

DRUMINNOR, FORMERLY CASTLE FORBES:  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ORIGINAL BUILDING  
OF A MID-FIFTEENTH-CENTURY PALACE HOUSE

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FROM at least 1270 Druminnor was the seat of the ancient family of Forbes whose head is the holder of the premier barony of Scotland. It remained in the family, passing always in the direct male line until 1770. In that year the deterioration of the family finances came to a head and James, 17th Lord Forbes, was forced to sell the estates. It was intended that the Kearn portion of the estates should be preserved for the family, for, although not the most valuable, on it stood Druminnor, the ancient Duthus. The purchaser was John Forbes of Newe but instead of holding it on behalf of the family he himself was forced through financial troubles to sell, and it passed to his son-in-law, Robert Grant of Rothemaise. It remained in the Grant family for nearly two hundred years, passing twice through the female line, until the estate was finally broken up in 1954. Druminnor was then acquired by the late the Hon. Margaret Forbes-Sempill who was descended in the fifteenth generation from Alexander, 1st Lord Forbes, the original builder; and it is entirely due to her enthusiasm and hard work that the present investigation has been possible.

*Period I (c. 1271-2)*

Although tradition ascribes the first building of Druminnor to Ochonochar, the third of that name, some time before A.D. 1000, the earliest date that can be cited as a period of likely building in this area is 1271-2, when, according to John Skene, Alexander III granted to Duncan Forbes the lands and tenements of Forbes and Kearn.<sup>1</sup> This is the first known charter in the name of Forbes and was in the hands of the family until 1730. Subsequent to this date it was lost, and is now represented by a late sixteenth-century copy made apparently for John, 8th Lord Forbes, some time before 1593.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever may have existed before, by 1300 it is probably safe to assume that Druminnor took the form of a simple earth and timber castle and stood about a mile and a half to the N. of the present building.

The name 'Druminnor', deriving from the Celtic, and meaning, 'Ridge of the Confluence', refers to the ridge between the Kearn Burn and Bogie Water. Whilst this is not particularly applicable to the present site it is appropriate to the area known as Castlehill. The farm of this name stands about a quarter of a mile S. of the junction of these two streams, but at the point of confluence there is a mound

<sup>1</sup> Skene, *Antiquities*, iv, 372.

<sup>2</sup> This copy formed the first item in the *Registrum de Forbes* and is as follows:

'John, Lord Forbes (the 8th) for verification of ye ancientie of his house, produceis ane charter granted be King Alexander to Duncan of Forbes, his predecessor, of all and hail ye landis of Forbes and Kearn. To be haldin immediatlie of ye said King Alexander and his successors. In ane frie baronie cum socco et sacca, furca et fossa, etc. The quilk charter is daited the XXIII year of the said King Alex. his Rigne, qlk was in ye yeir of god 1272.' (Forbes Charter Chest.)

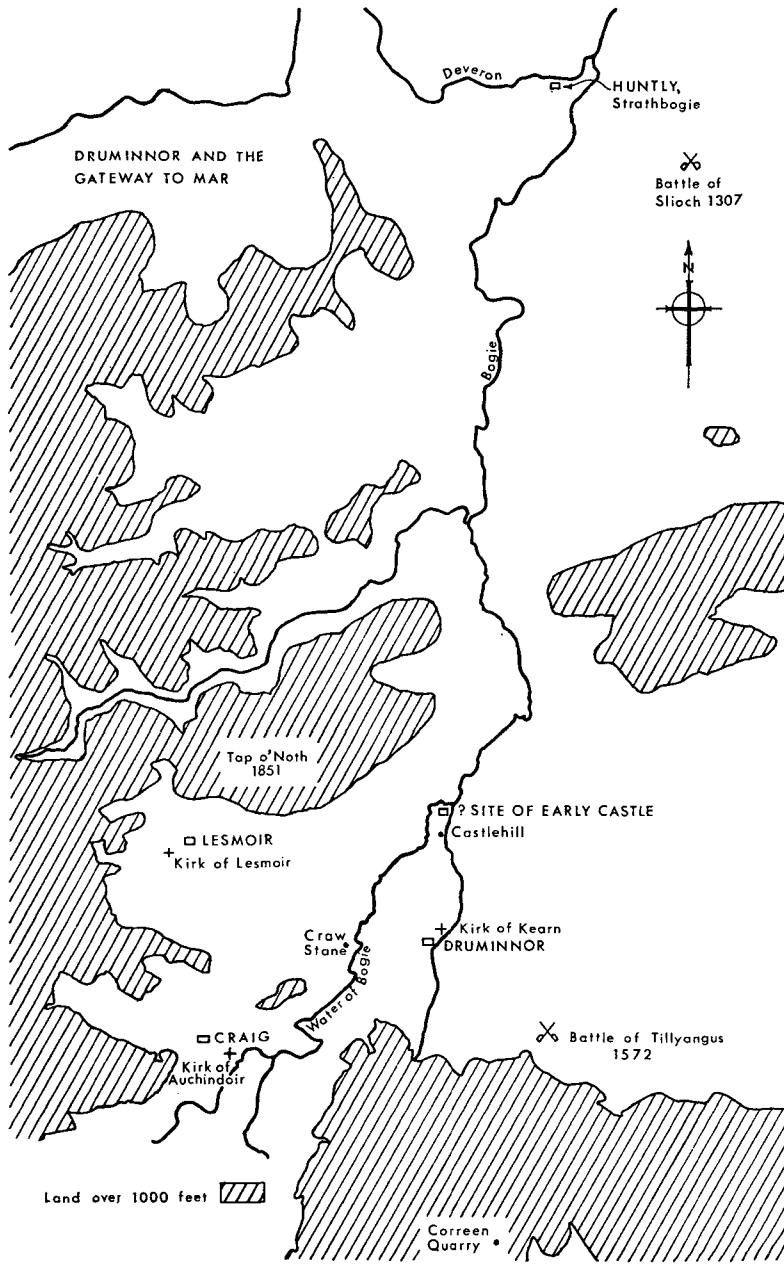


FIG. 1. Location map. (Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. = 1 mile)

which, allowing for the erosion of time, and the plough, could indicate the remains of a simple earthen castle – but until a proper investigation of the site has been made, it is impossible to be more definite.

It is interesting, however, to note that in a fresh charter of 1532<sup>1</sup> which was granted to John, 6th Lord Forbes, amongst the places named is a 'Castlehill', indicating that the tradition connecting this site with a castle is not a recent one, and it is also referred to in the charter granted in 1673<sup>2</sup> by Charles II to William, 12th Lord Forbes.

*Period 2 (c. 1440–80)*

Some time in the first half of the fifteenth century it seems that it was decided to rebuild Druminnor in a style more in keeping with the pretensions of the family and the advancing standards of the times.

Instead of rebuilding on the old site, which was low lying, unsheltered and confined by the two streams, a completely fresh start was made about a mile and a half away, where a sheltered position, on level ground facing SE. across the Kearn Burn, was chosen.

How much of the existing building dates from this period is still difficult to decide, but if, as seems likely, the two lower floors and parts of the first and second floors do, then the importance of Druminnor as a 'palace' building, ante-dating Huntly by some twelve years, must be considered.

There are two building documents on which we rely for what we know of the building work being done at Druminnor during the fifteenth century. In addition to these, there are the Bill of Divorce (with its account of the arrangement of rooms on the principal floor at Druminnor) brought, in 1573, by the Master of Forbes against his wife, Margaret Gordon, and John Leyden's description of 1800.

Taking them in order we have:

1. *4th July 1440*

A memorandum that John Kemlock and William of Ennerkype have been paid one hundred and fifty marks out of two hundred marks due for the building of Druminnor. This could indicate that the remaining fifty marks were a form of retention money. If this is so, and means that work was not started until the second half of 1440, then the dating of the 1456 document does not indicate an excessive time-lag as would be the case were 1440 the date of the completion, and not the commencement, of the work.<sup>3</sup>

2. *4th May 1456*

A licence granted by James II at Brechin to James, 2nd Lord Forbes, for the building of the tower or fortalice of Druminnor, commonly called Forbes, and the

<sup>1</sup> Charter under the Great Seal, 18th July 1532. (Forbes Papers.)

<sup>2</sup> 'A Charter to William, 12th Lord Forbes, containing a Novo Damus of the Whole Baronie of Forbes. . . . Given at the Court of Whitehall the 6th day of June 1673 and of his Majestie's reign the 25th year.' (Forbes Papers.)

<sup>3</sup> Forbes Papers, quoted in Appendix I.

fortification of the same with walls, ditches and doors of iron and the construction of a 'decorative and defensive superstructure'.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. 24th June 1573

Describing the misconduct of the Mistress of Forbes with Patrick Hepburn at Druminnor at various times between 1571 and 1573, it is stated that when at Druminnor . . . 'he lay in the uter chalmer within the hall, nixt to the said Margratis chalmer qukerin he might have enterit at his plesir he beand soletar within the said uter chalmer and the hall dour steiket upone hime within . . .'.<sup>2</sup>

### 4. 1800

From *Journal of a Tour in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland* by John Leyden.

'I saw the ruins of Druminnor tower, which the proprietor had demolished. The wall is about nine feet thick and the cement is exceedingly strong. It consists of a square tower united to a half square and which contains the staircase.'

From these extracts it would appear that between 1440 and 1456 a major stone building was in course of erection at Druminnor; that in 1573, two years after it has generally been accepted that the castle had been destroyed, it was perfectly habitable and that there was a third main room on the first floor, which has since disappeared, probably in the demolition recorded by Leyden.

It is now necessary to pass to the historical and architectural evidence and to the parallels afforded by Huntly Castle.

We know that building operations must have started at Druminnor in 1440, or early in 1441, and that work was still going on sixteen years later when the licence to fortify was granted. It is, of course, possible that the licence may have been granted retrospectively, the work already having been finished, but it is not likely that work was delayed until the licence was granted. At any rate, it seems certain that work was going on from 1440 until 1456, by which date it was probably nearing completion.

In 1452, when Lord Huntly was fighting on the King's behalf in the civil war following the murder of Lord Douglas, the Earl of Moray descended on the Gordon lands in Strathbogie and destroyed their old tower. Rebuilding seems to have started c. 1455 and is supposed to have been completed sometime after 1470 by the second Earl.

It is considered by some that Druminnor was built and enlarged by the Forbes in an attempt to emulate the greater splendours of their neighbours at Huntly, but I think it is more likely that it was Druminnor that served as a model for Huntly, and that the greater splendour of the latter was due to the greater wealth of the House of Gordon.

Many authorities, including Dr Douglas Simpson, consider that, in spite of

<sup>1</sup> Forbes Papers, quoted in Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> Process for divorce, John Forbes and Magaret Gordon, drawn up by Mr Robert Maitland, Dean of Aberdeen; quoted in Appendix III.

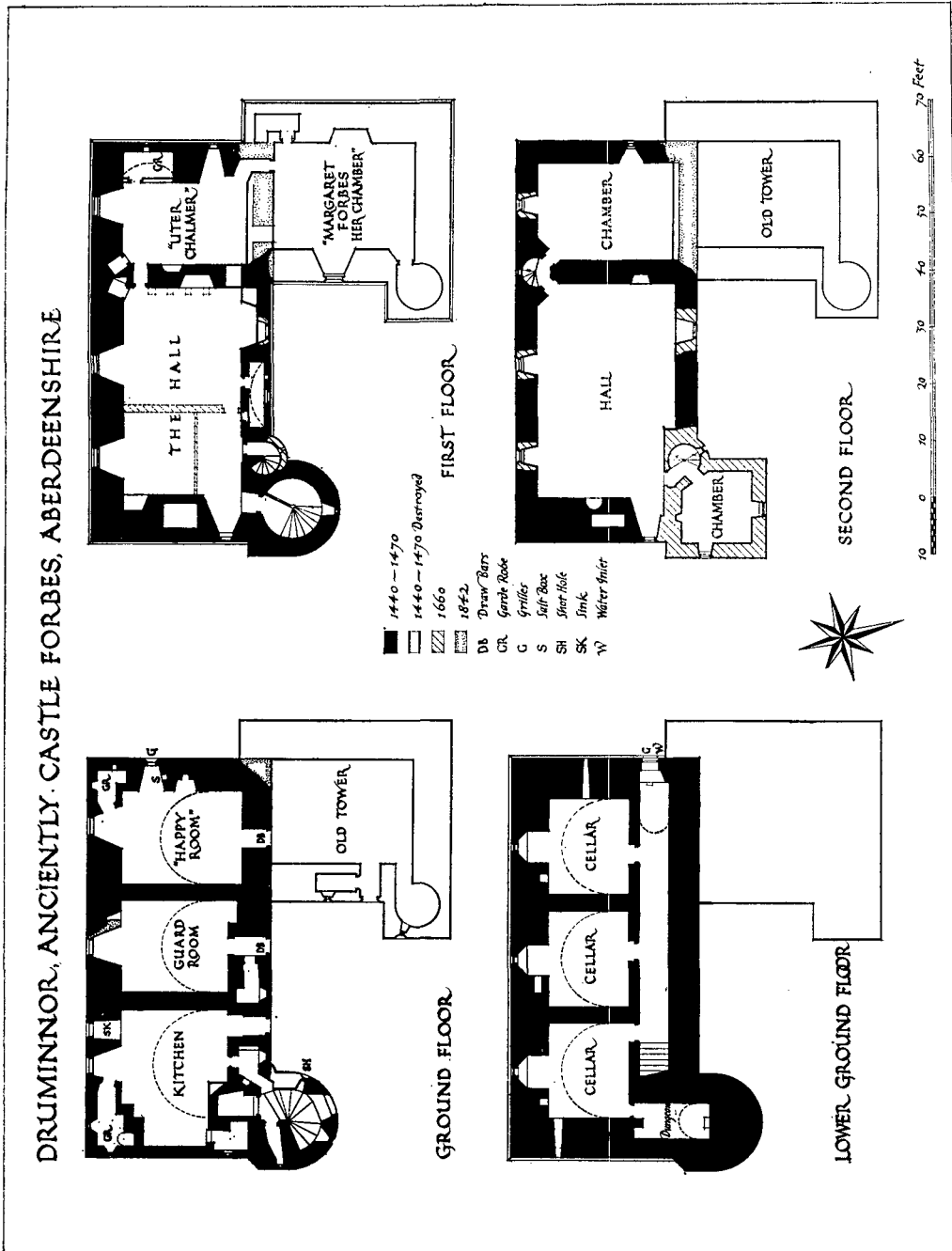


FIG. 2

later alterations and additions to the upper floors, the lower floors at Huntly are basically the work of the 1455-70 period. We also know that a Sir John Kemlock, or 'of' Kemlock, was in the service of Lord Huntly as chaplain in 1474; possibly he was the son of the John Kemlock who built Druminnor.

From this, the following facts would seem to emerge: Druminnor was building for about sixteen years from 1440 to 1456; secondly when his own castle needed rebuilding after 1452, Lord Huntly commissioned the architect of the nearly finished Druminnor to design and erect a new house at Strathbogie modelled closely on that of Lord Forbes, whose son, the Master, had married Huntly's daughter.

The planning of the two main blocks is remarkably close, and in dimensions they are almost identical, Huntly being about 4 ft. greater each way. The only striking dissimilarities being the better circulation on the ground floor at Huntly and the positioning of the towers. At Druminnor they were not placed diagonally to give what later becomes the standard 'Z' plan (fig. 2 and Pl. X).

It certainly seems unlikely that, because of the work necessitated at Huntly after 1452, Lord Forbes should have embarked on rebuilding his own house, which would have then only just been finished. One point, however, which remains unsolved is this; did Druminnor start in 1440 as a tower to which a palace house was added in the course of building, or was it planned from the beginning as a tower and palace house. Judging by the architectural evidence, it would seem that, if not planned as such initially, the decision to make the alterations was taken very early on in building, so that the two parts were well integrated. In any case, I am quite convinced that Druminnor had become a 'palace' house by 1452, so that it, in fact, served as a model for Kemlock's later work at Huntly, and the 1456 licence was largely to regularise work which had already been completed or was in hand, and did not refer to a second building.

The later alterations and additions to Druminnor have confused the picture to a considerable extent, and most of the work above the first-floor level contains little that can be dated earlier than 1577 with any certainty.

What exactly was done then is not at all clear, but probably consisted of purely decorative and superficial work. In fact, almost the only evidence for assuming anything was done, has been the date carved on a panel by the main door, to which I will refer later, and which is highly suspect.

From the Bill of Divorce of 1573 it is quite clear that the main house was perfectly habitable between 1571 and 1573, when, by tradition, it had been sacked and destroyed in the former year. Bearing in mind that Patrick Hepburn, the lover of Mistress Forbes, was also the bastard of Bishop Hepburn, at whose palace of Spynie the Master of Forbes was held prisoner from 1571 until 1573, and that Margaret Forbes was the daughter of Lord Huntly, and sister of Adam Gordon, who sacked Druminnor, it would appear that such sack as there was, was carried out with due regard to the lady's convenience.

Certainly, no mention is made of Druminnor, in a long document from the Forbes collection in the Record Office,<sup>1</sup> written between 1596 and 1600, in which

<sup>1</sup> Forbes Papers. No. 1091.

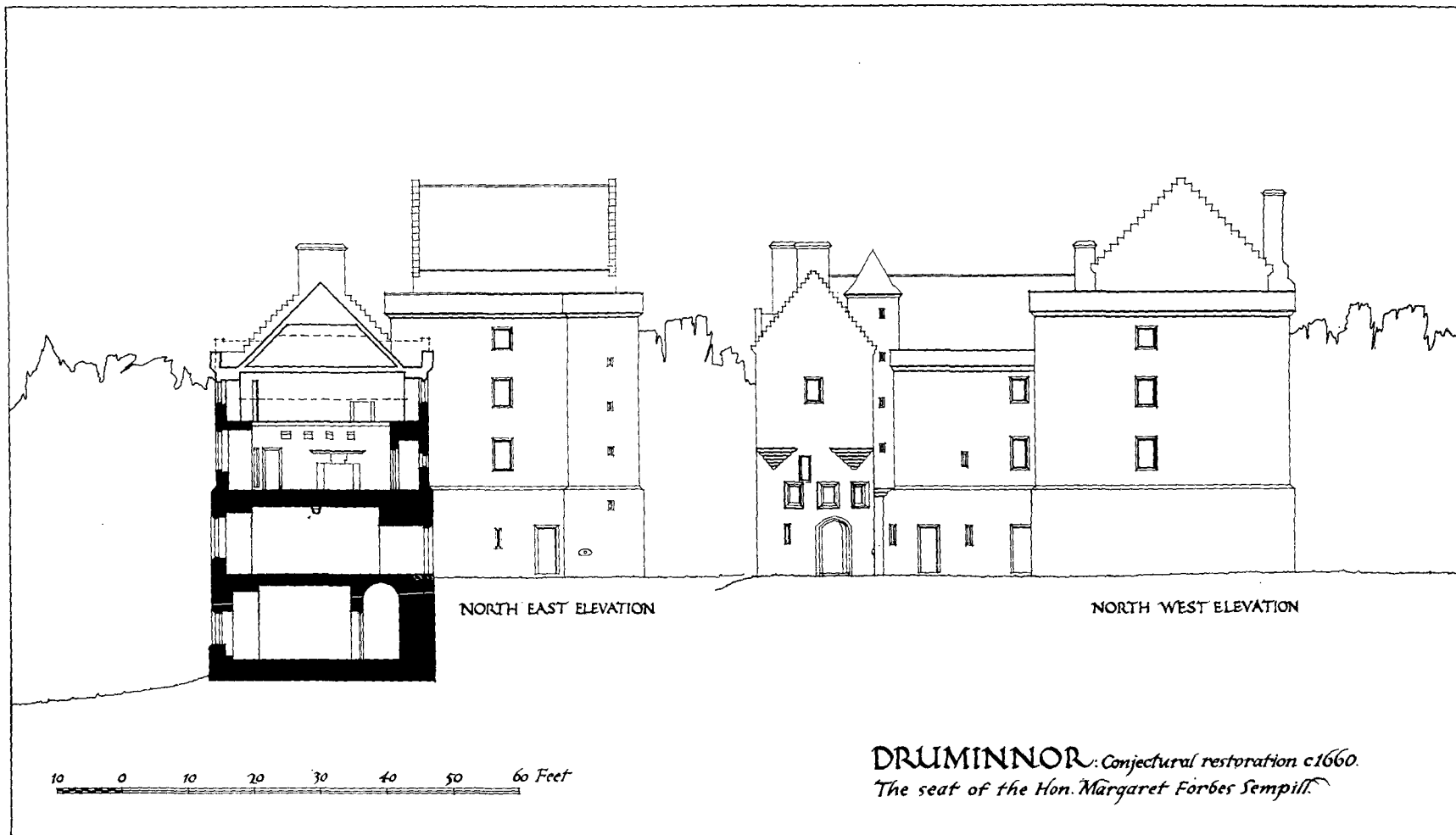


FIG. 3

John, 8th Lord Forbes, shows the shifts to which he was put to raise the money because of the expenses and losses caused by Gordons since the troubles of 1571. This is particularly interesting because there is considerable detail given of the work being carried out at the Forbes town house in Aberdeen and at Putachie Castle. It seems that damage at Druminnor was negligible and certainly not to the main house.

It would appear, therefore, that it was the middle of the seventeenth century that saw drastic alterations. Judging by a date carved in the Great Hall, these seem to have taken place *c.* 1660 when the upper floors were completely remodelled, the Great Hall sub-divided, and the dormer windows introduced. Possibly about this time, the square tower went out of use and became ruinous – thus necessitating the division of the Great Hall to gain extra accommodation. The Barony Courts which had, until now, been held in what was variously described as the ‘Great Hall’, ‘Old Hall’, and ‘Tower’ of Druminnor, ceased, and there are no records of any being held after 1670. Whether the sub-division of the hall led to the cessation of the courts, or vice versa, it is impossible to say. The embarrassment of the family estates would account for this contraction of style at Druminnor, and for the failure to rehabilitate the ruinous tower.

From the middle of the seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth, nothing seems to have happened to Druminnor. In 1770 it passed from the possession of James, 17th Lord Forbes, to John Forbes of Newe, who, in turn, was obliged to convey the estate to his son-in-law Robert Grant of Rothmaise, during whose occupation the ruined tower, according to John Leyden, was demolished *c.* 1795–1800. About fifteen years later a ‘gothic villa’, designed by Archibald Simpson, was erected on the site of the old tower. This was demolished in 1960. In 1840 Robert Grant made Druminnor over to his daughter, Elizabeth Foulerton, and in 1843 extensive alterations were made in the old part of the house. All the rooms were lined with lath and plaster on heavy studding, and in fixing the studding, a considerable amount of damage was done, both to the stone work and to the old plaster which was badly shattered. Extra partitions were introduced, and the ceiling level over the Hall was raised with the consequent loss of the garret floor and upper chamber in the stair tower.

Further damage was suffered when, to accommodate plumbing for bathrooms and lavatories, the old walls were drastically cut about.

Turning now to the surviving architectural evidence of the early building and the vanished tower, a number of points have emerged.

Firstly, we have a very fine series of masons’ marks throughout the two lower floors and on the newel of the main staircase, which make it quite clear that these parts of the house are all of the same build, and all the arrises on which this series are found are bevelled in the manner common to the fifteenth century. It is of particular importance that one is to be seen on the bevelled head of the remains of the pointed doorway which has been exposed between the main staircase and the kitchen servery, as this shows the original circulation between the Hall and kitchen.

The lower floor is the least altered of all. It consists of three vaulted cellars, pentered from a vaulted assage. At one end are the stairs, and at the other, a



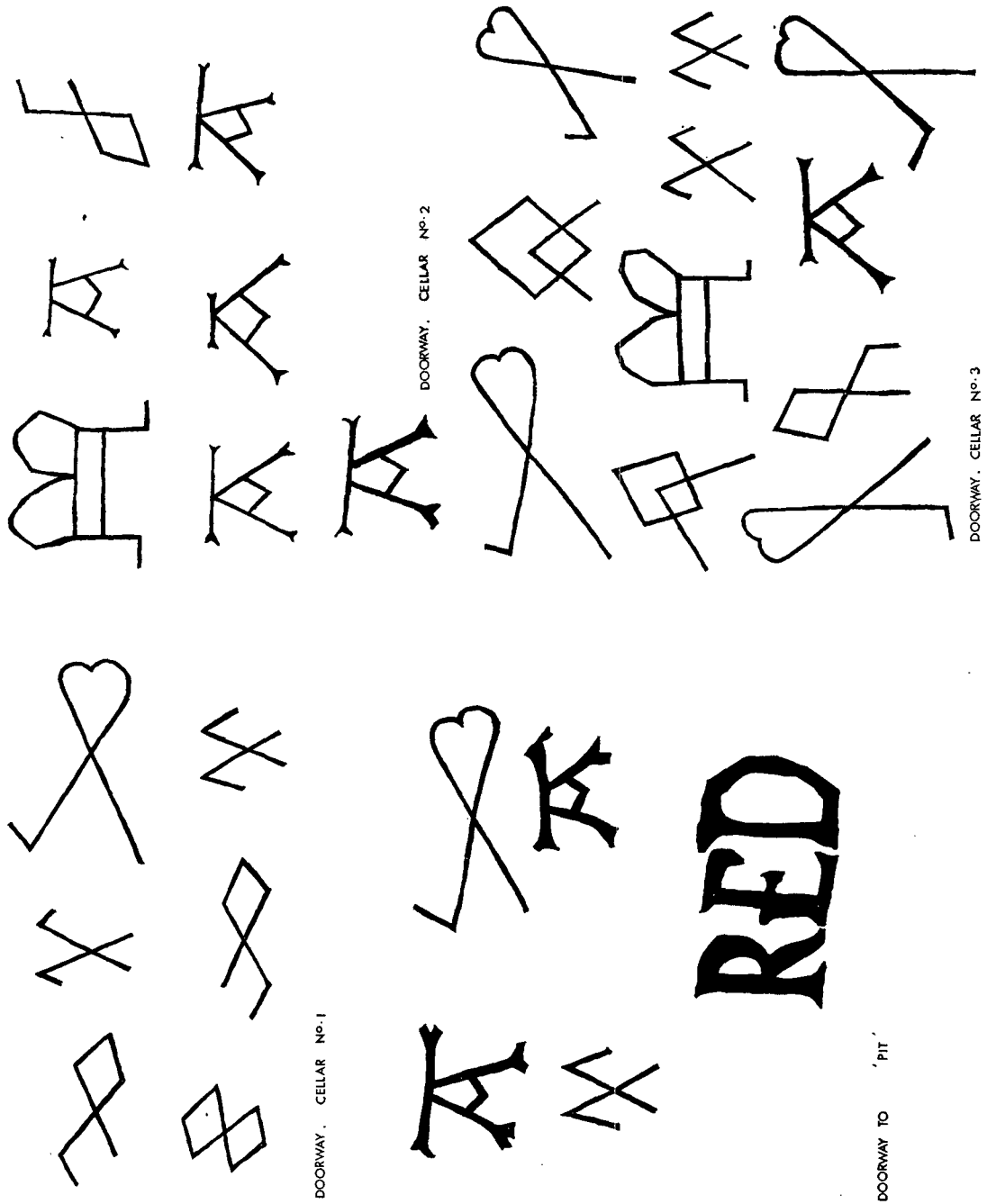


Fig. 4. Masons' marks at Drumminor. Scale 1/2

window with its grille as at Huntly. Beneath the window is the water intake. This apparently was fed by means of conduit from a spring to the NW. of the castle. There is no sign of a well within the house. Each of the end cellars has a stone outlet sluice into which the latrine shafts empty from above. Opening off the eastern cellar is the prison – a fair sized vaulted room with no direct access to the air. It has been a coal cellar, and has lost one side of its doorway, its stone shelf and latrine.

All the doorways in the cellarage are square headed with bevelled arrises, and bear a good selection of masons' marks (fig. 4).

No remains of the cellarage of the tower have been discovered, but these, if existing, would have been destroyed to make way for the basement and foundations of the nineteenth-century house.

Externally, the most important features at this level are at the NW. corner – where the junction with the vanished tower can be seen quite clearly. The line is still visible beside the barred window which lights the cellar passage. Immediately below this window is the stone water-inlet. This and the window were not discovered until the demolition of Simpson's building by which they were hidden, as was the splayed plinth course. After the demolition of the old tower this corner of the castle was harled, and in spite of Simpson's work, much of this harling remained under the later studding.

The ground floor shows a number of interesting features which came to light during the recent work. This floor contains the main staircase in its round tower and three vaulted rooms. A curious point is that this floor appears to have been designed from the beginning as living, and not storage, or purely service, accommodation.

The entrance – an extremely handsome moulded doorway with a five-sided head, opens directly on to the main staircase. The yett is not the original one and is said to have been stolen from the Gordons at Craig, but if from a Gordon stronghold it would more likely have been Lesmoir.

Due to Simpson's introduction of a corridor against the side of the house, the original circulation from the ground to first floor was not immediately clear, but during exploratory work the remains of a pointed opening between the stairs and the kitchen was found – which, judging from the marks on the bevelled arris, is an original, and not an inserted feature.

The kitchen produced a number of discoveries – behind a nineteenth-century range was found the original fireplace some 5 ft. deep by 11 ft. across, with a lum to correspond. To one side of the hearth was found an eighteenth-century brick oven; and when this was cleared away, it was seen to have filled the bottom of a small closet with a blocked window – probably originally used as a spice and curing room. On the other side of the fireplace is another closet with a latrine; there is also a sluice through to it from the kitchen, but unfortunately the baffle stones to control the flow have been broken (Pl. XI, 2).

The present window embrasure is a later enlargement, but next to it was found a smaller window and a stone slop sink with its outlet.

Between the kitchen and the stairs is a servery and there is also access to the courtyard through a small lobby.

In common with the other ground-floor rooms, there is, in the centre of the vault, a carved stone candelabra boss.

The central room is entered from the courtyard through a small lobby with a flanking closet or porter's room. This room is devoid of features, save for the candelabra boss and the remains of a destroyed window embrasure which, luckily, bears some masons' marks of the group found elsewhere on this floor. Immediately to the right on entering is a recess, which originally may have contained the fireplace – but the flue would have been destroyed in the seventeenth-century alterations.

In this room when the laths and studding were removed were found a number of pencilled marks dating from the alterations of 1843. Most of them are indecipherable, but the dates are clear, as well as the two last lines of one piece of doggerel which run,

‘And learn to crack such tyranny  
As stains the door of industry.’

The remaining room is known as the ‘Happy Room’ from an inscription cut into the chimney stone under the plaster (Pl. XI, 1).

This room differs from the other two ground-floor rooms in that it appears to have always been entered from another apartment. There is no lobby, the door opening directly into the room and the wall not being thick enough to contain a flanking closet. It is the original doorway, as can be seen from the check and chamfer which have been largely destroyed. This indicates clearly to my mind that the vanished tower and the palace block were designed in conjunction with each other.

Within the ‘Happy Room’ are a garde-robe off the window embrasure with the slots for the latrine seat. The window embrasure itself has been enlarged. In the embrasure beside the fireplace is a small stone ‘salt cupboard’ of which the door is missing, and the small window here retains its grille. Like most of the old window openings, it was designed to be glazed in its upper parts, but secured by shutters in the lower part.

Over the fireplace are the damaged remains of a moulded stone string. It must once have been an extremely handsome room. Originally it was not plastered, but limewashed, as were all the ground-floor rooms.

The doorways to all three ground-floor rooms retain their original draw-bar holes.

Another point which emerged during clearance was the presence of a shot-loop in the stair tower. Due to its position, it would appear to be completely useless as it covers nothing now – if, however, it was designed in relation to the doorway in the old tower, it not only makes sense, but pinpoints the entrance to the vanished building.

The main staircase, which is plain but well proportioned, with a radius of 5 ft. 6 in., rises to the entrance of the Great Hall. It is covered by a shallow stone vault and has a good seventeenth-century newel and balustrade at the stair head. The dating of the staircase is something of a problem. The masons' marks which appear on the newel indicate that it belongs to the same period as the two lower floors, but the junction of the tread with the newel suggests a date in the sixteenth or seventeenth

century. Instead of running tangentially to the newel, as was customary in earlier work, the face of each tread is returned to meet the newel as a radius. This is generally taken as a useful date-aid. As there are no signs of any major rebuilding here, it was, at first, difficult to reconcile these apparent contradictions, but once the staircase had been completely stripped of plaster, an explanation became apparent. The level of each tread is an inch lower than the joint between the stone out of which it is formed and its neighbour. This is true at the newel, the wall-bedding and beneath the next ascending step. The implication is that the stairs had become worn and that instead of patching, they were recut *in situ*, and that the masons remodelled the newel junction in the current mode (fig. 5).

In England the cut-back junction between the tread and newel was, however, in use *c.* 1440 and is well shown in the great staircase at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, which was in building at this date.

The first and second floors have suffered terribly at the hands of the improvers. Originally it would seem that the first floor was designed as a suite of Hall, Fore Chamber and Chamber, with a connecting Chamber on the second floor of the Tower. This form of plan can be seen in the ruined castles of Muness and Notland. The second floor consisted then of a separate Hall and Chamber reached from the first-floor Hall. This suggests that either the main suite was designed as family accommodation with guest quarters on the upper floor, or that the first-floor rooms were the Lord's rooms, whilst those on the upper floor formed a 'flat' for the Master.

The seventeenth-century alterations divided both the halls into smaller rooms, whilst those of the nineteenth century totally destroyed the internal arrangements of the upper floors.

With the demolition of the seventeenth-century cross-wall, the Great Hall has resumed something of its fifteenth-century aspect. The two great window embrasures are original and still have their plastered reveals, which are checked to show the dressed stonework of the arrises. Where they were heightened to accord with the raised ceiling and larger windows, the wall was made up with rough rubble.

On the N. side of the hall is a long vaulted closet, similar to the one at Huntly. This has been damaged in the interests of plumbing and the floor has disappeared. When the hall was divided, a hatch was made out of reused stones so that this closet could be used as a service room, between the stairs and the large inner room.

There are now four fireplaces in the hall. The first, dating from the nineteenth century, in the middle of the E. wall opening straight into the kitchen chimney. The second is in the SE. corner and was finally blocked at the time the first was made. Before then it had been contracted at least three times. It may have started life as a small hearth at the 'screens' end of the hall, where supplementary cooking and warming could be done, but from its position immediately above the kitchen sluices and drains, it is possible that it was originally designed as a lavatory, and that its change may have been due to the impossibility of keeping smells from the kitchen drains from rising into the hall.

The main fireplace, much mutilated, is now in the W. wall at the dais end of the hall. This dates from the seventeenth-century alteration; beside it is the nineteenth-

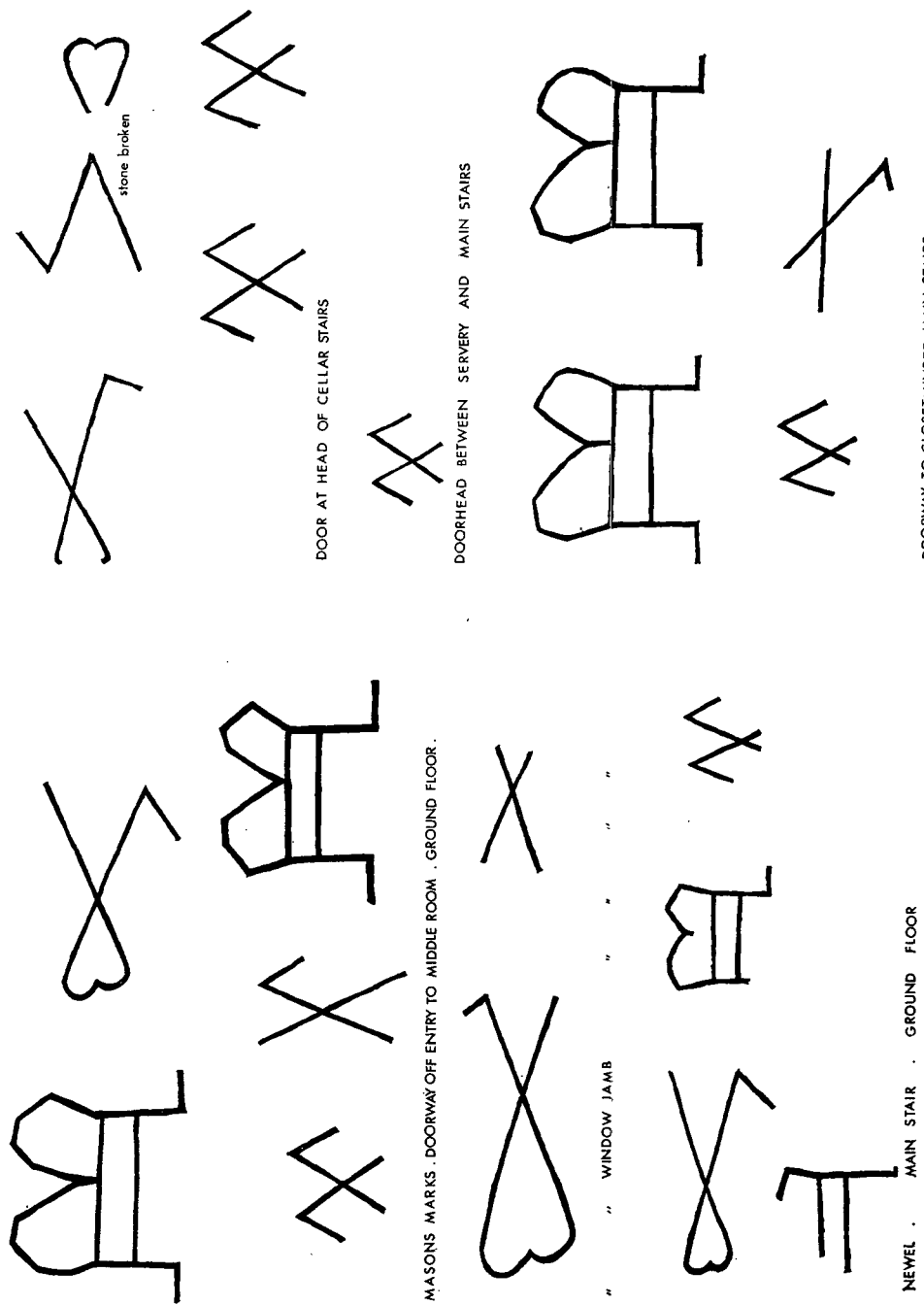


Fig. 5. Masons' marks at Drumminor. Scale 1/4

century fireplace, its flue leading into the old flue. The original fireplace was 6 ft. 6 in. wide at the opening, with a depth somewhere in the region of 2 ft. One jamb is still intact, and the great central keystone carved with the date 1660 and the initials of William, Master of Forbes, and Jean Campbell, his wife, is in its original position with traces of a deep string or shelf over it. The whole is in a close grained red freestone and of very simple design.<sup>1</sup>

The original great fireplace may have been in the N. wall, as it still is at Huntly. The wall here has been much altered and windows inserted – this became necessary when the Hall was divided – and parts of the wall give an indication that the stones have been subjected to extreme heat.

The original level of the floor above can still be made out – the feet of some of the joists are left in the E. wall, and in the W. wall over the fire are the remains of the stone corbels which carried the wall beam. These again suggest an attempt to dignify the dais end. In the SW. corner are two doorways, one undamaged, giving on to the circular stair in the thickness of the wall leading to the upper hall and chambers, the other damaged, to the fore chamber or, to use the words of the Bill of Divorce, 'the uter chalmer within the hall'.

In the NE. corner a small hallway was formed in the seventeenth-century alterations from which a turret stair opens. This room was plastered and a simple skirting and chair rail were painted on the plaster. The skirting and rail were in dark indigo, the intervening dado in a lighter shade, and the wall above white. Unfortunately, when wedges were driven into the walls for fixing the studs, the plaster was badly shattered. There were traces of this very simple treatment elsewhere on this and the next floor.

The fore chamber has suffered even more than the Hall – as late as the early years of this century the garderobe was destroyed to make way for a small bathroom, but fortunately the original fireplace remains in the E. wall.

A curious feature is what could be a 'safe' formed in the wall under the stair leading to the upper hall. This is partly lit by a shot hold. This may be a later reuse of a stone carved with three small grouped shot holes similar to those that can be seen at Fordyce.

Although almost the whole of the NW. side of this room has been rebuilt in conjunction with Simpson's work there is the trace of a splayed opening in the NW. corner. This makes no sense whatsoever, unless it is the remains of a doorway through to the other tower – as the Bill of Divorcement says, 'the uter chalmer within the hall nixt to the said Margaritis chalmer wherein he myt hav enterit at his plesir he beand soleter within the said uter chalmer and the hall dour steikit upone hime within'.

The floor above falls into two parts. Firstly the hall and chamber reached by the small stair in the wall. From the position of the banister sockets and the lower parts of the doors, it is clear that the staircase ascended no higher than this level.

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this, the keystone has, unfortunately, been moved to the centre of the nineteenth-century fireplace in the same wall. This was a compromise between historical accuracy, and the impossibility of bringing the original fireplace back into use.

The door at the foot could be bolted from within, as could the two doors at its head. In both these rooms there are remains of fireplaces and window openings which disappeared in the 1843 alterations – the new floor level cutting across them, whilst the raised ceiling level cuts across the garret windows.

The other part of this upper floor is that in the tower above the main stairs. This is reached by a turret stair in the angle between the stair tower and the hall. Below this turret – which seems to be post-1571 – there are traces of earlier work. The masonry is of coursed and squared stones, as distinct from rubble, and is of a different radius to that above.

From the Great Hall this stair gives access to a square chamber in the cap house over the main stairs. When in the 1843 alterations the ceiling of this room was raised, the room above went out of use.<sup>1</sup> In the inventory of 1683, reference is made to the 'high school'. It is likely that this may have been this upper room. When removing some of the plaster, a number of graffiti were discovered by the fireplace – these include a heart, a dog breathing a cloud, another dog being hung, a hare, a heart, a bird, two Roman heads with laurel wreaths, and the date 1731. One wonders which particular pet's death is commemorated here.

On the entrance tower are three coats of arms. The centre one, which is most worn, appears to be the oldest and is in red freestone, is that of William, Master of Forbes; that to the left, which is of coreen stone painted to resemble red freestone, is of William, 7th Lord Forbes and his wife, Elizabeth Keith, and bears the date 1577; that to the right is of Jean Campbell of Calder, Mistress of Forbes (1648–60), and is of white freestone, again painted to resemble the red freestone.

The arms dated 1577 have always been taken to indicate the date of the rebuilding, but they now can be seen to be an insertion into a red freestone surround. If, therefore, the carved date is of the time it claims, then the surround into which it is fitted must be older.

The central and oldest of the three coats is, unfortunately, undated, but it must belong to a period when the Master of Forbes was named William. This could have been before the succession of William, 3rd Lord Forbes in 1461 – that is to say, during the period of building of the main tower; between 1513 and 1547 before the succession of William, 7th Lord Forbes; or between 1620 and 1672, before the succession of William, 12th Lord Forbes.

Both the first and last of these fit periods when we know there to have been building activity at Druminnor. We have no knowledge or evidence of work being done between 1513 and 1547, so we can discount the work as having been done then. It seems most likely that it dates from the building period of *c.* 1660. This still does not, however, solve the mystery of the other two panels.

From the will of Alexander, 11th Lord Forbes, we know that William Forbes, above mentioned, was in possession of the lands and Lordship of Forbes at the time of his father's death. This William was married three times: first to Jean Campbell of Calder, secondly to Anna Erskine, granddaughter of the first Earl of Kellie, and

<sup>1</sup> It is intended that this room should be brought back into use again by lowering the floor to its original level.

lastly to Barbara Forbes, daughter of John Forbes of Asloun and widow of Arthur Forbes of Echt. At this period we can get some idea of the furnishings at Druminnor from two inventories drawn up in April 1683. Apparently much of the furnishings at Druminnor belonged to Barbara, Lady Forbes and it was necessary to distinguish between those secured to her stepson, the Master of Forbes, and those secured to her daughter Elizabeth Forbes, by her first marriage.

A vast quantity of sheets and plaids is recorded, as well as brass and china candlesticks, mirrors, table linen and silver – including a great syllabub pot with a cover and stoup and the hangings and furniture of a number of rooms. This is of particular interest as, apart from the reference to a green tablecloth and form coverings from the Great Hall, the following rooms are mentioned by name: ‘the dynen room, the old chamber, the low room, the fore chamber and the high school’. I imagine that the low room and dynen room were on the ground floor and that the old chamber refers to the room on the first floor of the tower. The fore chamber and the high school contained beds.

Of the outer buildings and courtyard works, nothing now remains above ground – whatever may have survived into the nineteenth century would have been swept away in the extensive work which was necessary in laying out the gardens. However, under the terrace wall to the E. of the castle, extensive footings have been uncovered. These are some 6 to 8 ft. wide and consist of larger boulders, the spaces in between being filled with packed clay and smaller stones. Until further trenches have been dug, it is impossible to say whether these are the foundations of a causeway or of some outer works, but it suggests that in forming the terraces, use may have been made of the walls and ditches referred to in the licence of 1456. When in 1963 preliminary trenches were cut in the ground to the E. of the main house and to the N. of the terrace it became clear that there were foundations remaining of extensive courtyard buildings of several periods, and fragments of late medieval pottery came to light. It is to be hoped that a complete exploration of this area will be possible in the future.

#### APPENDIX I

##### *Building of Druminnor 4th July 1440*

Memorandum that John Kamloke and William of Ennerkype has tane and are fully content of ane hundreth marke and fiftie ane marke and five (5) shillings of the two hundreth marks yt yai suld haf had for ye makyn of ye house of Drumynnour before ye lord of ye Ross and Alan of Erskene and this contract maide on ye ferde day of July ye yeir of oure Lord a thousand four hundred and forty yeirs – in witness of ye quhilk ye said William has procurit ye signet of ane honorabil man Alan of Erskene to yis present letteris to be put ye day before wretyn.

#### APPENDIX II

Jacobus dei gracia Rex Scotorum omnibus probis hominibus suis ad quos presentes lettres pervenerint salutem. Sciatis quod  
concessimus dilecto consanguineo nostro Jacobo domino Forbes plenam et liberam facultatem et nostram licenciam specialem turrim sive fortalicium dictum Drumynour vulgariter nuncupatum



Forbas in domino de Forbes infra vice comitatum de Aberden construendi et edificandi ac ipsam turrim sive fortalitium muris et fossis fortificandi circumigendi portisque ferreis firmandi et muniendi et in altum erigendi et in summitate eiusdem ornamentum defensivis preparandi et ornandi ceteraque ad consumationem dicte turris et fortalicii necessaria faciendi et proficiendi

Quare unius et singulis ligiis et subditis nostris quorum interest vel interesse poterit stricte precipiendo mandamus ne quis dictum Jacobum aut suos servitores vel factores in edificacione dicte turris molestent vexent aut inquietent in futurum aut eis vel eorum alicui impedimentum aliquid edificacione ejusdem prestant sub omni pena que competere poterit in hac parte.

Datum sub magno sigillo nostro apud Brechin  
quarto die mensis mai Anno domini millesimo  
quadringentesimo quinquagesimo sexto. Et Regni nostri vicesimo.

*Translation:*

Licence to fortify

James by the Grace of God King of the Scots to all his honest men to whom these letters present may come Greeting.

Be it known that we grant to our well-beloved kinsman James Lord Forbes full and free faculty and our special licence to construct and build the tower or fortalice called Druminnor commonly known as Forbes in the lordship of Forbes within the county of Aberdeen and to fortify and encompass the same tower or fortalice with walls and ditches and to strengthen and furnish it with doors of iron, and to build it up to a great height and at the top thereof to prepare and embellish a decorative and defensive superstructure and to make well all things necessary for the completion of the said tower and fortalice.

Wherefore, we do by our strict command, give orders to each and everyone of our lieges and subjects, whom it concerns or may concern, that they should not hinder, vex or disturb henceforth, either the said James or his servants or agents in the building of the said tower, or offer any impediment to them, or any one of them, in the building of the same, under every penalty which is in our power to inflict.

Given under our Great Seal at Brechin 4th May  
1456 in the twentieth year of our reign.

### APPENDIX III

Extract from the process of Divorce between John, Master of Forbes, and his wife, Margaret Gordon, second daughter of the fourth Earl of Huntly.

*1573 - 24th June - Edinburgh.*

. . . In placis of Druminnor and Rannallock within the Sherifdom of Aberdein and sumtymes being sa convoyit that no persoun knew of him but the said Margrat and her serving womane familiar unto her in thair unlauchfull doings as they supposit . . .

. . . Lykas for the better accomplishment thair of the said Margrat having lytill or na regard to her schame and at all tymis and nytis quhar the said umquhill Patrick was separat lyid and harberit in Druminnor, he lay in the uter chalmer within the hall nixt to the said Margratis chalmer quherin he myt hav enterit at his plesir he beand soletar within the said uter chalmer and the hall dour steikit upone hime within and the said Margrat havand na persoun with her bot her servand womane pertesepant and beand upon the cunsall of the said filthie crym, for the accomplishment quherof sche left her awin chalmer quherin sche was accostomit to remain befor . . .

*Note:* The co-respondent was Patrick Hepburn, parson of Kinoir and natural son of Bishop Hepburn (uncle of the Earl of Bothwell) at whose palace of Spynie the Master of Forbes had been held captive from after the Battles of Tillieangus and Crabstane November 1571 until May 1573. He obtained his release on the promise of payment of £705 Scots.

## APPENDIX IV

*Inventories*

## 1. For Anna Erskine, second wife of William, 12th Lord Forbes.

'Inventor of what plenishing there was in the house att my homecoming which was in August 1669.

'Blankets, sheets, bed plaids. Cods (Pillows)

'Bolsters – Coverings.

'Curtaines, Table cloathes.

'Naperie in the wardrobe, Mirror glasses.

'Chamber potts, stools, bedpan.

'Six brass candlesticks – snuffers – tongs.'

## 2. 'Inventor of the just and equall half of the domicills of the house of Castell Forbes disposed by William Lord Forbes to William Master of Forbes his sons, conforme to a just partition made betwixt the said Lord Forbes and his lady, on the one pairt and the Master of Forbes on the other, second day of April 1683.

'Imprimis, of naperie, Eleven tabel cloaths, six dizon and one half of servets, fiyv better meat cloaths, eleven hand tools.

'ITEM of bedding seveinteen pare of sheets, twentie two pillow wares, eight pair of hardin sheets, Eleven feather beds, twelve bolsters, twelve pillows, fortie-fiyve pair of plaids, eight coverings.

'ITEM of furniture and hangings of rooms, A green table cloth of the great hall, with the coverings of the formes, a satin quilt, the hangings of the dynen room, the hangings of the old chamber, the hangings of the low room, the bed hangings of the fore chamber, the bed hangings of the heigh school, a dozen cushions.

'ITEM of the vessels. Eleven trenchers a dozen of playtes and two useless playts. Two stoups of pynt measure, a guest stoup, a mutckin stoup, a flagon and a gill.

'ITEM. Six brass candlesticks fiyv tongs four tyre shovels, three dry-stools with their pans in the chambers.

'ITEM. Utensils for use of the Kitchens, a meikle jar, a great speit, a fire shovel, a crook.

'ITEM. Cellar vessels – nyn barrells.

'ITEM. Out of the wardrops Eight bottle glasses, two lame (earthenware) cans, two lame chamberpots, a lame playt, two lame trenchers, three lame dishes, two heckles (floor combs) two pairs of cairds (carding combs) two coffers, two chests, two lint wheels, two wool wheels, four chamber pots, two buffs (threshing flails) a pair of close creels.

A second Inventar gives:

'Such things as are apothecat to the house of Forbes (i.e. heirlooms) disponed by the foresaid William Lord Forbes to the heir thereof.

'Imprimis of silver work – a great syllabub pot with a cover and a stoup.

'Items a silver tankard.

'Item ane alamode pottinger with a cover.

'Item a large silver dish.

'Item a great silver salt fat (i.e. salt cellars).

'Item seventeen silver spoones.

'Item four silver forks.

'Item a large sugar box.

'Item of armes. Twentie-four guns.

'Item a brewlead.

'Item a great pot.

These two inventars are signed by Lord Forbes before witnesses –

Mr Adam Barclay, Minister of Keig.

Mr William Johnston, Minister of Kearn.

## 3. Inventure of Moveables Domicils, etc. for Mistress Elizabeth Forbes, daughter to my lady Forbes.

'INVENTURES of moveable goods and gear, domicils and household plenishings and soumes

belonging to Barbara Lady Forbes and disposed by her to her daughter Mistress Elizabeth Forbes, and the same is taken up and subscribed by her hand at Castle Forbes 7th April 1683.

'IMPRIMIS three scoir of sheep, all wedders, three kine with their following.

'ITEM of household plenishing, a chest with ten pair of plaids and fourteen pairs of sheets layd up therein.

'A presse in the Wardrobe having in it twelve pair of playds, six pair of sheets, Twenty-four pillows, whereof a dozen filled and wared.

'Two dozen of Dornich napery and thretty elnes of tyking, all laid up in these presses.

'ITEM. Two Cabinets.

'ITEM four coverings, whereof three sewed and one broidered, a web of green stamped cloth for bed hanging. Six feather beds, six bolsters.

'ITEM, a half dozen of great pewter playts, and a dozen of smaller playts. An acquavity Stillaton. A p.m. (pint measure) in bottles. A dozen of sewed and broidered cushions. A looking glass, two pairs of candlesticks whereof one pair of brass and another of china.

## APPENDIX V

### *Chronology*

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1271                | Lands of Forbes and Kearn granted to Duncan Forbes.   |
| c. 1436             | Work at Kildrummy reputedly by John Kemlock.  |
| 1440                | Bond for the building of Druminnor.   |
| 1452                | Huntly or Strathbogie Castle destroyed by Moray.  |
| 1456                | Licence to fortify Druminnor granted.   |
| c. 1470             | Huntly completed after this date.   |
| 1570                | Gordons acquire Auchindoir some three miles from Druminnor.   |
| 1571                | <i>10th-12th October.</i> Battle of Tillieangus and sack of Druminnor by the Gordons.                     |
| 1571                | <i>20th November.</i> Battle of Crabstanes - the Master taken prisoner by Adam Gordon.                    |
| 1571-3              | The Master of Forbes held prisoner at Spynie whilst his wife misconducts herself at Druminnor.            |
| 1645                | <i>June 29th-30th.</i> Montrose at Druminnor before the Battle of Alford.                                 |
| 1645                | <i>October.</i> Montrose at Druminnor after Philiphaugh.  |
| 1660 <i>et seq.</i> | Extensive alterations.  |
| 1670                | Last recorded holding of the Barony Court at Druminnor.   |
| 1670 <i>et seq.</i> | Tower becomes ruinous.  |
| 1689                | <i>June 9th.</i> General Mackay received provisions at Druminnor whilst retiring in front of Claverhouse. |
| 1770                | Estate passes from Lord Forbes.   |
| 1795-1800           | Final demolition of the Old Tower.  |
| 1815                | Gothic Villa built by Archibald Simpson for the Grants.   |
| 1843                | Interior of palace block remodelled.  |
| 1960                | Simpson's wing demolished.  |
| 1960-4              | Discovery and excavations of old House.   |



1. North front showing main doorway and stair towers



2. North front, general view



1. Fireplace in the 'Happy Room'



2. Window in the kitchen with entrance to garderobe on left