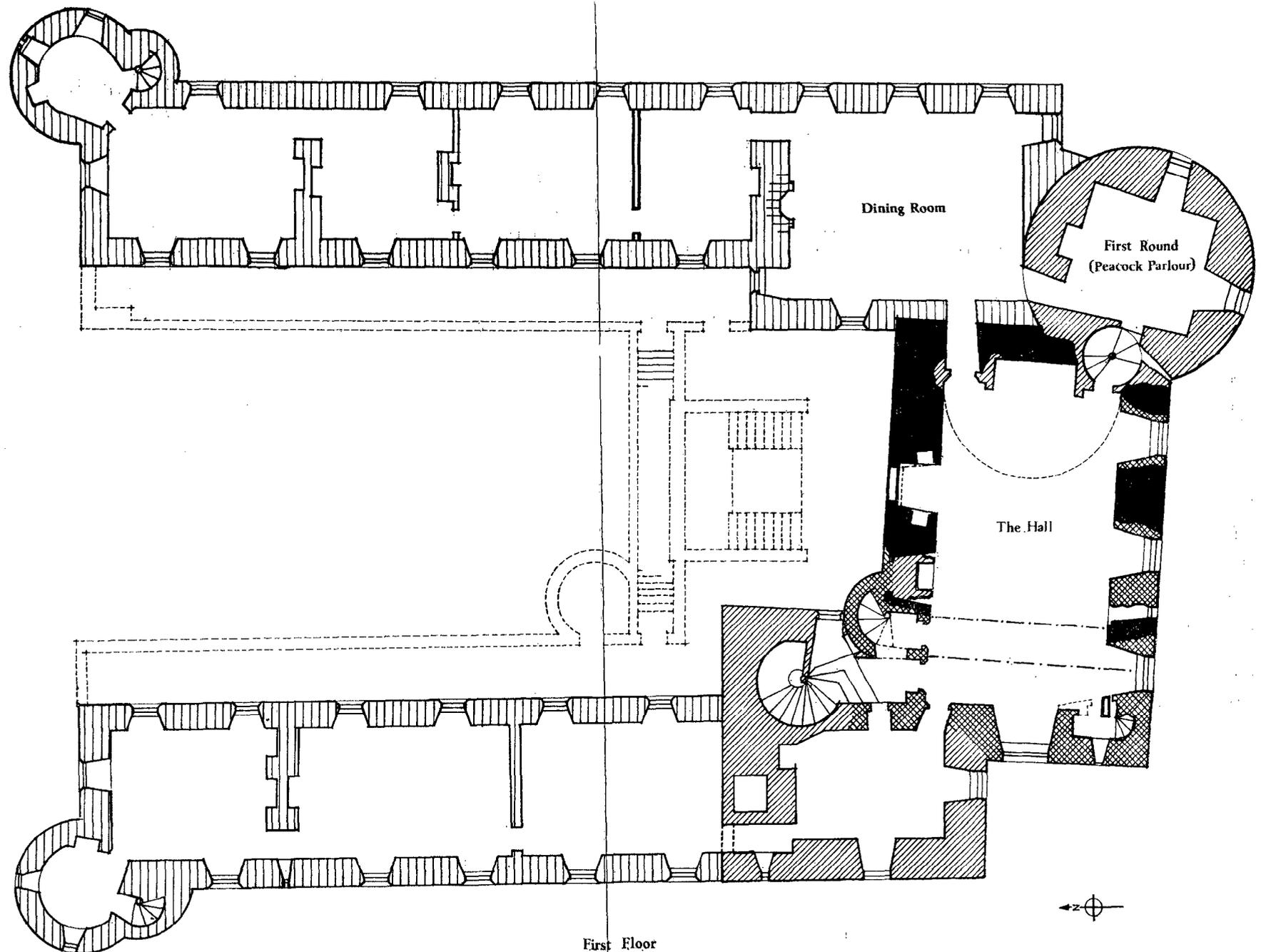


FIG 2 Castle Fraser: Ground Floor



c1454
 1563-1576
 1588-1617
 1621-1633
 1814-1847
 1796-1847 (destroyed)

1 0 5 10 15 20ft
 Scale of Feet

0 5 10m
 Scale of Metres

FIG 3 Castle Fraser: First Floor

safe to suggest that the core of the present castle dates from not later than 1456 with the possibility that it may be anything up to one hundred and fifty years earlier if the analogy with Drum and Dr Kelly's dating of that building can be applied to Castle Fraser.

The building of this early period was a rectangular tower measuring 39 ft by 32 ft 6 in, with a vaulted basement and a vaulted Hall, and rising 32 ft to the external crown of the hall vault. There may have been an upper storey but no evidence survives for this; the accommodation was limited and must have been supplemented by other buildings ranged round a courtyard to the N of the tower.

The internal extent of the Hall of the early building is shown in the structural line in the vault. Here about 10 ft to the E of the present W wall the build of the vault is interrupted, and is clearly of two periods. Dr Douglas Simpson suggests that the vault was built from E to W and stopped at this point whilst the SE corner of the Michael Tower was dismantled. The dismantling done building started again and the vault was finished. An ingenious but unlikely theory, especially as although interrupted it would in fact have been a continuous build, and it is unlikely that the junction would have been so strongly marked. One of the properties of barrel vaults is that their structural stability depends on their lateral walls and not on their end or cross walls, against which there is no thrust, and into which they are generally not bonded. Because of this lack of bonding the end walls are inherently unstable, and their collapse in no way endangers the vault – Pitsligo and Hallforest are both examples of 15th-century towers where great barrel vaults have survived the collapse of their end walls. It would therefore have been structurally possible to have demolished the W wall of the tower without imperilling the stability of the vault.

In the cellarge below the Hall there is further evidence that this was what was done. Here again the vault remains intact but the W wall has been largely removed. However part of it remains, mistakenly considered by Dr Simpson to be the SE corner of the Michael Tower – as this tower was built against the NW corner of the 15th-century tower it had no SE corner of its own at this level. The wall between the 15th-century cellar, and that in the 1616 extension is built under the 15th-century vault; the earlier vault can be seen oversailing. In the SW corner of the old cellar, at the foot of the now blocked service stair – which dates from the 1616 alterations – is a loop. Because of this later stair the jambs have been much altered but externally it is a typical inverted key-hole loop of the mid-15th century, and the only one to survive at Castle Fraser.

The N wall of the Hall contains what is perhaps the most important evidence of the arrangement of the 15th-century tower. And it is all the more curious in that it was largely overlooked by Dr Kelly, and totally ignored by Dr Simpson. In the wall to the E of the construction line in the vault are two blocked openings: one is hard against what would have been the NW corner of the original Hall, the other about mid-way along its length. The one in the NW corner shows no details internally – for the blocking has been only partially removed – save for a pointed head, and externally it must have been largely destroyed by the later stairs. However its purpose is clear; situated at the lower end of the Hall it is the first floor entrance for which Dr Kelly and Mr Marshall had sought. The building of the Michael Tower made this door unuseable, as its external stair would have obstructed the entrance to the new tower, and its flanking gun loop. Accordingly the first floor entrance was moved E to the next opening. That this was done suggests that, as originally built, there was no communication at first floor level between the two towers. Had there been it would not have been necessary to retain a first floor entrance. This second opening had originally been designed as a window, with aumbries in the sides of the embrasure. These aumbries have dressed stone jambs checked for wooden doors. Their position points to the opening having been intended as a window, for aumbries in a door opening are extremely rare. When this window became a doorway it was dignified externally by moulded jambs and a decorated lintel. Internally

in order to give a greater clearance when the door was opening the E cheek was dressed back, and the jambs of the aumbry partly destroyed. Heavy iron pins to carry the door were inserted, and still remain. The external stair which served this has long since disappeared but it survived until the latter part of the 18th century.

To the east of this second door in the NE corner of the Hall, and concealed under the floorboards, are the remains of a circular stair descending to the lower floor. This has been largely destroyed in later alterations probably as early as 1616, and it is impossible to discover if it was intended to rise to the upper floor of the 15th-century house. Its position, partly jutting into the Hall as it does, suggests that this corner too has been largely rebuilt.

In the S wall of the Hall, to the E of the construction joint in the vault, is the W jamb of an early window opening destroyed in the 17th-century alterations.

c 1563-76

When Michael Fraser decided to enlarge his 15th-century house the plan he adopted was a modified Z-plan, but it is not clear if this was his intention from the beginning, or whether the plan was adapted to the new fashion soon after building started. Possibly the latter was the case, for the Michael Tower is a tower-house complete within itself, and its junction with the older block is awkwardly contrived as far as the internal communication between them is concerned. A later house in conjunction with an earlier tower is not unusual – Tolquhon and Pitsligo are both examples of this type of development – but quite such a close juxtaposition as at Castle Fraser is unusual. Delgaty may be a nearer parallel.

The designer of the re-planning of the castle for Michael Fraser is not known, but by drawing analogies between the work here and that at Tolquhon, Dr Douglas Simpson has suggested that the master-mason may have been Thomas Leiper, who designed Tolquhon Castle, 1584-89, for William Forbes. Leiper's initials appear on one of the skew-puts at Tolquhon, and both buildings certainly have very distinctive and almost identical triplet gun-loops. These gun-loops are found in both the flanking towers at Castle Fraser, but not in the main block, with the exception of a re-used fragment. There are two other carved details which ornamented the exterior of the Michael Tower, and which still survive. The first of these is a panel carved with the Royal Arms of Scotland and dated 1576 which was moved to the S front by Miss Elyza, but which would have originally been above the entrance to the Michael Tower, together with the vanished arms of the owner. The second is the panel, also on the Michael Tower, of the *Arma Christi* beneath the east-facing window of the room traditionally supposed to have been an oratory. Both these panels, together with the oratory window and the missing panel were designed as an heraldic frontispiece to the tower, set in deeply moulded stone frames.

The Reformation came late in the NE, and later in some families than others. It is not unusual therefore to find Roman symbolism being used well into the second half of the 16th century. At each of the closely related group of Aberdeenshire castles, Gight, Craig and Towie Barclay, are bosses carved the symbols of the Passion. These castles, as Dr Douglas Simpson has shown, all date from the second half of the century, and are probably by the same hand; and to the same group belong Delgaty and Carnousie. The cult of devotion to the Five Wounds was popular in the NE, and Masses of the Five Wounds were founded and said at Aberdeen in King's College Chapel, and in the great burgh kirk of St Nicholas, and the devotion to the old forms lingered on after the Reformation was an official fact. However it is only at Castle Fraser that such a stone survives externally which argues both a catholic faith and an arrogant defiance of the trend of national opinion.

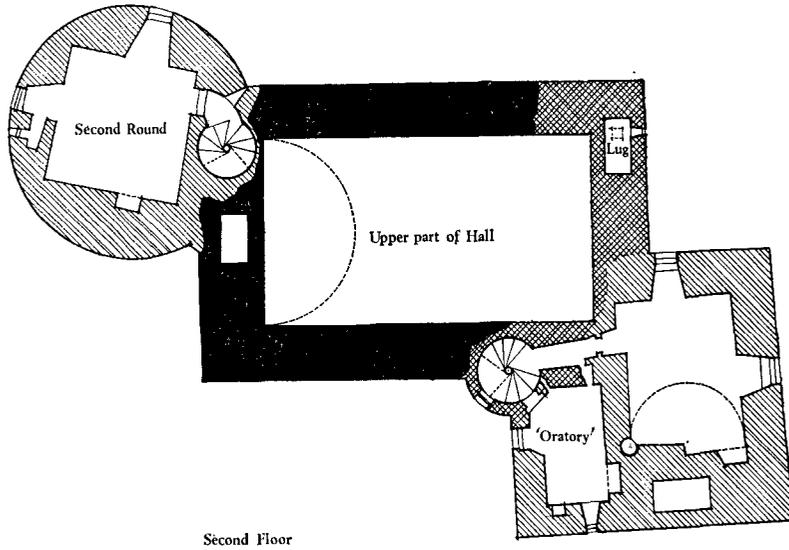
Internally the Michael Tower is planned on three floors. The staircase to the first floor is immediately to the right of the entrance door with a passage running N-S which gives access to the kitchen, and to the cellar of the old tower. To the left of the door is a triplet gun-loop, now blocked by the later turret stair alterations. This loop covered part of the N face of the old tower, but its field of fire must have been limited by the external stair. The wall at the southern end of the passage has been largely removed in order to form a doorway into the western extension of the cellarage of the main block. This has destroyed the triplet loop which would have covered the W wall of the old tower, but its remains have been incorporated in the S wall of the main block. Another triplet loop in the Michael Tower is concealed internally by later alterations to the kitchen chimney, but it shows externally inside the NW wing. Its position suggests that it was so placed to cover the wall of the courtyard which joined the tower at this point, and this in turn suggests that the present E wall of this wing is built on the site of, if indeed it does not incorporate part of, the wall. How this loop was reached is not clear; it may have been from the corner of the kitchen chimney space, or from a space, now blocked, under the stairs. There is room for either, although the kitchen solution argues a measure of inconvenience, if not of absolute discomfort. The remaining two triplet loops in the tower are both in the kitchen, under the windows in the S and W walls.

The stair which rises to the first floor terminates in a handsome newel with double capitals – the lower joining it to the stair vault, and the upper to the landing vault; and both are ornamented with cabled rolls. Dr Simpson argues that the position of the stair shows that the Michael Tower was not intended originally to be part of a Z or stepped plan. His reasoning is that in such plans the stair would be expected in the re-entrant angle, but this is stereotyping the plan to a greater degree than the evidence of the many surviving examples warrant. It will serve to quote only a few cases to show the extraordinary diversity of the staircase arrangement between the ground and first floors: at Terpersie it takes the form of a straight flight stair in the thickness of the gable wall; at Claypots the stair rises the full height in a subsidiary round in the angle; Notland and Carnousie devote the whole of a square tower to the staircase, as does Beldorney, and at Glenbucket the stair appears to have been fitted into the re-entrant by mistake; Harthill has a stair properly in the re-entrant, but Inchoch and Huntly both devote a round tower to the staircase, and a similar arrangement obtains at Kilcoy. At Muness a scale-and-platt stair is placed a quarter of the way along and within the main block, ignoring the Z completely.

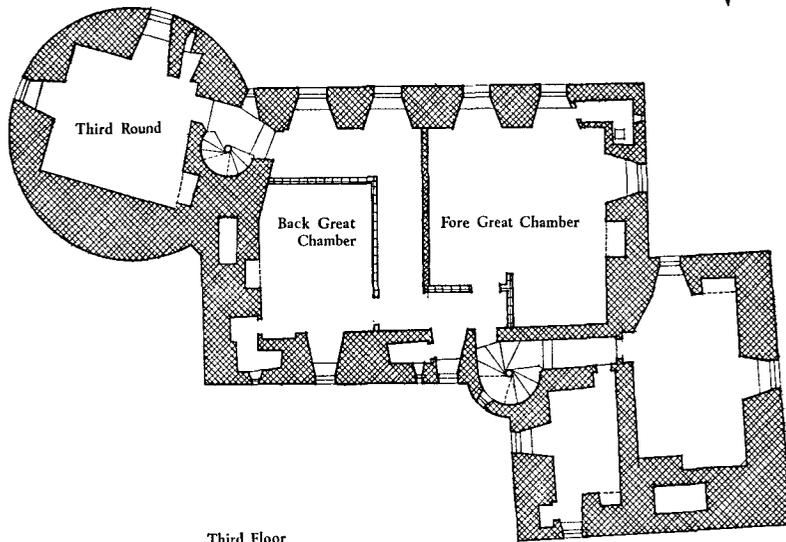
As first built the stair connecting the upper floors was contained in the wall thickness at the junction of the two towers thereby possibly allowing access from the private chamber in the Michael Tower to the Hall; the door at its foot survives partly blocked in the wall of the present stair.

On the second floor of the Michael Tower are two chambers, a private chamber and a smaller oratory or study. Both are vaulted, and the boss in the private chamber bears the initials 'MF' for Michael Fraser, the builder. The alterations caused by the re-building of the stair in the next century are clearly to be seen. In order to reach the private chamber it became necessary to demolish and rebuild, on a new alignment, the wall between the oratory and the passage. This involved re-positioning the doorway in the SE corner of that room, thus interfering in all likelihood with its original arrangement, for the older doorway, of which one jamb survives, opened in the SW corner. If the room had been intended as an oratory – and the presence of the *Arma Christi* under the E window suggest this – then presumably the altar would have been in the embrasure of that same window. A doorway in the SE corner hard against the altar would have seriously inconvenienced anyone using it.

The fact that the rooms on this floor are vaulted suggests that it was intended to carry the



Second Floor



Third Floor

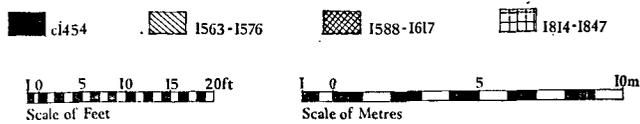


FIG 4 Castle Fraser: Second and Third Floors

tower no higher, but flag over at this level with stone. Parts of a moulded corbel table were taken out of the blocking of the wall S of the Hall fireplace, and these may have been from the parapet of the tower – Dr Kelly suggested that they might in fact be of mid-15th-century date.

Michael Fraser was also responsible for cutting back the aumbry in the Hall window, when he converted that same window into his new first floor entrance, and he may also have built the Great Chimney Piece in the Hall. Dr Kelly suggested that this dated from the mid-15th century because of its use of granite, but granite is used at Castle Fraser at all periods, and this in itself is not a sufficient guide. The design of the volutes of the capitals is coarse, but it is crudely Renaissance rather than rudely Gothic. Dr Simpson regards it as of the 16th century but rough for its date. The red freestone cornice and dentil course above it are an insertion of the next century.

The harling on the SW round tower conceals any changes in the build, but it seems likely that this too only rose for three floors. As Michael Fraser left it Castle Fraser had a vastly different and much more domestic silhouette than it has to-day.

1588–1636

The building activities of Andrew Fraser, 1. Lord Fraser, transformed the smaller, half finished building that he inherited on the death of his father, Michael Fraser, and left it largely as it is now. He was under age when he succeeded and does not seem to have started his great work on the castle until the early years of the 17th century. The house, as his father left it, consisted of the 15th century tower with two diagonal towers, one square and the other round, carried no higher than the central block – each tower containing three floors. The whole may have been roofed, forming a moderate Z-plan manor house very different from the great and elaborately detailed Z-tower that it was to become.

Andrew Fraser's building falls into two distinct periods, and is the work of two different men. The first, the raising and remodelling of the Z-tower was completed by 1618 – this date being carved on the great frontispiece and designed by John Bel. The second phase, which consisted of the fitting up of the interiors, and the extension of the house by the low wings enclosing the courtyard was started by 1621, and completed some time subsequent to the year 1633. The mason connected with the first part of this second phase at least was James Leper (Leapar, Lepar – the spelling varies, although nowadays Leper seems more generally accepted), although if he ever completed the work for which he contracted is doubtful, as in 1623 he was put to the Horn for his failure to carry out what he had promised.

In the remodelling of the Z-house the most drastic action was the extension of the central block by the removal of its western wall, and rebuilding it further W. This involved the demolition of the SE corner of the Michael Tower, and the loss of the original staircase arrangement on its upper floors. The evidence for this did not become apparent until the harling was removed from the external walls. In the first place there is a distinct change in the character of the rubble walling above the third floor in the Michael Tower and above the Hall in the central block; Secondly the building of the angles change at this level; in the lower parts they are of roughly squared rubble, but at the level of the third floor, immediately below the rounds, they change to properly squared and coursed ashlar coins. More important this technique is used for the whole of the SW corner of the main block, showing clearly that this was rebuilt from the ground upwards. The W gable wall has a further peculiarity; it steps back – the steps being in the form of chamfered strings – just below the cill level of the ground and third floor windows of the S face of the Michael Tower. Everywhere else the walls rise unbroken to the moulded string of the upper work, and this must

have been done to avoid blocking the windows which were already in existence when the W gable was rebuilt in its new position.

The upper work is perhaps the finest in the NE of Scotland. It is marked by a deeply moulded string course with corbels and cables, pierced with false stone cannon, running immediately under the cills of the fourth floor windows. To avoid the monotony of a strong horizontal emphasis it is stepped down at the rounds and stair turret to meet the corbelled springing courses, whilst on the Round Tower and Michael Tower it takes the form of false crenellations.

The rounds are of two stories, which is unusual: the lower floors lit by rectangular window, with square ventilation holes set lozenge-wise between them, whilst the upper floors are lit by small elliptical openings. Two-floored rounds are normally only associated with houses of the grandest sort, Glamis and Craigievar being cases in point. However ten miles from Castle Fraser, on the northern side of Bennachie, is the little castle of Lickleyhead, largely rebuilt by William Forbes in 1629, and here can be seen two-floored rounds similar to those at Castle Fraser, with the same distinctive arrangement of windows and openings.

In the centre of the upper work on the north front is the great fontispiece. This is carved in soft red freestone, probably from Strathbogie, for it lacks the angry red of that of Turriff, and is close in style to – and possibly even by the same hand – as some of the work at Huntly. It is now ravaged by weather, but even in its decayed state it is a noble composition. In the lower panel are, or rather were the arms of Fraser, but these are now so badly weathered, that only the supporters – dexter a Falcon and sinister a Heron – remain intact. The upper and larger panel contains the Royal Arms of Great Britain as used in Scotland after the Union of the Crowns, but before the Union of the Parliaments; and is encircled by the Garter.

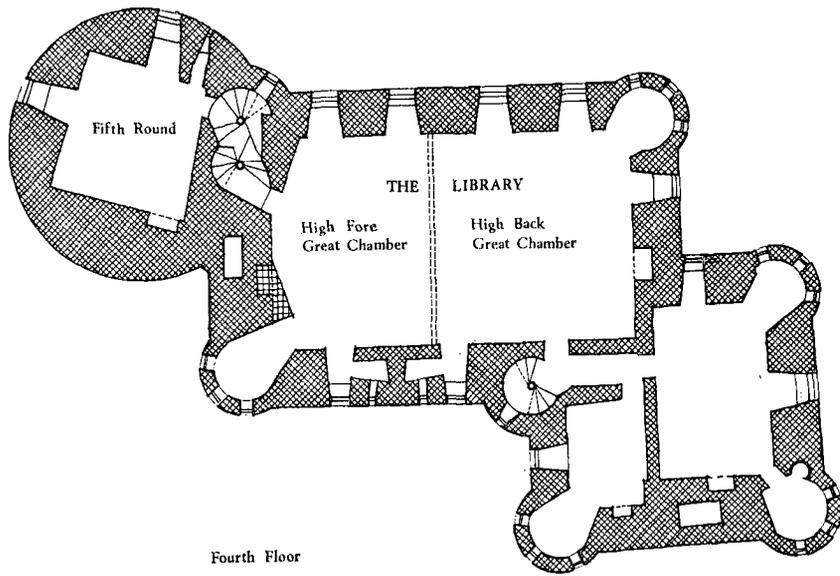
The panel is surrounded by a richly carved frame and rests on the great string course which is dropped to receive it. Set below the Fraser Arms is the small tablet inscribed '1617 I BEL MM^oF' which being interpreted by some signifies '1617 John Bell, Master Mason in leal service (or loyal) to Fraser'.

This has always seemed to be a straining after conceit, and it was whilst looking at the great arch over the entrance at Craigston that another possible interpretation suggested itself. The low setting sun of a very clear autumn afternoon had thrown all the carving into clear relief, and showed up particularly the two voussoirs on either side of the key stone. On each of these is carved with great precision a *heart*. They are too carefully and deeply cut to be ordinary masons' marks, and their position in the crown of the elevation suggests some added significance. Craigston has many of the signs of a Bell building, particularly in the great richness of upper works, and in the bull-nosed jambs to the doorways – a feature at Castle Fraser in those parts of the castle particularly associated with Bell.

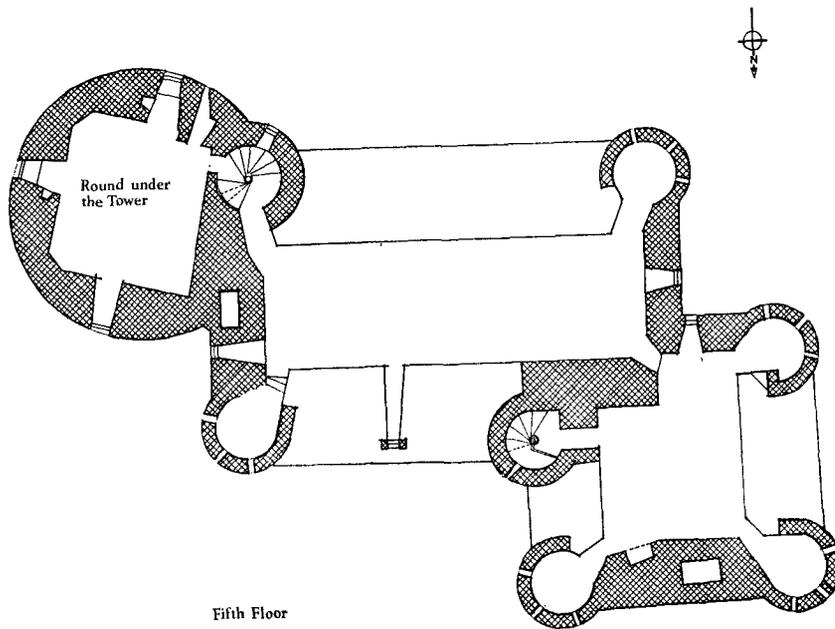
It seems highly probable that the *heart* was John Bell's sign manual, and that the correct interpretation of the Castle Fraser tablet is either 'John Bell; Master Mason (His Mark) Fecit', or 'John Bell, Murifex Me (His mark) Fecit'.

The whole composition is surmounted by the dormer window to the garret which has the date 1618, carved on its rounded pediment, and if the lines in the 18th century narrative poem 'The Don' are correct,

'On FRASER'S glorious pile, which southward lies;
Whose fame, whose structure, is by non excell'd,
That in our northern climes are yet beheld,
The sumptuous frontispiece on the north side
Shines with gilt ornaments of Scythian pride . . .',



Fourth Floor



Fifth Floor

1588-1617 1814-1847

1 0 5 10 15 20ft
Scale of Feet.

1 0 5 10m.
Scale of Metres

FIG 5 Castle Fraser: Fourth Floor and Attics

this great outburst of heraldry was painted and gilded: a fitting eye-catcher for the visitor approaching the castle from the N, and a sure defence for the soft stone against the effects of the elements.

In his alteration to his father's Z-house Andrew Fraser enormously increased the accommodation. The Michael Tower was raised by two full floors and a garret, as was the lengthened Hall, thus providing seven or eight new chambers, apart from the space in the garret, whilst the Round Tower was raised by four floors, providing a further four chambers.

The Hall was provided with a new, and improved access from the main staircase, which did not involve going through the private room in the Michael Tower, and with direct access to the stairs in the NW and SE re-entrants leading to the upper floors. The old stair to the cellarge in the NE corner was probably blocked at this period, if this had not already been done by Michael Fraser. There was already a direct stair down in the SE corner, and a further one was added in the SW corner, with its door in the W jamb of the SW window. This door was partly destroyed in later alterations when the stair was blocked and converted into a closet. As originally built this stair head would have formed a projecting closet in the SE corner of the Hall in a manner similar to one which once existed in an identical position at Craigston. The one surviving jamb of this closet doorway has a bull-nose instead of a chamfer, and this detail repeats in the doorways on the upper floor of the Michael Tower. A similar section to the doorway jambs is to be seen at Craigston, which is almost contemporary with this phase of Castle Fraser, and may also be a Bell house. At the same time the fireplace was improved by the addition of a cornice in red free stone, and the windows on the S and W sides enlarged or inserted.

In rebuilding the stair in the re-entrant to the upper floor it was possible for it to open directly from the Hall. This was normal practice and seems to have risen both from the need to secure the access to the upper floors and the economical wish to limit the cost and size of the principal flight, the stair from the ground floor reaching only to the level of the Hall. In the later and larger houses this admirable expedient was often defeated by the need to have a second stair rising from the cellarge to the uppermost floor, as happens at Castle Fraser. The original arrangement disappeared in the 19th century when the doorway from the Hall to the stairfoot was blocked, and a fresh opening made onto the landing. As the 17th-century opening has been unblocked, the 16th-century opening partly unblocked, and the 19th-century doorway was left open the result is confusing.

At the same time that Andrew Fraser rebuilt the west gable he introduced the strange chamber in the thickness of the Hall vault, known as the '*Laird's Lug*'. This measures 6 ft by 3 ft and is 6 ft in height: it is entered through a trap in the floor of the closet above – the trap measuring 12 in by 15 in.

It was re-discovered and recorded by James Skene of Rubislaw some time before 1817. He describes the listening aperture which he tested, and which was destroyed when an organ was installed in the Hall in 1817-18.

The purpose of these chambers – a similar one exists at Craigston – is not clear. Popular tradition and Skene denominate them '*Lugs*'; he considers them to be 'singularly illustrative of the treachery and cunning prevalent in their manners, where no man could trust to a neighbour's honor even under the sanctuary of his hospitality' and adds 'The existence of such contrivances were too favourable for the purpose of romance writers to have been overlooked (see *Woodstoke*)'.

Unfortunately this theory hardly fits with the facts for as there are external slits for light and ventilation these small chambers would have been known and their secrecy accordingly lost. Nor is it likely that any Laird would have subjected himself to the indignity and discomfort of squeez-

ing through so small a trap in the expectation of hearing some chance plotting. This might just be conceivable at Craigston where the chamber is at the High end of the Hall, but at Castle Fraser it is above the Service. It has been suggested that they may have been intended as a safe for charters and other valuables. Against this must be argued the inconvenience and inaccessibility, and the danger of fire, for the listening conduit would have acted as a flue: in any case this would not apply to the Craigston example where there is a properly constructed muniment room elsewhere.

Skene in fact, but quite unconsciously, provides the clue to their purpose when he says ‘The vaulted form of the recess in the exact apex of which this auricular cavity was placed would render a whisper below audible to the listener above, where immured in the heart of the wall, no extraneous sounds could cause to divert his attention’.

‘Immured in the heart of the wall’ has a wretched sound, and so it should have for this small cell was probably designed as a prison. The story that at Craigievar the floor of the With-drawing had to be thickened so that the groans and sighs of the prisoners should not disturb the ladies of the family may not be factual, but it is certainly indicative of a peculiarly callous society.

From the dates, 1617, on John Bell’s tablet, and 1618 on the gable of the garret dormer it is clear that the main structure must have been finished by 1620, but the interiors were to take longer. It was the intention to pave the Great Hall, apparently in a geometrical pattern similar to the fragment that remains at Tolquhon. The mason was James Leper (Leiper), and he had agreed with Andrew Fraser.

‘to have gon to the quarrell of Kyndrimy and to have furnished, winn, hewin, squarett and feattet the number of four hundreth pavement staines, according to the faschone of newillis condischendit betuixt the said complenar and the said James Leaper in forme of ane compers draucht, and that for pavementing of the hail hall of Muchall with the chimnay, dore and windowes thairof’.

Both Dr Kelly and Dr Simpson take this to mean that the Hall was paved in 1622. It certainly should have been, as the contract dated 27 December 1621 specified Midsummer’s Day 1622 as the completion date. The cost was to be £233 6s 7d and this was to be returned to Andrew Fraser if the work were not completed together with liquidated damages of £100. James Leper was dilatory and on 27 January 1623 he was ordered under the Signet to repay the money and damages within six days. This, with the rapidity peculiar to all legal processes, was delivered to Leper by the Sheriff on 22 April with the threat of being put to the Horn (*anglice*: ‘outlawed’) had he not complied within yet another six days. This produced no effect and accordingly on 2 May 1623 Robert Merser with

‘ane wther of the sherefis in that part past at command and charge of thir our Soverane Lordis letters within writin to the mercat croce of Aberdein heid burch of the shyre within the quhilk the said James Lepar, messone, duellis and remainis, and thairat be, opin proclamatioun eftir the giving of thrie oyesis and publict reiding of the saidis letters in his heines name and autoritie I lawfullie dewlie an ordourlie denuncit the said James Lepar, meassone, our Soverane Lordis rebell and put him to his heines horne be thrie blastis of my horn. . . .’

What effect this had is not revealed, but it is doubtful if Andrew Fraser ever saw his ornate floor laid.

In spite of the enormous increase in the size of Castle Fraser it was still not big enough and in the years between 1621 and 1638 there was a further scheme of enlargement. Possibly Andrew Fraser was endeavouring to fit the Castle to *his* pretended necessities, but he was building on a

scale only rivalled in the North-East at Fyvie, where Lord Dunfermline, Chancellor of Scotland, had already created his immense palace out of an older house.

The first part of this third phase to be built was the gabled block against the NE corner of main tower. This provided two rooms; a vaulted kitchen, larger and more convenient than that in the Michael Tower, on the ground floor, and above it on the first floor a With-drawing room. To reach this from the Hall a passage was formed in the thickness of the E wall to the N of the fireplace, possibly making use of an existing window. The With-drawing room was also connected with the private room on the first floor of the round tower. This extension did not prove adequate enough for shortly afterwards plans must have been made for building the two wings which run N from the main house and enclose the courtyard. It was probably intended to build two wings from the outset, and from the carved pediments to the first floor dormers it is possible to date them reasonably accurately.

On the west wing is the date 1631 together with the initials *AF* – for Andrew Fraser; *ED* – for Elizabeth Douglas, his first wife; *AD* – for Anne Drummond; and *ME* – for Margaret Elphinston, his daughter-in-law. Given the fact that Andrew Fraser was created Lord Fraser in 1633 it is fairly safe to assume that 1631 marks the main building period – the walls would certainly have been standing. The roof may not have been completed until the following year because it was necessary to import timber from Norway as is shown by the following entry dated 29 March 1631 in the *Privy Council Register*

‘Supplication by Andrew Fraser of Stanywode as follows: – “He is building a house in Muckalls, and cannot obtain in this country suitable timber for the roof of his house, and must therefore send to Norway for it. He is informed that there is a strict prohibition in that country against exporting timber unless victual is brought in by the exporter in payment of the price, and therefore he craves ten chalders of meal for the aforesaid purpose. The lords grant the permission desired, provided that the meal is all shipped in one ship and before 30th April next.”’

The E wing is a little later, built between 1633 and 1636 according to Dr Kelly, a date accepted by Dr Simpson. This is based on the initials *LAF* – Andrew, Lord Fraser; *DAD* – Dame Anne Drummond; and *DME* – Dame Margaret Elphinstone.

However, the date is probably earlier than that, for Margaret Elphinstone must have been dead by the end of 1633, as her husband contracted to marry Anne Haldane of Gleneagles in July 1634. It is likely, therefore, that both wings were building at the same time with only such time lag between them as would be caused by the proper deployment of the labour force available.

Apart from the shelf over the fireplace in the Hall nothing visible remains of the internal finishes of this period. However, from James Skene’s description of the finding of the *lug* we know that the chamber over the lower end of the Hall – the *Fore Great Chamber* – was once known as the ‘*Picture room of the auld Kings*’; a name derived from the shutters being decorated with carved portraits of the royal line of Stewart. These sound very similar to the panels which now decorate the drawing room doors at Craigston, and Castle Fraser may have once been as rich in carved woodwork as that house seems to have been.

1716–1814 (pl 22)

When Andrew Fraser, 1. Lord Fraser, died in 1636 he left Castle Fraser in such a condition that it needed, and was to receive, little attention for the next hundred and sixty years. If for the

first 70 years this was because the fortunes of the Frasers of Muchall were gently declining, there was still no very pressing wish on the part of Charles Fraser of Inverallochy, who inherited the estate in 1717, to do anything either. And although his son, William Alexander Udny Fraser, had the roofs overhauled in 1790, it was Miss Elyza who in 1795–96 started the work that her great-nephew, Colonel Charles MacKenzie Fraser, was to bring to such a triumphant and disastrous conclusion in the following century.

From the 1722 inventory it is possible to gather a very clear picture of the furnishings of the various rooms, and to identify many of the rooms themselves. Altogether 44 are listed as containing furniture, and, although in some of those on the upper floors this is rather sparse, the general standard of comfort seems to be high, indeed luxurious (Appendix B). In the Drawing Room were ten chairs with flowered velvet cushions and a blue velvet resting seat, together with a japanned tea table, two glass sconces, and five alabaster statues.

Lady Fraser's Chamber (she was the widow of the last Lord Fraser) was hung with black, with striped black and white hangings. Her successor, Lady Betty, took her own widowhood less seriously; for five years after her husband's death her chamber was not even in half-mourning. There were green calico-lined hangings to the bed, and a green silk quilt, whilst the walls were hung with green, and panelled with blue and white paper.

Other rooms had glass and metal sconces, walnut framed looking glasses, olive wood tables, pictures in gilded frames (16 of them being in the Drawing Room), and one was hung with Dutch drugget and pale crepe.

At this period the principal entry to the castle from the courtyard was by way of a great external flight of stone steps ornamented with obelisks, and a touching description of this is to be found in 'Spring Flowers and Autumn Berries' by Mrs Sandell, published in 1848. Describing a visit to Castle Fraser (the extract is from her diary written in 1829–1830) she says . . . 'after a visit to a monument on the Gallow Hill and questioned an old Shepherd:

"Oh ye Ken" he replied, "I mysel mony mony years ago, helped carry the stones there, the monyment ance stood aboon these trees, at the top o' the grove. There were twa o' them at the top, and twa at the door o' the Castle, each side o' a noble flight o' stone steps, and there in front where the green is now, there was a garden . . . It's a' changed sin I came, and I hae been here forty-year Whitsunday last, that's a guid pairt o' a man's life . . ."

He is a dear good old man, is Francis Middleton'.

The monument on Gallow Hill to which he referred consisted of an obelisk with a ball on top, and a somewhat similarly ornamented staircase to a first floor entry survives at Meldrum House. There is a tradition that this came from Castle Fraser; if this is so then the move must have been made about the time that Francis Middleton came to Castle Fraser in 1790, for it does not appear on any of the estate maps after that date, and it had certainly acquired an aura of respectability when James Giles painted his view of Meldrum in 1840.

When he succeeded his father in 1787, William Fraser seems to have been faced with a dilapidated house for in 1790–91 he was paying James Massie the comparatively large sum of £552 14 7 for a massive overhaul of the roofs which included new slating and leads for the tower, with a considerable amount of new woodwork, the timber for which came from the neighbouring estate of Monymusk. Although William only lived to enjoy the castle for five years, much of the work attributed to his sister, Miss Elyza may have been started, or at least planned by him.

What exactly Miss Elyza did is not absolutely clear, but it now seems fairly certain that much of that for which she has been blamed is, in fact, the work of her great-nephew. Certainly

she claimed that she had restored and beautified the whole by 1795 – but to have done this in not quite three years (she only succeeded her brother in 1792) argues a fairly modest scale of operations.

Her most important work was the building of the new stable court to the W of the Castle on the rising ground beyond the Ducat Park. This was designed as an irregular hexagon in a mildly turreted style by James Paterson and built in a simpler manner than that of his drawings dated 1794. There is also a design by Paterson for a new entrance hall at the Castle. This is very much in the Edinburgh New Town manner, with a pilastered doorway flanked by side windows and surmounted by a wide low fanlight. The hall itself is covered by a shallow groined vault, and the three doorways leading from it have neat architraves and entablatures. Had this scheme been carried out it would have involved the destruction of the ground floor vault: more important it foreshadows the later grand staircase. The doorway at the back of the hall – that is the one on the N side – shows the intention of breaking through the wall there, and the removal of the external stairs. In his manuscript notes Mr Marshall suggests that the walls of the grand staircase were originally built to enclose the external stairs – if he is right then these may well have been part of Miss Elyza's work.

Before 1795 she seems to have had further and grander ideas: in the muniment room is a large plan of the policies by Thomas White showing proposed improvements. Although the scale of the Castle on this drawing is small what is intended is clear; part of the courtyard has been filled to allow for the new stairs, and the new door on the S front is dignified by a large pillared porch. Much more drastic is the appearance at the SW corner of a great round tower, matching in position and scale that already existing, to the NW, and giving a symmetrical elevation. It is doubtful if this is a flight of White's imagination, and as the same plan shows Paterson's stables it is likely that White was working from some drawings by the architect which have since disappeared.

Miss Elyza is also supposed to have enlarged the W window of the Hall in order to enjoy a better view of the setting sun but this must refer to the window opening itself rather than the embrasure for Skene shows this in its original form; and she certainly set up her name and coat-of-arms which is now on the S elevation. Whether she was responsible for the present entrance door is not clear, although she certainly intended one. This is not shown in its present form on the 1794 map, and is drawn in on the 1799 map, possibly with the 1819 alterations. It is a curiously heavy piece of design and is difficult to associate with the name of William Burn who was working here in 1818-19. The sombre, mannered and, almost neo-classic character is not typical of Burn, and is hardly in keeping with Paterson's work. One is tempted to associate it with the name of James Byres. He had designed Miss Elyza's mausoleum which was building in 1807; and in his settlement of 1811 he writes 'I wish and recommend that my said Trustees, or such of them as are pleased to accept would cause a small but substantial room be erected with a vaulted roof, for a tomb upon the bank above the Old School of Tough, exactly similar to the one I erected at Cluny for Miss Fraser'. After her death and assured of possession of her carriage and best pair of horses, he was to revoke this wish. He would have been working on this mausoleum during 1806, and this date fits in well with the building of the new entrance. Both his and Miss Bristow's letters of this period refer to his visits to Castle Fraser – in January 1806 he was thwarted in his desire to spend only a night with his old friend for, as he wrote to Patrick Moir, he was 'seised with a smart fever and severe cold' and was not able to return to Tonley for ten nights.

It must have been shortly after this, if tradition be true, that Miss Elyza took to her bed for good, and left the Castle to dilapidate for the last eight years of her life. She was commemorated after her death by becoming a legend, and by an epitaph of more than usually pompous fatuity.

Were but one-tenth of it true she would have been the most intolerable bore – and that she certainly was not.

Sacred

*To the Memory of
Elyza Frazer
Late Possessor
of this Castle
Who departed this Life
On the 8th Jany 1814
Aged 80*

*Distinguished by her
Intellectual attainments
And Polite Accomplishments*

*And still more
By those Virtues
Which dignify and exalt
Human Nature
And after a life spent in the
Uniform and active Discharge
of every Christian Duty
She resigned her Breath
In the Joyful hope
Of a Glorious Immortality
That her memory may be cherished
By the Inhabitants of this place
Is the sincere Prayer of her
Grateful Relation and Successor*

Charles Fraser

1814–71 (pl 23–25)

When Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser succeeded Miss Elyza in 1814, Castle Fraser entered on fifty-seven years of strenuous activity. The loss of his leg seems in no way to have curbed the Colonel's energy, of which much, although not all, was devoted to the re-fashioning of the castle. His unfortunate wife, Jane Hay, must have spent much of her married life being brought to bed in a haze of builders' dust. To be fair, she did not consider herself to be in anyway unfortunate for she was devoted to her husband, her fourteen children, and the 'dear old Chateau', and obviously considered herself to be the happiest and most blessed of mortals.

Even before his marriage Colonel Charles had started work, and with the aid of the letters and drawings that survive it is possible to follow the sequence of his efforts. The first work recorded is the re-decoration of the Hall, and proposals for this were in hand in March 1816, as shown in the three small ink and water colour sketches produced by William Burn. The ceiling was given an elaborately ribbed vault, the window heads were arched and given simple tracery, and the window embrasure in the west wall was given a splendid tabernacle to take the organ. Colonel Charles, not caring for this, produced designs of his own, which did not find favour with Burn, who in a letter that was both tactful and confusing, explained why this design needed amending – he mentions his intention of using a square panelled patera with a large honeysuckle ornament in the centre. This motif he was to use on the vault of the Lower Hall. In June James Barrie of Edinburgh gave an estimate of £164 2 0 for the execution of the Hall plasterwork.

Photographs of the Hall and Lower Hall before the destruction of their decorations show these to have been carried out in a simpler fashion than originally intended. The work must have been well advanced in July 1818, for Jane, whilst absent from the castle, wrote to her husband ‘the Saloon must be beautiful, are the curtains to be put up, flock paper etc?’.

Although there is a reference on a later drawing to the stair hall as the Saloon, Jane must mean the Hall in this case.

A considerable amount of work was done the following year both inside and outside the house. Internally this included the re-papering and painting of all the rooms on the first floor, together with a new chimney and chimney piece for the Dressing Room in the West Gallery and the bricking up of arches at the castle. This probably refers to the arches at ground floor level in the walls enclosing the old external stair. The following year saw the Lower Hall completed and the remodelling of the policies for in writing to the Colonel on 20 August Jane records that . . . ‘the Hall is quite finished as to the Carpenter’s work . . .’ It is also clear from this letter that the organ and a shower bath had been installed. The one needed tuning, and Lady Forbes had called wanting to see the other.

Indeed it was Colonel Charles’s interests in shower baths and other modern devices that had caused a friend to write of the Castle begging him to ‘preserve its antiquity and avoid explosions of gas’; presumably from an estate supply.

In December 1827 the arcades and passages under the galleries were paved in granite, payments of £26 to Alexander Wallace, and £74 10 0 to S MacDonald being made. Indeed by the middle of 1828 it seems as if the first stage of the renovations of the Castle was coming to an end. In June, Jane was writing to her husband ‘. . . The chimney is finished and the boiler put up in the kitchen which answers very well, and does not take much fire to make it boil, don’t you think we shall find the dear old *Chateau* too perfect when we get home again’, and then somewhat inconsequentially ‘Grace tells me iron bedsteads are the proper things for servants’: apparently because they were less likely to harbour bed bugs.

Poor Jane Mackenzie Fraser; the attempt to make the ‘dear old *Chateau* too perfect’ was to continue for another 16 years at least.

An undated drawing from the office of John Smith, who had replaced Burn, shows a design for the principal staircase – called the saloon. This was to have a central lower flight to a half landing with two upper flights returning against the side walls. It was covered by a coffered ceiling, divided into 15 compartments, and lit by a large three-light window in the N wall overlooking the courtyard. This design was abandoned in favour of the cupola which has since been demolished, and which is shown on Hullmandel’s drawing of the castle c 1833 before the back stairs were built. It had certainly been built by the autumn of 1830. In December of that year John Smith writing to Colonel Charles concerning the intended creation of a library and alterations to the

bedrooms in the W wing, includes a reference to the new staircase which was obviously proving difficult to heat. He suggests one of Joyce's patent stoves . . . 'for the staircase as not requiring any flue for smoke . . . but am afraid that one of them (without its being very large) would not give sufficient heat for your large staircase'.

The proposals for the library did not go ahead at this stage, and it was not until 1836 that any more large-scale works were intended. In October of that year Smith wrote to Colonel Charles on the subject of a new dining room in the E wing. The room was to be 34 ft by 15 ft with a large bay 18 ft by 8 ft on the E side. Smith produced two designs for the elevation of the bay both totally out of sympathy with the Castle, and someone – probably Colonel Charles – has sketched on the drawing three further designs each partaking of the nature of an oriel. As Trollope says 'Let oriel windows grace a college, or the half public mansion of a potent peer', and these proposals were even more unsuitable than Smith's confections. From the letter it is clear that one of Smith's designs, the most elaborate and boasting a stone balcony, was based on a sketch of the Colonel's.

The proposals for the new dining room were not carried out but probably at this time Smith provided a new chimney piece in the existing dining room. This chimney piece, which was of polished pink granite, was of a remarkable solidity and hideousness. Unfortunately it was removed, shortly after the National Trust took over the Castle, in a most injudicious fit of good taste.

The next four years saw a considerable amount of work done, and even more proposed and never carried out. Two schemes were prepared for a wing to close the courtyard on the N; one in keeping with Smith's design for the new dining room, the other a mock gatehouse with crenellations and false loops positively reeking of Colonel Charles. The ground floor in both cases provides service or servants' rooms flanking the entry to the courtyard. In the simpler design the upper floor consists of a nursery, and the Colonel's dressing room, hot bath, a secondary dressing room with a shower bath, and a water closet. Apart from the Colonel's dressing room which commands the vista of the North Avenue the arrangement is only a rudimentary attempt at planning. Not so the upper floor of the castellated wing; the Colonel's Dressing Room again is central but now it is flanked by the Hot Bath and the Shower Bath arranged *en suite*, with two water closets, and a closet for clean water. In short a commodious arrangement combining domestic convenience with due propriety of taste. Neither was ever built.

More important was the remodelling of the two upper floors and the staircase which took place between 1838 and 1841. The first evidence for this is contained in some notes of John Smith, dated 28 November 1838, on both the work in hand and that proposed. The present arrangement of the floor immediately above the Hall was carried out at this time. Originally planned as two rooms—known in the early 18th century as the Fore Great Chamber and the Back Great Chamber, and later as Miss Elyza's room (Skene refers to it as the Old Kings Room) and the Billiard Room—this floor was given a dog-leg passage so that the two chambers were self-contained. The cost of this was £470. There are hideously elaborate door cases which have been given misleading initials. They are certainly not early 17th century, which is the style—complete with bogus evidence – that they ape, and they are not in Smith's manner. It is likely, although there is no evidence to prove this, that they were installed by Colonel Charles' son, Colonel Frederick, to please his first wife Lady Blanche Drummond, the daughter of the titular Duke of Perth. He and his wives were much given to travelling in Germany, where they indulged in the hospitality of minor Royal and Serene Highnesses; a hospitality returned by gifts of fish and game, which seldom arrived in a condition that was satisfactory to their hosts. These decorations would well accord with their pretensions.

On the floor above, formerly the High Fore Great Chamber and the High Back Great Chamber, Smith designed a library to occupy the whole space. The designs for this exist but were slightly altered in execution. His original intention was to keep the turrets as retiring rooms but this was abandoned. This must have been completed by October 1839 in time to receive two book presses with lacquered wire fronts which had been ordered from London. The estimate for the work had been £450, but the final account, when it was settled, was for £602 7 4³/₄.

During 1839 and 1840 the staircase was being re-modelled. This had been foreshadowed in the designs for the new dining room in 1836. The drawings show back stairs built against the N wall of the main stair hall. These would have blocked out the large window in the N wall. There are records of payments for plastering and panelling on the staircase and, during these two years, John Thomson the contractor received £599 7 9. The same period probably saw the building of the low service buildings, lodges, and entry at the N end of the court.

There is also a design by John Smith, drawn in an economical frame of mind on the reverse of the library drawing, for remodelling the bedroom and dressing room in the W wing. This together with the bathroom suite in the N wing would have provided Colonel Charles with a splendid set of private rooms. It is surprising that he then, with total disregard for his wooden leg, had the library placed at the top of the house.

This apart from various items of general maintenance and repair, seems to have been the end of the last great building period at the castle, although Colonel Charles was to build yet another bathroom. This called forth a warning from John Thomson who wrote that Blaikie (the plumber) 'would recommend carrying water upstairs when a Tiped Bath is wanted (I mean the Shower) as by causing it to ascend in a pipe from the Boiler might be attended with some danger by making it even so hot as to scald a person'. Nevertheless the hot *and* cold shower bath together with the boiler were installed at a cost of £17 15 0.

Perhaps it was as well that this was the end for William Burn was at the Castle in 1847. A set of drawings of mouldings and details (what appear to be the survey notes of these are in the library of Kings College, Aberdeen) suggest that an elaborate refacing was intended. Certainly there is a handsome drawing for the restoration of the Clock Turret that gives a clue to what the Castle escaped, and is best explained in Burn's own words; . . .

'I may mention also, that although I have ventured to call this restoration, I do not believe there was a clock in this position of the original building and that its introduction there was as much an innovation as the present dial – but be this as it may, it is not a bad situation for a clock, and it admits of a very characteristic and effective style of finishing – which is a good answer to all who insist on being over critical.'

The remaining building history of the Castle has been the frustrated efforts of Sir Robert Lorimer, the careful archaeological work on the Hall and the Michael Tower for Clive Pearson by Dr Kelly, and finally the removal of Colonel Charles, disfiguring additions in the courtyard, and a thorough and painstaking restoration of the whole Castle by Major and Mrs Smiley before it was gifted to the National Trust for Scotland. It is to be hoped that the work of five centuries does not now disappear in a cloud of interior decoration.

NOTE: THE PROPOSED WILKINS ALTERATIONS

It is probably not generally realised how very narrow an escape Castle Fraser had from destruction – and not by the explosion of gas. In the Mellon Collection at Yale University are a number of drawings of proposed alterations at Castle Fraser which are attributed to William

Wilkins (1778–1839) (pl 24), together with two older survey drawings of which Wilkins made use. The surveys, a sketch outline of the ground floor and the elevation of the S front are by the same hand and are both dated *Cluny 1819*: the attribution is to an artist of that name but in fact this indicates that whoever drew them was staying at Cluny at the time. The elevation is of interest as it shows all Miss Eliza's trifling alterations, save that the fanlight over the entrance door is of a more elegant description than the present one. These drawings may be by William Wilkins, or by Willam Burn, who was working on Castle Fraser for Colonel Charles in 1819, or they may have been done for either of them. The latter is more likely as they have an amateurish air about them, which Burn's and Wilkins' drawings never had. They certainly have – as far as can be judged from the photographs – a strong family resemblance to other drawings by James Skene of Rubislaw.

However that may be either William Wilkins or Colonel Charles has marked on the elevation in pencil the first hints of the desired alterations. These are the obliteration of all Miss Elyza's works, the blocking of all the openings on the ground floor, the continuation of the break-backs on the W elevation along the S front and some ill-defined alteration to the round tower just above the great moulded course.

The drawings by Wilkins – the N and E elevations, and a perspective from the SW makes only too plain what was intended.

The building was to be refaced in ashlar with the lower set-back carried round as a plinth, and the second set-back continued along the S front. All the windows were to be re-built as two-lights with trefoiled heads and heavy, stopped label-moulds. The panels over the entrance in the Michael Tower disappeared, and the doorway itself became mildly Tudor. The courtyard wings and dining room were demolished. And in order that nothing should spoil this *neat and commodius gothick residence* the whole of the upper works above the ceiling level of the present library were demolished, and that was lit, if it were lit at all, by small windows behind a *handsome castellated parapet in the baronial taste*. Some concessions were made to the original design of the upper works. The battlements followed the line of the false battlements on the Michael Tower, and were carried on an elaborate set of mouldings, copies of those destroyed, and which dipped underneath the vanished frontispiece; and the rounds had been replaced by rounded open balconies, for turrets they were not.

It is difficult to believe that Colonel Charles could ever have seriously contemplated such an appalling solecism, thoroughly justifying Sir Robert Lorimer's stricture on the family which '... cannot have possessed a vestige of taste'.

So far no letters have been found at Castle Fraser to establish any link with Wilkins: if the two survey drawings are his, or were done for him it shows that Colonel Charles was seeking his advice on re-modelling the house at the same time that William Burn was doing this very thing. In date this design falls between Wilkin's two other large Scotch commissions, Dalmeny for the Earl of Roseberry 1814–17, and Dunmore for the Earl of Dunmore 1820–2, and is distinctly less Tudorish than either.

THE POLICIES (fig 6; pl 25b)

The earliest estate map to show the lay-out of the policies is of a date before 1788, and probably records an arrangement that dates from the second half of the 17th century. The Castle stands at the junction of four great avenues of sycamores; the main visual axis is the avenue to the N – *the Broad Avenue* – which is the widest as its name suggests, but the principal access must have been from the West Avenue which led on to the Aberdeen road at Broomdyke of Braeneil, and by which it was possible to bring coaches to the entrance to the courtyard.

The N avenue is separated from the castle by a metal screen with stone piers and, because of the fall in the ground towards the house, a flight of steps. A similar screen closes the opening

of the fall in the ground towards the house, a flight of steps. A similar screen closes the opening into the courtyard into which another flight of steps descends. At the far end of the *Broad Avenue* is another stone and metal screen, beyond which lie the Mains.

Immediately surrounding the castle, but with a greater extent to the W than the E is an enclosure known as the *Cherry Yard*, presumably planted with cherry trees, and beyond it to the W is a larger enclosure, the *Ducat Yard*. At the NW corner a building is shown, but it seems too large for a ducat, and, as there is a large pond close by, it probably contains the various poultry houses as well.

To the E of the castle, and lying S of the E avenue, are two much bigger enclosures; that to the S being *Walks and Birles and Oran Ground* whilst that to the N is the *Garden*. This is

matic.

In the angle between the Broad and East avenues is a long barn-like structure in a cross

THE POLICIES c1780

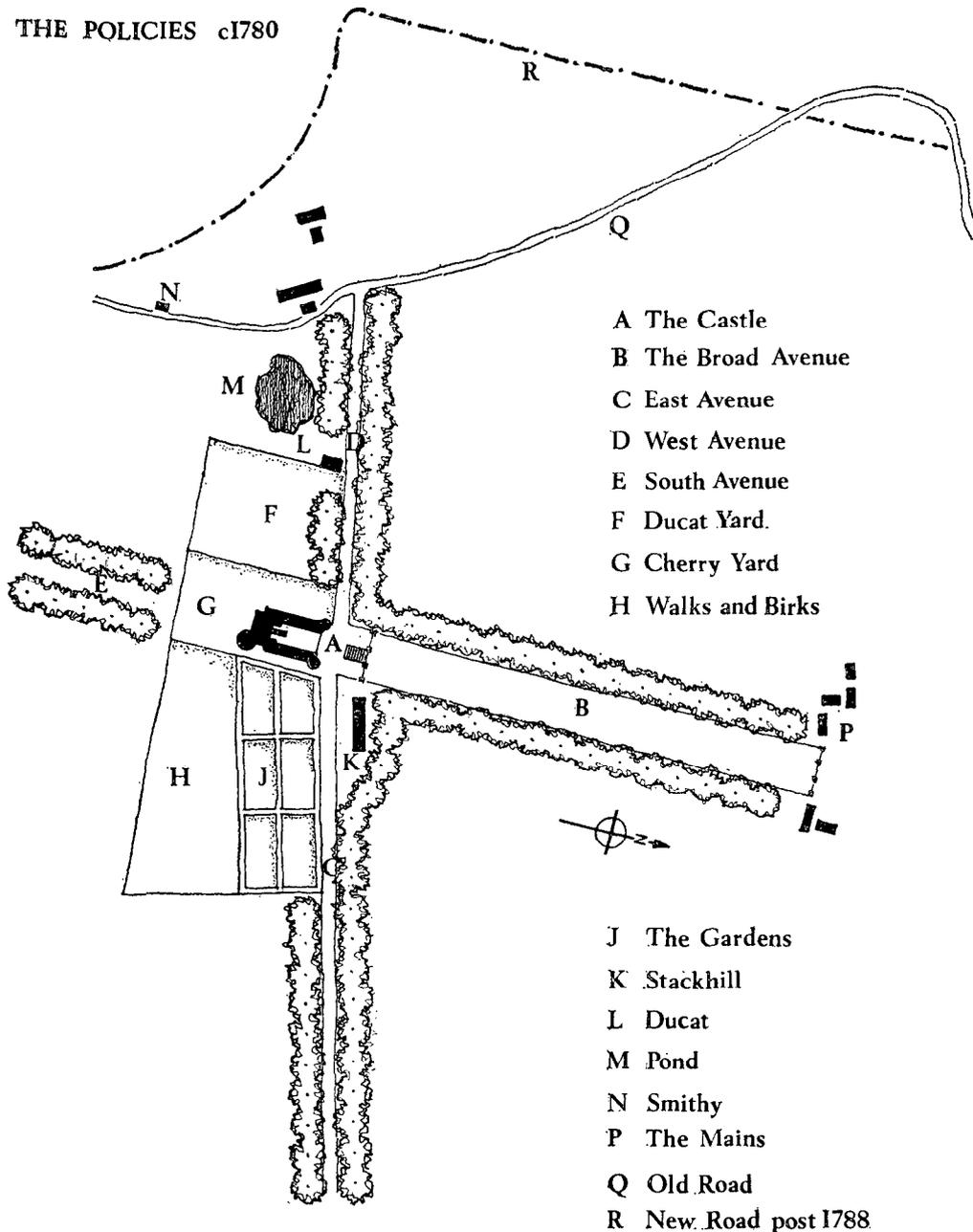


FIG 6 Castle Fraser: The Policies c 1780

Colonel Charles added to them with one commemorating Miss Elyza, her friend Miss Bristow, and his father the General.

Unfortunately Colonel Charles took to gardening, encouraged no doubt by his indefatigable Aunt Gibbs, who despatched plants from the South on board 'The Aberdeen Packet'. And

although James Giles, visiting in September 1856, could write ‘. . . The place is looking quite beautiful and everything thriving. In the course of a few years it will be one of the finest things in the country for its extent’ it is clear from his paintings that the Colonel had begun to fiddle with herbaceous borders, which came perilously close to the Castle. These have now vanished and its setting must be very much as Miss Elyza knew it. Perhaps Giles’ comment was not entirely disinterested, for the family tradition holds that his advice was in part responsible for the landscaping around the Castle.

But the saddest of all the monuments at Castle Fraser is the granite memorial to Colonel Charles’ son, Colonel Frederick MacKenzie Fraser, erected after his death in 1897:

*‘The last of his race to live and die
In this his Ancient Stronghold’.*

CASTLE FRASER AND SIR WALTER SCOTT: AN EXERCISE IN SPECULATIVE INFERENCE

When David MacGibbon and Thomas Ross were producing their great work on Scottish castles, one of the few to which they were denied access was Castle Fraser; consequently their entry on this important building derives almost entirely from the manuscript of James Skene of Rubislaw, which was lent to them by his son, Dr William Forbes Skene, HM Historiographer for Scotland. In the course of their remarks they deliver themselves, in speaking of the lug, of this cautious statement – ‘It is perhaps permissible to infer from the intimacy of Mr Skene with Sir Walter Scott that he may have communicated this discovery to Sir Walter, and that it thus became the prototype of the ‘lug’ or ‘Dionysius’ Ear’, which played so important a part in the *‘Fortunes of Nigel’*.

Later writers have been much less cautious and such a gloss has been put upon the original statement that it has acquired all the standing of an accepted tradition without anyone enquiring too closely into the respectability of its antecedents.

There is no direct evidence to show that Skene ever discussed Castle Fraser with Scott, although it is difficult to see how, if he had seen Skene’s notes and sketches of old buildings, Scott could have been ignorant of the castle or of the ‘Lug’, which Skene sketched in great detail. There is however a considerable body of circumstantial evidence to suggest that Scott may have been aware both of the Castle, and of several family traditions. His knowledge of these could have come through James Skene, or through Colin MacKenzie, who was great nephew to Miss Elyza Frazer, and first cousin to Colonel Charles MacKenzie Fraser: there is even a possibility that gossip by James Byres had reached his ears, for Byres had connections with Sir William Forbes, elder, of Pitsligo.

Byres had acted for Sir William in the buying of Sculptures and had not lost touch with his patron on returning to Scotland – indeed he hoped still to make use of his influence. In January 1806, writing to his nephew, Patrick Moir who had been expelled from Rome by the French and was then in Edinburgh, Byres says, ‘I understand that Mr McKinzey, Sir William’s son-in-law has planned for himself and means to build a great House on his property in the country, and that Mr MacDonald of Glengarey, his other son-in-law intends making a considerable extension addition to his Castle in the Highlands’; the intention being that Sir William who was then a very sick man, should persuade his sons-in-law to make use of Moir’s doubtful architectural abilities (Moir in fact went out to Bengal in the following year with Lord Minto, as Commissioner of the Court of Requests at Calcutta, where he died in 1810).

James Byres has been described as ‘one of those gentleman who, with a little income, a little learning, a little knowledge of art, and a full capacity for speech, wander from gallery to gallery, delivering opinions on the works of genius with a confidence that passes with the world for the offspring of refined taste’.

Possibly Scott had Byres in mind when in *St Ronan's Well* he drew the picture of Mr Winterblossom; ‘. . . a civil sort of person, who was nicely precise in his dress. . . . In his heyday he had a small estate, which he spent like a gentleman, by mixing with the gay world. . . . To conclude he was possessed of some taste in the fine arts, at least in painting and music, although it was rather of the technical kind, than that which warms the heart and elevates the feelings’.

Where, or if, Scott met Byres is not known: it could have been in Aberdeenshire when Scott was staying with Alexander Leith of Freefield in 1796, or it could have been in Edinburgh. Byres was too well known for Scott to have been ignorant of him – but he is I think the least likely source of the information.

By far the most likely sources of Scott’s knowledge of Castle Fraser and the Frasers (if that is he had a knowledge and it is not a series of coincidences) would have been James Skene and Colin MacKenzie, the former for the building and the latter for the family. He had known both men since they were volunteers together, and both men had married sisters, Jane and Elizabeth Forbes, daughters of Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, whilst their brother, George, had married Mary Hay, daughter of Sir John Hay, and sister of Jane Hay, who was to marry Colonel Charles MacKenzie Fraser. Colonel Charles was Colin MacKenzie’s cousin; and for good measure Colin MacKenzie had been General MacKenzie’s man of business; the General was Colonel Charles’ father, and had commanded the 78th in 1794–5 when Sir Walter’s brother, John, transferred into the 2nd Bn of that regiment.

When the *Antiquary* was published in 1816 it contained three passages which could be related to Castle Fraser. The first of these it could be argued could be based on the great Frontispiece, and the dangers of over enthusiastic antiquarian attribution. The letter IBMMF have been translated as ‘John Bell, Master Mason, Leal to Fraser’ and it would not be too difficult to draw the parallel with the scene at the Kaim of Kinprunes in which Jonathan Oldbuck explains to Lovel the significance of the stone which had been found on the site ‘. . . and the third day we found a stone which we transported to Monkbarns, in order to have the sculpture taken off with plaster of Paris; it bears a sacrificing vessel and the letters ADLL which may stand without much violence for *Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*’.

‘Certainly, sir; for the Dutch antiquaries claim Caligula as the founder of a lighthouse, on the sole authority of the letters CCPF which they interpret as *Caius Caligula Pharum Fecit*.’

‘. . . Mair by token, Monkbarns, if ye howk up the bourock as ye seem to have begun, ye’ll find, if ye hae not fund it already, a stane that ane o’ the mason-callants cut a ladle on to have a bourd at the bridegroom, and he put four letters on’t, that’s ADLL – *Aiken Drum’s Lang Ladle* – for Aiken was ane o’ the kale – suppers o’ Fife’.

The two other passages are both connected with the Glenallan tragedy: this hinges on Lord Glenallan’s mistaken belief that his wife, and the mother of his son, was his illegitimate half-sister and that he was therefore guilty of incest. He and Miss Neville were in the words of old Elspeth ‘owre sib’; but not much more so than Miss Elyza Fraser and her uncle, the Laird of Udney. And when Eddie Ochiltree sees the Earl, at Glenallen House in his black hung apartment – the ancient form of mourning – this is the same story that is told of Lady Betty’s black chamber at Inverallochy, and of Lady Fraser’s at Castle Fraser.

The question of the Lug however is more complex. The two best preserved examples in Scotland are both in Aberdeenshire, at Craigston and Castle Fraser. Skene makes no mention of

that at Craigston, but he describes and draws the one at Castle Fraser in great detail in his MS on 'The Domestic Architecture of Scotland', now in the Edinburgh City Library. From internal evidence this manuscript was re-copied after 1836 from an earlier version started in France in 1827-8, but the material and sketches on which it was based were of much earlier date. As early as 1805 Scott was trying to have Skene's drawings of his foreign tour engraved and published, and the idea was to recur in later years. Writing in his *Memories of Sir Walter Scott*, Skene says '... From the numerous collection of drawings which I possessed of the most ancient mansions of Scotland, and the observations I had made on the peculiarities of the style of the baronial and castellated residences, Sir Walter had often urged me to arrange my notes on that subject, and as he had also some ideas, he thought we might throw off something of general interest in that matter'. And it is extremely unlikely that Scott would not have seen the sketches of the Castle Fraser Lug amongst these. When the Lug was discovered is not clear - Skene's drawings of it are not dated, and he only refers to the discovery as having been made at some time anterior to his inspection. However, as he tested its acoustic properties this must have been before 1817 when the installation of the organ destroyed the listening hole, and as it is hardly likely that the aged and bedridden Miss Elyza Fraser would have encouraged antiquarian investigation in the closet of her chamber, Skene presumably explored it between her death in 1814 and his return to Edinburgh two years later, or before she took to her bed in 1806.

In three of the novels, *A Legend of Montrose* (1819), *Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), and *Count Robert of Paris* (1831), Scott makes use of, or refers to 'lugs' or 'ears' as concealed means of overhearing secrets and conversations, and in each case links them with the name of Dionysius, Tyrant of Syracuse. In Sicily, is a cave traditionally known as the Ear of Dionysius; Skene must have known of this - he was in Sicily 1802-03 - and his sketch of it appears in the unpublished Vol 2 of the *Existing Localities* in the possession of Dr James Corson. On the mount is written 'Nigel and Dionius Ear': it is plate 19, but in the list of contents the entry against 19 is blank.

This could be explained by the fact that although the expression '*Dionysius' Ear*' was used to refer to secret chambers, the original was a natural feature, and therefore its description would not fit the chamber which James VI and I had built at the Tower of London - a room which caused the King to remark feelingly that he had willingly given instructions for it to be blocked up 'the rather that my back is sair with sitting in it for a whole hour'. As the Castle Fraser lug measures 6 ft by 3 ft 6 in by 6 ft high with the listening hole in the floor, and is entered through a trap 12 in by 15 in square, and 2 ft 6 in depth, there is a certain justness in the King's complaint.

When Mrs Jane MacKenzie Fraser met Scott at the home of her brother-in-law George Forbes, in 1828 he spoke to her of Castle Fraser. Writing to her husband she recorded that '... Sir Walter said much to me of his intended visit to Aberdeenshire, and has all the localities of the *Chateau* by heart from Mr Skene's drawing and description'. From this it is clear that Scott had seen Skene's notes on Castle Fraser - the use of the word '*chateau*', the term by which the family always described the Castle makes it evident that it was Castle Fraser of which Scott was speaking, and that therefore he would have been aware of this particular lug which figures prominently in the notes. Unfortunately there is nothing to show that he had seen them prior to the writing of *Nigel*, although it is reasonable to suppose that he had - but deduced reason is not fact.

In his own account of these secret chambers Skene covers a considerable amount of ground, ranging from Fren draught to the Seraglio of the Sublime Porte and tilts in passing at his friend - 'The existence of such contrivances were too favourable to the purpose of romance writers to have been overlooked (See *Woodstoke*)'.

The first reference to Scott in the Castle Fraser papers comes in a letter written on 6 March 1817 by Colin MacKenzie to Colonel Charles - it deals principally with family legal matters,

but also makes mention of Scott: ‘. . . I cannot however confine myself for we have no fewer than 3 sick clerks of Session, Old Ferrier with gout, James Walter gone to Harrogate, and I’m very sorry to add Walter Scott who was last night seriously ill with cramp in his stomach and is still only easier – he had another attack which lasted 4 hours a few nights ago . . .’. Possibly the health of a famous public figure was of interest to Colonel Charles – but the tone suggests more than that, at least a degree of acquaintance.

In 1826 Scott’s *Life of Napoleon* began to appear, and in Vol VI was a reference to General Alexander Fraser, which could be taken to imply that he was responsible for the disasters of the campaign against Rosetta. This was not Scott’s intention, as he made clear in a letter to Colin MacKenzie, who had taken the matter up with him on behalf of Colonel Charles. His words include the phrase ‘. . . I had never the least idea that your uncle of all men was in the slightest degree compromised . . .’, which again suggest a degree of acquaintance with the subject.

To what does all this tend? It is certainly not proof that Scott knew of Castle Fraser and its Lug, whether from Skene, or from some other source, or that he knew of the two family traditions so similar to detail to those of the Glenallan tragedy. Nor is it proof that any of this formed the basis for material in either *Antiquary* or *Fortunes of Nigel*: to claim that it does would be to trespass unpardonably on the known facts.

It does however provide a large body of circumstantial evidence, large enough to suggest that all these facts were likely to have been, and indeed probably were known to Scott, and that, consciously or unconsciously he made use of them in the two novels. In the words of MacGibbon and Ross, ‘It is perhaps permissible to infer’.

CASTLE FRASER, OR BALGORKAR, STONE CIRCLE

This very fine stone circle which lies about half a mile west of the castle has already been described in the *Proceedings* (Vol 35 and Vol 38) by F R Coles. The first of Coles’s descriptions seems to have been inhibited . . . ‘This fine group, on ground never till last year disturbed by the plough, stood, on the day of our visit, more than half hidden in waving corn, which from the surveyor’s point of view, was a somewhat serious hindrance’. In his second paper Coles draws in greater detail on a number of letters written in 1855–6 by C E Dalrymple, who had excavated the circle, to Dr John Stuart, editor and secretary of the Spalding Club. Both papers contain plans of the circle widely at variance with each other; the first showing it to be a rough ellipse 58 ft by 76 ft, the second a rough circle 63–66 ft in diameter. The second, although re-numbered and re-oriented, is copied from Dalrymple’s plan. James Skene in his notes also has a plan of the circle which approximates closely to Dalrymple’s drawing, and he gives the diameter of the circle as 60 ft.

In the muniment room at Castle Fraser is another description of the circle, together with a plan sent by Dalrymple to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser. This differs slightly from the description quoted by Coles. Neither the description nor the letter accompanying it have a date other than the 1st of April. Coles notes that the letters which he saw were written in 1855–6; in his letter to Colonel Charles, Dalrymple refers to some paper of Skene’s which he was returning and to an architectural work ‘*Baronial and Ecclesiastical*’ – presumably Billings’ *Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities*’ published by 1852 and to which Colonel had subscribed for a set of India Proofs. The Skene paper was probably his undated letter (Appendix C) to Colonel Charles in which he expounds his theories on the dating of Castles. This agrees with Coles’s dates, and the excavation of the circle was probably undertaken in 1854–5.

Charles Elphinstone Dalrymple was the seventh son of Sir Robert Dalrymple Horn Elphin-

stone of Horn and Logie Elphinstone. He was born in 1817 and died 14 July 1891. He was married twice, to Harriet Gordon of Ellon, and to Christian Gordon Cumming Skene of Pitlurg, through whom he came into possession of Glasgoforest. As a landowner, vice-president of the Mar Agricultural Association, Captain in the Cinque Port Artillery Volunteers, Deputy-Lieutenant and Commissioner for Supply for the County of Aberdeen, and a staunch Conservative, and not enjoying the most robust health he would hardly seem to have the time to devote to other pursuits. It was however in the fields of archaeology and antiquarianism that his greatest interest lay.

He belonged to the Spalding Club, and after its demise in 1869 was instrumental in re-founding it as the New Spalding Club. In his speech at the Music Hall in Aberdeen, 11 November 1881, when he moved that the club should be formed he looked further than the country of the old club ' . . . When the circular proposing the formation of the new society was issued, the Counties of Banff, Aberdeenshire, and Kincardine were the only ones referred to; but it ought to be distinctly understood that the whole north-east of Scotland and the whole of Scotland north of the Tay may come within the sphere of operations if we find suitable material . . . we shall have no objection to our extending our operations to Inverness, Sutherland, and Caithness, and even to Orkney if suitable material should offer.' He was elected Vice-President, convener of the Editorial Committee, and a member of the Family History Committee, and his taste and interests had considerable influence on the remarkable series of volumes that the club published in the years following its foundation. But perhaps his most important work was that which he carried out in the 1850s on the stone circles of the NE, particularly his investigation of the five recumbent stone circles at Rayne, Ardoyne, and Ardlair in the Garioch, and Sunhoney and Castle Fraser in Mar. These by the light of his generation were serious excavations and do not deserve to be dismissed scathingly as 'mid-nineteenth-century "howkings" '.

Logie Elphinstone, April 1st

My dear Colonel Fraser,

I fear I have kept the enclosed a very long time, but I always expected that we might meet, when I could return it to you in propria persona. It is truly an exceedingly interesting dissertation on a subject which it always gives me pleasure to pick up any information upon, M^r Skene possesses the talent of saying a great deal in comparatively little space.

My father was much pleased with the Architectural work, the 'Baronial and Ecclesiastical' details of which are much in his way. Harriet will give you a full account of the present state of things here, and I hope will find all well at the Castle.

I should have been glad to have accompanied her, but we cannot both leave home at once just now. With kindest regards to M^{rs} Fraser

believe me

very sincerely yours

[sgd] *Charles E Dalrymple*

Notes of the examination by digging of a circle of Standing Stones near Castle Fraser, in Aberdeenshire. —

This Circle stands about half a mile West of Castle Fraser. Another group of stones formerly stood about 400 y^{ds} to the Eastward of the Circle, but the original number, which is uncertain, is reduced to two. The Circle has consisted of eleven stones, of which ten remain, — three of them thrown down. — There is the usual 'Altar-stone', measuring 6 f^t 9 in : long by 6 ft : broad, —

between two upright pillars, one 11 ft 9 in: in *entire* height, by 4 ft: 9 in: broad, and the other 8 ft: 2 in: high (above ground) by 2 feet in breadth. The other stones vary from 4 to 6½ feet in height. –

The diameter of the Circle is from 66 to 63 feet, being rather irregular in shape. The ‘Altar-stone’ is nearly due south from the Centre. There is a small concentric circle, 13 feet in diameter, within the larger one, but only defined at the North and South sides, as shewn in the ground-plan, – by stones sunk in the ground down to the sub-soil and showing themselves a few inches above ground. They touch each other, and show generally a flat side turned to the centre of the circle. –

Heaped up against the ‘Altar-Stone’ and the upright stones beside it, – (see No’s I, II, III,) was a low tumulus, about 2½ feet in height, which was found to consist of earth heaped over a rude pavement of small boulders, enclosed & intersected by lines of larger ones placed as shewn in the ground-plan. Just above this pavement and up against the ‘Altar-stone’ was a deposit of the usual black mould, covered by a small flat stone, placed horizontally, similar to those which are so often found laid above and below these deposits, but of which this circle shewed only this one example. *Below* the rude pavement was a considerable quantity of black mould, evidently containing a great deal of charcoal, both powdered and in small pieces, – and extending down to the subsoil.

At stone No VII was another low tumulus, of earth over a layer of small boulders, and containing, beneath the latter, no less than eight different deposits of the black mould and charcoal, seven of them having fragments of urns mixed with them. A curious feature of this tumulus is that the stone No VII lies embedded in it, only shewing its surface, or little more, above ground, and has every appearance of having always formed part of it, as, from the thickness of the stone, its lower side reaches nearly to the subsoil. –

At stone No IX was found a deposit of black mould, and charcoal, extending *beneath* the stone. – No X stands on a small tumulus, lower than either of the others, covering the same rude pavement, and containing, beneath it, a quantity of black mould & charcoal extending *under*, and to the other (outer) side of the stone.

The *whole area* of the Circle was found to be paved closely & firmly with small boulders, lying about 6 inches or less, below the surface.

The small inner circle contained, beneath this pavement, a quantity of black mould mixed with small fragments of charcoal, & occasional small fragments of incinerated bones. These traces extended as far as the circumscribing crescents of stones shewn in the plan, beyond which the character of the soil changed, – the outer part of the circle yielding a sort of sandy loam mixed throughout with small fragments of charcoal, not presenting generally the appearance of *black* mould, but of *yellow dotted* with *black*. This seemed to extend, everywhere, down to the subsoil. –

At XII, were found two deposits of the black mould but had become covered with soil from the decay of vegetable substances &c. during the lapse of many ages.

The area of this circle had evidently never been disturbed by tillage or planting, – and the pavement was everywhere in its original state.

[sgd] *Charles E. Dalrymple.*

P.S.

The Circle stands on a height commanding an extensive & beautiful view of the Valley of the Don.–

This Circle was the only instance in which the writer has seen deposits placed actually *under* standing stones, except in the case of a stone placed in the *Centre* of a circle. –

On the South West side of this Circle, where the ground falls away, the deficiency has been supplied by a sort of rude *step* of stones, raising the height to the level of the rest of the circle, so as to make it pretty level throughout.

[sgd] C.E.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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But my greatest thanks must go to Mrs Smiley, both for the constant encouragement which I have received from her, and from Major Smiley, and for the work which she and her sister, Mrs Tritton have done, on reducing the Castle Fraser papers to order and intelligibility.

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THE CASTLE FRAZER (BALGORKAR) STONE CIRCLE: A FURTHER NOTE

R J Mercer

The site known today as the Castle Frazer stone circle is situated about 800 m to the W of the castle in the parish of Cluny at NGR NJ 715125. The circle is approximately 20.4 m in diameter and today comprises the visible remains of seven independent standing stones – two of which have now fallen. Set in the SW sector two further uprights flank a recumbent slab thus proclaiming the site to be one of the well defined group of monuments, peculiar to Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire within Scotland, known as Recumbent Stone Circles (RSC's).

The earliest published account relating to this monument is that of James Logan (1829). An apparently carefully executed plan and elevation is given of the circle in this paper together with a brief description. 'The circle at Balgorkar seems to have consisted of eleven stones, nine only of which remain. The Altar "(the recumbent slab)" measures 6' 9" in length and is 4' 6" in height. The stone at its East end is 6' 7" high and 4' 6" wide at the base. About 200 paces eastwards are two stones a few paces distant from each other and about 7' high'.

Logan's plan shows the circle in rather different condition to that recorded by Dalrymple in the 1850s (Coles 1904, 300) and different again from the plan of Coles executed in 1900 (Coles 1901, 198). The writer would recognise no compulsion to regard these differences as due necessarily to the vagaries of the 19th century surveying but would argue that the plans could represent, quite possibly, fairly radical changes in the condition of the monument over this period of seventy years.

The monument as shown by Logan has Stone I in Coles' terminology (Coles 1904, 301) standing erect (by the 1850s the stone is lying flat) and Stone II recorded by both Dalrymple and Coles as showing just above the ground is not recorded by Logan. The orthostat setting of the circle is clearly shown to be set upon a continuous bank not recorded by Dalrymple and only hinted at by Coles as though this had become severely denuded by 1900. This bank and the stone

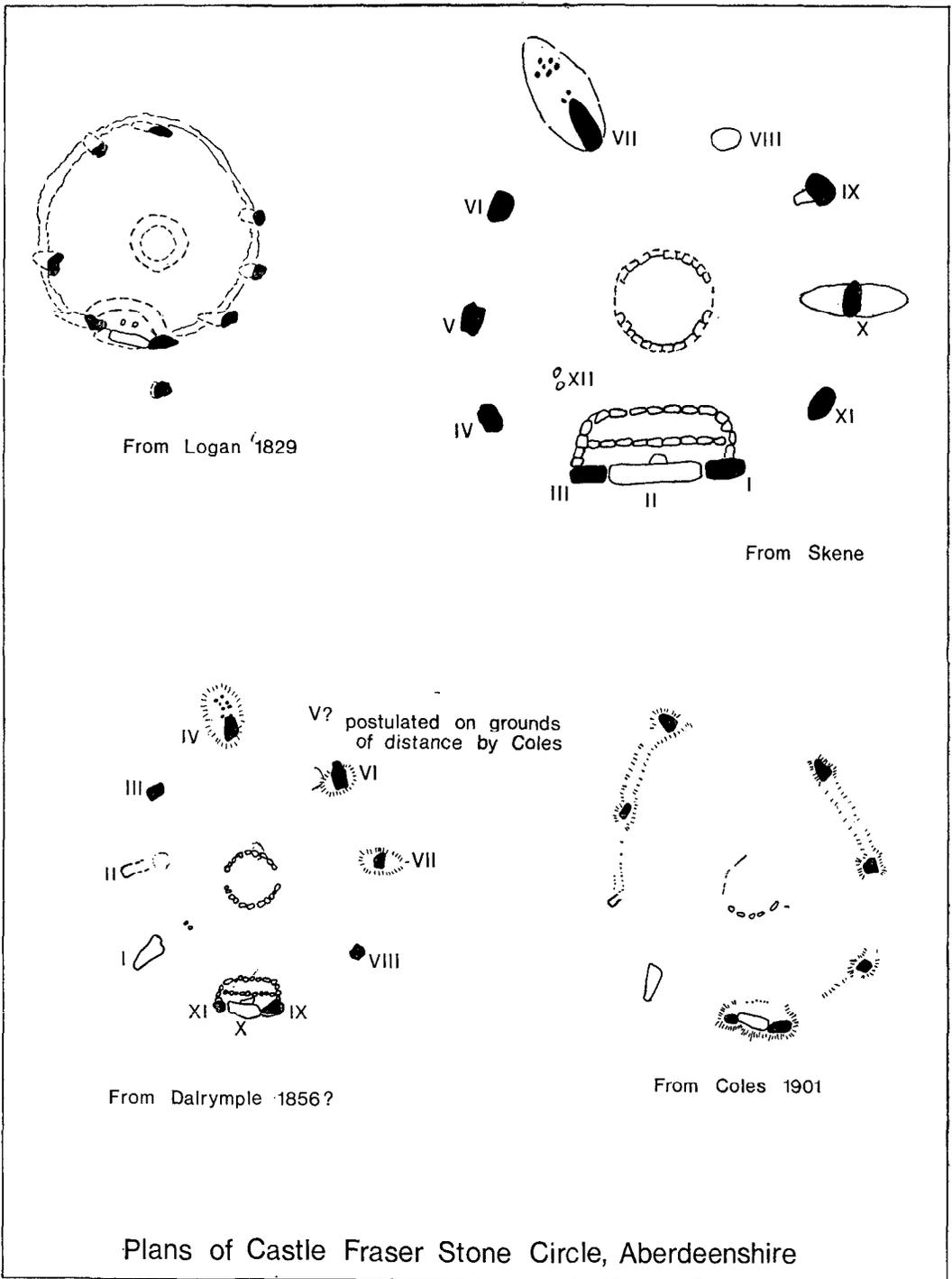


FIG 7 Castle Fraser: Plans of the Stone Circle

setting upon it are shown by Logan as delineating a simple circle and Dalrymple's plan may be interpreted as indicating a similar state of affairs (as does an unpublished plan of James Skene where the circle is noted as 60 ft in diameter). Coles (1901) recounts that the old name of the farm upon which the circle stood was Balgorkar and it is thus that Logan describes it. Coles, experiencing difficulty in locating the monument, established by local enquiry that the old name had been changed to West Mains Farm in the 1870s.

Coles, however, surveying in 1900 places Stone IV out of the true circle by some 5 ft. As this stone was a focal point of Dalrymple's attention during his excavation in the 1850s it might be suggested that this fairly radical movement is to be linked with his activities – this suggestion, of course, being based upon the, perhaps unwarranted, assumption of accuracy by the various planners. Perhaps indicative of the relative reliability of the planners are the measurements to the nearest inch in the texts and the consistent accuracy of depiction of the individual shapes of the stones. In the circumstances there seems little reason to suggest that they could not then be accurately placed relative one to the other. Finally an individual stone shown outwith the circle to the S of the site on Logan's plan is absent from all other plans.

Dalrymple undertook the excavation of the site in the mid-1850s as part of an extended campaign of stone circle investigation entered into at the behest of James Stuart, editor and secretary of the Spalding Club. Stuart was at the point of producing the first volume of his great *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (Stuart 1856–67) and wished to include descriptions of some of the major stone circle sites of Aberdeenshire. Excavations were undertaken by Dalrymple at Broomend of Crichtie (later published in this Society's *Proceedings* for 1884), Tuach, Sunhoney, Rayne, Ardlair, Ardoyne, Auchorthies and Invergourie and brief, careful descriptions by Dalrymple were included in Stuart's first volume published in 1856. Only the Castle Frazer account does not appear and it may thus be suggested that it was the last in this sequence of investigations – coming too late for inclusion in the great work. Possibly, therefore, an 1856 date for the excavation should be preferred to that of the preceding year.

Dalrymple appears, by the standards of his time, to have been a relatively careful and observant worker who, by the time he came to excavate the Balgorkar site, had had a good deal of experience. Excavation of the circle at Castle Frazer revealed that the site had been deliberately built up on the SW side by rudimentary terracing to produce a level platform set on a gentle slope. This phenomenon recorded by Dalrymple is one quite typical of other RSC's in the region. Upon this level platform (composed of loamy make-up) a circular bank had been built on and into which the stones of the circle had been set. The whole interior of the circle was 'paved closely and firmly with small boulders' a level which occurred about 6" below the surface of the 1850s turf. In the centre of the circle a further circular setting of small upright setts was recovered, the interior of which were also paved. Beneath the paving of the inner circle was 'a quantity of black mould mixed with fragments of charcoal and cremated bone' – presumably a mixed deposit laid down prior to the paving of the area after the building of the terrace. This activity would appear to have been restricted to the area of this inner circle – 'these traces extended as far as the outermost edge of the inner ring but beyond this no bone was found. The soil throughout the outer part of the circle was of quite a different character, a sandy loam mixed throughout with small bits of charcoal – not presenting the appearance of the black mould however but of yellow flecked with black. This seems to extend everywhere down to the subsoil'.

This evidence is of some importance as it would appear to indicate that burning activity is clearly associated not only with secondary aspects of the site but is present right from its very inception as quantities of burnt material occur throughout the make-up of the platform upon which the site is set. There is however no guarantee that the burnt material within the platform

is of similar origin to the much denser material which did apparently include burnt bone which is restricted to the central area sealed beneath the paving.

More light is thrown upon the primary versus the secondary nature of burnt bone contexts on the site by Dalrymple's examination of the orthostats of the stone circle. At Stone IV Dalrymple encountered a 'low earthen tumulus' set over a layer of small boulders sealing 8 distinct deposits of 'black mould and charcoal' – seven of these having fragments of 'urns' mixed with them. The stone lay embedded in the 'tumulus' (possibly a remaining sector of bank) only showing its surface or little more above the ground and with its base apparently penetrating nearly down to the subsoil.

As this stone is situated on the N most side of the circle little if any platform material could be present. If the stone is therefore set in the tumulus which seals the burnt deposit and the stone itself barely reaches the subsoil the stone *must* be later than or contemporary with the deposition of the deposit.

The account of Dalrymple's exploration around Stone VI helps to confirm this primary nature of the burnt deposit. Here 'a deposit of black mould and charcoal' was found to extend beneath the stone. Stone VII, like Stone IV, 'stood on a small tumulus lower than the others' covering a similarly rough stone pavement sealing 'a quantity of black mould and charcoal extending under the stone and on either side of it'.

At Stone I 'several feet within the base of the stone' (?) 'were found two deposits of black mould mixed with fragments of urns'.

None of the artifactual material from the Castle Frazer excavation would appear to have survived and we must rely upon Dalrymple's description of the fabric of these vessels – 'The whole of the urns seemed to have been thick and massive in material, and to have been burnt'. Such a description is, indeed, scant enough but might be held to accord more with a description of Early Bronze Age Urn fabric than any other that is likely. From Dalrymple's description this material, if a modern interpretation is correct, is primary to the construction of the monument.

Burl (1973, 1976) has indicated that a conventional date between 2000–1500 BC would be most in keeping with the relatively scant evidence that is available from this group of sites. The writer feels that the possible secondary nature of much of the pottery material from these sites must be borne in mind alongside the occurrence of 'Lyles Hill Ware' of Early Neolithic date (although certainly of longer duration) in possibly primary contexts at Loanhead of Daviot (Kilbride-Jones 1935). Nevertheless the Castle Frazer material, if this secondary interpretation is correct, would appear to support Burl's view of the late date of this group. The internal typology/chronology proposed for the group by Burl, however, may be affected by the *caveat* implicit in the possible changes of plan documented at Castle Frazer over a period of 70 years in the 19th century – possibly representing merely the tip of a chronological iceberg.

Coles, in 1901, inveighs against the constraints placed upon the survey – 'This fine group, on ground never till last year disturbed by the plough, stood on the day of our visit, more than half hidden in waving corn, which from the surveyors point of view, was a somewhat serious hindrance'. This first documented and the succeeding cultivation of the site will doubtless have added further to the distortion of the plan already noted.

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APPENDIX A

'AULD INVERALLOCHY'

The exact position of Charles Fraser of Castle Fraser and Inverallochy in the family descent has been the subject of no little confusion. This is due in part to his having a father and a brother, both named William, but also to the omission of some writers of two generations - his father's and his grandfather's - and to the inclusion of an extra generation - between his father and his grandfather - by others.

The family of Fraser of Inverallochy descend from Sir Simon Fraser of Inverallochy, the younger son of Simon Fraser, 6. Lord Lovat, by his second wife Jean, daughter of Lord Doune. Sir Simon married Jean Moncrieffe of Moncrieffe, and they had a son, given variously as Simon or Alexander. He died before his father as in 1659 Simon Fraser of the next generation was served heir to his grandfather who had probably died 1657-8. He married Lady Marjorie Erskine, daughter of 7. Earl of Buchan, and probably was dead by 1682, as in September of the following year his widow had married his cousin, Charles, 4. and last Lord Fraser. Simon Fraser left two sons (Burke gives them incorrectly as three brothers, thus losing a generation), Alexander and William. Alexander died in 1698 when his brother succeeded to the Inverallochy estates. William Fraser acquired an interest in the Castle Fraser estates in 1713 when the Earl of Mar disposed the Lands and Barony of Muchall to him. This William Fraser was also heir to whatever Lord Fraser - his stepfather - had to leave, which seems to have been little apart from Castle Fraser itself and its plenishings, which were probably largely secured to Lady Marjorie under the terms of her marriage settlement.

William married Lady Elizabeth (Betty or Beattie) Erskine, daughter of 3. Earl of Kellie, and of this marriage were born three children, two sons and a daughter. The daughter married Alexander Fraser of Fairfield and is of no further concern, but the sons, Charles and William are.

Three points arise at this juncture which are not clear: first, what was the date of William Fraser's death; secondly, in what year did Lord Fraser fall over the cliff at Pennan; and thirdly which was the elder brother, William or Charles?

There is a tradition that William Fraser was killed at Sheriffmuir in 1715 but against this should be set the preamble to the creation of his son as Lord Fraser, which implies that William was still alive at the time of the Pretender's arrival in Scotland, and in the introduction to the *Spalding Club Miscellany* of 1842, the year of William's death is given as 1717. As however the preamble speaks of William as having ' . . . died bravely asserting our cause', it is possible that he may have died in 1717 from wounds received at Sheriffmuir. At Castle Fraser is an inventory of furnishings, dated 1722, which is signed by Charles Fraser and Lady Elizabeth Fraser, presumably on the occasion of Charles' coming of age. Lady Elizabeth would only have had an interest in this as the widow of the former owner, and if William had died in 1715 before Lord Fraser, this would not have been likely. If therefore William had inherited from his stepfather, and had died in 1717, the date of Lord Fraser's death must have been 1716, and not 1720 as is sometimes given. The inventory in its list of rooms mentions Lady Betty's Chamber and Lady Betty's Closet, and this would be more likely to have occurred if she had lived there since 1716.

The date of William Fraser's marriage to Elizabeth Erskine is not known but it must have taken place by 1699 - possibly in that year, as there are no references in the Castle Fraser papers to Lady Betty earlier than that. The first reference to a son is in a disposition from Lord Fraser to his stepson dated 18 July 1701, which mentions Charles Fraser, son of William Fraser, and which would accord well with a coming of age in 1721-2. If Charles were born in 1700-01 and his parents were married in 1699 there would hardly have been time for another child to have been born first. This dating fits well with the raising of Charles to the Jacobite peerage as titular Lord Fraser in 1723, after he had reached his majority.

The preamble to this creation '... his father died bravely asserting our cause, and in consideration of the earnest desire of the late Lord Fraser when we were last in Scotland to resign his titles of honour in favour of the said Charles's father', gives no clue as to why, if Charles were not the first born, his elder brother had been passed over in his favour. The confusion between the two brothers may have arisen because William has been taken – mistakenly – as his own father; because he was known as of [the family of] Inverallochy; and because at his death in 1749 his brother Charles was served as his heir.

In the letters, some of which have been published, which Simon Fraser, 11. Lord Lovat, wrote to Charles Fraser, he always addressed him as 'of Inverallochy', and on one occasion reminded him of his '... Being a child and grandchild of an Erskine, daughters of 2 Considerable Branches of the house of Marr.'; and in later writings further evidence of the relative position of the two brothers can be found. Charles Fraser was not 'out' in the '45, but both his brother William, and his eldest son, also named Charles, and barely of age, were. In Lord Roseberry's List of Rebels, William is shown as 'brother to Inverallichy', and in 'Memoirs of the Rebellion in the Counties of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire' appears the note that 'Immediately on Lord Pitligo's resolution being known there appeared to join him. . . . Fraser brother to Inveralachy . . .'. Generally in accounts of the battle of Culloden the command of the Frasers is given to Colonel Charles Fraser 'of Inverallochy' or 'younger of Inverallochy'. In a footnote to Daniel Munro's 'Account of the Late Rebellion' Dr Blaikie states that Colonel Charles was heir to his uncle, William Fraser of Inverallochy, and that on William's death in 1749 Charles Fraser of Castle Fraser succeeded to Inverallochy. He then muddles it further by stating that Charles Fraser was William's younger brother but too old to be 'out', although the supposedly elder brother was not too old! Charles Fraser was about forty-five years of age at the time of the Rebellion.

'Auld Inverallochy' was certainly suspected of complicity in the rebellion, even to the extent of having served under Gordon of Glenbuchat ('Old Glenbucket'); a charge against which his cousin, Lord Lovat, in a letter to the Lord President defended him . . . 'As to my cousin Inveralachy, the character that your Lordship gives him is very just; for I do assure you that he is a gentleman of very good sense and understanding, and far from being a fool, and was so cautious and prudent in his proceedings and ordinary transactions as any that lives in the shire that he is in. Besides he knows his birth to well to go under Glenbucket's command on any consideration whatever, . . .'.
 William Fraser was killed in 1749 when failing to mount his horse after an evening's conviviality and as he was childless and unmarried his elder brother was served as his heir. If Charles Fraser was born in 1700 he would have been eighty seven when he died having held the Castle Fraser and Inverallochy estates for seventy years, and well earned the appellation 'AULD INVERALLOCHY'. At his death he was buried, or at least wrapped, in a table cloth: an inventory at Castle Fraser in 1787 records '*6 Breakfast table cloths marked 1776 and 1777 one at the washing and one put in the Coffin wt Inverallochie!*'

APPENDIX B INVENTORIES OF 1722 AND 1787

- 1 *Att Castle Ffraser Septr. 17th 1722 years. Inventare of ye Household furniture of the House of Muchell*
 In the East Garret: 'A Charter Chest wt a Standard and a Chair
 The Round under an Stand bed wt striped hangings
 ye Turret: an feather bed a bolster 2 pair of plaids and a Covering
 ye Room hung wt stripped hangings
 an Chamber Box and pan
New Room: an Gillimanky bed and bed steds wt a down bed and feather bed a bolster and
 2 cods 4 pairs off plaids and an thicked blanket wt a Covering
 an Olive wood glass table and Standards
 7 chairs whereof an Sleeping chair and an armed chair
 6 cushens
 3 piece of Arras hangings
 4 window curtains of Musleburgh stuff
 a laim pot
 a grate

- The Red Room:* an bed sted hung wt red crape 2 feather beds and bolster and 2 pillows 4 pair of blankets an white twilt
4 thrawn chairs and an arm'd
4 flowrd Velvet cushens
and an walnut tree glass
2 Scounces
a painted table
an Laim chamber pot
3 pieces of Arras hingings
2 window courtains of Musleburgh stuff
an grate
privy box and pan
a little Skreen
- Waiting Room:* a painted Skreen
ye Room hung wt old Stripped hinging
a Chair
- Drawing Room:* a Table and Glass of Princess wood
2 glass Scounces
12 Ken chairs 2 of ym arm'd
12 flowred velvet cushens
an resting seat covered wt blew velvet
a jepanned Tea Table
2 white mettall scounces
an brass shuffle and tongs
9 large pictures wt gilded frames
2 Talid cut pictures
3 pieces of Arras hingings
4 window Courtains of musleburgh stuff
5 allabaster Statues
2 door pieces
- Dining Room:* 10 low back'd ken chairs
an Table and Standards of walnut tree
a Moneth Clock
a jepanned Brassen Laver and cooler
4 piece of painted hingings
a chimney piece and 4 door pieces
2 pictures wt painted Mullers
3 window courtains of Musleburgh stuff
an grate
2 gilded Scounces
a jepanned and liam chimney piece
an Cupboard wt glasses
- First Round:* a bed sted wt hangings of green moyhair lin'd wt taffety
a feather bed and downe bed one bolster 2 pillows 4 pair of plaids a thick blanket
an Silk twilt
an reposing seat
6 shew'd chairs
an little glass of princess
a little firr table
an Chamber box and pan
an laim chamber pot
an tongs
4 pieces of Arras hingings
an window curtain of craip
a picture

- The Hall:* 17 thrawn chairs
 an oak wall table
 anoyr oak Table
 an grate
 26 pictures
- Little Dining Room:* an oval Table
 an half oval Table
 12 thrawn chairs
 4 bigg pictures wt gilded frames
 12 lesser pictures wt gilded frames
 2 pieces of carped
 2 gilded Scounces
 2 window courtains
- Second Round:* an bed sted wt cloth shew'd hingings
 an bolster and 2 pillows on feather bed 3 pairs of plaids an stripped covering
 an little Table and Standard
 an laim broken chamber pot
 4 chairs covered wt cloth
 an box bed wt bed and bolster
 an Trunk
 the Room hung wt stripped hingings
 an tongs
 chamber box and pan
- Third Round:* an bed hung wt green cloth
 an feather bed bolster and pillow 3 pair of plaid and a red Covering
 2 chairs
 an firr Table
 an chest
 an chamber pot
 the Room hung wt old striped hingings
- Fourth Round:* 2 bed steds an bed and bolster 2 pair of plaids and an covering
 an old oak Table
- Back Great Chamber:* a bed hung wt strip hingings
 an feather bed an pallies on bolster 2 pillows 4 pair of plaids an stripped covering
 8 chairs
 4 cushens
 an Table and 2 Standards
 an Olive glass
 an grate
 an Chamber box and pan
 an door piece
 The Room hung wt Dutch drogat and pale craip
- Fore Great Chamber:* A bed hung wt yellow stuff
 an feather bed and pallies an bolster wt 2 pillows 4 pair of plaids and a thick blanked an silk twilt
 4 chairs
 an Chamber box and pan
 an Table and 2 stands
 an Walnut tree glass
 the Room hung wt stripped hingings
 an grate and tongs
 an laim Chamber pot
- Colin's Room:* an bed hung wt blew hingings
 an feather bed and 2 pillows 4 pair of plaids and a thicked blanket
 an Chamber box and pan

- an box bed wt an feather bed 3 pair of plaids and an covering on bolster
 an little oak Table
 a Glass
 3 chairs
 an Trunk
 ye Room hung wt stripped hingings
 4 pictures
 an Tongs
Green Room: an bed hung wt green hingings
 an little Table
 2 chairs
School Chamber: an bed sted partly hung
 3 pairs of plaids and an covering a feather bed an bolster an pillow
 an box bed
 2 little tables
 5 chairs
Red Room: an bed sted hung red hingings
 a feature bed bolster 3 pair plaids and an covering
 an box bed
 2 chairs
Clock Wardrop: a bigg clock
 an chair
 an Table

*The High fore
 great Chamber:* an chair
*The High back
 great Chamber* an Table
 3 old chairs
 ye trests of an Table
*The High bottle
 Room:* an bottle hake
 6 dozen and a half of mutchken bottles
 a Dutch stone jarr
 a proof Sieve for meal
 an cutt Sieve
The Vault: 2 tables an large Oval and anoyr firr
 4 chairs
*My Lady Fraser's
 Chamber:* an bed sted hung wt striped black and white hingings
 2 feather beds 4 pair of plaids an bolster 2 pillows
 a Cabinet wt drawers and anoyr bigg cabinet wt drawers and a guilded bead
 an little oval Table
 an black Table wt drawers
 an bigg Glass wt an indented mullar
 2 Scounces
 an cernilled press
 an sleeping chair
 an armed chair
 7 thrawn chairs
 ye Room hung wt black hingings
 2 window courtains
 an grate
 an tongs
 an little bissom
*My Lady ffraser's
 Closet:* 2 skritor drawers
 a bigg white press
 an press cupboard
 an privy box and pan
 2 chairs

- an Table
 an red shelf
 an picture 2 brushes in the Frame
 an Clock
Lady Bettys Room: an feather bed 2 pair of plaids an green covering an bolster
 an Bed sted hung wt green cloth lined wt Calligo
 2 beds an bolster 3 pillows 4 pairs of plaids an green silk twilt
 an cutt press
 an Walnut tree glass
 an armed chair
 2 thrawn Chairs
 an little oak Table
 the Room hung wt green and pannell'd wt blew and white paper
 2 window courtains
 an Chamber Pot
 a Tongs
Lady Bettys Closet
 (1): an fixed press wt an great parsal of Laim vesshell
 an large marble mortar wt a timber pistol
 18 bigg pictures
 18 small pictures
 3 earth cans
 an Chamber box and pan
 an chair covered wt red
Back Chamber: a bed sted hung wt old stripped hingings
 an feather bed an new c(h)aff bed 2 pairs of plaids a covering
 an little course press
 2 trunks
 a little Table
 3 thrawn chairs
 on plain chair and an old chair
 ye Room hung wt old hingings
Lady Bettys Closet
 (2): an bigg firr chest
 an counter Table
 an Dutch hamper
 3 hinging Shelves
 an Trunk male
Little Wardrop: 2 Trunks
 2 chests and an broken chest
 4 pillows
 balk and broads
 an little spinning wheel
 a pair of blankets a white twilt and an bolster
 a small chest
Mrs Anna's Closet: an bigg chest
 an little chest
 an chair
 a and blades
 a parsal of painted papers
Lardner: 2 bigg beef fatt
 3 little stands
 2 Lousing Barrells and an bigg salt fatt
 2 Tables
 a girdle and baike bread seller
 an iron for warming of Trenchers and anoyr for roasting of apples
Latter Meal Room: an meal Girnle
 an bigg oak Table

- an Gantree
 an bread chest
 an sid stand
 3 furms
Low Sellar: an bottle hake
 9 dozen of choppin bottles
 an meal sieve
 an white iron filler
 an wand Basket wt cork
 an chair
 an old grate
Kitchen 7 potts
 2 pair of Bowls
 an bigg grate
 2 crooks
 2 raxes
 2 bigg pans
 2 small pans
 4 speets
 an litle coper Kettle
 2 buckets
 an hash gully
 a mustard cap wt a bullet
 a mortar wt a pistol
 a sauce pan
 an Kitchen knife
 a Tongs
 a droping pan
 an frying pan
 a Kitchen Table
 2 feather stands
Victual House: 2 girnellis
 2 chests
 a bigg punchen balk Batty and Broad
 an ringed 4 stone weight of stone
 an ringed 2 stone weight of stone of iron and stone half stone quarter and 2
 pound
 an bigg furm
 a malt firloot
Geet House: 2 bigg working fatts
 a little working fat
 3 large wort tubs
 2 little queeds
 one 9 gallon tree
 one 6 gallon tree
 one 5 gallon tree
 2 four gallon trees
 a stoup
 nine 20 pint trees
 two 10 pint trees
 2 little stands
 a barm benz
 a filler
 a working ladle
Brew House: a bigg masking fatt wt a straw cover
 a sput

a Lead tap tree
 a cover to ye Lead
 2 masking sheets
Baike House: baikeing Table
 baikeing Trough
 a skullian
 a rake
 an shuffle
 and a Tub for baikeing
David's Room: a Bed sted hung wt old striped hingings
 4 pair of plaids an bolster an caff bed
 an little Table
 anoyr bed wt 2 pair of plaids and a covering
 anoyr Table and bolster
Low Hall: an old bigg chest
 2 old beds
 an old cheese hake
 2 box beds
 a seller
William Falconers 2 beds
Room: In ye little sellar an gantrees and a Trough
Pantrie Head: 8 pair of candlesticks
 a pair of snuffers
 2 dozen of new Trenchers
 2 dozen and on of old Trenchers
 6 Timber Trenchers
 2 tin pin(t) Stoups
 on timber quart Stoup
 one timber pint Stoup and timber choppin stoups
 a Vinegar crewet
 a new tin Choppin Tanker
 2 pewter fats
 10 old knives
 10 old forks
 2 timber boskets and a wand bosket
 a white win bosket
 4 drinking cups
 12 new knives and 12 new forks
 an hand bell and anoyr broken
 21 plates large and small
In the Glass 5 fine mettall plates belonging to ye super frame wt 4 sauce plates and 4
Cupboard: candlesticks and ye frame itself
 2 pewter bassons
Milk House: 9 butter barrells
 7 bigg milk cogs
 1 chessall
 on bigg spinning wheel
 on cheese hake
 on plump kirn and staff

This is the exact account of the furniture of the houses of Castle ffraser taken up (on the) day and year above sett down. Subscribed by Lady Elizabeth Fraser and Charles Fraser of Muchall before witnesses Mr William Robertson writer hereof and William Fraser of Hattoun.

Will: Robertson wittness
 Will: ffraser wittness

Elizabeth ffraser
 Charles Fraser

2 *Inventory of the Bed and Table Linnen Beds and Blankets and Wine Sellar etc in the house of Castle Fraser 16 and 17 Augt 1787*

Inventory of the Wine Sellar at Castle Fraser

Old Claret:	1 Doz and 9 bottles
New Do.:	2 Doz and 7 bottles
Rum:	5 Bottles
Curren Wine:	3 Bottles
Brandy:	13 Bottles and 2 pint bottle
White Wine:	15 Bottles
Bitters:	a pint bottle and 1 Chopin not quite full neither
Raspberry Brandy:	1 pint
Raspberry Wine:	11 Bottles Spoiled and Bad
Porter:	5 Bottles
Port Wine in Two Bunkers:	20 dozen and 9 bottles

*Janet Mackenzie
Robert Young*

1787 Aug 17

Bedding and Blankets

Inner Room:	Two Beds, one Bolster, two Pillows, Three pairs Blankets, under Blanket, and Cotton Cover.
Yellow Room:	Two Beds, one Bolster, two Pillows, Three pairs Blankets under Blanket and Twilled Cover.
Lough Room:	Two Beds, two Bolsters, four Pillows, Six Pairs Blankets, two under Blankets, one Twilled Cover.
Mrs Fraser's Room:	One Bed, one Bolster, two Pillows, Three pair Blankets, Under Blanket and Cotton Cover.
Benjamin's Room:	One Bed, one Bolster, three pairs Blankets.
School Room:	two Beds, two Bolsters, four Pillows, Six pair of Blankets, two Coloured Covers, two under Blankets.
Inverallochie's Room:	One Bed, one Bolster, two Pillows, four pair Blankets, Under Blanket and Twilled Cover.
Closet in Do's Room:	One Bed, one Bolster, Two pair of Blankets and a cover.
Miss Fraser's Room:	One Bed, one Bolster, two Pillows, three pairs Blankets, and a Cotton Cover. All this sent to <i>Ythan Lodge</i> . 5 Aug. 1787.
Back Room:	Three Beds (two of them Chaff Beds), Three Bolsters, Nine pairs Blankets and 3 covers.
Lodge:	Two Chaff Beds, two Bolsters, Six Pairs of Blankets, two covers.
Hall:	Four Beds, three of them Chaff, two Bolsters, Two Pillows, Six Pairs Blankets, two covers.
Stone Closet:	3 Pairs New Blankets marked 86, A Web of bleached linnen and a small web of Blue Cloth – a Web of Linnen at Law the Weaver's and a Web of Linnen at the Bleaching, 30 Do. of Wool.
In the Kitchen:	9 Pork Hams.
In the Milk House:	Three Butter Kitts full, 10½ stone which came from Inverallochy this year.
In the Valt:	A small cask wt some Pickled Pork, A Butter Kitt (arung) and more than half done. An old Cheese (arung) and two new Cheeses.
In the Meal Gernel:	1 Boll 3 (ferlow) of Meal.

Silver Tea pot, sugar box and Milk Pott, 9 tea spoons and a Sugar Spoon.

*Janet Mackenzie
Robt. Young*

1787

*Aug 17 Inventory of the Bed and Table Linnen in the house of Castle Ffraser
Delivered by Miss Mackenzie. 16 Aug 1787*

9 Pairs of Best Sheets
2 Pairs of New Sheets marked 1784
Six Pairs Second Kind
Three Pairs Third Kind
Three Pairs Fine Sheets
Two Pairs of Single Sheets one of them at the washing marked 1774
Three Pairs of Tweedling Sheets at the washing
Eight Pairs of Sheets marked 1786
(and) of the above there is 11 pairs in the closet dirty and three upon the Beds

Servants Sheets

9 Pairs (Course) at the washing and on the Servts. beds to be Delivered by Mr J Jameson
5 Pillow Slips wanting of Different Kinds
Two Damask Table Cloths Large
Nine Spotted Table Cloths and Napkins marked 1764
Seven Table Cloths and Napkins Do. 1765
Five Fine Table Cloths and Napkins marked 1774
Six Breakfast Table Cloths Marked 1776 and 1777 one at the washing and one put in the Coffin wt
Inverallochie
Six Table Cloths and Napkins marked 1780, 4 at the washing and one of them not given in
Ten Course Table Cloths 2 of which at the washing and one in the Lardner about ye meat
Five dozen and five old fine napkins. The five washing
One Dozen and 9 fine Napkins marked 1755
4 Dozen and two fringed Towls marked 1760 of which 13 at the washing
1 Dozn. and 5 Towls fringed marked 78
five at the washing
1 Dozn. Course Towls 1 of them wanting and } one of this
7 at the washing } Towles not given
Six Bolster Slips } in from the washing

*Jannet Mackenzie
Robt. Young*

APPENDIX C THE BUILDING OF MISS ELYZA'S MAUSOLEUM

[October/November 1807]

Instructions for Building a Tomb in the old Church yard of Cluny for Miss Fraser of Castle Fraser Conform to a plan laid down by James Byers Esquire of Tonley. Viz.

The foundation to be cleared out at 6 feet Deep below the surface and foundation laid upon a proper solid bottom the Dimensions as follows the Diameter over below the Vase moulding to be 22 feet, the Diameter of the body to be 20 feet over; the height of the Cornice to be 18 inches, the projection 17 inches and a halfe, the inner Cornice height to be 6 inches and projection 6 inches; the Rubble work below Vase to be 3 feet 6 inches, and above the Base 2 feet 6 inches thick to the level of the Cornice; the first Block Course above Cornice to be 2 feet 6 inches high and upper Block Course 16 inches high the arch 15 inches thick upon the tope of upper Block Course and to Diminish as it advances to the Center Stone to be 12 inches thick; in laying the foundation if the Ground is not Good at 6 feet Deep it must be cast out untill a proper foundation is got – it Being understood whatever Digging or building is more than 6 feet below Ground will be paid for by the employer. The whole Rubble walls Below Ground must be 3 feet thick thoroughly Built with Lime, the hewen Course of stones Below Vase moulding to be 12 inches high neatly Joynted and Dressed. The Base mouldings are to be Done Exactly to the plan as to size and form – as also the whole mouldings as nearly to one Colure as possible and weel leveled round and Closs Joynted – as also the whole Body from Base to Cornice must neatly Dressed and Squard so as to make the Joynts Closs and pits or hollows taken out by pick and axes to make the surface Clean; the

inside must also be Done to the plan and Estimate it being agreed upon that in place of Squar Corners Round the niches that an architrave is to be Done of hewen Grannet Round the whole insides of them as also for the Door opening to a plan formerly fixt upon, and upon the front the door is to have a Double architrave Rownd it with broken mouldings at the tope and squar block to stand upon the same as the plan; the ornament above Door is not included in the Estimate but a Space must be left in the wall to fitt it into with Carnlet Chacks Cutt to Receive the 2 Doors both for out and inside of the wall at 2 by 3 inches, the Cornices must all be Done of one Stone of 4 feet 5 inches long 18 inches Deep and not less than 12 inches broad so as the externat Cornice may be Cutt upon one end of the Stone and the inner Cornice may be Cutt upon the other end – and this Cornices must all be of particularly weel Chosen Stones as to Colure and quality and laid level upon their beds as also the mouldings must be Cutt and Joynted together nearly so as to apear of one piece Round the wholl work. The whole Stones of the arch must be neatly hewen to the Curve both out and inside and Joynted with lintseed oil and white lead at least 6 inches inward from the outside – and the upper stones of the arch must be Chack' into the keystone which must be of one Stone and Cut to the plan, with an opening in the Center of 2f6 Diameter Check above to Receive the Glass and beveld below to spread the light within and upon the whole it is understood that every part of the before mention'd work must be done in a manner so as to Satisfy James Byers Esqr of Tonley and James Massie who are to be Judges of said work and it is agreed upon that the work must be Rather Better than the front of Miss Frasers Green house at Castle Fraser I mean the Joynts Closer and pits taken out of the face of the Stones and Cleaner Dressed upon the outside, and in the Event of any Differences taking place Respecting the foresaid work it must be Determined by Judges mutually Chosen who are to Report and finaly settle all points anent the Said Building, and as I Alexander Wallace, undertaker, hafe Read and fully Considered the whole of the foregoing instructions and finds them Conform to my Estimate therefore I do bind and oblige myselfe to perform the before mentiond work as specified in this and the two former pages witness my hand this 28th Day of November 1807.

[Signed] Alex^r Wallace

[Endorsed] 1807 Oct^r 30th. Instructions for Building a Tomb.

1808 An Account of Expenses of Mason work on Miss Fraser's Tomb

	£	s	d
To James Hay 35 weeks 2/3 Ds at 3/6 per Day	36	17	4
To James Taylor 34 weeks 3 Ds at 3/6 per Day	36	4	6
To Alex ^r Ross 33 weeks 2 ² / ₃ Ds at 3/6 per Day	35	2	4
To James Moir 15 weeks 5 Ds at 3/6 per Day	16	12	6
To David Lumsden 29 weeks 1 Ds at 3/6 per Day	30	12	6
To William Mear 14 weeks 3 Ds at 3/6 per Day	15	4	6
To William Tough 11 weeks 2 Ds at 3/6 per Day	11	18	–
To George Dukie (? or Dickie) 10 weeks 2 Ds at 3/4 per Day	10	–	–
To Georg Lumsden 21 weeks 1 ¹ / ₂ Ds at 3/- per Day	19	2	6
To Al Gillespie 4 weeks 4 Ds at 3/6 per Day	4	18	–
To Adam Craig 1 week 4 Ds at 3/6 per Day	1	15	–
Oct ^r To Alex ^r Menie 6 weeks 4 Ds at 3/6 per Day	7	–	–
To James Hay 6 weeks 2 Ds at 2/4 per Day	4	8	8
To James Taylor 5 weeks 4 Ds at 2/4 per Day	3	19	4
To Alex ^r Ross 6 weeks 1 D at 2/4 per Day	4	6	4
To James Moir 1 week 2 Ds at 2/4 per Day		18	8
To David Lumsden 6 weeks 4 Ds at 2/4 per Day	4	13	4
To William Mear 3 weeks 3 Ds at 2/4 per Day	2	9	–
To William Tough 5 weeks 3 Ds at 2/4 per Day	3	10	–
To George Dickie (?) 4 weeks 3 Ds at 2/2 per Day	2	18	6
To George Lumsden 4 weeks 3 Ds at 2/- per Day	2	14	–
To Alex ^r Gillespie 5 weeks 4 ¹ / ₂ Ds at 2/4 per Day	4	–	6
Dec ^r To Adam Craig 4 weeks 3 Ds at 2/4 per Day	3	3	–
To William Dunn 3 weeks 2 ¹ / ₃ Ds at 3/4 per Day	3	7	9
To William Anderson 10 weeks 2 Ds at 2/10 per Day	8	15	8
To Thomas Winchause (?) 1 week 4 Ds at 2/- per Day	1	–	–
To Alex ^r Paterson 2 weeks 4 ¹ / ₂ Ds at 2/- per Day	1	13	–

To And ^m Robertson Black Smith for Sharping tools	2	1	4½
To Thomas Daniel wright for making moulds	-	9	2
To William Booth Black Smith for Sharping tools	22	7	7½
To William Booth for Bourd at Kirk style of Cluny when Employed at Sharping tools for the masons	4	4	4
To my own attendance at the work 35 weeks at 4/- per Day and 7 weeks at 2/8 per day	42	-	-
	5	12	-
			£353 19 5

[Endorsed] Acct of Miss Fraser's Tomb 1808

APPENDIX D JAMES SKENE AND CASTLE FRASER

Castle Fraser: from an unpublished MS by James Skene of Rubislaw on *The Domesticated Architecture of Scotland* (now in the Edinburgh City Library)

PRELIMINARY NOTICE

The following compilation is the fruit of a few idle months passed in winter 1827-1828 at Versailles, where in the absence of more profitable employment, the arrangement of some notes collected in the course of inspecting from time to time the remains of early architecture in Scotland, afforded a reasonable variety to the dull routine of a temporary residence from home. The pleasure of the occupation however has been grievously lessened by the constant detection of imperfection of the material. We are seldom aware of the valuable use to which the opportunities we enjoy may be put, until they are irretrievably gone by; these notes were gathered casually and carelessly without the regulation of any preconceived design; and are accordingly in many respects defective and unsatisfactory, while they are sufficient to shew how productive of curious information many of the subjects might have been made, which have now passed away for ever.

There is little excuse, and certainly no comfort in the recollection that they were only intended as the meagre accessories of a collection of desultory drawings made in various parts of the country, wherever any object presented itself, attractive from its picturesque beauty, character, or connection with history; they possess at least the merit of faithful delineation, and have now acquired value in their number, and the subsequent destruction of many of the objects represented.

The idea of extracting from these materials any lights illustrative of the domestic accommodations, and habits of our ancestors during different periods of their history, was likely enough to suggest itself to any one conscious of the requisite qualifications for such an undertaking; but such not being within my grasp on contemplation, and owe the suggestion to a friend Sir Walter Scott. . . . 'of this description of building the old mansion of the Lords Fraser of Muchals in Aberdeenshire affords an interesting example, not only from the high state of preservation which enables it still to be the residence of the representative of that family, but as being replete with matter illustrative of the architecture of the sixteenth century - Castle Fraser is indebted to the merits of its architecture alone for the stately and imposing aspect which it presents from whatever quarter it may be viewed, for its situation is itself little calculated to enhance the effect, having been originally placed in a low marshy hollow with a view to its safety, which would lead one to suppose that the position must have been selected before the introduction of gunpowder, and that a more antient structure probably preceded the present castle, old as it undoubtedly is. We have seen that the marsh or the insulated crag either on the sea shore, or angle of some river or stream, were the positions most attractive to the Scottish architects of former days, but as residences such situations were in the highest degree inconvenient, possessing no recommendation but the difficulty of access, and it shews the improving state of society when the Barons thought themselves safe to descend into the fertile plains or glens, and there erect their strong mansions. So that after the fifteenth century the insulated crag seems to have been more rarely the object of choice, except when rendered attractive by the feeling of veneration for the site of the ancestral abode, and as the era of violence and disorder subsided into that of comparative tranquillity and peace, the baronial mansions arose in more accessible conditions, a more commodious and ample stile of building was followed, and a shelter of forrest trees was reared around, through the center of which a long straight avenue led directly to the front of the mansion.

The general disposition of the plan of Castle Fraser will be best understood from the adjoining measurements, elevations and sketches of each separate floor in which it will be observed that the more modern portion consisting of two long and low wings stretching from the main body although represented in the elevation are not comprehended in the plans of the internal arrangement, as not being either in themselves interesting or connected with the subject of enquiry which is confined to the antient part. It may suffice to mention that the wings are 33 feet of width outside and 27 inside comprehending a range of bedrooms above and servants appartments below anno 1618, and by the lengthened exposure of these weak tenements on both sides communicating with the main body they altogether destroy the defencible nature of the castle – It will be observed how accurately the plan of Castle Fraser corresponds with the principle stated to belong to that class of building where every point is scrupulously guarded by some projecting position.

In one respect it exhibits the best example I have seen of that contrivance not uncommon in the architecture of the era, which provided for the secret means of *espionage* directed against the inmates of the mansion itself, a system which is singularly illustrative of the treachery and cunning prevalent in their manners, where no man could trust to a neighbour's honor even under the sanctuary of his hospitality. And accordingly the private annals of the country are replete with the abominable instances of treachery which were practiced, the knowledge of their practises of deceit, and constant state of suspicion which they must have kept up, could not but maintain the rancour of family feuds long after a good understanding and mutual confidence might otherwise have been brought about. – These contrivances by which an unsuspecting confidence might be betrayed were characteristically denominated “*Lugs*” or Ears. And one of them enclosed in the concealment of the wall was lately discovered at Castle Fraser, communicating from above directly to that recess in the hall where a confidential conversation would be most likely to take place. The position as well as means used to render this purpose effective will be obvious upon examination of the accompanying plan, which description might not succeed in conveying distinctly. – From the hall itself there is not of course an indication of the existance of such a contrivance connected with it, and even where access is obtained to it, it is under circumstances of such scrupulous concealment as to make it nearly altogether safe from detection. In the principal bedroom which is immediately above the hall, and was probably the chamber of the proprietor himself, there are several closets in the thickness of the wall, and the entrance to one of them concealed behind the shutter of a window. The floor of this closet is paved with large rough stones, in all likelihood designedly left in this state, and used to store within it a supply of peats or firewood for the chimney, so that the irregularity of the floor would become concealed by the dross of the fewel, and its very rough state would render it almost impossible to clear it out entirely from rubbish before again filling it up a fresh, so that the persons whose duty this might be would remain as ignorant as others that the floor of the peat closet could be subservient to any concealment, and accordingly that it was otherwise, remained long unknown. – But the modern substitution of coals in general use to that of peats required no such stone closet of fewel for the service of a bed room, and the more orderly habits of the housemaids of the present day over their progenitors of the same class occasioned the closet to be cleaned out, and in the process of this operation the active damsel engaged was suddenly arrested in her work, and thrown forward on her face by part of the floor giving way under her feet, accompanied with the alarming sound of the stone which she had unwittingly removed, descending into an abyss she knew not how deep, and leaving its dark entrance close to where she had fallen; the damsel decided upon a hasty retreat, somewhat doubtful as to the nature of the interposition which had occasioned her alarm, shut the closet door, and prudently resolved to terminate her labours in that quarter at least. And as a certain remnant of the old superstitious feelings formerly prevalent in Scotland still lingers in the minds of the rural inhabitants of the north, the girl judged it prudent to keep her own secret, and refrain from disclosing either the accident to anyone, or the occasion of her alarm. Always finding some ingenious shift to avoid being sent to the “Picture room of the auld Kings” a name which the appartment in question had aquired from the circumstances of its window shutters being decorated with a series of curious old portraits, now removed, of the royal line of Stewart. However accident in the course of time extorted from the Damsel a confession of the cause of her reluctance to go to that particular chamber, where she said she had met “wi an awfu stoon” in the window closet, the investigation of which led accordingly to the discovery of the “*Lug*”. –

The entrance is constructed like the vent of a chimney through the center of the vaulted floor of one foot three inches by one foot in dimensions, and into which a stone similar to the rest of the pavement is fitted, so as entirely to conceal the opening. A lantern having been lowered down through the opening discovered a vaulted appartment at some depth below, into which a boy was let down by a cord with no

small reluctance on his part, and when pulled up again could give but a very indistinct account of his visit. Being at Castle Fraser soon after and desirous to investigate this curious seclusion, a ladder of such length as to get clear of the narrow shaft was let down, as being little more than one foot square it would otherwise have been impossible to have forced a passage through so narrow an opening, and divesting myself of all superfluous covering I succeeded in squeezing myself down, and by means of the ladder descended into the vault. It appeared at first to be merely a place of concealment of which the plan will shew the dimensions, having in the side a very small loophole for the admission of a portion of air and light, and room enough for a person to lie at full length or stand upright, until observing a small tortuous conduit in the lower corner descending in the direction of the hall below, I became aware of its ulterior and probably real purpose. A large window in the end of the hall occasioned a deep arched recess furnished with a stone seat all round, whither those desirous of a private interview or confidential conversation would naturally retire, and in the upper corner of this recess the conduit of the Lug accordingly terminates, and may have often been the means of betraying the confidence and designs of those unaware of the treacherous device prepared to entrap them. – The vaulted form of the recess in the exact apex of which this auricular cavity was placed would render a whisper below audible to the listener above, where, immured in the heart of the wall, no extraneous sounds could cause to divert his attention. Before quitting the Lug its function was put to the test of experiment, and I distinctly heard what was spoken in the hall below, although a wall of fourteen feet thickness intervened.

Under the vault there is another concealed chamber constructed out of the solid wall, which is here of extraordinary thickness, which opens by a concealed door into the Hall, and from which a small built up stair seems to have led down to the floor below, or to some other secret apartment but there does not appear to be any connection or communication with this and the Lug above. In an age when every means of gaining an advantage over an adversary, or of obtaining an object desired was esteemed fair and honourable, even though obtained through whatever reckless betrayal of friendship or confidence it might cost, such secret aids of cunning were probably common enough, although from the effect of subsequent alterations in the building, or their falling into oblivion from a change of manners throwing their purpose into disuse, they may in general have been obliterated, or remain concealed (until) accidents similar to the one mentioned bring them to light. – Indications of former existence of Lugs I have observed in many old buildings, although seldom so far preserved as to be demonstrable, and the contrivances for the attainment were so numerous, that one forms no guide by which to discover another. The sealed rooms at Fyvie and Glamis had probably some contrivance of this kind in connection with them, at Towie there was one, and also in the small tower of Lauriston near Edinburgh, and probably in most of the baronial mansions of that period if sufficiently examined. – In fact there were few houses of that era unprovided in almost every chamber with moveable panels in the wainscote, leading to some concealment over which arras hangings or a portrait was suspended having perhaps one of the eyes moveable, so as to enable a person from the concealment behind both to hear and see what passed in the room without risk of detection. The existence of such contrivances were too favourable to the purpose of romance writers to have been overlooked (see *Woodstoke*).

The account in the MS then discusses examples of similar contrivances in England, at Eltham Palace and the Bishop of Ely's house in Holborn; draws parallels from Shakespeare; instances holes in castle walls as a means of 'spreading intelligence in any sudden alarm'; visits the Seraglio of the Sublime Porte; introduces 'the catastrophe of old King Duncan'; and finally appeals to the murder of Lord Aboyne at Frenndraught. In short nothing concerning secret chambers that appeals to Skene's Gothic imagination is left out.

From James Skene of *Rubislaw* to
Colonel Mackenzie Fraser of *Castle Fraser*
12 February 1838

My Dear Colonel

I dare say, that, by this time, you are beginning to accuse me of negligence in having been so long in answering your letter, but, the fact is, from its having been addressed to Leamington where I was not, nor had for some time been, it only reached me a few days ago.

To throw much light on the subject of your enquiry, were I capable to do so, would require more space than even this alarming size of sheet could afford, nevertheless, to show very good will. – Have at it – . Before the 14th or 15th centuries dates are seldom found on any Scotch Buildings, nor in respect to

the actually existing buildings are documents altogether conclusive by reason of the changes, and successive reconstructions to which most of them have been liable. The only data are circumstantial, deduced from the style, the historical events by which it was likely to be affected, and the concurrence of other circumstances to strengthen the inference. This ground so far, is narrowed by its being found that it was only at particular epochs that buildings of importance seem to have been carried on in Scotland, to one or other of which we may safely assign any individual old mansion, as to these intermittent periods, distinct and intelligible causes seem to have led. Tradition generally assigned a much earlier date than the buildings are justly entitled to, from the historic notices of the existence of structures at a very early period on the spot where buildings are still extant, but as in most cases been a successive series of constructions on the same site, the notice may refer to a building of which no trace remains. With the exception of the rude Hill Forts, and round dry stone burghs, the Scotch structures, both defensive and ecclesiastical before the 10th cent were generally of timber, of which no remains can be looked for, and in respect of the stone buildings of this century the earliest building Epoch was 1003 and of that early date but a few *doubtful* specimens remain. What led to this effect was the deep impression which prevailed throughout christendom that the thousand years after the birth of our Saviour was to prove the term of the existing dispensation, which occasioned a general apathy and reluctance for many preceding years of entering upon any undertaking having reference to the future, and of course building ceased. But the fated era having passed, a revulsion took place in 1003, and an extra-ordinary activity in repairing and constructing buildings throughout Europe, but to a small extent in Scotland, although largely in England, where it was soon followed by the building mania of Stephen's reign when innumerable baronial mansions in the Norman castellated fashion were raised, that is, a square keep having a base court and Barbican, until the introduction of gun powder rendered a change necessary.

In estimating the age of a castellated domicile we may safely assume the scale of simplicity as being equivalent '*coeleris paribus*' to the scale of antiquity, and on that ground there is reason to conclude that in Scotland the Keep and Barbican was preceded by the simple square tower, which was the first step beyond that of the round Burgh of dry stone a change that was introduced prior to the 11th century. Before this period all the remains indicated the general partiality to circular forms, and the remark will be found to apply to most countries, that the circular preceded the square. It was in the 11th century also that in Scotland lime came into general use, although its use appears to have been introduced in the East at a far earlier period. People are staggered by the diminutive appearance of these small square fortalices, as compared with the important events and the power of the proprietors with which history combines them, but it is a mistake to estimate the power or dignity of the Baron of those early days with the meanness of the habitation, because the idea which connects splendour of abode with dignity of station is not of old date; the abode was at that time held as a matter of mere convenience, and according to the primitive notions than prevalent, attention to it was held as the *reverse* of creditable, as indicating sloth and effeminacy. And the splendour of castles and palaces described in the Legends of the Bard had no reference to these stone castles but to the wide extended and temporary timber erections of a former era, to which the stone buildings had become a necessary but reluctantly adopted improvement. Many of the castles down to a comparatively late period had only the foundations partly of stone, the superstructure being still continued of wood, and sometimes it appears that an addition to the wooden buildings, a small square tower of stone was added as a last resource in case of emergency, which often remained standing after the rest had been destroyed. This you will perceive, in some measure, accounts for our finding in Scotland nothing but a small square tower of great strength of walls, but singularly insignificant proportions as the only remnant on the site of antient strongholds, which it would otherwise be difficult to reconcile to the events of which history records it to have been the theatre. The next step to this small tower was the duplication of it by the addition of a larger tower of great height in proportion to its breadth, fortified with turrets, and connected at the angle to the smaller tower, and this tower, so far as my observations extends, appears to be the usual nucleus on which in Scotland buildings of that description have been more or less extended, as the accidental irregularities of the site or other circumstances would admit.

The more antient baronial residences of Scotland I am disposed to date from the middle of the 11th century, when Malcom 3rd availed himself of the discontents prevalent in England in consequence of the operation of the survey of Domesday Book driving many powerful families to seek an asylum elsewhere. He invited them to Scotland, and fortified his own lands by giving them territories of which it had become necessary to disposses the former proprietors, and accordingly these Norman barons required to defend these territorial grants by forthwith erecting castles. This was followed by the eras of William the Lion

and Alexr. 1 also prolific in building, and also David 1st who was a great builder, but chiefly of ecclesiastical structures, although some castles are of his time. The well-known form of Norman castles seems by this time to have been as generally adopted in Scotland as England.

The buildings of the 13th century are chiefly distinguished by the Keep becoming a flanking tower, and not detached as formerly, and having a number of Towers and turrets round the Balium, enclosing a court within lofty walls.

Those of the 14th century have usually a single square Keep with angular towers and a fortified gateway. -

15th cent. The group of buildings become more light and airy, decorated with corner turrets projecting over the base, serrated gables, demi-square towers in the upper corners. - In the 16th cent. accommodation as a dwelling seems as much taken into account as defence. Long extended wings are added, joined by loop-holed walls and an aproned gateway enclosing. Or merely an extended low wing stretching from the great Tower, and its only means of defence depending on its being enfiladed by the tower. But in very few cases is the original plan left in such a shape, from having been subjected to successive alterations and conditions as to prove its date clearly by the style. - I ought to have mentioned that the reign of Alexr. 2nd was also fertile in castle building. Middle of 13th cent. witness Kildrummie. R. Bruce from policy destroyed a great many in order to break the overgrown power of the Barons; and sub-dividing their territories into smaller baronies, many families, and of course their residence date from this period. The first James were very jealous on the subject and would suffer no castles to be built without special royal licence asked and obtained, therefore few were of that era. About the middle of the 15th century a great many then in ruins were restored, and many new ones erected. I take your small square tower to be of this date, and the first part of the building, as its situation indicates the selection of the site prior to the period when gun powder had become a familiar use, which in Scotland although known before, can scarcely be said to have been the case earlier than that period. The middle of the 16th century was also fertile in buildings, and it is significant how many will be found to date about 1552. And when we are able to fix the date of one building in a district we generally find that a good many of those in the neighbourhood.

Now my dear friend, if you are not tired of this long epistle I begin to be so, and am only sorry that I have not been able to make it more definite, but in fact we cannot in general arrive at a conclusion as to the date of old buildings, but by bringing a variety of *circumstantial* evidence to bear upon it.

With best regards to Mrs Fraser, believe me to be

Most faithfully yours

JAMES SKENE

APPENDIX E CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING SIR WALTER SCOTT

Extract from a letter from Colin Mackenzie of Portmore to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser of Castle Fraser. 6 March 1817

(The letter deals principally with arrangements for family settlements.)

... 'I cannot however confine myself for we have no fewer than 3 sick Clerks of Session, old Ferrier with gout, James Walker gone to Harrogate, and I am very sorry to add Walter Scott who was last night seriously ill with cramp in his stomach and is still only easier - he had another attack which last 4 hours a few nights ago ...'

From Mrs Charles Mackenzie Fraser of Castle Fraser to her husband

Greenhill 13th June 1828

Wingfields Birthday

My dearest Charles

Many thanks for your pencilled note, which makes me quite happy till I hear again - you will not be pleased to see this dated from this side of the Firth, but we are positively to be off on Tuesday morning, I have written for James to come up on Monday, this arrangement will do very well, for I am sure we will stay no more than a fortnight.

Charlotte Forbes has not answered my letter sent a week ago. We have been very entertained here in a nice quiet way except one day that Emmeline came, when George from less to more had collected a dozen gentlemen to meet her and Miss Scott who came with Sir Walter to see the candidate for the Rectorship of the New Acad^m, *Mr Sheepshanks* by name . . . Sir W. said much to me of his intended visit to Aberdeenshire, and has all the localities of the Chateau by heart from Mr Skene's drawing and description . . .

Janey.

GG

From Sir Walter Scott To Colin Mackenzie of Portmore

My dear Colin

I am favoured with both your letters I had never the least idea that your uncle of all men in the world was in the slightest degree compromised by the misfortunes of the period you allude and I will be most anxious to give any account which can in your opinion make such my opinion more distinct. Every thing is due to the memory of a good and brave man which the pious anxiety of those who loved and valued him can possible require.

Et si pulvis nulla erit famen excute nullum

This I shall do so soon as the public gape for another edition. But 8000 copies of a historick work in *nine* volumes (I sweat at the thought of them) will satiate for a while at least the stomach of a Boa Constrictor. Thank you kindly for your congratulations on the subject of the arbitration. I hope I am not so much a 'pipe for fortune's finger' as not to be able to bear bad fortune but it would ungrateful to God and his best gift kind friends like yourself not to be grateful and thankful for what is good.

You are certainly the most active of men. I have thought about that same game of Scots and English whilst you have acted and taken the lighted match from the fools who were clapping it to the powder magazine. Oh that love of self-importance which regularly attends second rate abilities when meated with a certain quantity of animal spirits which makes men mistake their own execrable cyder for Champagne merely because it bustles over the brim of the glass – who can compute the mischief which it does in the world. For myself I think we would agree intirely. My reason is in favour of the English accent. In fact all we can do by refusing to teach it here is forcing people to send their sons to England where it is taught. Everywhere now it is creeping in and the question only is whether our sons are to speak it well or some horrible caricatura. It is not the question about Buchanans latin any more than his English. We must have our sons acquire what will be understood and listend to at the bar in the House of Commons or wherever public speaking is listend to.

With all this it is repugnant to my feelings to destroy what seems one of the last faint reliques of Scottish independence. I am sensible that the Scottish fashion will become antiquated perhaps even before you and I are quite off the stage. But I would not have it die a violent death far less would I put hands upon it as some men do upon an old hound who has wrought his turn. This goes against my feelings and pride as a Scotchman.

I trust Mr Wood will now remain quiet and not disturb an excellent institution by an interference which can not but send it to the Devil by introducing feuds and parties upon subjects of which the honest dunderpates who assembles to decide upon them are generally the worst of all earthly judges. I hope we can meet this year and that at both Harcus & Abbotsford cum toto corpore regni.

Yours truly with love to the fireside

WALTER SCOTT

Abbotsford
26 July

Colin Mackenzie Esq
Harcus Cottage
Eddleston
Peebleshire

Colin Mackenzie of Portmore to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser of Castle Fraser. (This arising from some reflections thought to be detrimental to the reputation of Major General Alexander Mackenzie Fraser in Vol. VI. of Sir Walter Scott's 'Life of Napoleon')

(29-30) July 1827 from Harcus

My dear Charles

Many thanks for your kind letter of the 25th. I have a very satisfactory reply from Sir Walter Scott - I inclose a copy of what I wrote - his letter which I have just received touches on some other topics - What relates to this is as follows - But on second thoughts I send it to you for I think you will like to keep it with the other papers about the Egyptian expedition - and it is nothing the worse of conveying to you some of his feelings and opinions on other subjects -

You will observe how classical I have become - I found his quotation which is in Ovid, *de arte amandi* - It is amusing to see the great unknown make a blunder in the gender of 'nullus' The correct words are as I have marked them.

To explain the rest of the letter, Constable's Creditors had made a Claim to the benefits of Woodstock and Napoleon. I heard when in town that the Arbiter to whom the question was referred had pronounced his opinion in Scott's favour. This he knew that, as a lawyer I anticipated, but it was a great point to have it settled and I both congratulated him for it and gave him Credit for his great equanimity while it was in suspense.

The last subject is our Academy - I told him in the same letter what had occurred at our Meeting in Edinburgh, which after all I attended, having had the satisfaction by interposing with friends on both sides of the question to bring about a Compromise and to prevail in avoiding discussion - One Gentleman alone, Mr Wm. Wood a *furious* Scotchman, gave us an enormous speech, but he knew I had clipped his wings by detaching some of his best supporters, and therefore though he would not spare us this speech he did not insist on a division - I am glad to find that Scott's opinion agrees with mine, as I rather think it will with yours.

Yours most affec.ly
Colin Maczenzie.

....

The extract which had caused Colonel Charles to protest was . . .

'Neither was the subsequent expedition to Alexandria more favourable in its results. Five thousand men, under General Fraser, were disembarked and occupied the town with much ease. But a division, despatched against Rosetta, was the cause of renewing in a different part of the world the calamity of Buenos Ayres. The detachment was, incautiously and unskillfully on our part, decoyed into the streets of an oriental town, where the enemy, who had manned the terraces and flat roofs of their houses, slaughtered the assailants with much ease and little danger to themselves. Some subsequent ill-combined attempts were made for reducing the same place, and after sustaining a loss of more than a fifth of their number, by climate and combat, the British troops were withdrawn from Egypt on the 23rd of September 1807.'

Sir Walter Scott: *The Life of Napoleon*
Vol VI Chapter 1

APPENDIX F CORRESPONDENCE ANENT THE 19TH CENTURY RESTORATION OF THE CASTLE

1 *William Burn to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser*

76 George Street
May 27 1816

Sir

I ought long ago to have replied to your last letter, but for some weeks past have been in constant expectation of going North, when I proposed, as I should have been near Aberdeen to have taken a look at Castle Fraser, and should then have been able to have written you possibly more satisfactorily.

As however I cannot go north I have inclosed another simple sketch for the ceiling, and shall state my objections to the one you last sent me: but should the idea you sent please you best, it might also be carried into effect, by altering the points from which the ribs spring to the same as those shown on my Drawing.

The room is of that shape altogether that I do not think it would look well unless regularity, as much as possible is attended to – and for this reason I conceive the ribs ought to rise or spring from such parts as may not only be useful but ornamental to the side walls.

The windows then are determinate points, and as I formerly proposed to finish each side of them with a *small* column in place of an *Architrave*, it follows that from the top of the columns that the ribs of the ceiling ought to rise.

The sketch will completely show my ideas upon this part, which is indeed my only objection to the other, and you will observe that now the head on column marked, a, removed to the corner marked, c, as shown on your sketch, b, would require to be removed to the point, d, to make the spaces on each side of the window equidistant, by which means the space between the Pillars or heads, upon the pier betwixt the windows marked, d–c, would become so small that the effect would be bad both on the walls and ceiling – my sketch is drawn to a scale so that you may easily observe the effect it would have.

I also think something larger than knots tying the ribs would improve the look of the ceiling of so large a room, for which purpose I have drawn a square panelled pattered, with a large honeysuckle ornament in the centre, which is also opposite to each window.

I shall be glad to hear from you upon the subject and beg to assure you I shall not only be glad to order the execution of either design for you – but to assist you to the utmost of my power with anything you may require of me professionally, or however trifling it may be. I shall also procure an estimate immediately upon hearing from you, and shall so enable the Plasterer to prepare his part of the work, that you may order the execution of the work, whenever you may choose.

I am Sir

Your most obedient and
very much obliged

W^m. Burn

Charles Fraser Esq

2 *James Berrie to William Burn*

Edinburgh 6 July 1816

Sir

Having measured the Drawings of the Plaster work of the new Drawing Room Fraser Castle I hereby offer to execute the whole Plaster work corresponding with the 2 plans given me to estimate for the sum of One Hundred and Sixty Four Pounds, 2/- sterling – to be deducted if the Soffits and Scuncions of the Windows are not executed – Twenty Three Pounds 5/10 Sterling.

The above is exclusive of travelling charges for myself and men Colonel Fraser finding all Materials except Stucco.

Sir

Your most Obedient Servant

Jas Berrie
Leith Walk

3 *Memorandum of Work 1819*

OUT OF DOORS IMPROVEMENTS OF THE YEAR 1819 AT CASTLE FRASER

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| May: | The Hill of Lauchentilly purchased from Lord Kintore at present being inclosed to be planted in Autumn about 200 acres and part of the Hill of Braeneil the inclosure forming the Dyke of a new field to be taken in then. The Braeneil leases expire in 1822. |
| February: | The road from the Castle to the Brew House gravelled. |
| April–May: | The Acaith Hill road repaired – the road from Buckhill to the Lodge completely gravelled. |
| May: | A back entry to the Farm made and gravelled. |
| March–April: | Mason work indoors.
A fire place and chimney made in Dressing Room in West Gallery.
A marble chimney piece in Dressing Room. |

OUTDOOR

April: A new servant's necessary
Pillars and ? to Gateway and addition to Lodge.
May: The roof of the House and Farm offices entirely new pointed by slater.

INDOORS

April and May: All the rooms on the first floor painted and papered
September and October: A fountainhead made. Space for new Mill Wheel for ? an new machinery.
A brick Dog Kennel (Jos Walker's House and Offices)
Arches bricked up at the Castle.

4 *John Smith to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser*

Aberdeen 20th December 1830

Dear Sir

I beg to send you herewith Mr Thompson's Estimate for finishing the different appartments as specified in the Castle, and plans for the large room and alterations of the bedrooms in West Wing for your inspection.

The amount of the Estimate in whole appears high, but I have gone over the detailed prices for each of the appartments and I do not think they could be lower, to perform the work in a good and substantial manner.

The sketch of the large room shows a similar angle taken off the back part of the end as formed by the wall and the opposite side, the fire place built up and a flue made from it for a stove - to be placed in the middle of the end.

The coved ceiling is shown with four moulded longitudinal ribs and may be either as the end No 1 or 2 but the former with five sides is intended as I think it will look best.

The sketch of the West Wing shows an Alteration of the fire wall, and door of the Dressing room, and a curved partition between it and the bedroom to the north, for the purpose of enlarging it as much as possible.

Mr J has made his estimate according to the sketches, but they may altered in any way you think best should you not approve of them.

With regard to Joyce's patent stoves which I spoke of for the staircase as not requiring any flue for smoke, I have been trying one of them, and it answers very well in every respect so far as I have seen, but am afraid that one of them, (without it was very large) would not give sufficient heat for your large staircase.

They will however be found to be very useful for heating passages, or airing rooms as they can be easily moved about. I have sent a prospectus of them, and I regret I was not at home when you called, as I had one of them to show you.

I am

Dear Sir

With much respect

Your very obt. Sert.

JOHN SMITH

Colonel Fraser
of Castle Fraser

5 *John Smith to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser*

Aberdeen 20 October 1836

Dear Sir

I herewith beg to send you sketches for a new Dining room at Castle Fraser, made out in the manner you described, and in the execution of which I do not see any difficulty. The roof however, so far as the new projecting part extends will require to be removed and reconstructed with a new diagonal or angle couple, the baulks of the present couples raised to give 13 ft in height to the room, and the rafters braced in order to strengthen the bottoms of them. I have shewn a coved, or half-octagonal ceiling which would

be in character and have a good effect if finished with ribs as indicated on the plan. The dimensions of the room are marked on the sketch namely 34 ft in length by 24 ft in breadth in the centre recess which is 18 ft in width.

The breadth of the present appartments and wing is only 15 ft 4 ins, but with the additional space in the middle I think the appearance of the room will be handsome, and with the large centre window will be sufficiently lighted.

I have shown two elevations of the side addition one without a balcony and the window in 4 divisions, and the other with one (of stone) and a window in three divisions as you sketched – and both reaching to the floor.

The probable expense of executing the whole with the former elevation will be about £195 Stg and with the latter about £228 including all materials and carriage, but excluding painting.

Should you determine on going on with the alteration I will be very glad to make the necessary working drawings and Specifications, and it would be very satisfactory if you could make it convenient to be at the Castle, although I do not think it would be advisable to commence operations this Season farther than preparing for them.

I am
Dear Sir
With much respect
Your very Obedient Servant
John Smith

Colonel Fraser
of Castle Fraser

6 *John Thompson to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser*

Aberdeen 16 April 1840

Sir

I beg to send you Messrs Blaikie and Sons Estimate for Plumber work and other apparatus for the Bath, concerning the Boiler placed in the same closet – he was unwilling to include the mason work.

He says he would recommend carrying water upstairs when a Tiped Bath is wanted (I mean the Shower) as by causing it ascend in a pipe from the Boiler might be attended with some danger by making it even so hot as to scald a person – it would also he says be a good deal more expense.

I neglected yesterday to put in your view that if the Bell pulls require alteration it should be done before the plaster is finished.

I am Sir your
obedient Humble Servt.
John Thompson

Colonel Fraser
of Castle Fraser

7 *William Burn to Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser*

6 Stratton Street
14 Dec 1847

Dear Sir

According to promise in my last letter I now send you a drawing for finishing the Clock Dial in the style of the building, and if I had a proper drawing of the Arms in the pannel beneath, or indeed any drawing of the Arms, I would have finished the whole drawing as highly as possible, and given the full effect to every part, but not knowing the Style and Character of the Arms, I thought it better to do nothing more to that portion I have ventured to submit for your consideration.

The figures I have put in the Angles, you will understand, are intended to represent where the date may be properly placed, and not the correct date, which I am at present ignorant of.

I may mention also, that altho' I have ventured to call this restoration, I do not believe there was a clock in this position of the original building, and that its introduction there was as much an innovation

as the present dial – but be this as it may be, it is not a bad situation for a clock, and it admits of a very characteristic and effective style of finishing – which is a good answer to all who insist on being over critical.

I am Dear Sir
Yours very faithfully
Will^m. Burn

Col^l. Fraser

APPENDIX G THE CASTLE FRASER DRAWINGS: THE CASTLE

1-4	13.2.1794	A General Plan of the Stable and Farm Offices designed for Miss Fraser of Castle Fraser. (There are four drawings in this set; ground and first floor plans, and two sheets of elevations. They have all been framed.)	: John Paterson
5	13.2.1794	Plan and Section of the Hall or Vestibule at Castle Fraser, the property of Miss Elyza Fraser.	: John Paterson
6	1794	A plan for the Improvement of Castle Fraser, The Seat of Miss Elyza Fraser.	: T White
7	1799	Map of the Castle Policies (this has alterations of 1819 added).	: J Johnston
8	?	Dimensioned plan of the Hall with proposals for an architecturally unrelated character.	: ?
9	?	Pencilled drawing for schedule of window sashes.	: ?
10	?	Sketch plans of Castle Fraser.	: James Skene
11-12	1816	Small plan and sketch of proposals for the Hall.	: Col Charles M-F
13-15	1816	Plan of Hall together with two elevations showing proposed treatment of W end.	: William Burn
	?	Rough Sketch for Lodges to back entrance.	: ?
17	?	Sketch plan for proposed Dining Room Bay (to Col Charles Mackenzie Fraser from a friend.	: ? M M-F
18	c 1830	Design for Stair Saloon (without Cupola).	: John Smith
19	c 1830	Plan and elevations for the new library (on the reverse proposed alterations for the bedroom wing).	: John Smith
20	c 1836	Design for cross wing containing bathrooms: to close courtyard (with pitched roof).	: John Smith
21	c 1836	Alternative design for cross wing with flat roof and castellated gate house.	: John Smith
22	1836	Ground floor plan of alterations in E Wing.	: John Smith
23	1836	First floor plan of alterations in E Wing to form new dining room.	: John Smith
24	1836	Elevation and section of alterations to E wing (with pencilled improvements by Colonel Charles Mackenzie Fraser).	: John Smith
25	1847	Set of measured drawings of stonework details:	: William Burn
	1)	Chimney copings: W elevation	”
		Coping and cornice: Round Tower	”
	2)	Elevation of upper part of Staircase Turret and of Round Tower	”
	3)	Details of mouldings and elevations of baluster pilasters on Round Tower	”
	4)	Elevation of Panel with Coat of Arms Cornice and gables in E and W wings	”
	5)	Heads of dormer windows to S and W elevations, dormer heads to courtyard wings, eaves mouldings and chimney copings	”
	6)	Dormer heads, N elevation Cornice to principal front	”

- 7) Elevation and plan of the lower part of stair turret to Round Tower : William Burn
 8) Dormer heads in low wings ”
 The survey sketches for these drawings entitled ‘*Measurements at Castle Fraser 1847*’ are now in the Library of Kings College, Aberdeen. ”
 26 9) Castle Fraser, Sketch for the restoration of the Clock Turret. ”

ESTATE MAPS

- 27 1776 COPY PLAN of Part of the Moss of CRAIGERN set off to Inverallochy : John Forbes
 ? Copy SCHEME of DIVISION of the Moss between KEMNAY and INVERALLOCHY
- 29 ante 1788 Acath
 30 ” Farm and Crofts of BACKHILL and Croft of TILLIESOUL
 31 ” BRAENEIL and Croft of Walkend
 32 ” MAINS of CASTLE FRASER
 33 ” A plan of HOUSE FARM OF CASTLE FRASER
 34 ” Corskies and Bervie
 35 ” NETHERTOWN and MILLTOWN of DRUMNAHOY
 36 ” Upper Drumnahoy and Culshargart
 37 ” Glack
 38 ” Sketch of New Parks of Castle Fraser
 39 c 1788 Junction of the W Avenue and Aberdeen Road at Broomdyke of Braeneil
- 40 1809 Boundary between the farms of Scraphard (Lord Kintore) and Glack
- 41 1814 March of Lauchentilly and Scrapehard
 42 c 1820 Outfields of BRAENEIL improved
 43 1825 A Plan of the outfields of BRAENEIL
 44 1828 Farms of GREENMOSS and WALKEND
 45 1828 A sketch of new line of Communications Roads through the Backhill of Castle Fraser
- 46 1829 Sketch of the Farm of Cairnfold
 47 1828–30 Sketch of the Croft of GREENBURN
 48 1830 No1. Sketch of the Farm of Drumnahoy : Walker and Beattie
 49 1830 No2. Sketch of the Farm of BACKHILL of CASTLE FRASER: Walker and Beattie
 50 1830 Plan of the Farm of Tirrysoul
 51 1831 Sketch of the Farm of CROWNESS : Alexander Ogg, Kemnay
 52 1834 Sketch of the Crofts of Corskie : Alexander Ogg, Kemnay
- 53 1835 Sketch of Roads in the Parish of Cluny
 54 1836 The Farms of BACKHILL OF BLACK
 55 1846 *Book of PLANS of the LANDS of CASTLE FRASER lying in the Parish of CLUNY and COUNTY of ABERDEEN being the property of Colonel Fraser 1846*
 Mill of Drumnahoy Courtcairn
 Upper Drumnahoy Shagart
 Cairnfold Acath
 Westmains Glack
 Backhill Backhill of Glack
 Home Farm Crofts of Bogintorry and Corskie
 Crownness Upper Corskie
 Greenmoss Nether Corskie
 Braeneil

- 56 1847 Sketch of Drains on the Home Farm of Castle Fraser
 57 1882 Proposal for slating Braeneil Cottages

MISCELLANEOUS

- 58 1765 Plan and Elevations of the Court of Offices at Udney
 (Larger scale details of the main block on the reverse)
- 59 1798 Plan of the Lands and BARONY of INVERALLOCHE
 Divided into Farms
- 60 1808 Plans and Elevations of Country House
 (Principal floor above raised basement) : M M F
 (Marianne Mackenzie
 Fraser?)
- 61 Sketch Plans of Inverallochy Castle : ? James Skene
- 62 ?1815 Sketch for an entrance
- 63 1839/40 Elevations and Plan of an apsidal sanctuary in an R.C (?)
 church. Corinthian order internally, Ionic externally. Coffered
 ceiling. Ten Commandments over Altar : William Burn
- 64 1839/40 Alternative design for square rear wall with Composite Order,
 for the same church : William Burn
- 65 1839/40 Bas-relief ornaments for Marble panels beneath *Lords Prayer*
 and *Belief* : William Burn
- 66 1839/40 Detail of Enrichment : William Burn
- 67-68 1924 Plans, Sections and Elevations of the Castle as existing : Sir Robert Lorimer

There are also, both in the Muniment Room at Castle Fraser,
 and the Library of Kings College, Aberdeen a very large number
 of sketch plans and details of various parts of the Castle by
 Dr W Kelly, Dr W Douglas Simpson, and Mr Alan Marshall.



a Castle Fraser: South Front (RCHM)



b Castle Fraser: Courtyard and North Front (RCHM)



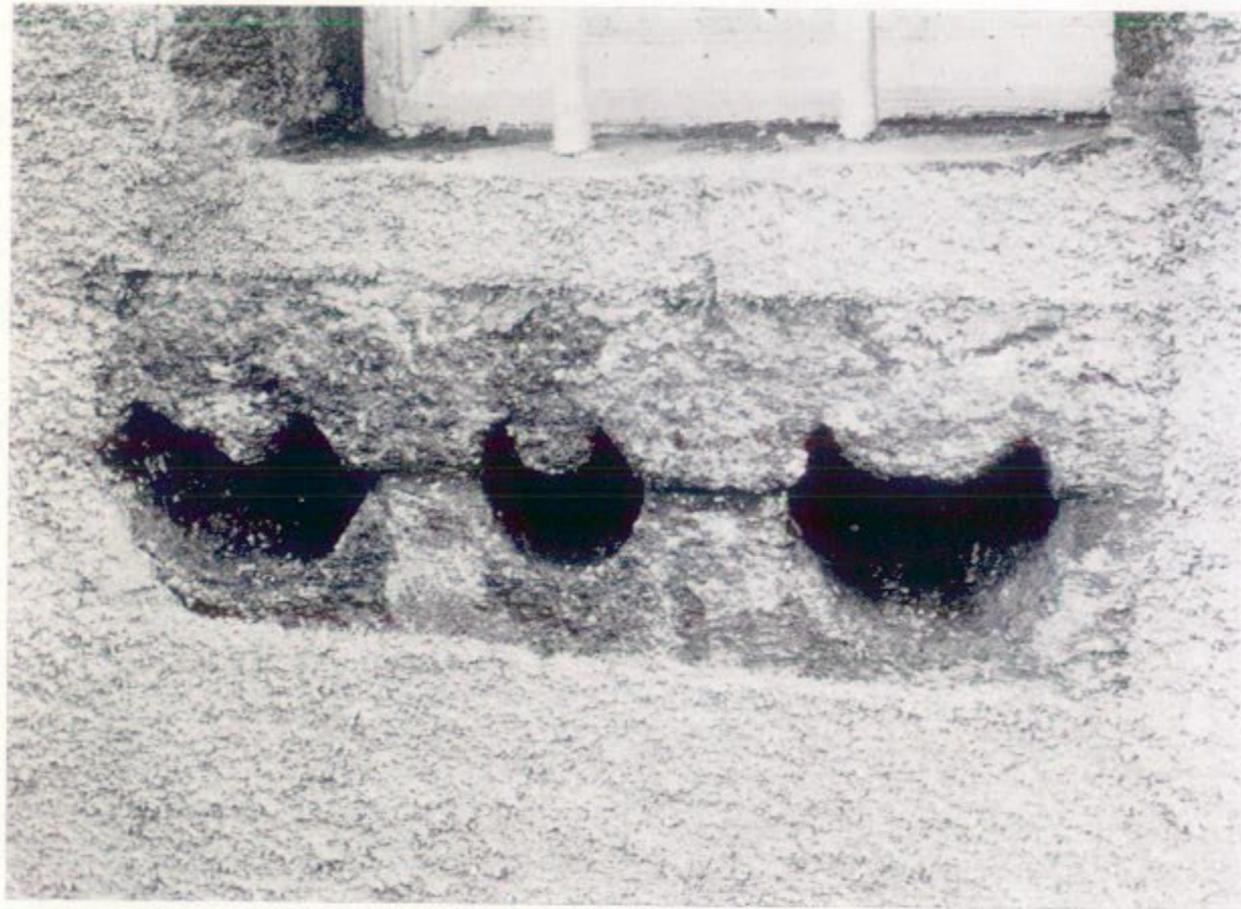
a Castle Fraser: The Upper Works (RCHM)



b Castle Fraser: The Hall from the East (RCHM)



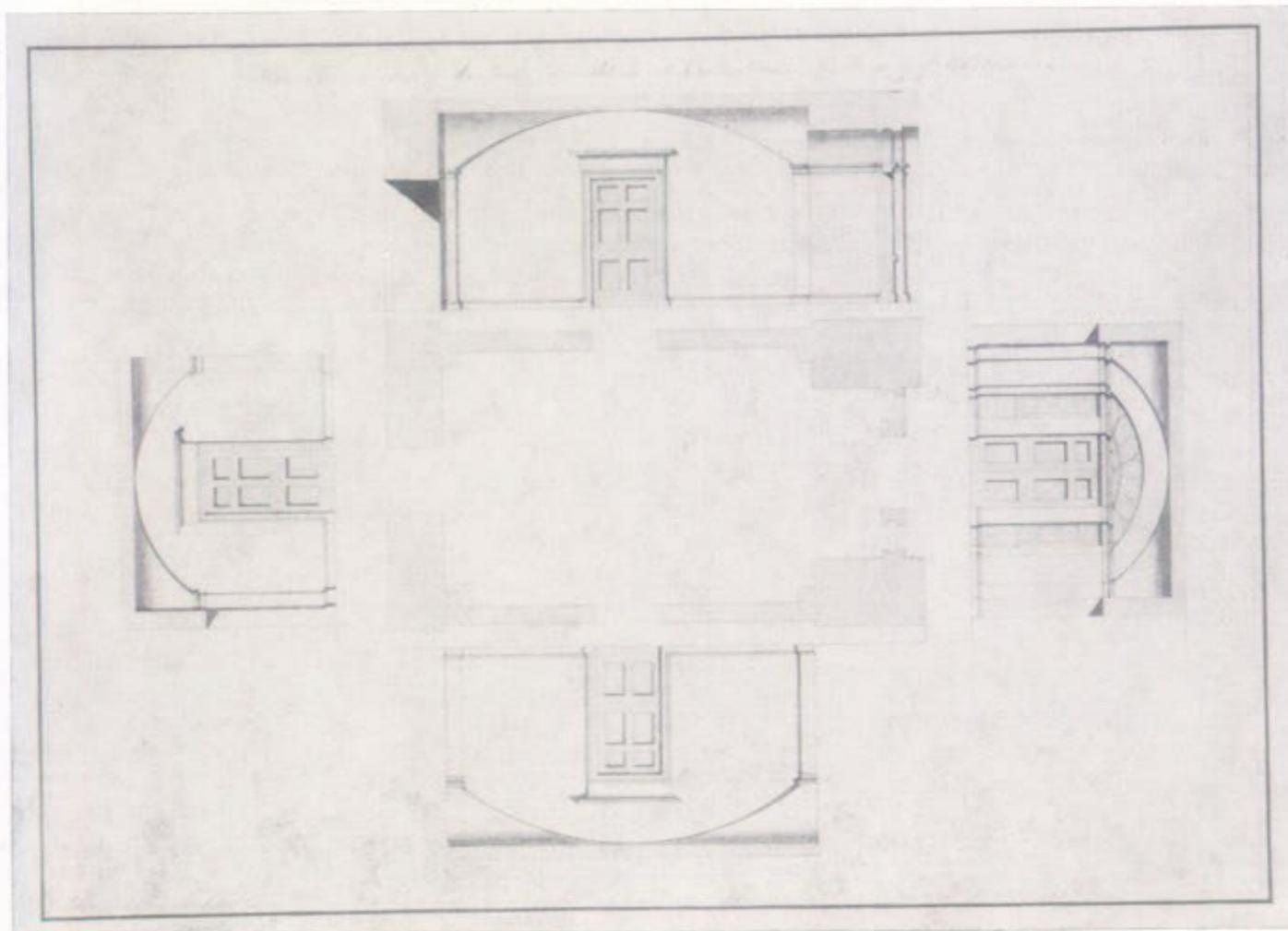
a Castle Fraser: The Hall; the North Wall (RCHM)



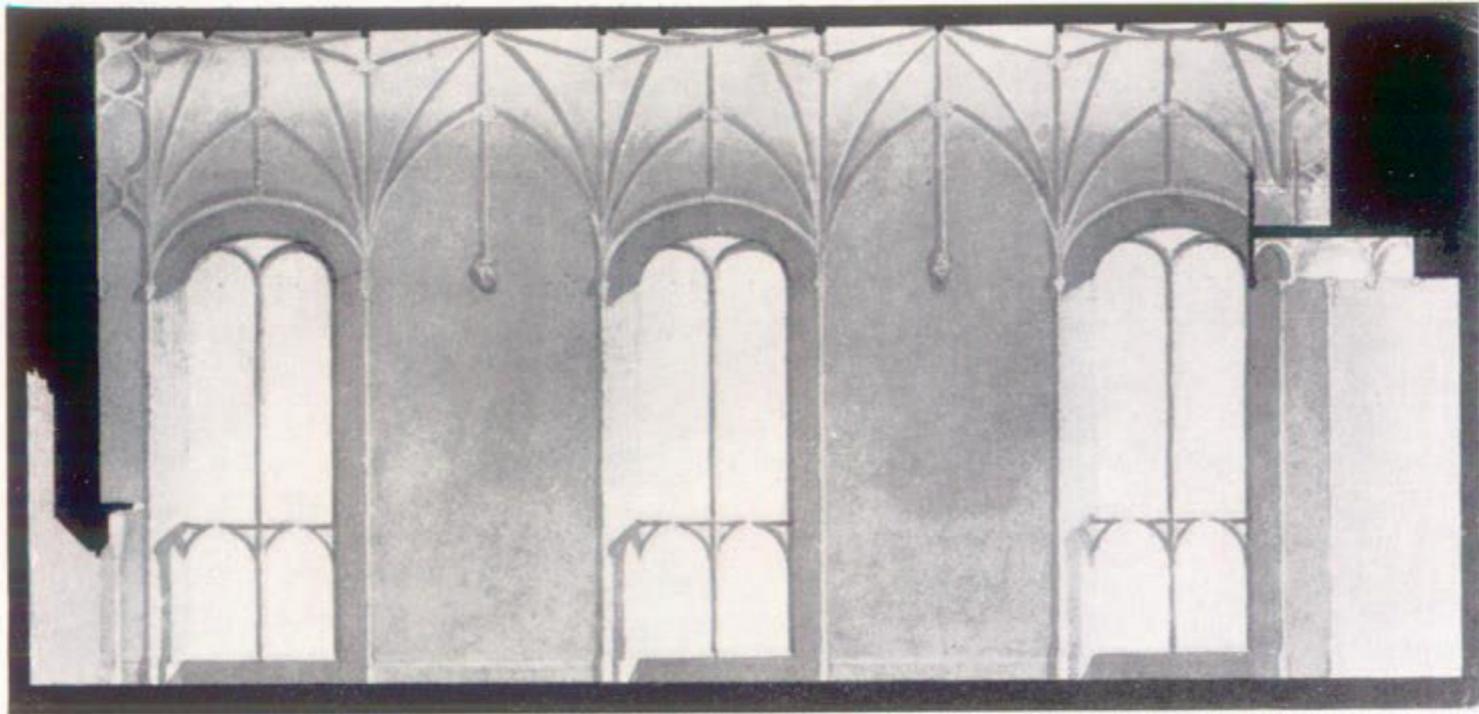
b Castle Fraser: Triple shot-hole (RCHM)



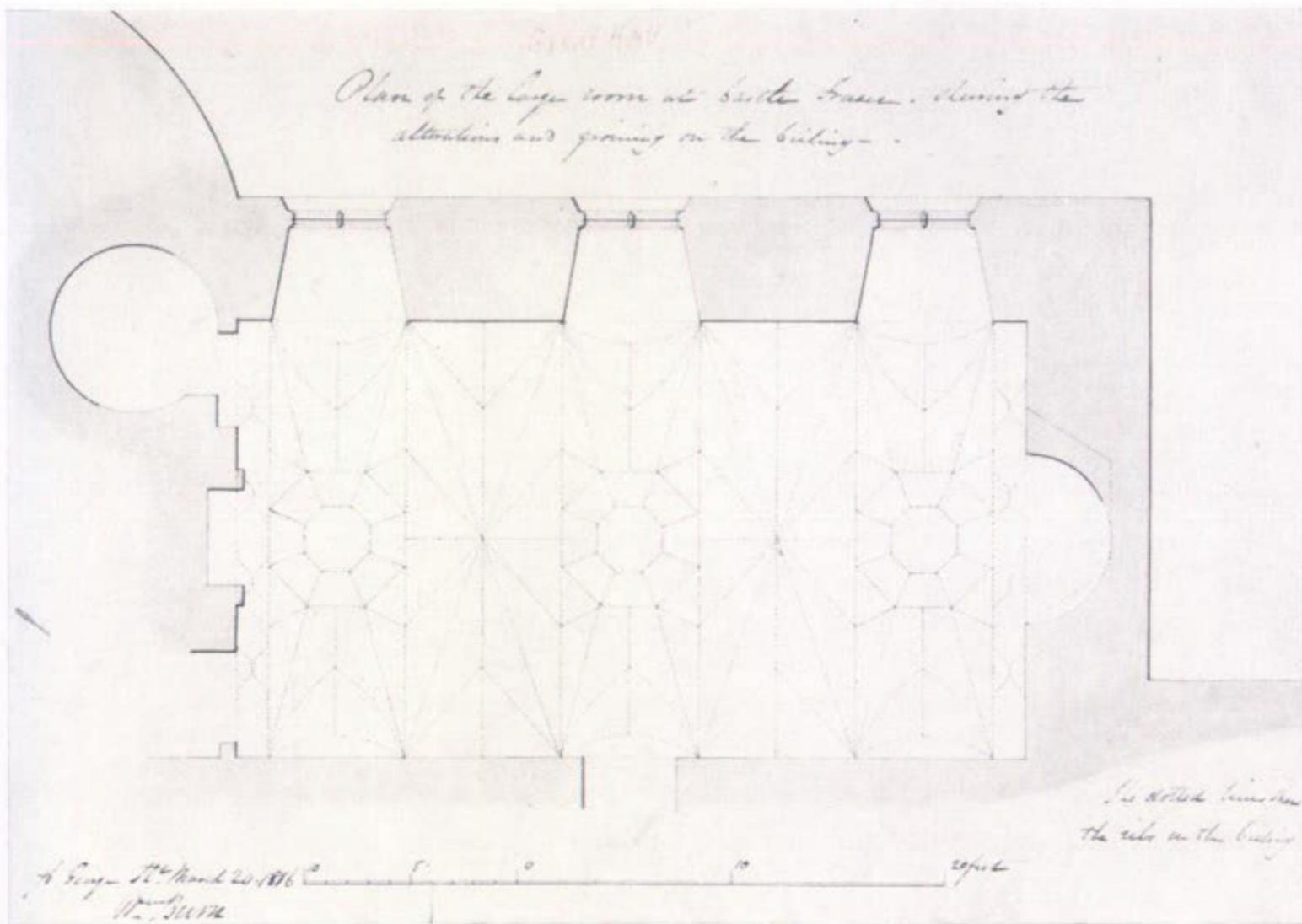
a Castle Fraser: Miss Elyza Frazer's Mausoleum, Cluny, des: James Byers (RCHM)



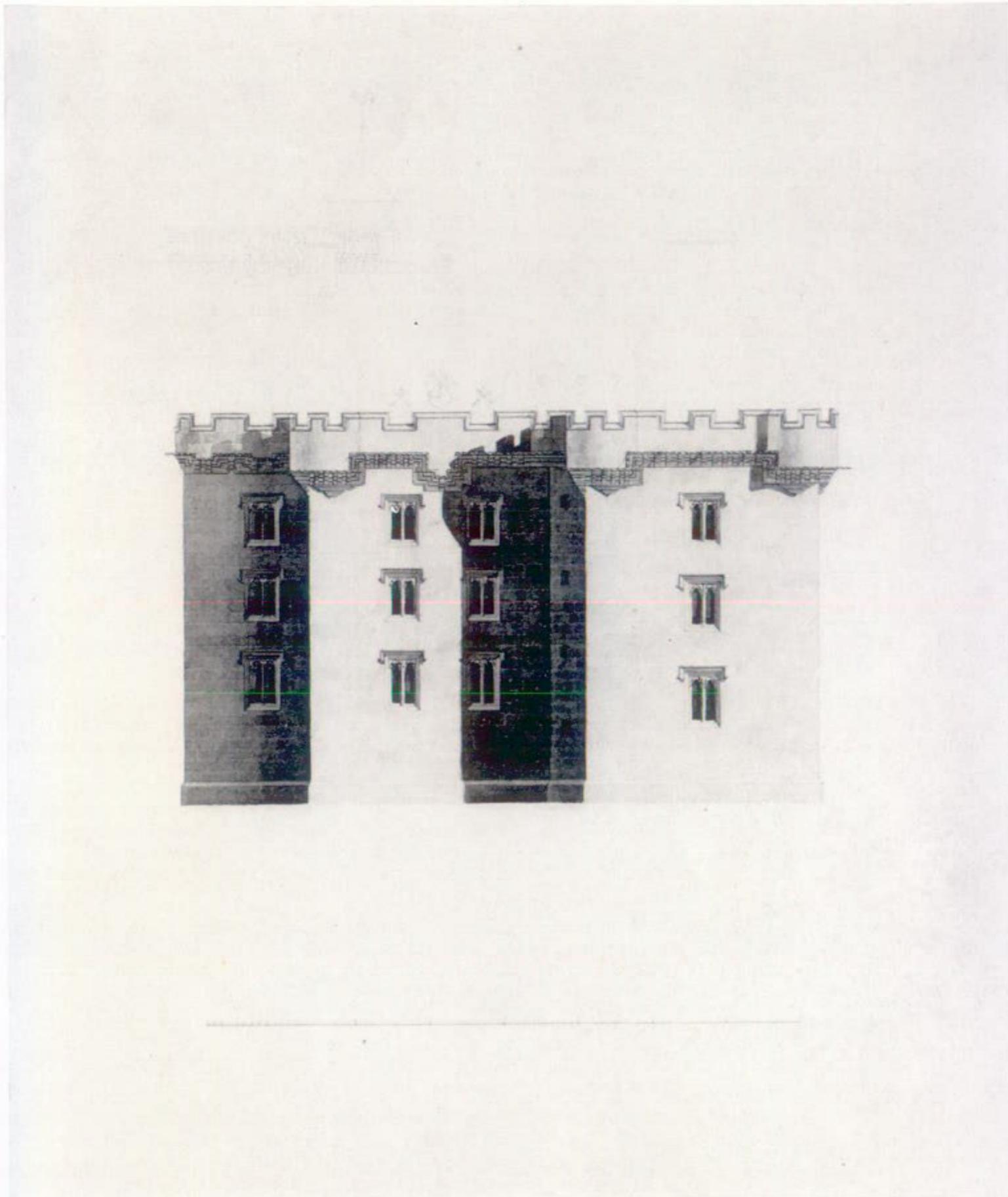
b Castle Fraser: Design for a new entrance hall 1794, John Paterson



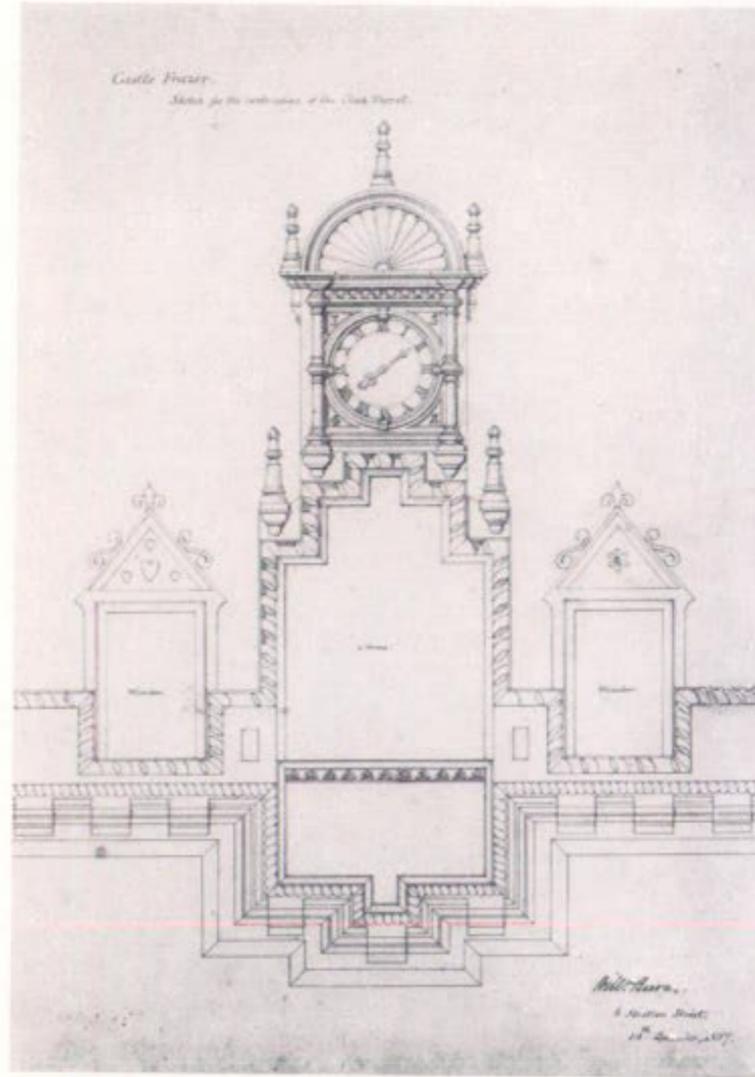
a Castle Fraser: Design for the Hall 1816, William Burn



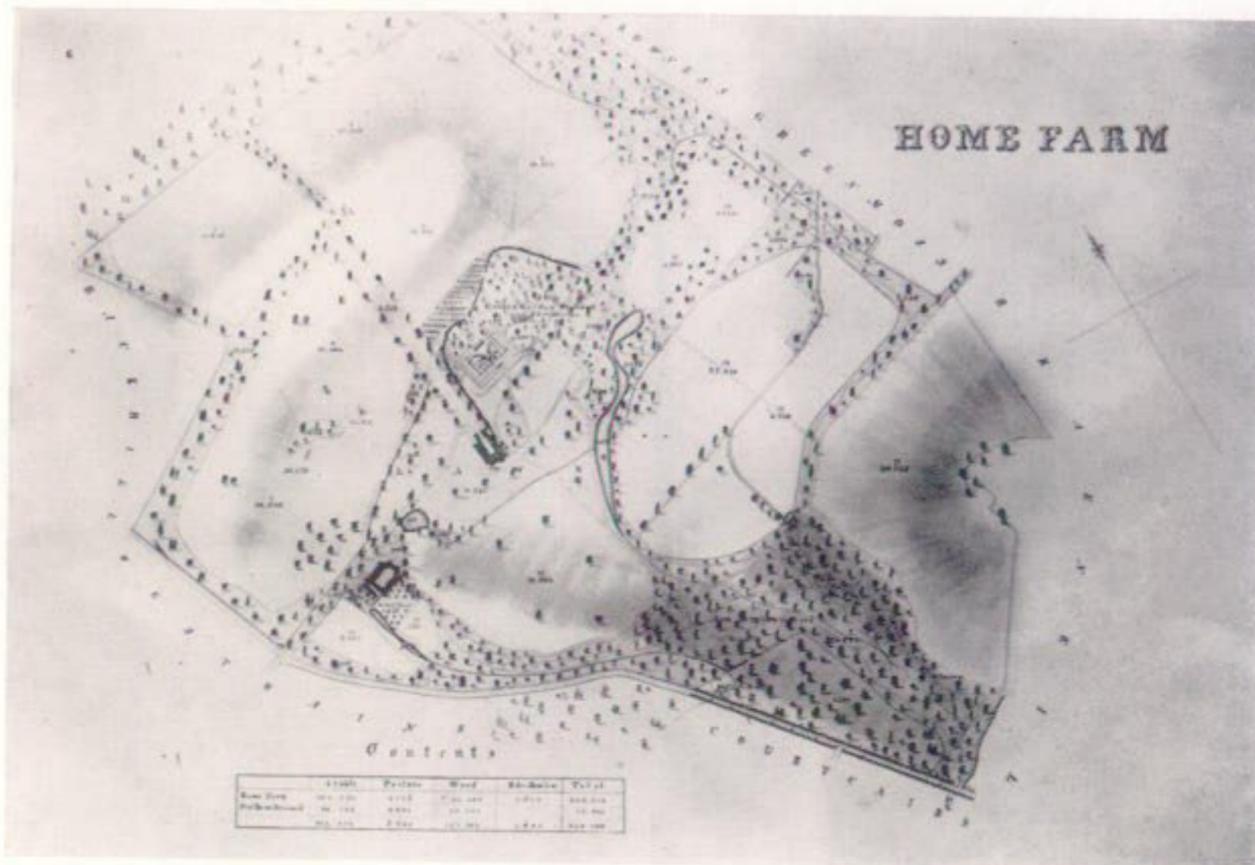
b Castle Fraser: Design for the Hall 1816, William Burn



Castle Fraser: N elevation: proposed alteration c 1819, William Wilkins (Yale Center for British Art)



a Castle Fraser: Design for the restoration of the Clock Turret 1847, William Burn



b Castle Fraser: The Policies 1846