

III.

FURTHER NOTES ON HUNTLY CASTLE. BY W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON,
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The works of repair, begun in 1923 after Huntly Castle had been handed over by the late Duke of Richmond and Gordon to the custody of the Ancient Monuments Department of His Majesty's Office of Works, have now been completed, and the entire castle area has been

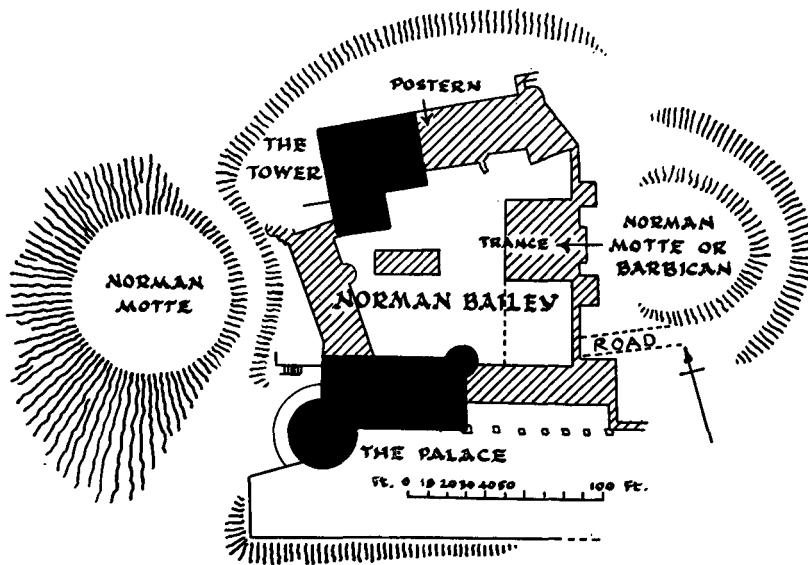


Fig. 1. Huntly Castle: General Plan.

cleared of debris and the ground lowered to its original contours. The result has been the discovery of a large amount of additional information about the development of the fabric and the successive alterations that it has undergone between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries. My former account¹ thus requires amplification and correction in some important particulars: and I gratefully acknowledge the courteous permission accorded to me by the authorities of H.M. Office of Works to keep in touch with their operations during the past nine years, and to discuss the results in the present paper.²

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. pp. 134-63.

² I have to acknowledge much assistance from Mr James Gregor, who acted as foreman in charge during the work, and from Mr Alexander McWilliam, custodian of the castle. The plans

THE NORMAN EARTHWORKS (see General Plan, fig. 1).

Trial cuts in the surface and sides of the *motte* showed its substance to be a natural fluvio-glacial gravel. Probably the mount was originally higher, and has been cut down in connexion with the later stone buildings and pleasure.

No excavation has taken place in the semicircular earthwork at the opposite end of the bailey, described as a barbican in my former account. Between this eastern mount and the bailey there has clearly been a ditch, corresponding to that which isolates the western mount.

The sinking is still apparent, and the later stone buildings have settled forward into the ditch. The inner face of the mount is much disturbed by an old gravel pit.

The question of the relationship of this eastern mount with the bailey is an interesting one. A barbican exists at the *motte* castle of Grimbosq, in Normandy,¹ but it is much more crescentic in shape (see plan, fig. 2). Quite possibly the eastern mount at Huntly may be the remains of a second *motte*. Norman castles with double *mottes* are very uncommon, but two well-known examples exist at Lincoln and Lewes. The significance of the two *mottes* at Lewes (Plan, fig. 2) has been well explained by Dr Hamilton Thompson.² "The natural tendency," he writes, "would be to throw up the mount at first on the

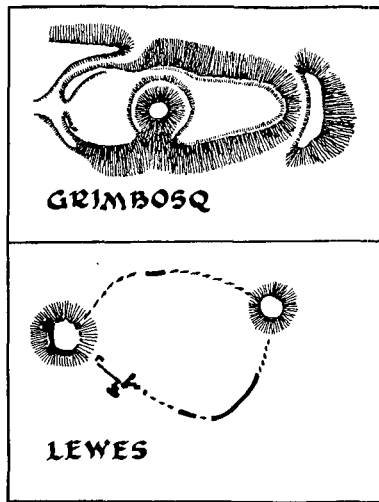


Fig. 2. Plans of *Mottes* at Grimbosq and Lewes (not to uniform scale).

side nearer the valley, where the slope was steeper and the labour required in construction would be less. An attack, however, on the town and castle would come most naturally from the higher ground to the west, which commanded the castle and its defences. A new mount would in process of time be constructed on this side, and the old mount would become of secondary importance." If the eastern mount at Huntly be accepted as an additional *motte*, the situation here, *mutatis mutandis*, is seen to have been very similar to that at Lewes. The first mount would be constructed on the steep bank, commanding the passage of the

have been drawn by Mr J. Fenton Wyness, A.R.I.B.A., A.I.Archts.Scot., F.S.À.Scot., from the survey prepared by H.M. Office of Works. Those of the "palace" show its condition before the conservation work had started.

¹ A. de Caumont, *Abécédaire ou Rudiment d'Archéologie, Architectures Civile et Militaire*, 3rd ed., pp. 399-400.

² *Military Architecture in England during the Middle Ages*, p. 49.

Deveron. Later, when the "Raws of Strathbogie"¹ had sprung up under the shadow of the Norman castle, an additional mount would be thrown up on the opposite side, to dominate the village.

THE "GREATE OLDE TOWER."

By far the most interesting feature discovered in the excavations has been the foundations of a large and very massive tower-house of the L-plan, on the north-western side of the courtyard (see Plan, fig. 3). The unearthing of this tower restores a lost chapter in the architectural history of Strathbogie Castle, and clarifies certain statements hitherto obscure in our literary evidence. Thus Robert Gordon of Straloch, in his Latin tract on the "Origin and Progress of the Illustrious Family of Gordon," written about 1655, says of George, fourth Earl of Huntly (1524-62), that he had "magnificently extended his castle of Strathbogie, adding new structures to the ancient fortalice, and sparing no expense."² Clearly the "ancient fortalice" refers to the tower-house, while the "new structures" would include the great building on the south side. Straloch, however, was wrong in giving the fourth Earl exclusive credit for this latter building. He merely reconstructed it, for we know from other sources that the work was begun by the first Earl, *post* 1455, and completed by the second Earl (1470-1501);³ moreover, its basement, as it survives to-day intact beneath the later reconstruction, is evidently a work of the fifteenth century. This new building was of the type known technically in Scotland as a "palace" (*palatium* = hall)—*i.e.* a house designed on the plan of an elongated hall, raised above a tier or tiers of cellarge, as distinct from the tower-house plan.⁴ The word "palace" first emerges in connexion with Huntly Castle, so far as I am aware, in 1544, when the fourth Earl "caused the palace of Strathbogie to be called Huntlie, by act of Parliament."⁵ These two buildings, the ancient tower-house and the later "palace," are distinguished as the "auld werk" and the "new werk" in connexion with the events of October 1594.⁶ And the tower-house is undoubtedly the structure referred to in Randolph's account

¹ The medieval township was nearer the castle than its modern successor. It occupied more or less the ground of the present Gordon Schools, extending eastward to the little old bridge that crosses the burn in the golf course.

² *Strathbogia arx, comitatus caput, amœno situ ad confluentes Bogii et Duuerni fluminum posita, quam Huntleus, adjectis veteri arci novis structuris, nulli sumptui parcens, magnifice extruxerat*—"Origo et Progressus Familiae Illustrissimæ Gordoniorum in Scotia" (see J. Robertson, *Inventories of Mary Queen of Scots*, p. xxv, note 1).

³ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. pp. 151-5.

⁴ See W. Mackay Mackenzie, *The Medieval Castle in Scotland*, chap. v.

⁵ Sir Robert Gordon, *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, p. 110.

⁶ *Register of the Privy Council*, vol. v. p. 186.

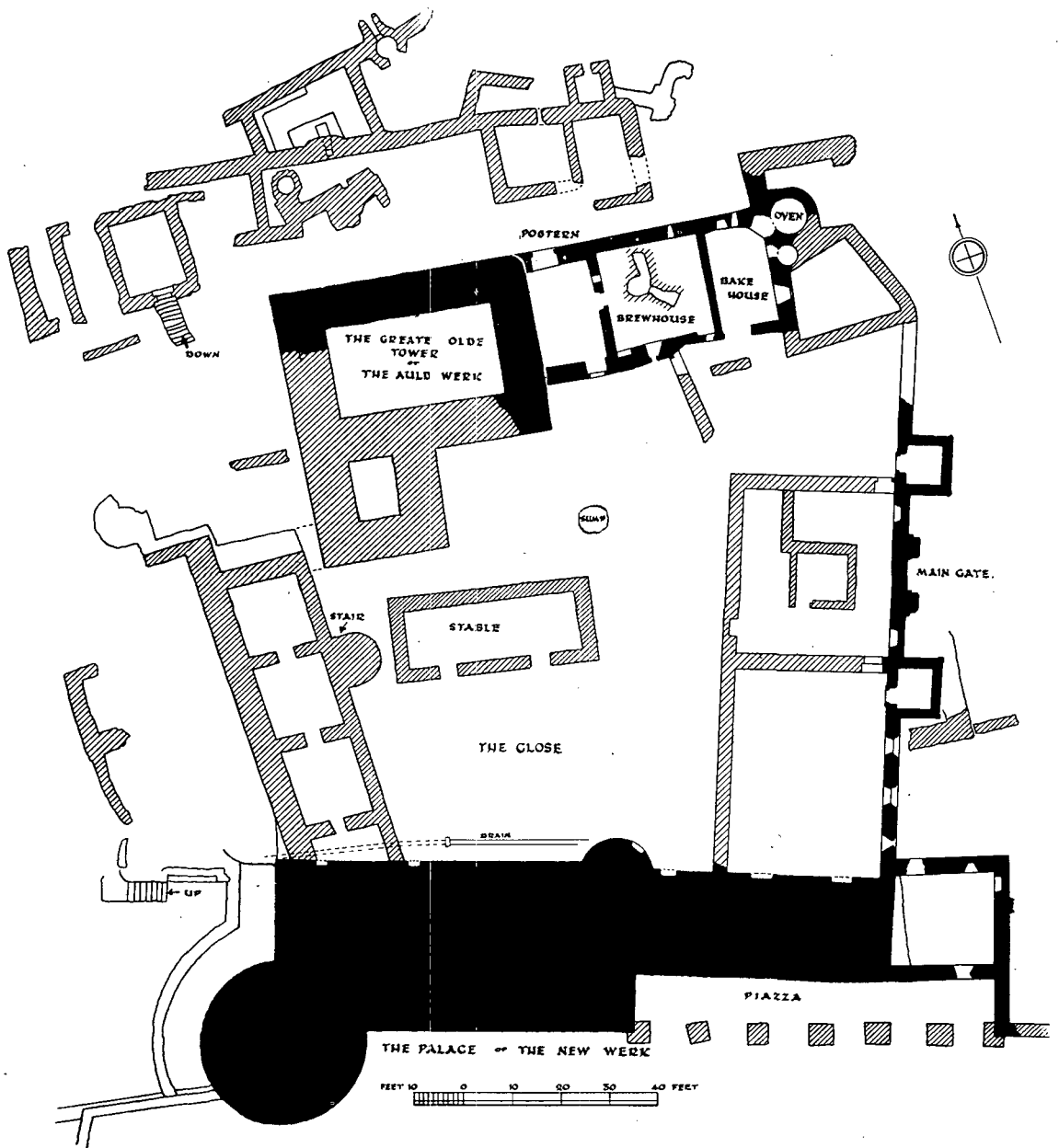


Fig. 3. Huntly Castle: Plan. (Those parts of the buildings which are hatched are now reduced to absolute foundations.)

of the demolition by James VI. in that year: "nothing was left unhocked savinge the greate olde tower which shall be blown up with powder."¹ Blown up it clearly was, no doubt with some of the "twenty stone weight of powder" lent to the King by the Town Council of Aberdeen.² When the castle was restored in 1601-7 there would of course have been no point in rebuilding the tower-house: it represented an obsolete type of fortalice, and had long been superseded by the stately "palace" which had only partially been involved in the destruction. No doubt the shattered ruins of the old tower would be used for materials towards the reconstruction of the other buildings—a circumstance which will account for the fact that so massive a structure has perished right down to the foundations.

The tower-house measures 58 feet by 52 feet 6 inches over its two long sides, with walls 9 feet 6 inches thick. Its north-eastern angle is rounded. The main portion contains a single long cellar, of which the north wall remains partly to the haunch of the vault. In the "jam" or limb of the tower-house is a chamber measuring 11 feet 9 inches by 9 feet 10 inches; it does not communicate with the long cellar, and was perhaps the "pit" or prison. The masonry of the tower-house is extremely massive, with an outer facing of boulders, and the interiors grouted.

No moulded fragments were found within the area of the tower-house, such as might have given a clue to its date. Having regard to the thickness of the walls, the style of masonry, the simplicity of the plan, the absence of party walls in the main cellar vault, and the apparent lack of a ground-floor entrance,³ it seems possible that the tower-house may have been built in the latter part of the fourteenth century—probably after 1376, in which year the claim of the old Earls of Atholl to Strathbogie was extinguished by the failure of their line, and the Gordons, with their interests now transferred conclusively from Berwickshire to the north, could settle down in unchallenged occupation of the lordship. It is similar in general dimensions to David's Tower at Edinburgh Castle, erected between 1368 and 1379, and to the tower at Craigmillar Castle, which is believed to date from about the same period. The tower-house would doubtless be the first stone-and-lime building to be erected within the palisades of the Norman castle.

So massive a structure as the tower-house would suffer little, save for its woodwork, in the burning of Strathbogie Castle at the hands of

¹ *Records of Aboyne*, p. 521.

² *Register of the Privy Council*, vol. v. pp. 183-4.

³ It is right, however, to say that the walls of the "jam" are reduced to a mere foundation that may be below the threshold level of a door which might have existed here; in which case the "jam" would doubtless have contained the main stair.

the Douglas raiders in 1452. In Lesley's *Historie*¹ this event is thus described: "In the meane tyme of the fyeld"—*i.e.* at the time of the battle of Brechin, 18th May 1452—"Archebald Douglas than Erle of Murraye, broder to the Erle of Douglas, brint the peill of Strathboggie, pertening to the Erle of Huntley, and heriet the lands thairabout." I conceive the word "peill" here to be used in its strict medieval sense (*palum*=palisade) as referring to the stockaded Norman earthwork by which the newer stone tower continued to be shielded.

THE COURTYARD BUILDINGS (see Plan, fig. 3).

These have now been completely excavated, and the results may be described, taking each range separately.

(1) *West Range*.—The oblique north-west face of the revetment wall that retains the terrace on the south front of the castle has been exposed up to its junction with the great round tower of the "palace," against which it abuts without bond. From this revetment wall another wall runs concentrically round the tower at a distance of 7 feet from it. It is a secondary construction, having no bond with the revetment wall, and is built with clay instead of mortar. This wall forms a *chemise* enclosing a fosse or ditch round the tower, and into the fosse went the garderobe shafts of the "palace," as well as the surface-drainage culvert from the courtyard.

The south end of the counterscarp of the *motte* ditch is retained by another revetment wall connected with a stair of access from the southern terrace to the *motte* ditch, and so to the courtyard. In the upper part of this revetment wall occurs a bench, the only probable explanation of which is that it supplied abutment for a timber staging to a high door slapped out from the first-floor room in the round tower. This door is evidently an afterthought, as it cuts through an offset, and as one-half of a wide-mouthed gun-loop has been re-used in the lower half of each jamb. Doubtless the door has been cut down out of an older window with a gun-loop in its breast, like those which may still be seen elsewhere in the "palace."

The lower part of the west wall of the "palace," below the quoin, is carried northward continuously for a distance of some 9 feet beyond the quoin, at which point it has been worked into the foundation of the outer wall of the latest west range, which is set obliquely to the "palace." This wall is itself carried in across the older rectilinear wall below, so as to abut upon the "palace," into which it is bonded, truncating the upper string-course.

¹ Ed. Bannatyne Club, p. 23.

On the inner side of this later wall a door opens into the west range from a mural recess in the north-west angle of the "palace." When found this door was blocked, but it has now been opened up. Evidently it was made to open, not into the present oblique west range but into its rectilinear predecessor, and was blocked when the present west range was built.

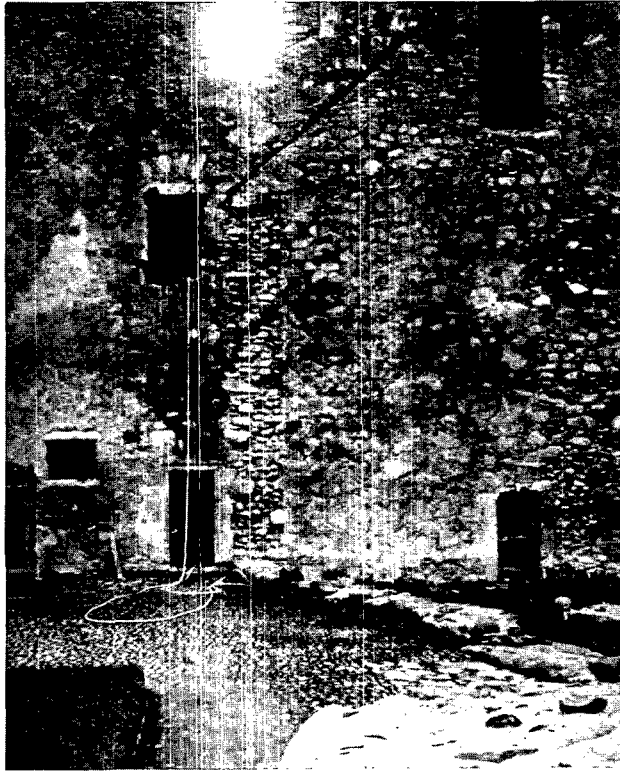
We are thus enabled to disentangle a rather complex architectural history of these buildings on the west front. It is clear that when the "palace" was first built, in the latter half of the fifteenth century, the west range, or at all events the west barmkin wall of the courtyard, was set at right angles to the "palace." The later, oblique west range, the whole west gable of the "palace" above the upper string-course, and the adjoining end of its north wall as far eastward as the toothings of the west outer wall, are all of one date, and indicate a comprehensive reconstruction of the whole west front of the castle. No doubt the oblique alignment was chosen in order to enable the new west range to be prolonged northward past the old tower-house. It is evident that, as stated above, the west gable of the "palace" was involved in the rebuilding of the west range, for the quoin from the bottom up to the lower string-course at the north wall-head (see *infra*, p. 151) is of one uniform work; and the coat-of-arms on this string-course fixes the period of the reconstruction, namely, during the time of the fourth Earl (1524-62): this coat-of-arms is to be taken in connexion with the two southern spur stones of the main gables, both of which are dated 1553.¹ The older masonry to the eastward in the north front of the "palace," into which the rebuilt gable is worked, is doubtless of the fifteenth century.² This older masonry forms a solid mass or *enclave* between the two lateral walls of the range, and extending as high as the eaves level: it is out of alignment with the rest of the north "palace" wall, and under the roof-lines of the west range it is worked back in masonry of a different texture into the general wall plane (see fig. 4). Above this the masonry of the "palace" is uniform in character right across the whole north front, and is dated by the coat-of-arms already mentioned. A corresponding joint occurs inside the building, both in the side walls and in the vault of the mural passage to the dungeon, affording the clearest proof that the whole gable has been rebuilt, even from this low level. All this is confirmed by the character of the basal string-course along the north front, which is at a higher level and is different in section from the corresponding string-course on the other side of the west range; this

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 139. It should there have been stated that the south-east spur stone also is dated AÑO 1553.

² Cf. *Proceedings*, *ut supra*, pp. 155-6.

latter string is continued across the rebuilt west gable and round the tower.

On the north front of the "palace," at the first-floor level, a door, now blocked (see first-floor plan of "palace," fig. 5), was provided to give access to the oblique west range, with which the door is aligned. The inner wall of the later west range (like the outer one) is bonded into the "palace."



[Photo. H.M. Office of Works.]

Fig. 4. Huntly Castle: Abutment of west range on north wall of the "Palace."

Two successive roof raggles of the west range, the upper one later, may be seen upon the "palace" wall (fig. 4). Midway in the range was a door from the courtyard, the worn threshold of which remains. Beside this door to the north was a half-round stair tower, the splayed freestone base-course of which is still *in situ*: it is seen in the foreground of fig. 4.

At the north end of this range in a westward projection was a bakehouse, of which some remains still exist of a large circular salient oven. The soil dug out here showed evident marks of fire, and considerable portions of charcoal were recovered. These were submitted for

examination to Mr A. S. Watt, M.A., D.Sc., of the Forestry Department, Aberdeen University, and found by him to consist of the following woods: oak (*Quercus robur*), Scots pine (*Pinus silvestris*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), willow (*Salix* sp.), and birch (*Betula* sp.).

(2) *North Range*.—To the west of the block of two cellars still standing,¹ the remains of another cellar have been exposed, abutting against the east end of the “greate olde tower.” Part of its barrel vault

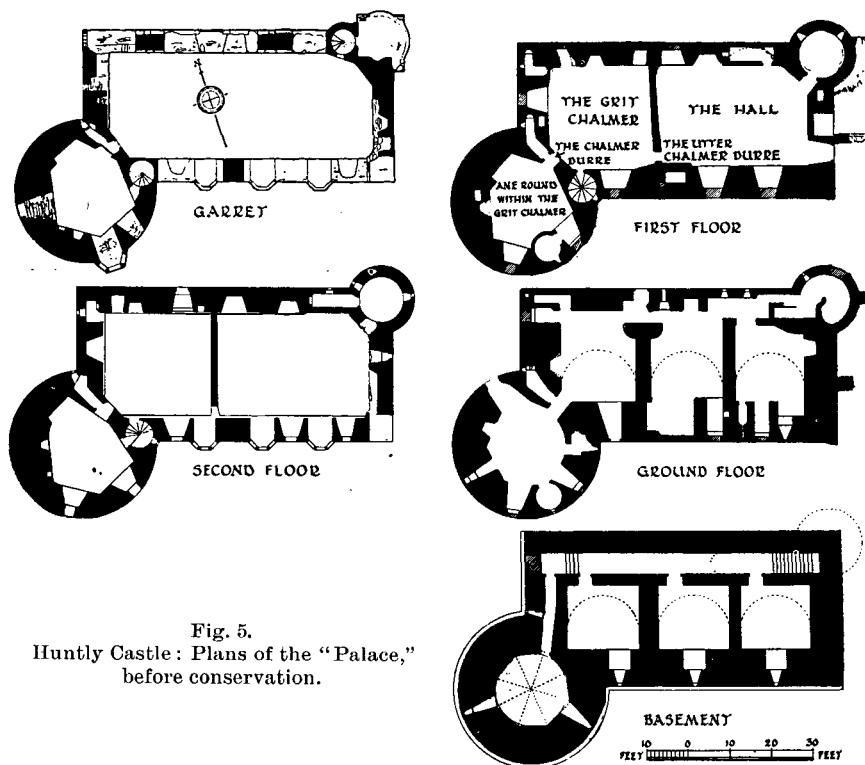


Fig. 5.
Huntly Castle: Plans of the “Palace,”
before conservation.

is still extant. A door connects this cellar with its neighbour to the east. The vault abuts without bond against the back wall, which is older—although its middle portion has been rebuilt. The rebuilt part, as also the partition wall and the vault, are of one texture with the two cellars eastward, and exhibit the usual sixteenth- or seventeenth-century masonry, with frequent pinnings. In the older work in the back wall pinnings are sparingly used: this wall, however, is in its turn less massive in texture than that of the “greate olde tower,” against whose rounded north-east angle it abuts.

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 147.

Two stages of major reconstruction may be identified on the north front, as on the west front. First were built the two eastmost cellars, their outer wall being on the line of an older barmkin wall, a small portion of which was left, linking these cellars up with the "greate olde tower." In this fragment of the barmkin wall was an arched postern, probably the "backe gate over a lowe walle of stone" mentioned in 1562.¹ The inner face of the wall with the postern was, then or subsequently, refaced, the jambs being withdrawn and all traces of the door on the inside thus being obliterated. On the outside, however, the jambs still remained, and in the recent conservation work the postern has been reopened. It was low and well secured, having in addition to the door an outer gate opening outwards.

The ground outside along this front has been cobbled. West of the postern the cobbling slopes outward to a gutter running parallel with the wall. Along the eastern cellars the cobbling slopes in, with two gutters running in towards the building, and now stopped by it. This clearly shows that the cobbling here is older than the cellars, dating from a time when the buildings on this front did not extend further east than the tower-house.

Excavation of the interiors of the two eastern cellars has shown that the west one was a brewhouse, the seating of the vat being still well preserved; while the eastern was a bakehouse, having two circular, domed ovens in its north-eastern corner. At the eastern end of this range was a projecting square building, apparently divided into two compartments.

(3) *East Range*.—Below the present east range, of which only the outer wall remains, appear the foundations of an older range. The present range is set at right angles to the south front of the castle, but the older range follows an oblique alignment parallel to that of the later range on the west side. Thus the architectural history of the two lateral ranges of the courtyard is a reversed one: on the west side the rectangular alignment is original, and the oblique alignment secondary; while on the east side an oblique range underlies a later rectilinear one. No doubt the older oblique range on the east front is coeval with the secondary oblique range on the west front, both dating from the general reorganisation of the castle carried out by the fourth Earl in the middle years of the sixteenth century. Both from the absence of vaulting and from the thin walls and character of the masonry, it would seem that the reconstructed east range must be almost the latest building now identifiable in the castle—representing

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

probably, as I suggested in my former account, the work upon which the second Marquis was so busily engaged in 1643.¹ The date thus suggested is confirmed by such architectural detail as is available—for example, in the finely moulded bases that excavation has revealed at the porch, and in the windows, which have a plain raised margin all round, a common moulding in the seventeenth century: the quoins are also treated with a similar raised band on each face, meeting so as to encase the angle. The external walls of these buildings have very small sharp stones thumbed into the pointing, probably to obtain a rough surface for the harling.

Latest of all in date is a large walled area built against the inner face of the outer wall of the east range. This range was clearly designed to provide a series of living-rooms, as appears from the windows in the walls; but these rooms were never completed, and the outer wall remains a mere screen, against which at a subsequent period the enclosure referred to was built. It blocks the entrance, which never seems to have come into use, if we may judge by the total absence of any worn appearance on its threshold. No doubt the troubles of the Civil War, and the disasters that therein befell alike the noble family of Huntly and their stately castle, are the explanation of the non-fulfilment of what was clearly an ambitious design—comparable, it may be, with the contemporary Renaissance wing at Caerlaverock. In the centre of the enclosure is a smaller walled space, cobbled. It is difficult to suggest any probable explanation of this curious double enclosure, the west or courtyard wall of which has been continued to meet the south wing.

At the south end of the east wing a cambered and cobbled roadway (see Plan, fig. 1), 10 feet 6 inches broad, and set at right angles to the older, oblique alignment of this wing, approaches the castle and runs under the later work. This road has been traced outward from the castle, partly by uncovering sections of it and partly by probing, right to the point where it joins the ancient main road to the Deveron Bridge, the junction taking place just a little west of the old bridge on the golf course, already mentioned.

(4) *South Range*—(A) *The Terrace*.—The revetment wall, running out in a south-westerly direction from the great round tower (see *supra*, p. 142), is built upon an older and thicker wall which is continued out beyond the north-west angle of the terrace and forms a retaining wall to the base of the *motte*. Pits sunk at the base of the round tower and along the front of the “palace” revealed finished walling faces to a depth of 8 or 9 feet. It is thus evident that the terrace is wholly

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 161.

"made up," and that as originally built the cellars and dungeon in the basement of the "palace" were not *souterrains*, at all events as far as their south face is concerned. One of these pits was sunk just in the south re-entrant between the round tower and the revetment wall, and the lower wall upon which the latter is imposed was found in the whole depth of the pit. It was therefore decided to cut the ground down to a depth of about 5 feet, exposing the bases of the cellarage loopholes, which have an oilette below. A lower string-course, different in section from the upper, was thus exposed, continued along the south front and round the tower.

The south front of the revetment was cleared for a length of 72 feet eastward from the south-west angle. In its eastern portion it had been somewhat bulged out by a slipping of the made-up earth of the terrace, which caused the whole south revetment wall to move forward, fracturing the west revetment near the angle. Beyond this length a catastrophe had taken place. About 32 further feet of the wall had toppled right forward, and when excavated was found lying on its face about 8 feet in advance of the remainder. The whole wall has been jacked up and replaced, and now shows a row of eleven weepers, of which Nos. 1, 3, 5, and 8, reckoning from the west, are ancient. The original bulge in the wall, as shown by the foundations, has everywhere faithfully been preserved. As now restored, the terrace gives an exceedingly fine effect, and adds greatly to the imposing appearance of the castle as approached along the drive from the Gordon Schools (fig. 6: contrast *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 139, fig. 4).

(B) *The Arcade*.¹—The bases and sub-bases of this have been uncovered, and indicate six arches of about 10 feet span. The piers at either end were engaged with the quoins upon which they abut: the bonding at the east end is contemporary, but at the west end the pier has of course been inset into the older masonry of the "palace." Fragments of one pier found indicate a square plan, measuring 1 foot 10 inches either way, with chamfered angles and a sunk strip on each face. One loose stone shows the springing of the arch.

A long socket for a beam exists in the wall on the outside of the south front of the "palace" at the east corner, just above the upper string-course. From this socket two putlog holes run back into the body of the wall. At the same level a door opens southward from the room east of the kitchen, and has three grille holes on the outer face of each jamb, indicating that it has subsequently been converted into a window. Originally this door must have given access to some kind of gangway, resting in the socket and putlog holes, and leading along to the lower

¹ See *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 146.

storey of the arcade (evidenced by the lower set of joist holes in its back wall—see *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 148, fig. 10).

(5) *Courtyard Area*.—Apart from nondescript or unrelated foundations, only one free-standing building has been discovered in the courtyard area. It is a narrow, oblong structure, measuring 36 feet 4 inches by 12 feet, within walls 2 feet 6 inches thick. The interior is closely cobbled, the floor being divided by pitchings into ten stalls of equal size with a corridor running along the south of them, clearly showing that this building was a stable. There are two doors in the south



[Photo. A. B. Beattie, Huntly.]

Fig. 6. Huntly Castle: view of "Palace" from the south after conservation.

wall. North-east of the stable is a roughly constructed sump about 3 feet deep. The courtyard is all cobbled, the drainage system being arranged in grids of gutters discharging into the culvert that skirts the "palace." The cobbling varies much in different sections, and seems to be the work of different periods, some of the settings following the rectangular and some the oblique alignment of the successive courtyard enclosures. A cobbled and cambered roadway, 15 feet broad and set to the oblique alignment, crosses the courtyard from south to north, between the stair tower of the "palace" and the postern gate on the opposite side.

(6) *Outbuildings on the North Front*.—Externally to the north range the foundations of a confused assemblage of outbuildings have been

uncovered, extending as far as the scarp of the Norman bailey. These foundations, which are shown on the plan (fig. 3), are evidently of various dates, and do not admit of any intelligible description, with the exception of a rectangular vaulted cell, measuring about 15 feet 3 inches by 12 feet 4 inches, lying to the north-west of the "greate olde tower." This cell is sunk about 4 feet 6 inches below the *terreplein*, and is reached by a flight of thirteen rough steps, with a lower door strongly secured. It may have been a strong room, possibly a prison, or perhaps a well-house, although no trace of a well-head or cistern has been discovered. Some of the walls of these outbuildings were laid in clay instead of lime: in all, the floors consisted of rammed clay above the native gravel. All over this area extensive traces of fire were noted.

THE "PALACE" (see measured drawings, figs. 5, 7, and 8).

I have left to the last, consideration of the "palace," because here excavation has naturally played a minor part. But in the course of

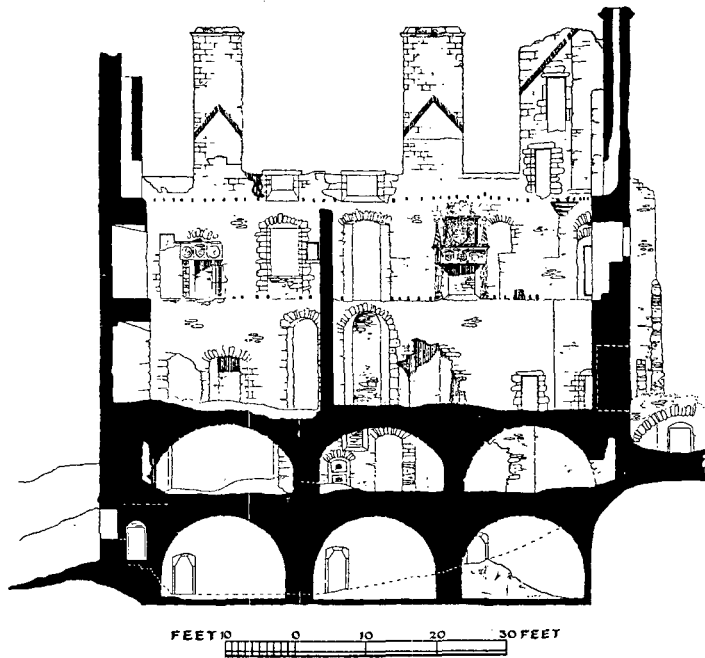


Fig. 7. Huntly Castle: longitudinal section of the "Palace," looking north, before conservation.

the conservation work a great deal of additional knowledge has been gained with regard to the architectural history of this noble building,

revealing very clearly the ceaseless process of minor alteration, no less than destruction and repairs on a major scale, which it had undergone during the two centuries of its stormy history.

Perhaps the most interesting discovery is the way in which the roofing arrangements were altered when the "palace" was finally reconstructed in 1602-7. The original roof was at a lower level, namely, at the offset that crosses the north front above the coat-of-arms noted in my former account.¹ It was there stated that this coat-of-arms (which is much weathered) was that of the first Marquis and his wife—*i.e.* of the building period 1602-7. But when the scaffolding was in position I examined the shield and had a photograph taken (fig. 9), from which it will be seen that the bearings are those of the fourth Earl and his wife, Elizabeth Keith. Thus the shield is of the same period as their shield and monogram on the two spur stones, with the date 1553. The offset on which this shield is placed represents the eaves-level of the building as then completed.² Subsequently an additional 3 feet of walling was imposed, with dormer windows whose sills remain. These windows are shown entire in one of Nattes' drawings (fig. 10). A new roof was made to suit the higher level, as indicated by the raggles cut in the two chimneys on the north front and on the great south-west tower and its caphouse. The new raggles on the tower cuts through the heavy string-course under the corbel cornice. The tall chimney with the mock window on the south front is coeval with the heightened north wall and later roof, as it shows only the chase of the latter, which is original wrought work, and not a rough secondary cutting. But as this chimney is contemporary with the

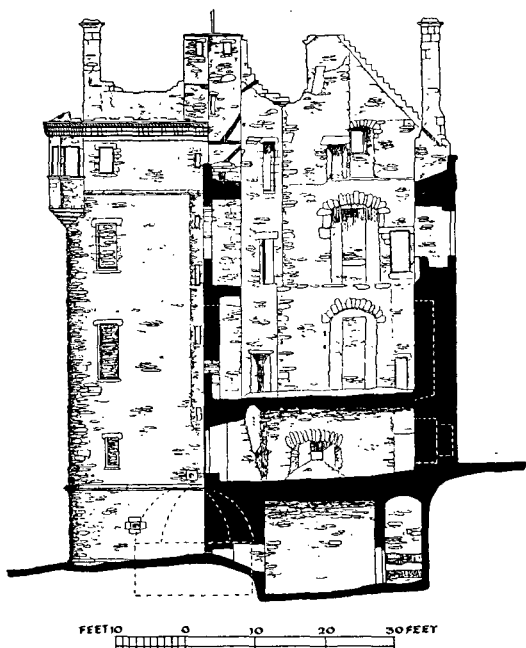


Fig. 8. Huntly Castle: transverse section of the "Palace," looking west, before conservation.

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 140.

² The custom of placing a shield at the wall-head of a building is not uncommon in Scotland. An example is the coat-of-arms of Bishop Tulloch on the great tower of Spynie Castle (see my *The Palace of the Bishops of Moray at Spynie*, p. 10). At the wall-head on the inside of King's College Chapel, Aberdeen, over the east window, is a shield bearing a very fine representation of the Scottish Royal Arms.

present wall-head arrangements of the round tower, it is clear that the heightening of the roof represents an afterthought while the restoration of 1602-7 was in progress. On the north front the heightened walling abuts without bond against the stalks of both chimneys, which rise from the lower wall-head of 1553, and in their original form are therefore of that date. When the roof was heightened, however, the eastern chimney was taken down, and rebuilt at almost double the width, the original quoin still remaining near its base. The western chimney was also rebuilt, as shown by the detail of its cope, which is the same as that of the other chimney. East of the latter the wall-head moulding is very irregular and has clearly been worked into the older gable of

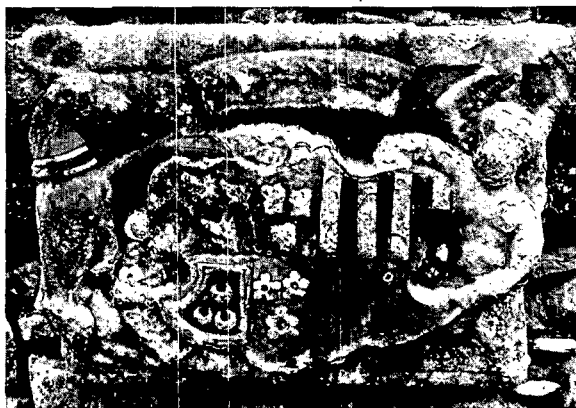


Fig. 9. Huntly Castle: Arms of the fourth Earl of Huntly and his wife, Elizabeth Keith, on north wall of "Palace."

1553, which has been heightened, the old corbie-steps and inscribed skew-putts having been re-used. The pitch of the original gable is still clearly visible. The same heightening, and re-using of the crow-steps, has doubtless taken place on the eastern gable, though here the evidence is less distinct. When the roof was raised, and a new raggie cut for it on the caphouse, a little crow-stepped gabbling, with a roof-chase properly wrought, was constructed in the north-west re-entrant of the caphouse so as to close the new roof in, and to supply abutment for the stair from the wall-walk of the tower to the caphouse.

On an average it was found necessary to clear down 3 feet, in both tiers of vaults in the "palace," in order to reach the old floors, which are of hard beaten clay. In the long basement corridor the steps shown in my former plan were found to be modern: the original steps were lower, and the bases of the jambs of a door, opening upon them from

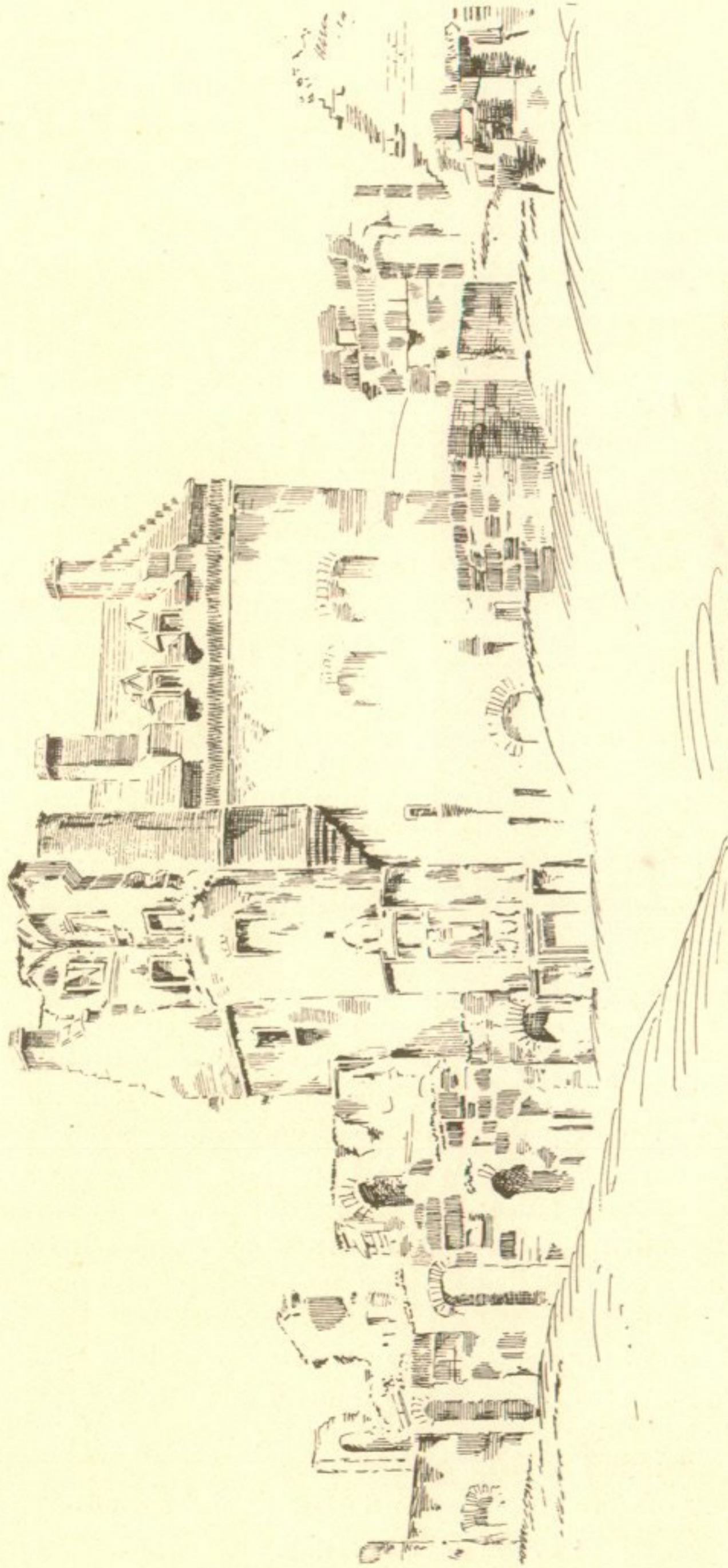


Fig. 10. North view of Huntly Castle, copied by the late Dr Thomas Ross, F.S.A.Scot., from an unpublished drawing by John Claude Nattes, dated 20th October 1799.

the passage, were exposed. These steps have been restored at the ancient level. A second gunloop (as shown on plan) was discovered in the dungeon, and both have been opened. The pieces fired through them must have been mounted on a timber framing, but evidently the arrangement did not find permanent favour, as both gunloops were latterly closed with grilles.

Passing up to the ground-floor level, a slop drain has been discovered in the kitchen, opening beside the fireplace. A blocked void on the opposite or courtyard side has been opened; it forms a double vent, the upper one a water-conduit sloping in, the lower a slop drain discharging out. On the first floor it was discovered, in the room in the round tower, that the present fireplace is an insertion, the jambs of an older and wider fireplace being found below. In the state-room on the second floor tamping operations disclosed a mural chamber east of the great fireplace. It had been blocked when the fireplace was inserted, and is now evidenced only by an elliptic relieving arch and by part of the threshold stone. During treatment the chamber was partly opened, and was found to be lined with white plaster. In the withdrawing-room on this floor the door on the left of the fireplace with medallion portraits¹ (fig. 11) is a late slap-through to give access to the garret of the west range of the quadrangle when the roof of this was raised (see *supra*, p. 151). The slap takes in the lower part of a former aumbry, corresponding in position to a similar aumbry at the other end of the room. Over the fireplace lintel was a moulded sconce for a light, which has been cloured away.

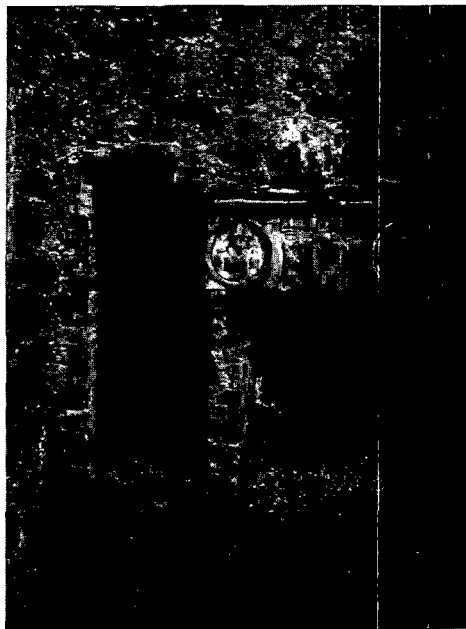


Fig. 11. Fireplace on second floor of "Palace."

At the south-east corner of the lower corbelled room above the main stair tower (see fig. 10) there has been a fireplace, of which the flue remains. Part of the lintel was found during treatment. This fireplace was subsequently turned into a mural press.

On the parapet of the great round tower the crowned female bust,

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 145.

mentioned in my former account,¹ has the name IVSTECIA incised beside it.

In cleaning the interior walls of the "palace" the last mouldering traces were laid bare of the painted decorations for which Huntly Castle was once renowned.² As far as possible these have been conserved. In the south window on the second floor of the great round tower a fragment of stucco shows the lower part of the figures of two greyhounds rampant, acting as supporters to a shield, the scroll below which partly remains. The painting is in brown and black on a yellow ground with a red border below. Similar painting exists in the three window recesses of the room below. In the south window the letters G. M. are traceable, with a geometrical pattern overhead.

More interesting than these poor remnants of a once far-famed "tinctured pomp" of heraldry, because more intimately revealing the homespun life of the old inhabitants of the castle, are the *graffiti* that have been discovered in considerable numbers on the plastered walls. The majority of these are in the long basement corridor. They include such diverse subjects as a cruise lamp, the dial of a clock, pavilion tents, a bull, men and women in sixteenth-century costume, and a fragmentary motto incised in large, not ill-formed, ligatured letters as follows: SCO ME THAT NOT SCHAME SWPPOIS. On the east wall of the withdrawing-room is a spirited sketch of a huntsman and hounds bringing down a deer.

Some interesting details about the arrangements of the "palace" prior to its partial destruction in 1594 are preserved in the curious tract entitled "The Maner of the Erle of Huntlies Death," describing the apoplectic stroke that carried off the fifth Earl on 20th October 1576.³ In it the "palace," as in other references of the same period (see *supra*, p. 139), is referred to as the "New Warke." We read of the "vter yeat, that is narrist the greine," where the Earl was playing "futball" when the fatal seizure struck him down. In the neighbourhood of the green was "ane peit-stake," against which he tried to support himself in his distress. His attendants carried him into the castle, and "buire him in to his owin chalmer, and laid him in his bed: quhilk chalmer was ane round within the grit chalmer of the New warke of Strabogie." We are to understand by this that the Earl's bedroom was a chamber in the great round south-western tower, and that it lay "within"—*i.e.* beyond (being entered through)—the great chamber. The great chamber is also referred to as the "chalmer of daice," and had two doors, the "chalmer durre," leading into Lord

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 139.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5.

³ *Richard Bannatyne's Memorials*, pp. 333-8.

Huntly's bedroom, and the "vtter chalmer durre," entering the great chamber, presumably from the hall. From this it would appear that the division into hall and great chamber, otherwise dining- and withdrawing-room, already existed in 1576, although the present partition dates from subsequently to the final reconstruction of 1602-7, as its impingement on an oriel window of that period clearly shows.¹ Elsewhere in the narrative the hall is described as immediately abutting on the "chalmer," so that a person passed directly from the one to the other. These ancient designations have been inserted in the plan at fig. 5, although the rooms themselves were of course reconstructed by the first Marquis thirty years afterwards. We further read of "ane chalmer, callid the laich chalmer, vnder the turne graice [spiral stair], quhilk quarter is direct foranent the auld hall"; and we are told that this "laich chalmer" could accommodate fourteen or sixteen men, and had a fireplace. At this point the narrative is not very clear, but the description now seems to be referring to the tower-house. The commencement of the spiral stair, and the "laich chalmer" (or lower private room) at its foot, were probably on the first floor of the "jam" or wing of the tower, and thus might correctly be described as "direct foranent" the hall, which would occupy its main portion at this level. We have also an allusion to the "gallerie of the New warke," to which the Earl's servitor "was gone vp . . . to bring down spicerie or some other geir for the kitchine." The gallery, which had windows, was evidently used as a store, and contained "ane coffer." Doubtless it was situated immediately under the roof, as at Earlshall and Crathes. In the final restoration it was absorbed into bed-chambers. The "chaipell" is also referred to, but without any indication of its whereabouts. It is mentioned frequently in other records, and was an important apartment, richly painted.² There does not seem to be any room for it in the "palace," at all events as last reconstructed: and the conjecture might be hazarded that it may have been the oblong room on the first floor of the range adjoining the "palace" to the eastward. This room is more or less oriented, measures 32 feet by 17 feet, and is separated from the "palace" by an ante-room. That it was an apartment of some importance is shown from the fact that a chase is provided in its walls for a wooden floor to be laid on top of the vaults underneath.³

¹ Cf. *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 137, and fig. 3.

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

³ Mr James S. Richardson, F.S.A.Scot., H.M. Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland, to whom I am indebted for much helpful criticism, has suggested that the building in the centre of the courtyard may at first have been the chapel, and that it was afterwards desecrated and turned into a stable.

It is no part of my purpose to describe the technical operations that have been conducted, with so much skill and insight, by H.M. Office of Works for the consolidation of the "New Warke of Strabogie"—assuredly one of the grandest and most interesting pieces of baronial architecture that Scotland boasts. I may refer, however, to the reconstruction, as far as the first-floor level, of the main newel stair, so that the "palace" is now again entered, in all befitting dignity, through the stately "frontispiece" which the first Marquis designed as a portal befitting such a "full fayre house."¹

THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AS NOW REVEALED.

With the knowledge now available it is possible to tabulate the development of Huntly Castle with greater accuracy and in ampler detail than when I wrote my former account nine years ago. Our amended version may be set forth as follows:—

(1) The original fortress, in the thirteenth century, known as the "peel of Strathbogie," was a mount-and-bailey timbered earthwork, apparently with a double *motte*.

(2) Perhaps about the end of the next century, after the final installation of the Gordons, there was built, in the bailey of this early castle, a massive tower-house on the L-plan.

(3) In 1452 the castle was burned by the Douglasses, and in the reconstruction set afoot thereafter, and continued through the lifetime of the first and second Earls—*i.e.* until the beginning of the sixteenth century—the principal feature was an entirely new and imposing building erected on the south side of the old bailey. This fifteenth-century edifice—known as the "new warke"—was designed on the "palatial" plan then coming into vogue, and consisted of a great hall, raised upon cellars, having a large round tower at its south-west corner. Of the original work the basement alone substantively remains. Contemporaneously with the "palace" a courtyard enclosure or barnkin came into being, of which the west front at all events was set at right angles to the "palace," and doubtless was linked up with the tower-house, known henceforth as the "greate olde tower."

(4) *Circa* 1553 the castle underwent an extensive reorganisation at the hands of the fourth Earl. At the time of its destruction in 1594 it was stated that the castle had taken fourteen years to build,² and this probably refers to the fourth Earl's operations. The whole of the

¹ A fine measured drawing of this "frontispiece," showing many details scarcely now identifiable, made by Mr Frank W. Troup, F.R.I.B.A., was published in the *Edinburgh Architectural Association Sketch Book*, New Series, vol. i. plate 50.

² *Records of Aboyne*, p. 521.

"palace," above its fifteenth-century basement, dates in substance from this period, although the upper floors and interiors generally were remodelled in 1602-7. As thus reconstructed, if not before, the "palace" had a wing or tower projecting to the north, in the position now occupied by the stair-tower of 1602.¹ At or about the same period, the old barmkin wall was superseded by a courtyard enclosed by consolidated ranges of building, the alignment of which was set obliquely to the "palace." Of this mid-sixteenth-century courtyard there remain the foundation of the west range, the bakehouse and brewhouse to the east of the "greate olde tower," the older foundations underlying the present east range, and the vaulted cellars of the south front, east of the "palace," in so far as these have not been reconstructed.²

In 1562, after the defeat and death of Huntly at Corrichie, the castle was pillaged by Queen Mary, and it has been said that the fabric underwent damage on that occasion: but I can find no contemporary account of any such mishandling, and no trace of it seems to be discernible in the building to-day.

(5) In 1594 the castle was dismantled by James VI., gunpowder and fire being called in to his aid, so that Carey could report to Cecil, on 18th November 1594, that "the castle and palace of Strathbogie is clean cast down and burnt."³ No doubt the extensive traces of burning found over great parts of the castle area during the excavations are a memorial of this catastrophe. The "greate olde tower" was blown up; the "palace" was severely handled, the whole of its north-east wing or tower being removed; the courtyard buildings were also "hocked," except the brewhouse and bakehouse on the north side and part of the cellarage prolonging the "palace" eastward.

(6) In 1602-7 the castle was restored. The work of this period in the "palace" comprises (a) the staircase tower with its "frontispiece" and the thin wall adjoining it westward;⁴ (b) the remodelling of its upper floors, including the building of the great oriel windows; (c) the raising of the roof, and other alterations connected therewith, as detailed above; (d) the conversion of the vaulted apartments on its ground floor (except the kitchen) into living-rooms; and (e) the decorating of its interiors.

(7) Subsequent work in the seventeenth century included the present partition of the hall in the "palace"; the restoration of the west courtyard range, with heightened roof; the building of the present east range, on a rectangular alignment; and the erection of the piazza

¹ See *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 159.

² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³ Tytler, *History of Scotland*, ed. 1864, vol. iv. p. 225.

⁴ See *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 159, and fig. 5.

east of the "palace." These operations may be correlated with the building work that we know was going on in 1633, 1639, and 1643.¹

RELICS FOUND DURING THE EXCAVATIONS.

A large number of carved and moulded fragments were recovered, of which the following are the most important:—

Two grotesque gargoyles in the form of demons' heads.

Corbel mask in the form of a grotesque dog's head (not a gargoyle).

Body and lower limbs, in two parts, of a griffin, sitting on his hind legs on a pedestal. His forelegs grasp a shield of florid Renaissance design, with scrolled upper and lower borders. The left leg is extended down the shield, the right is crossed over the body and grasps the upper part of the shield with its talons. The neck and wings are covered with feathers, and the tail curls over the back. The height of this fine fragment is about 2 feet 7 inches.

Fragment of the lower part of the body of a similar griffin.

Bearded male head, in helmet with visor up.

Portion of a statue showing left shoulder, arm, and hand, all nude. The hand grasps drapery caught up round the waist.

Part of side, arms, and neck of a statue.

Fragment of an armorial shield showing bearings identical with those of the upper sinister quarter of the coat-of-arms of the first Marquis over the great door.

Many architectural details, including stringcourses, finials, mullions, an octagonal shaft and capital, a Corinthian capital, and other pieces of early seventeenth-century carved work.

A pavement block of white marble, $5\frac{2}{5}$ inches square and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.

Various pieces of thick glazed tiles of seventeenth-century date, mostly red with a green glaze.

Fragments of a plaster cornice of the same pattern as that still existing in the withdrawing-room.

Among the minor relics found may be mentioned the following: cannon balls in stone and iron; numerous shards of pottery, including both native and foreign wares, and ranging from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century; fragments of glass, including bases of bottles, part of a wine glass, and pieces of plain window glazing; a silver coin of Charles I. and a penny dated 1797.

No account of the work accomplished at Huntly Castle would be complete without a reference to the generous gift, made in September

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. p. 161.

160 PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY, FEBRUARY 13, 1933.

1925 by Mr (now Sir) Leybourne F. W. Davidson of Huntly Lodge, who presented to the nation eight acres of land surrounding the castle, including the fine avenue by which it is approached from the Gordon Schools. Few of our ancient Scottish castles enjoy a more pleasant natural setting, and the munificence of Sir Leybourne Davidson has secured this for all time.
