

Beldorney Castle, Aberdeenshire: an early Z-plan tower house

by H Gordon Slade

The castle of Beldorney stands on a sharp rise above the Deveron, almost on the thousand-foot contour, some 8 miles SW of Huntly, in the parish of Glass, and overlooking the site of the *Walla Kirk* (St Walloch's Kirk) (fig 1).

Originally the lands of Beldorney formed part of the extensive estates associated with the barony of Kethmor (Auchindoun) which had been granted by John, Lord Drummond to Sir James Ogilvy of Deskfurde towards the end of the fifteenth century. The Royal Seal was appended to a confirmation of this charter at Linlithgow on 31st December 1490 (see Appendix A).

The lands remained in the hands of the Ogilvys until 1545 when on 15th April Alexander Ogilvy granted the lands of Beldorney to George Gordon and Janet his wife, and the confirmation of this grant was dated 10th December 1552 at Edinburgh. This particular branch of the Gordons represented by George Gordon, 1st of Beldorney, was of a proud descent where in decency no descent should be. The third son of Alexander 1st Earl of Huntly was one Adam Gordon, Dean of Caithness, who, according to the Balbithan MS begat three natural sons and a daughter on a Gentlewoman (Bulloch 1903, 11) believed to be Marriota Duffus (and possibly a natural daughter of Chancellor Crichton), and the eldest of these three natural sons was the George Gordon aforementioned. As befitted the grandson of an earl and the son of an un-reformed Dean, he held the office of Constable of Ruthven in Badenoch, the Barony of Rothiemurchus, which he sold to John Grant of Freuchie in 1561, and the lands of Wester Foulis and Easter Leochel in Cushnie. He married Janet, daughter of Hugh Ros (Rose) of Kilravock.

Sir Alexander Ogilvy had married an Elizabeth Gordon and the family connection may have persuaded him to make over Beldorney to her kin. According to the Balbithan MS the Laird of Ogilvy Findlater who married George Gordon's sister disposed the lands of Findlater and Auchindow (Auchindoun) to John Gordon, who later married his widow. This would suggest that Elizabeth (Gordon Ogilvy) was the daughter of Dean Adam.

In any case, from 1545 until his death in September 1575 George Gordon was in possession of the lands of Beldorney (apart from the period after the Battle of Corriche in 1562, when the lands were forfeited until 1565). According to the Balbithan MS '... the said George builded the house of Beldorney and dyed'. This places the building of the castle between 1545 and 1575. In spite of the awful finality of that sentence in the Balbithan MS it is likely that the castle was building in the years 1550-60.

George Gordon was succeeded by his son Alexander 2nd of Beldorney, who married Margaret Grant of Freuchie. Although little is known of his life, the financial difficulties which beset the family throughout the seventeenth century may already have begun, as in 1607 he sold the lands in Cushnie. With the death of Alexander, and the succession of George, 3rd of Beldorney, in 1627 the condition of the family finances became even worse, and from 1637 the lands appear to

have been almost constantly in the hands of wadsetters: these included John Cushnie of Culsalmond, David Richard (son-in-law of George Gordon, 3rd of Beldorney), John Lyon of Craigston and Muiresk, and George Ogilvy, 3rd Lord Banff.

George Gordon, 4th of Beldorney,¹ succeeded in 1638 and married a daughter of John Lyon of Muiresk. Their son, John Gordon, 5th of Beldorney, succeeded in 1664. Although he was given sasine of Beldorney his uncle John Lyon obtained the superiority. The bitterness thus engendered coupled with the dislike of the tenantry for John Lyon culminated in his murder on the Braes of Abernethie in 1667. John Gordon was implicated and spent over a year in the Edinburgh Tolbooth before he was cleared. He was succeeded by his son John Gordon, to whom

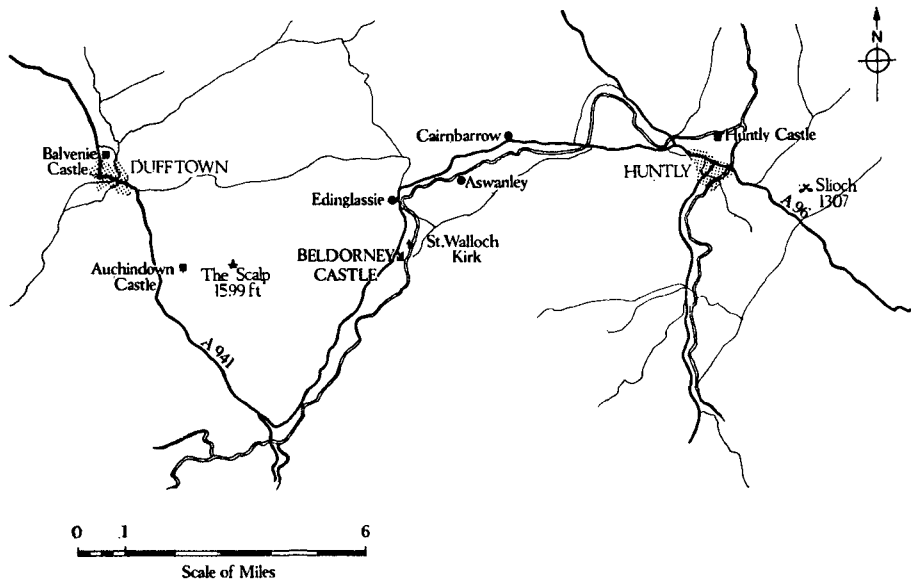


FIG 1 Location map

sasine was given of 'all and hail that part and portions of the lands of Belcherie wt the pertinents' on 31st May 1685. There is conflicting evidence on the date of the death of George Gordon, 4th of Beldorney, but bonds dated between 1680 and 1690 and signed by 'John Elder' and 'John Younger' together with the date 1679 on the initialled stone over the courtyard entrance at Beldorney suggest that this death took place sometime in 1678. This initialled stone bears the date 1679, and the initials IG and AG. The only couple for whom these would account are John Gordon 5th and Anne Gordon, his wife, daughter of William Gordon of Cairnbarrow.

John Gordon 5th had been appointed a Commissioner of Supply for Banffshire in 1664, and was also an honorary burges of Aberdeen. This may suggest that in money matters he was somewhat more beforehand with the world than his father, and that on his succession he was able to undertake improvements at Beldorney – including the courtyard ranges – between 1679 and 1689. In that latter year Beldorney, together with the houses of other lairds in Strathbogie and Deveronside (this is almost the only indication of John Gordon's religious sympathies), was pillaged by Highlanders² before whom the government forces under Major General Mackay were retiring.

It would seem that the family were in possession of the house at least, even though the lands seem to have been in the hands of wadsetters.

This pillaging may have been the blow which finally destroyed the family financially, a destruction which seems to have been aided deliberately (if the Birnie MS is to be believed). Referring to John 5th of Beldorney and John 6th of Beldorney as 'James' the author says 'The former (John 5th) was very thoughtless and careless, and allowed himself to be involved under the pretences of friendship by Alexander Gordon of Tirriesoule, son to James Gordon of Camphill (Camdell?). . . . Tirriesoule bought up the debts upon the estate of Beldornie, and upon the lairds death took possession of the lands and got them adjudicated to himself.' This Alexander Gordon was descended from the marriage of Alexander Gordon, second son of Alexander Gordon 2nd of Beldorney, with Jean Grant, daughter of Duncan Grant of Rothiemurchus, and was cousin to John 5th in the same generation.

John Gordon 5th died in 1694 and was succeeded by his son John 6th, who died four years later, leaving a son John, a minor, as heir. It is not clear whether this son ever succeeded as 7th Laird or not, but apparently he went abroad with his brothers and had not returned within twenty years of his father's death, by which time the land had passed to his cousin, Alexander Gordon.

The passing of the estates is very obscure at this stage as not only had the family become embarrassed but so had its creditors. As early as 1670, John Lyon, who had succeeded his murdered father in 1667 to the wadset rights of Beldorney, was the subject of decret of apprising in respect of the lands of Beldorney at the instance of Captain William Barclay of Achreddie and others; and on the escheat of John Lyon in 1679 the lands of Beldorney passed into the hands of George, 3rd Lord Banff. This wicked old man apparently remained in possession until 1700 when Alexander Gordon gained sasine, and may have retained part of the lands until 1713, in which year Alexander seems to have obtained final and complete possession. This was also the year in which Lord Banff was murdered amidst the flames of his castle of Inchdrewer, and whilst there is no evidence to link Alexander Gordon with this crime – indeed as far as I know there has never been any suggestion made that he was involved – the crime may have come at a very convenient time for one whose methods of acquiring the Beldorney estates were not above reproach.

Whatever the truth of the matter, it is clear that by 1713 Alexander Gordon was in full possession of Beldorney. He had married Sileas (Gillies) MacDonell, daughter of James MacDonell of Keppoch. She acquired considerable fame as a poet in the Gaelic, and is supposed to have translated the Psalms and other passages of the Bible into the same tongue. It is probable that it was in their time that the alterations to interior of the castle were carried out.

There is some difference of opinion as to whether Alexander Gordon was 7th or 8th of Beldorney. James Godsman considers him to be 8th (1970, 54) as does J M Bulloch (1909), but the Rev Charles Bruce of Glenrines, who at the end of the last century worked extensively on the genealogy of this family, regarded him as the 7th laird, and this view seems to have been held by Douglas Wimberley (1903) based on the doubt that John Gordon ever inherited as 8th laird. Without entering into the merits of this controversy, which is not unlike that of the 9th and 10th Lord Forbes, I have for convenience considered Alexander as 8th Laird.

He was succeeded in 1730 by his son John, 9th of Beldorney, who became 'of Kildrummy' on his purchase of that estate in 1731 from James and David Erskine. During his lifetime Beldorney was known as a house where priests could meet. John Gordon, who married Mary Gordon, daughter and heiress of John Gordon 3rd of Law and 1st of Wardhouse, was succeeded on his death in 1740 by their son John Gordon as 10th of Beldorney and 2nd of Kildrummy; he married Margaret Smyth of Methven in 1745 and they were both staunch supporters of the Jacobite Cause (see Appendix C).

He died in 1760 and was succeeded as 11th laird by his eldest son, Alexander, then aged

twelve, who also inherited the Wardhouse estate from his great-uncle, Arthur Gordon of Wardhouse. He became a protestant, entering the 49th foot as an ensign in 1766. In 1767 whilst stationed in Ireland he was involved in a brawl which made it advisable for him to retire to France. It was unfortunate that Alexander Gordon should have been given an introduction to Lord Harcourt, then our ambassador in Paris: it was equally unfortunate that Lord Harcourt should have suggested that Gordon should occupy himself by visiting the French Dockyards and should have furnished him with letters of credit to enable him to do so. He was arrested at Brest in June 1768 and finally brought to trial as a spy. He was sentenced to death and beheaded at Brest on 24th November 1769, facing his end with great courage. His Excellency seems to have done little but wring his hands and shuffle out of the whole wretched business.

With the succession of his brother, Charles Edward Gordon, 12th, the Gordon connection with Beldorney ends. As early as 1775 the estate was advertised (*Aberdeen Journal*, October 1775) for public roup although for some reason the sale did not take place then and the estate remained with the family for some years until it was sold to Thomas Buchan of Auchmacoy. He in turn sold it to Sir William Grant, who was Master of the Rolls 1801–17. The estate remained in the possession of the Grants until 1919 when, the male line coming to an end on the death of William Grant, it was bought by Sir Thomas Birkett.

Extensive alterations had been made to the house in 1890 by William Grant, under the direction of Dr Alexander Marshall MacKenzie, and again though on a less drastic scale in 1920.

Sir Thomas Birkett died in 1959 and in 1960 the castle and lands of Beldorney were sold to Commander Vivian John Robinson. Once again change of ownership entailed alterations to the castle but of a nature that for once was sympathetic to this remarkably interesting building.

DESCRIPTION

The position of Beldorney in the development of the Z-plan castle of the north-east has not been properly recognised, coming as it does amongst the first three of this type – the other two being Huntly and Terpersie.

Huntly was largely rebuilt in 1551–54 on its 1452 foundations, and Stewart Cruden suggests (1960, 155) that not only is Huntly the earliest but also the only pre-Reformation example of this type. It may be that this early date makes this less obvious at Huntly, with the smallness of the stair tower and the paucity of shotholes. Terpersie on the other hand, which is dated 1561, is a fully developed example of this plan with diagonally placed round-towers of equal size and a generous provision of loops. In date Beldorney is earlier than Terpersie and bridges the years (1554–61) between Huntly and Terpersie, resembling the former more closely, in that the stair tower is the smaller of the two diagonal towers. It is obviously more than coincidence that these three castles all belonged to members of the most powerful family in the north-east at that time: Huntly to George, 4th Earl of Huntly, Beldorney to George Gordon, grandson of the 1st Earl of Huntly, and Terpersie to William Gordon.

In plan Beldorney consists of a main block measuring some 43 ft by 25 ft externally, with its main axis running north-south. At the SE angle is a drum tower, some 21 ft in diameter, whilst attached to the NW angle is a smaller tower some 12 ft square. This tower contains the main staircase. To the west two wings were extended in the seventeenth century enclosing a courtyard entered by a gateway in its W wall (fig 2; pl 20). It is these wings, or 'laich biggin', which give Beldorney its somewhat fortuitous resemblance to Castle Fraser and to Midmar; a likeness which would have been more striking had the drum tower not lost one, if not two of its upper floors.

The accommodation originally provided consisted of a kitchen and two vaulted cellars on

the ground floor, from one of which there was a mural stair to the first floor. On the first floor was the Hall with a chamber in the round tower. A newel stair led directly to the second floor which appears to have consisted of another hall, or gallery and a tower chamber. In the re-entrant of N gable was a turret stair leading to the upper chamber over the stair tower. There was at least one further floor in the drum tower, and there may have been one further chamber in the stair tower. In 1679 further accommodation was provided in the wings; that on the north which was of two storeys containing five rooms, whilst that on the south which was only one storey in height

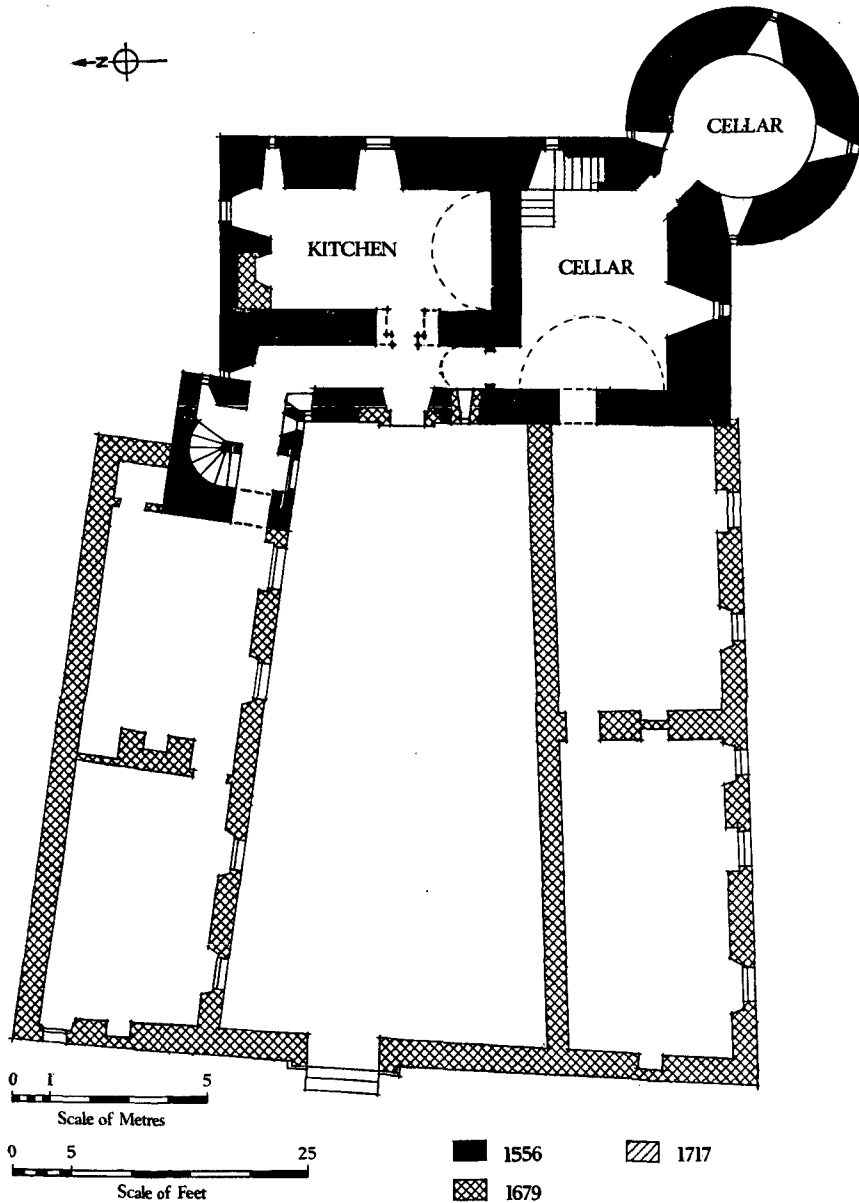


FIG 2 Beldorney Castle, ground-floor plan

containing two. The hall was subdivided into two rooms and a lobby, *c* 1713, and probably at the same time the gallery was divided into two rooms, and a garret was introduced into the roof space.

Entrance to the forecourt is through a semicircular headed arch flanked by plain pilasters, the whole surmount by a pulvinated frieze and cornice. Above the cornice is a semicircular pediment enclosing a square recess. The pediment is flanked by consols, somewhat clumsily placed, and balls on pedestals, and surmounting the pediment is a further pedestal and ball. Originally the inner face of the gateway had a moulded architrave, but this has been largely hacked away and defaced with harling. The central key-stone is carved with the date 1679 flanked by the initials 'IG' and 'AG' (John Gordon and Anne Gordon). The south side of the courtyard is flanked by the back wall of the S wing. This wall is devoid of windows, suggesting that it was designed for service use, and that this lack of windows was a means of ensuring privacy for the family rooms in the N wing. Nor is it accidental that this wing is only one storey in height; by keeping it low sunlight was not excluded from either the courtyard or the N wing. The elevation of the N wing to the courtyard is of four bays. The ground-floor windows have been altered and retain none of their original features. On the upper floors two of the windows retain their eighteenth-century sashes and astragals, one is blocked, and the one adjoining the stair tower is a very narrow one, matching that in the stair tower itself. It may be a nineteenth-century replacement.

The original entrance to the castle was through a door in the S face of the stair tower. This was set in a square-headed doorway of red freestone with a typical mid-sixteenth-century moulded architrave. Above are a pair of square panel recesses set within a similar architrave. These would have been intended to contain the arms and initials of the original builder and his wife (George Gordon and Janet Rose), but these have now disappeared. Flanking the doorway and in the re-entrant is a rectangular loop. The design of this loop is interesting in that, although externally it appears to be a single loop, internally there are two loops at right angles to each other. This entrance is now blocked and made into a window.

With the 1679 alterations the entrance was moved to the centre of the N face of the main tower-block (pl 20c). This was to effect the internal planning of the ground floor, but its main external effect, as it lay on the axis of the gateway, was to formalise the entrance and to give an appearance of exaggerated perspective to the forecourt. The doorway, again of red freestone, is typically late seventeenth century with a simple moulded and lugged architrave. Within the lugs are carved small stone rosettes. To the south of the door is a small window, probably a spy-hole for the porter. Its form is Gothic but as there are no features of this style elsewhere in the castle it is either a peculiar example of vernacular works or a re-set stone from another building.

Above this doorway is a most singular feature. An ogee-headed panel – the outer moulding a normal late medieval lable mould, the inner a cable mould – encloses a square recess which appears to be blocked. The ogee is filled with a winged angel's head, both the head and the wings mastering the cable mould. Above the ogee is a simple foliated mantling with a fleur-de-lys on each side. On the underside of the base moulding is carved centrally a thistle with its leaves flanked by two fleur-de-lys. The whole is surmounted by a length of string course decorated with tablet-flowers, the centres of which are alternately raised and sunk. Why a feature was placed here is evident; it serves admirably as an eye-catcher. But why this particular feature should have been chosen is a fascinating speculation. Stylistically it has nothing in common with the door it surmounts, and very little more with earlier work on the stair tower. The section of the lable mould is similar to that on the sacrament house at Kinkell Church dated 1528, and the tablet flowers and cable mould resemble those of the sacrament house at Kintore. At Cullen the square headed aumbry is contained within an ogee-headed moulding; at Deskford the aumbry is again square headed within

a debased ogee (and incidentally bears the initials and arms of Alexander Ogilvy of Findlater and Elizabeth Gordon his wife), and is dated 1551. The same couple probably gave the sacrament house at Cullen. An ogee-headed cable mould surmounted by a fleur-de-lys surrounds the aumbry at Airlie Church, Forfarshire. Tablet flowers can be seen on the cill of the sacrament house at Auchindoir.

It would seem that this is in fact a hitherto unknown sacrament house. The detailing, similar to detailing on others in the region, suggests that this is likely; the connection of Beldorney with Alexander Ogilvy and Elizabeth Gordon, the donors of the sacrament house at Deskford, and probably that at Cullen as well, should not be overlooked; the well-known Roman Catholic sympathies of the Beldorney branch of the Gordons would explain its protection and survival. From whence it came, of course, is impossible to say. Probably not from a chapel in the castle, but more likely from the *Walla Kirk*. Its sanctity may have ensured its initial protection but its picturesque qualities probably ensured its subsequent survival.

In the stair tower are a number of blocked windows. The two at the highest level obviously once opened into the upper chamber; but those on two lower levels, one on the N and one on the S, are less easy to explain. There is no internal sign of them, as they are covered by later work, and although they may once have lit the staircase there is some internal evidence to suggest that they were originally intended to light a small chamber which has since disappeared. The apex of the gable is surmounted by a roughly carved dog.

On the W face of the main tower there is evidence of considerable alterations to the upper floors. The building of the seventeenth-century south wing necessitated the blocking of one of the hall windows; and the re-arrangements of the first floor with the consequent introduction of a new chimney forced the blocking of the middle one of the three gallery windows. This chimney was carried up as a gable terminating in a square stack. The gable was pierced with a roundel, now blocked, which would have given light to the garret. On the skew-put is carved a fleur-de-lys.

In its original condition the S face of Beldorney would have been completely dominated by the great drum tower on the SE angle. This rises without any horizontal break for the first two floors, the ground being pierced with loops, and the first with two larger windows lighting the withdrawing room. The second-floor level is marked by a moulded stone string and there are two window openings, that on the south side being blocked. The third-floor level is not marked by a string; instead this runs round the tower slightly above window-cill level. On the S side the string is broken by a blocked window. This is not an accidental break, as the string is returned to the wall face on either side of the opening. The reason for this must have been architectural: had the string been at third-floor level with another at the level of the fourth floor the whole effect of verticality would have been lost. Above this point most of the tower has been destroyed, although on the S face the wall, which contains the chimney stack, continues to rise until it reaches what may have been the level of the original wall head, where it would most likely have finished with an oversailing parapet. The present finish of a gabled ridge is neither suitable nor satisfactory.

In the angle between this tower and the S gable is a newel stair starting at first-floor level from a simple but well designed set of corbelling, at the base of which is a grotesque mask. This round rises unbroken, save for two lighting slits to a point above the level of the third floor, but below the third-floor string. Here there is a moulded corbel course bearing a shield. This is charged with the Gordon arms and the initials GG (Standing for George Gordon, the builder and first laird of Beldorney). Above this the diameter of the turret increases, but most of the rest of it has been destroyed.

On the gable wall there are three windows; that at first-floor level which lights the hall keeps its chamfered stone surround but it has been enlarged, and the details of the glazing are all

nineteenth century. The remaining two, one to the ground-floor cellar and the other to the garret, are both blocked.

The elevation of the S wing, which has just been re-harled, is of five bays with a central doorway: the window sashes retain their eighteenth-century form and astragals.

On the E face, beyond the tower, there is little left of interest apart from three small windows, two to the cellarge and one to what would have been a first-floor closet. The remaining fenestration is all nineteenth century although in the openings of the seventeenth-eighteenth century. The skew-put to the N gable is carved with a scallop shell.

The N face is obscured by late nineteenth-century additions. The most interesting feature is a quarter round rising from corbelling in the E re-entrant of the stair tower. This rises from the third floor and must have been part of the staircase to the upper chamber in the tower. The upper part of this turret has now disappeared; there is a reference to it in an old family MS to which reference will be made later. At the angle between the round and the main gable is a gargoyle water-shute.

The N elevation of the N wing has suffered considerably from the work done in 1898 but still retains one window on the upper floor with its original sash and astragals.

The original plan of the castle was simple. On the ground floor immediately facing the entry was the main staircase to the hall. Under it was a recess by which it was possible to reach the loop covering the N gable. Immediately to the right of the entry was another loop, covering the W wall. This shared a common external loop with the internal loop which covered the entrance. At right angles to the entry was the vaulted passage in the main tower, which gave access to the kitchen and cellars. The vault still exists behind a modern false ceiling. The passage ran for about two-thirds of the length of the tower with the kitchen on the E side. When the new entrance was formed and the S wing was built in 1679, the ground floor seems to have been re-planned. An entrance immediately facing the kitchen was not usual practice and it is likely that the kitchen was then removed to the new S wing. This would have been as convenient to the cellars and for service to the first floor as the original kitchen, and almost as convenient if a new dining-room had been formed in the N wing. The old kitchen has a barrel vault but retains no original features. If any survive they are hidden by later plaster. This room has been known for many years as 'The Lairds Room' so may it well have become the business room after 1679.

The first cellar is a barrel-vaulted rectangular room, which has now been partitioned into three storerooms. There is a narrow mural staircase which is probably original, and one in the S wall, now blocked. In the vault is a large iron double meathook, probably dating from the eighteenth century.

The cellar in the base of the drum tower is also stone vaulted. In the reveal of the doorway between the two cellars are the original iron pins. Light is provided by four loops, one of which covers the E wall, and one the S gable-wall. Again there is a large iron double meathook in the vault.

Access to the first floor was either by the mural stair from the cellar or by the main stair. This is half turnpike and may have ascended no higher than the first floor until the nineteenth-century alterations. In the 1560 building the whole of the first floor of the main tower was occupied by the hall. This measured about 34 ft by 17 ft (10.4 m by 5.2 m), the normal 2 : 1 proportion. The fireplace seems to have been at the upper end, although it is possible that there may have been a secondary fireplace in the N gable. Light was generously provided through four large windows, two in the E wall and two in the W wall. There was a closet, possibly with a garderobe in the NW corner, and in the SE corner were the entrances to the inner chamber and the staircases to the cellar and to the upper floors. In the c 1713 alterations the hall – as was common practice at

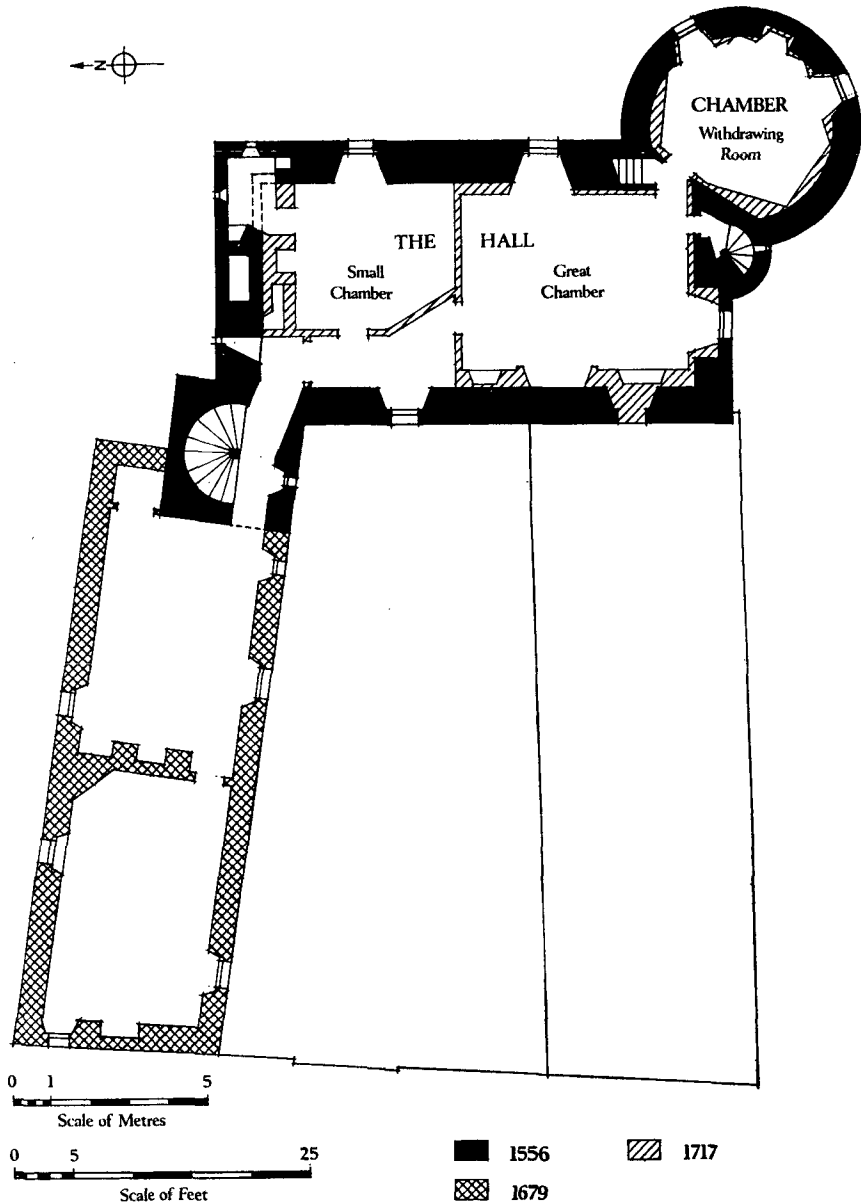


FIG 3 Beldorney Castle, first-floor plan

the time – was subdivided into a lesser chamber and a Great Chamber. An exact parallel is to be found at Druminnor (Gordon Slade 1967) which was altered in 1660. Above the lowered ceiling of the lesser chamber is a space or secret room, where John Gordon, the 10th laird, hid after Culloden; and within the space traces of the original scheme of decoration is preserved. The walls were plastered and painted, and where the plaster remains on the N wall the colour scheme seems to have been a greyish-white with some detailing in a darker shade. It is likely that a mock skirting, dado and chair rail were painted in shades of the darker colour (a similar scheme origin-

ally existed at Druminnor). Unfortunately the later chimney breast of *c* 1713 obscures much of this wall.

The wall plate which is $4\frac{1}{2}$ in (114 mm) square is carried on moulded freestone corbels, with a normal sixteenth-century profile of two flats and two rolls, some 10 in (254 mm) deep with a projection of $5\frac{1}{2}$ in (140 mm), and a width that varies from 8 in (203 mm) to 12 in (305 mm). Both the corbels and the wall plate were originally painted. The plate on the E wall carried texts which are mostly indecipherable, but from the few words that it is possible to make out they would seem to have been of an edifying nature. The joists, which measure $6\frac{1}{2}$ in by $5\frac{1}{2}$ in (140 mm) rest directly on the wall plate and are not housed into it. The painting of the joists, in black and white, shows a continuous strapwork of a very conventional nature with scrollwork and floral patterns. The boarded ceiling above the joists, from the evidence of one board remaining, was also decorated in black and white with the addition of a drab green. Unfortunately this fragment is too small to give any idea of the overall scheme showing as it does only a small area of scrollwork; the painting was carried out in distemper. From this fragment the boarding would appear to have been out of planks, 12 in by 1 in (305 mm by 25 mm), jointed with a splayed rebate. If any of this ceiling survived the early nineteenth-century alterations it would have finally disappeared when the new boards were laid on the second floor at the end of the last century.

The floor of the loft is also made out of 12 in by 1 in planks (305 mm by 25 mm) which are pegged, and not nailed, to the joists. These joists which measure 6 in by 5 in (153 mm by 127 mm) have been cut from re-used timbers, and the whole construction is of a somewhat makeshift nature.

The original hall was not a true rectangle: immediately beyond the southernmost window the E wall sets in 12 in (305 mm) and then splays to accommodate the cellar stairs. This is concealed by the later panelling.

Of the three rooms formed by the subdivision of the hall the lobby is the least distinguished. It is so lacking in features and so inconveniently shaped that it may be a nineteenth-century alteration. The chamber which opens off it and occupies the NE corner of this floor is wainscotted with fielded panels arranged in two tiers – that of the N side being much altered, which would agree with a nineteenth-century alteration at this point. The architrave to the door is original with a bolection moulding, but the door, shutters and sash together with the chimney piece are all nineteenth century. A small garderobe with two windows and two aumbries opens off this room.

The Great Chamber is the finest room in the house, both in size and in the quality of its decoration. The walls are lined with bolection panelling arranged in three tiers with skirting and chair rail to match. The chair rail is 2 ft 8 in (813 mm) above the floor with panels between it and the skirting. Above the chair rail the main panels rise to the height of the top of the windows and between these and the cornice is a further tier of much smaller panels. The whole is crowned by a heavy, boxed timber cornice. Originally there was a window in the W wall but this is now blocked, and in the centre of this wall there is a large stone chimney-piece flanked by recesses, which are filled with shelves for the display of china. Both recesses have lugged bolection architraves, as has the principal doorway on the N side of the room. The doorways to the stair turret and the withdrawing room have bolection architraves without lugs. In the sixteenth century the fireplace would have been at the upper – or S – end of the hall as the chimney in the gable suggests; it was the early eighteenth-century alterations which caused it to be moved to the W wall both for convenience and appearance. The chimney-piece measures 6 ft $9\frac{1}{2}$ in (2.070 m) across with a bolection surround $6\frac{3}{4}$ in (171 mm) wide. The width of the opening was contracted in the nineteenth century. At the same time the sashes, shutters and doors, with the exception of that into the withdrawing room, were renewed.

The withdrawing room is now panelled as an irregular septagon but there is every reason to suppose that originally the room followed the line of the tower walls. The panelling is arranged in three tiers above the skirting but without a chair rail. The panels of the middle tier are slightly narrower than the others, and those of the upper tier have ogival top corners. As in the Great Chamber there is a boxed timber cornice. The chimney-piece is similar to, but simpler than, that in the Great Chamber, and has a moulded timber surround which may be slightly later in date.

The nineteenth-century alterations, which include a new door and doorcase, sashes and shutters, and a cupboard in the north corner, seem to be earlier in character than elsewhere; the sashes still have astragals.

From the SE corner of the Great Chamber a pair of late eighteenth-century double doors open onto a circular stone stair with treads of red freestone giving access to the next floor and rising to the roof space. There is evidence of considerable alteration in the upper part. The present opening into the round tower is of red freestone with chamfered and rebated jambs with mason's marks, but the opening in the wall thickness into the second floor has been widened by 3 in (76 mm) with a clumsy resetting of the jamb. Above this point the steps have been reset, probably at the time that the upper stages of the turret and SE tower were demolished. The tower room which opens off this staircase has, apart from the doorway, no original features visible. If any remain they are hidden by the nineteenth-century lath-and-plaster wall linings. The principal entrance is now by way of a flight of steps forced through the thickness of the wall in the NW corner.

The main access to the second floor seems always to have been by this staircase. The upper flight of the main stair appears to be part of the nineteenth-century re-planning of this floor and must have destroyed the lower of the two tower chambers. There is evidence for this room in the blocked windows still visible externally. These alterations would also have destroyed the newel stair from this floor to the upper tower chamber. Evidence of this stair remains externally in the re-entrant between the NW tower and the main block, but internally it has been replaced by a rough stairway awkwardly contrived, partly in the thickness of the wall, and partly under the bulkhead in the roof space.

The interior of the upper chamber has suffered almost as drastically. The original rebated doorway in red freestone, with its iron pins for the door, still remains, but the threshold is 2 ft 3 in below the new floor-level, and there are few signs internally of the blocked windows, which show externally on the S and W walls, or of the fireplace which must have been there. In the E wall are the remains of stone steps to a small doorway giving on to the roof. There is a reference to this room being used as a chapel and approached by a corkscrew staircase (see Appendix C).

At present the main second floor is divided into two rooms on the west side, an irregularly shaped closet in the NE corner, and an even more irregularly shaped corridor along the N and E sides giving access from the main stairs to the tower room. There is no detail earlier than the late nineteenth century and the planning dates from the same period. As originally built in 1556 there were two fireplaces on this floor – in the N and S gables – and the roof framing suggests that the roof was of open construction with no ceiling. Two fireplaces would certainly be needed to heat a room of this size and are not necessarily evidence that at that period there was any subdivision. It would seem possible that this floor was designed for use either as a second hall or gallery with two windows on the E side, and three in the west. The middle window on the W side is now only visible as a blocking externally, having been covered by the chimney put in in c 1713 for the Great Chamber.

There must have been alterations by 1745 as there is reference to the secret room being reached by way of a trap door in Mrs Gordon's sitting room (Appendix C) which would have

occupied the N half of this floor, with the partition – its position dictated by the windows – roughly central. Opening from this sitting-room were the doorways to the tower chamber and stair, and to the garderobe in the NE corner – this latter largely destroyed in providing the present closet.

In the upper floor only the remains of the original scheme exist. Judging by the string and increased diameter of the stair turret there must have been at least one floor in the tower above the present attic but sometime in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries this was removed,

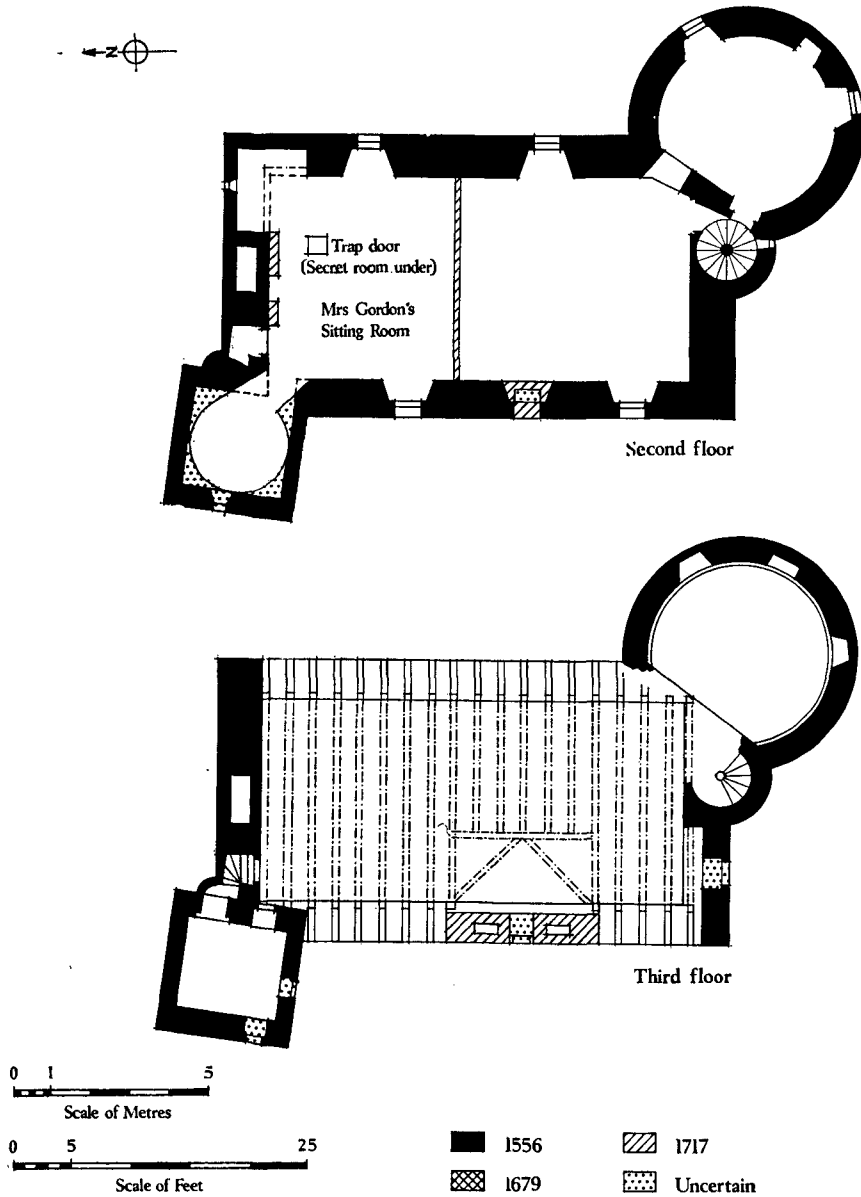


FIG 4 Beldorney Castle, second- and third-floor plans

the remaining floor partly demolished and a ridged roof at right angles to the main roof introduced. This alteration seems to have been done at two different periods. The remains of the windows on the N and S sides were partly blocked and beams spanning N and S were introduced. The seatings for these were in the window blockings, and higher than the existing floor – but at the level of the present floor in the main roof space. The wall between the tower and the main roof was removed and replaced by a stud-and-plaster partition, the mud plaster being set not on laths, but on straw ropes. Nothing is to be learned from the roof timbers, which are mostly re-used, or from the framing, which is haphazard in the extreme. It is difficult to understand why, having achieved a common floor-level, this should have been subsequently destroyed. The only reason which suggests itself is that the inserted beams failed in the nineteenth century and the opportunity was taken to insert joists at a lower level to carry both the attic floor and the second-floor ceiling joists. In the E wall are the remains of the fireplace.

The main roof appears to date from the original building of 1554-61, and later alterations have for once not been drastic enough to destroy the early work. It is a collared rafter roof of 18 trusses – the trusses being at about 2 ft (610 mm) centres, with ashlar, and sole pieces, but no wall plate. The collars and principals are dove-tailed and halved, and the principals are halved and pegged at the ridge. There is no ridge piece and a purlin was only introduced in the eighteenth century to carry the principals across the gable on the W side. The ashlar and sole pieces are both 5 in (127 mm) square, the principals 6 in by 5 in (152 mm by 127 mm), and the collars $7\frac{1}{4}$ in by 5 in (184 mm by 127 mm). The main span is 20 ft (6.1 m), and at the collar 8 ft $1\frac{1}{2}$ in (2.47 m). Assembly marks from I to XVI with two oddities, * and ♡, are on the trusses. One curious feature is the appearance of a mortice on the E side of many of the collars: if these are for horizontal braces it is odd that in only one case is there a corresponding mortice on the W side of a collar. This would suggest that the tenon of the brace was inserted and that the brace was then driven home until wedged in position. There is no indication that the trusses were ever ceiled and this would point to the whole of the upper floor being originally one large apartment open to the roof.

At some time there must have been doubts about the stability of the roof and to counter this secondary principles were introduced, against the sides of the original ones, but resting directly on the wall head. There are nine on the N side and eight on the S side, but only three are arranged as pairs. Their form is rough in the extreme, and it is difficult to believe that they do any good. Some have been notched at the top to house others, but it seems that this attempt at strengthening was abandoned before it was completed.

There are two blocked windows in the roof space; one in the S gable which is partly below floor level and would date from the first period when this was part of the second-floor room, and the other, a circular one in the W gable dating from the seventeenth-eighteenth-century alterations. There is also a small blocked window on the staircase.

There are no original features left in the two seventeenth-century wings, but despite later alterations their internal arrangements seem quite clear. In the N wing there are two rooms on the ground floor measuring about 13 ft by 20 ft (3.96 m by 6.1 m), and entered from the foot of the main staircase. A small closet was formed at the E end of each floor where the wing clasps the stair tower. With exception of one window, on the first floor, the fenestration overlooks the courtyard. This one window together with indications of a corner chimney breast suggest that the first floor was planned as a large room opening off the main stairs with two chambers within; the room at the end of the wing being approached by a short passage on the S side. The S wing, which does not overlook the courtyard, is divided into two by a chimney gable. In the E half, adjoining the main house, is a large room about 13 ft by 24 ft (3.962 m by 7.315 m). The W half is divided into two rooms each about 13 ft square (3.962 m).

To the N of the older parts of the house are the nineteenth-century kitchen and service wings which seem to have been designed with a total disregard for either appearance or convenience.

APPENDIX A

CHARTER OF CONFIRMATION OF JAMES OGILVY OF DESKFURDE, KNIGHT, AND CHARTER OF LORD DRUMMOND, OF THE BARONY OF KETHMOR

James, by the grace of God, King of Scots, to all good men of his whole land, clerical and lay, Greeting. Know that We have understood completely a certain charter made by our beloved cousin and councillor, John, Lord Drummond, to our beloved James Ogilvy of Deskfurde, knight, of all and whole the lands and barony of Kethmor, viz, the lands of Kethmor, Auchindoun, the half of the lands of Clunymore, Clunybeg, Baldorny, Gowlie, Tullochallom, the Glenfethik, with the forest of the same, and the mill of Auchindoun, with all their pertinents, lying in our sheriffdom of Banff, seen, inspected and diligently examined by our command and found to be in good condition, whole, not torn nor erased nor in any way defective, and in this form:—

To all who shall see or hear this charter, John, Lord Drummond, baron of Kethmore, Greeting in God everlasting. Know that I, for service to me diligently undertaken in this matter, have given, granted and by the style of a pure sale, have alienated and by this my present charter have confirmed, also give, grant, alienate and by this my present charter confirm to a noble man, James Ogilvy of Deskfurde, knight, all and singular my lands and barony of Kethmore aforesaid, viz, the land of Kethmore, Auchindoun, the half of the lands of Clunymore, Clunybeg, Baldorny, Gowlis, Tullochallom, the Glenfethik, with the forest of the same, and the mill of Auchindoun and with all other their pertinents, lying in the sheriffdom of Banff, for a certain sum of money freely paid to me in my necessity by the said James, in unnumbered money and wholly assigned to my use, of which sum of money I hold me fully content and whereof by the tenor of these presents I discharge the said James Ogilvy, his heirs and assignees for ever, to be held and had, all and whole the aforesaid lands and barony of Kethmore, viz, the lands of Kethmore, Auchindoun, half of the lands of Clunymore, Clunybeg, Baldorny, Gowlis, Tullochallom, the Glenfethik, with the forest of the same, and the mill of Auchindoun, with the pertinents, by the said James Ogilvy, his heirs and assignees, of Our Supreme Lord the King and his successors in fee and heritage for ever and in free barony, throughout all its just and ancient boundaries and divisions as they lie in length and breadth, in houses, buildings, woods, plains, moors, marshes, ways, paths, waters, ponds, burns, meadows, pastures and pasturages, forests, glades, thickets, mills, multurens and their dunes, hawkings, huntings, fisheries, peats, turves, coalheughs, rabbit-warrens, dovecoats, smiddies, breweries, heath and broom, with their courts and their fines, amercements, blood wits, herezelds, and selling of women, with common pasturage and free entry and exist, with fure and foss, sok, sak, tholl, theme, infangthefe, outfangthefe and with all other singular liberties, commodities, easements and their just pertinents whatsoever, as well as not named as named, as well under the ground as above ground, far and near, belonging to the said lands and barony, with the forest and pertinents, or which should be held to justly belong to them in any way in future, as freely, well, fully, wholly, honourably, well and peacefully in all things and by all things, just as I, the said John, or my predecessors held or possessed the said lands and barony, with the pertinents, and the forest, without redemption, revocation or obstacle of any kind being made, doing therefor, the said James, his heirs, to Our Supreme Lord the King and his successors, Kings of Scotland, the services used and wont for the said lands; and I, truly, the said John and my heirs shall warrant, acquit and defend for ever to the said James and his heirs all and singular the said lands and barony of Keithmore, viz, Keithmore, Auchindoun, the half of the lands of Clunymore, Clunybeg, Baldorny, Gowlis, Tullochallom, the Glenfethik, with the forest of the same, and the mill of Auchindoun, with all their rights and pertinents, in all things and through all things, in all force and effect as aforesaid, throughout all our lands and possessions within the kingdom of Scotland. In testimony whereof my seal is appended to this my present charter at Linlithquow, 31 December 1490, before these witnesses: Walter Ogilvy of Boyne, John Menteith, Malcomn Drummond, William Drummond, John Ogilvy, Alexander Hay, Henry Malmuresoun and Master Andrew Cadeiow, notary public, with diverse others.

We, for us and our successors, as aforesaid, approve, ratify and confirm for ever this charter and grant of alienation and sale contained therein, in all its points, articles, conditions, ways and circumstances whatsoever, and in equal form and effect, in all things and by all things, saving to us and our

successors the rights and services due and wont to be given to use before our present confirmation from the said lands and barony, with the forest and mill, with the pertinents. In testimony whereof, We have commanded our Great Seal to be appended to this our present charter of confirmation. Witnesses as in the second preceding charter. At Linlithquow, 1 January 1490/1491, and of our reign the third year.

CHARTER OF CONFIRMATION OF MASTER GEORGE GORDOUN AND HIS SPOUSE

Mary, by the grace of God, Queen of Scots, to all good men of her whole land, clerical and lay, Greeting. Know that We, with the advice and consent of our dearest cousin and tutor, James, Duke of Chettellarault, Earl of Arran and Lord Hammiltoun, Protector and Governor of our kingdom, have commanded to be seen, read, inspected and carefully examined a certain charter of feufarm and lease made by our beloved Alexander Ogilvy of that ilk, with the consent and assent of Elizabeth Gordoun, his spouse, to Master George Gordoun, Constable of Ruthven in Badyenacht, and Janet Ros, his wife, and to the longest liver of them, in conjunctfeftment, and to the heirs lawfully procreated or to be procreated between them, whom failing, to the lawful and nearest of the said Master George whomsoever and their assignees, of all and whole of the lands of Baldorny and Linband, with their fisheries upon the Water of Deveron, and all their pertinents, lying in the barony of Keithmoir alias Auchindoun, within our sheriffdom of Banfe, to be held of the said Alexander and his heirs in feufarm and heritage, and it has been found in good condition, whole, not torn nor cancelled not fault in any part thereof, under this form:—

To all who shall see or hear this charter, Alexander Ogilvy of that ilk, Greeting in God everlasting. Because secular lands are leased and granted in feufarm so that by the care and industry of worthy men they may be looked after and cultivated, know, therefore, that I, led neither by force nor fear, nor by falling into error, nor by being beset by fraud or gyle, but by my pure and spontaneous desire, with the express consent and assent of my beloved spouse, Elizabeth Gordoun, my advantage and that of my heirs in this matter having been foreseen, thought over and riply considered, also the suitability for the state of the kingdom and consideration of the acts of parliament enacted thereupon and for the furtherance of the fermes and profits of my lands withinwritten, to the sum of thirteen shillings and four pence over and above what was previously paid, and also, for a certain sum of money which our beloved Master George Gordoun, Constable of Ruthven in Badyenacht, and Janet Ros, his spouse, have gratuitously and wholly paid to me by hand, in numbered money, to my special advantage, and for other voluntary assistance and good deeds many times given to me by the said Master George, have given, granted, leased and at feufarm or lease hereditarily given and by this my present charter have confirmed, and by the tenor of the same give, grant, lease and hald over in feufarm or lease and by this my present charter confirm to the said Master George Gordoun and Janet Ros, his spouse, in conjunctfeftment, and to the longest liver of them, and to the heirs lawfully procreated or to be procreated between them, whom failing, to the true, lawful and nearest heirs to the said Master George whomsoever and their assignees, all and whole my lands of Beldorny and Lynebane, with their fisheries on the Water of Deveron and their singular pertinents, settled upon me and my said spouse in conjunctfeftment, lying in the barony of Keithmoir alias Auchindoun and within the sheriffdom of Banfe, to be had and held, all and whole of the aforesaid lands of Beldorny and Lynebane, with fisheries and their singular pertinents, by the said Master George Gordoun and Janet Ros, his spouse, in conjunctfeftment, and to the longest liver of them and their heirs and assignees abovewritten, of my, my heirs and assignees, in feufarm and heritage for ever, as the said lands, with the pertinents, lie in length and breadth, limits and bounds, from every side, in tofts, crofts, yards, houses, buildings, woods, plains, moors, marshes, ways, paths, waters, ponds, burns, pools, meadows, pasture and pasturages, mills, multure and their profits, hawkings, huntings, fisheries, peats, turves, coal, coalheughs, stone and lime, smiddies, breweries, heaths and broom, quarries, the right to cut wood, iron workings, forests, thickets, firewood, logs, walls, marsh land, applies, orchards, fruits, shrubs, trees, spinnies, mountains, valleys, hills, rabbits, rabbit-warrens, doves, dovecoats, with courts and their profits, escheats and fines, herezelds, bloodwits and selling of women, with common pasturage and free entry and exit, with the faculty and power to build mills, granaries and fulling mills upon the said lands and possess them freely and peacefully; also the thirling of the grain of the tenants of the said lands to these mills and the taking up of multure and all other profits of the mills and taking them and applying them to their use, and the right to divert water necessary to the said mills, and with all other and singular liberty, commodities, profits, easements and just pertinents whatsoever, as well not named as named, as well under the ground as above the ground, far and near, belonging or which shall be held to justly belong to the said lands, mills and fisheries in any way in future, freely, quietly, well and in peace, without withholding, revocation,

contradition or obstacle whatsoever, returning therefor annually, the said Master George Gordoun and Janet Ros, his spouse, and the longest liver of them and their heirs and assignees above-written, to me, my heirs and assignees, ten pounds of the usual money of Scotland as ancient ferme of the said lands previously paid by use and wont, and thirteen shillings and four pence of the same money as augmentation of the fermes and profits of the said lands, more than was formerly wont to be paid, extending on the whole to the sum of sixteen merks money of Scotland, payable at 2 accustomed terms, viz, the feasts of Pentecost and St Martin-in-Winter, by equal portions. In addition, the heirs of the said Master George and their assignees shall double the said sum of sixteen merks in name of feufarm in the first year of entry of each one of them to the said lands and mills; also, the said Master George and Janet and the longest liver of them, their heirs and their assignees above-written shall send and upkeep at their own expense one worthy man sufficiently provided with arms of both defence and attack to march or ride with us when summoned to the wars against the English and invaders of the kingdom as often as they should happen to be warned by command of the Queen and the Governors of the kingdom and their successors, only for all other burden, secular service, exaction, question or demand which could be justly exacted or required by anyone in any way from the said lands and mills with the pertinents; and if it should happen the said Master George and Janet or the longest liver of them, their heirs or assignees above-written to fail in payment of the said feufarm for two terms running into the third, in that case, I will and ordain by the tenor of this my present charter, that it shall be lawful to myself, my heirs and assignees, to seize and distrain by our officers the said lands and mills and whatsoever goods in the same for the time for payment of the said feufarm as often as this occasion should arise; and I, indeed, the aforesaid Alexander Ogilvy of that ilk, my heirs and assignees, shall warrant, acquite and forever defend all and whole the aforesaid lands of Baldorny and Lynebane, with the said mills, fisheries and their singular pertinents, to the aforesaid Master George Gordoun and Janet Rose, his spouse, and the longest liver of them, and to the heirs lawfully procreated or to be procreated between them, whom failing, to the lawful and nearest of the said Master George whomsoever and their assignees, in all things and through all things, as aforesaid, against all mortals, under lease and obligation of all our lands and goods, moveable and immoveable, present and to come. In testimony whereof, my own seal together with the seal of the aforesaid Elizabeth, my spouse, in sign of her consent and assent to the present lease and grant of feufarm, are appended to this my present charter, together with our manual subscriptions, at Findlater, 15 April 1545, before these witnesses: Alexander Ord, George Duff, Thomas Gordoun, John Wrycht, Sir Thomas Gregour, notary, Sir Robert Leith, chaplains.

We approve, ratify, and for us and our successors, confirm for ever this charter containing in itself feufarm and lease, in all its points, articles, conditions, ways and circumstances whatsoever in all things and by all things, saving to use and our successors the dues and services from the aforesaid lands and fisheries, with the pertinents, previously used and wont before our present confirmation. In addition, We, with consent and assent aforesaid, will and grant, and for use and our successors for ever decern and ordain that this our present confirmation shall be of as much value, strength, efficacy and effect to the said Master George and his spouse, their heirs and assignees aforesaid as if the same had been given and granted to them under our Great Seal in a more extended form before the taking up of sasine of the aforesaid lands and fisheries. Notwithstanding sasine taken up by them of the same before our present confirmation, We give dispensation for ever for any other defects which might follow therefrom. In testimony whereof, We have ordered our Great Seal to be appended to this our present charter of confirmation. Witnesses as in similar preceding charters. Given at Edinburgh, 10 December 1552, and tenth year of our reign.

APPENDIX B

Chronology

1490	Lands of Beldorney granted to Sir James Ogilvy of Deskforde. (30th December 1490.)
1545	Lands of Beldorney granted to George Gordon by Alexander Ogilvy. (15th April.)
1552	Aforementioned grant confirmed. (12th December.)
1550–1560	Beldorney building.
1562–1565	Lands of Beldorney forfeited.
1575	Death of George Gordon, 1st of Beldorney.
1679	Alterations to Beldorney by John Gordon, 5th of Beldorney.
1689	Beldorney pillaged by the Highland army.

- 1713 Murder of Lord Banff at Inchdrewer.
Alexander Gordon of Tirriesoule obtains final possession of Beldorney. Further alterations to the house.
- 1731 John Gordon, 9th of Beldorney, becomes 1st of Kildrummy by purchase.
- 1745-46 Second Jacobite Rising.
- 1769 Alexander Gordon, 11th of Beldorney, 3rd of Kildrummy and 1st of Wardhouse, judicially murdered at Brest.
- circa 1777* Lands of Beldorney sold to Thomas Buchan of Auchmacoy.
- circa 1791* Lands of Beldorney sold to Sir William Grant, Master of the Rolls.
- 1890 Alterations made to the house under the direction of Dr Alexander Marshall Mackenzie.
- 1919 Lands of Beldorney sold to Sir Thomas Birkett.
- 1920 Minor alterations to the house.
- 1960 Lands of Beldorney sold to Commander Vivian John Robinson, RN.

In spite of nearly five hundred years of history and of the ownership of five different families the lands of Beldorney have the extent today that they had at the granting of the original charter in 1490.

APPENDIX C

Beldorney and the Rebellion of 1745

John Gordon, 11th of Beldorney, was twenty-two the year that the Rebellion broke out, and his wife, whom he had only married that year, was twenty. She was Frances Margaret Smyth, granddaughter of Patrick Smyth of Brace and Methven. This young couple inspired no doubt by the romantical notions of youth as much as by their Jacobite sentiments and Romish tendencies were enthusiastic supporters of the Chevalier, and joined him in Edinburgh during his brief occupation of the city. There Mrs Gordon obtained from the Prince two satin vests which he had worn at Holyrood. These were to serve as patterns for shape and size, as it was her intention to embroider one for him to wear at his father's anticipated coronation. The vest was to be of crimson silk richly embroidered, and Mrs Gordon had completed the two breast-pieces when the battle of Culloden destroyed any hope of a Stuart restoration.

These two vests, together with the embroidered pieces, a letter from the Young Chevalier to Patrick Smyth dated 14th August 1745, and two gold rings given in 1715 by the Old Chevalier to Alexander Gordon of Auchintoul – this same Alexander was Mrs Gordon's step-grandfather and had commanded the right wing of the Jacobite army at Dunblane under the Earl of Mar in 1715 – were long treasured by the family. This extremely interesting collection of relics was finally dispersed at Aberdeen, on 3rd November 1898, at the Union Bridge Auction Rooms, and the vests and embroidery have not yet, despite Mrs Robinson's attempts, been discovered.³

Following the battle of Culloden, John Gordon escaped to Beldorney, where he was hidden in the secret chamber already described between the floor of Mrs Gordon's sitting-room and the ceiling of the floor below. The following description is taken from a family MS:

'While Cumberland's soldiers were scouring the country to hunt up and secure the Prince and his adherents a detachment arrived at Beldorney and insisted on searching the house. Lady Beldorney (as she was called according to the custom of those days) was a girl of great spirit and strength of character. She gave orders that the men should be admitted and allowed to make their search, while she remained quietly seated at the spinet or harpsicord, which she had drawn over the trap door leading to the secret chamber.

'The soldiers search everywhere without discovering any trace of the fugitive: he appears to have remained unmolested, probably owing to the interest of the Duke of Gordon.

'The Laird's place of concealment was in the old part of the house, and a person knowing of its existence may observe that the level of the window compared with the others leaves a space to be accounted for; such irregularities are not uncommon in old castles and houses built for strength.

'There is also near it a room formerly used as a chapel and approached by a corkscrew staircase.'

John Gordon was not the only fugitive at Beldorney. In his memoirs (1958, 151-2) the Chevalier de Johnstone described his wanderings after Culloden. This extract starts when he was at Park.

'About five in the morning I took leave of Mrs Menzie who gave me a letter to Mr Gordon of Kildrummy⁴, one of her relations, who then resided about twelve miles from the castle of Park,⁵ and she gave me a servant by way of a guide, whom I sent back as soon as we were in sight of the mansion in

question. Upon asking for Mr Gordon I was told he had just gone out but that he would return to dinner; and the servant added, with a tone of indifference, that if I were cold, I might in the meantime go to the kitchen and warm myself. As it was very cold I accepted his offer and entered the kitchen where I found a number of servants assembled round the fire. Believing themselves of a class above mine, they allowed me to remain standing a long time before inviting me to sit down and join their number, which I did very respectfully. They embarrassed me very much by their incessant questions. One lackey asked me if I had been long in the service of Mrs Menzie? I answered, with an air of the utmost humility and submission, that I had not yet been two months. A chambermaid whispered to a lackey sufficiently loud to allow me to hear her, that Mrs Menzie ought to be ashamed to send so shabbily dressed a servant with commissions to her master. Their jargon, stupidity and impertinence wearied me to death and irritated me for two long hours until Mr Gordon at length arrived to deliver me.

'I delivered to him Mrs Menzie's letter before his servants and continued following him to his apartment. As soon as I saw an opportunity, I informed him who I was and begged him to procure me a guide to conduct me to the first arm of the sea, as I was unacquainted with the country. He appeared greatly affected with my situation, showed me every possible kindness and immediately sent a servant with an order to one of his gamekeepers to procure me a guide to his estate of Kildrummy, sixteen miles distant.'

Mr Gordon's second brother, George, was also out and figures in Lord Roseberry's List, incorrectly, as Charles (Charles was the youngest of the brothers, aged eight at this time). In the latter part of 1745 he was sent into East Lothian to search the house of Government supporters for arms and horses. Whilst there he lost a letter from his mother, which was picked up on the road near Tranent and handed to the authorities:

'George Gordon of Beldorney att Edenbrought.

'Dr George - I am glad to find by accident you are weil, tho you did not writt me all the whill ye wase in the Country. That I atterbutt more to the herry than neglect, whoever writt by post on the first occation what regiment or company ye are in, and you Driction. My Dr George be ernest at the Almighty God to preserve, and give scuckess to the prince viceruss armess, behav lik a man of honour and your father son. We are very wull all hear, but the news of the last engagement; the falls word of our frinds death put us all in alarme, however I am hartly sorry Tillary death in so bad a cass. Your Brother is at fatternear⁶ he took his Live of me. What he is to do I know not. Giv my complayment to Capt. Cook Stron. Your Uncle Sandy I saw his wiffe weil on Sunday last. Cass him accept his word. Mr Brocky your sister and all hear jines in this complayment to you and to all frinds - and ever I am Der George your effe Mother whill
Mary Gordon.⁷

George surrendered after Culloden but was detained on suspicion of being a rebel officer at Huntley in September 1746 and was in prison in Aberdeen in December of the same year. Nothing is known of his later life, although there is a family tradition that he was lost at sea in the Downs.

NOTES

- 1 According to a Discharge dated 2nd May 1656 by which John Gordon and his mother, Janet Lyon, renounce their title to the lands of Beldorney, George was 'non compos' at that date (Gordon Castle Papers. CD44/14).
- 2 'They have ruined Edlinglassie's House and Land at the greatest rate imaginable; as also Cairn-burrow's, Aswanlie's and Beldorme's (Beldornies) though a Papist' (the report containing this statement was dated Alford 9th June 1689). *An Account of the Proceedings of the Estates in Scotland 1689-1690*, vol 1, p 131, Edinburgh 1954 (vol XLVI of 3rd Series of Publications of the Scottish History Society).
- 3 Taylor and Taylor 1928, 246-7. The Vests as described by the Auctioneer:
Item:—'Light yellow satin vest: yellow satin vest richly embroidered.' (These two items were bought for £33 15s 0d and £51 respectively by Miss Shirries, Bon-Accord Crescent, 'on behalf of a London Gentleman with Jacobite proclivities'.)
Item:—'Crimson silk vest with massive gold embroidery begun by Mrs Gordon, but unfinished'. (Bought by Mr Hay, iron-merchant, Aberdeen for £22.)
- 4 John Gordon, 10th of Beldorney and 2nd of Kildrummy.
- 5 Twelve Scotch miles that is - the distance from Park to Beldorney is nearer sixteen miles.

- 6 fatternear: Mrs Gordon's somewhat idiosyncratic spelling of Fetternear, the seat of the Roman Catholic Leslies of Balquhain, near Kemnay in Midmar.
- 7 Mary Gordon was the daughter of John Gordon of Wardhouse.

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a View from SW



b View from SE



c Courtyard showing the 1679 entrance and the 1566 blocked entrance