

## A funeral hatchment in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire

by Charles J Burnett

Above the entrance door to the town council chamber in Fraserburgh there hangs a funeral hatchment showing the arms of the 16th Lord Saltoun (pl 28c). With impending local government reorganisation and the ensuing possible dispersal of burgh items it might be useful to record the Fraserburgh hatchment in these pages. The funeral hatchment was the heraldic record of the arms and honours of a deceased person which was displayed on the exterior of the deceased's house or in the church of interment. They are commonly found in English and North European churches and although used in Scotland during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there are fewer examples to be found in this country.

The Saltoun hatchment is a little more elaborate than usual as it shows two oval shields side by side, the dexter slightly overlapping the sinister, displaying the deceased's arms impaled with those of his wife. From the totally black background we can determine that Lady Saltoun predeceased her husband. The arms of Lord Saltoun can be described thus: 1st and 4th azure, 3 cinque foils argent, for FRASER; 2nd or, a lion rampant gules, surmounted of a ribbon sable, for ABERNETHY; 3rd argent, 3 piles gules for WISHART. The shield is encircled with the Collar and Motto of the Order of the Thistle. The second shield has the arms of Lord Saltoun impaled with the assumed arms of his wife, Catherine Thurlow (died 1826), a natural daughter of Edward, Lord Chancellor Thurlow. Surmounting the shields is a baronial coronet upon which stands the crest, an ostrich holding a horseshoe in its beak. The arms are supported by two angels with wings expanded and endorsed proper and vested in long garments or. The supporters stand on an architectural compartment decorated with the second of the two Saltoun mottoes 'In God is all', the first being 'The glory of the honourable is to fear God'. As an alternative to mantling the arms are shown against a robe of estate, a heraldic feature more commonly found on the Continent than in Britain and possible here used as an indication that the deceased was a Representative Peer for Scotland. Below the compartment are hung the decorations awarded to Lord Saltoun during his distinguished military career. From left to right these are: The Order of Maria Teresa of Austria, the Order of the Thistle, the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, the Grand Cross of the Hanoverian Guelphic Order and the Order of St George of Russia. The 16th Lord Saltoun also held the Waterloo, Peninsular and China medals. The hatchment is painted on stretched canvas and with frame measures 6 ft 2 in (1.88m) square.

Alexander George Fraser, 16th Lord Saltoun (1758–1853) was a Representative Peer for Scotland from 1807 to 1853, a Lt General in the Army who served with the Guards in Sicily and Spain during 1806 and was present at Corunna. He took part in the Walcheran Expedition in 1809 and saw active service again in Spain from 1811 to 1814. He was present at Quatre Bras and during the Battle of Waterloo accepted the surrender of General Cambronne, commander of the Imperial Guard. While taking part in the capture of Peronne he was saved from a fatal wound when a bullet struck a purse of gold ducats which was in his pocket. He died of dropsy on 18th

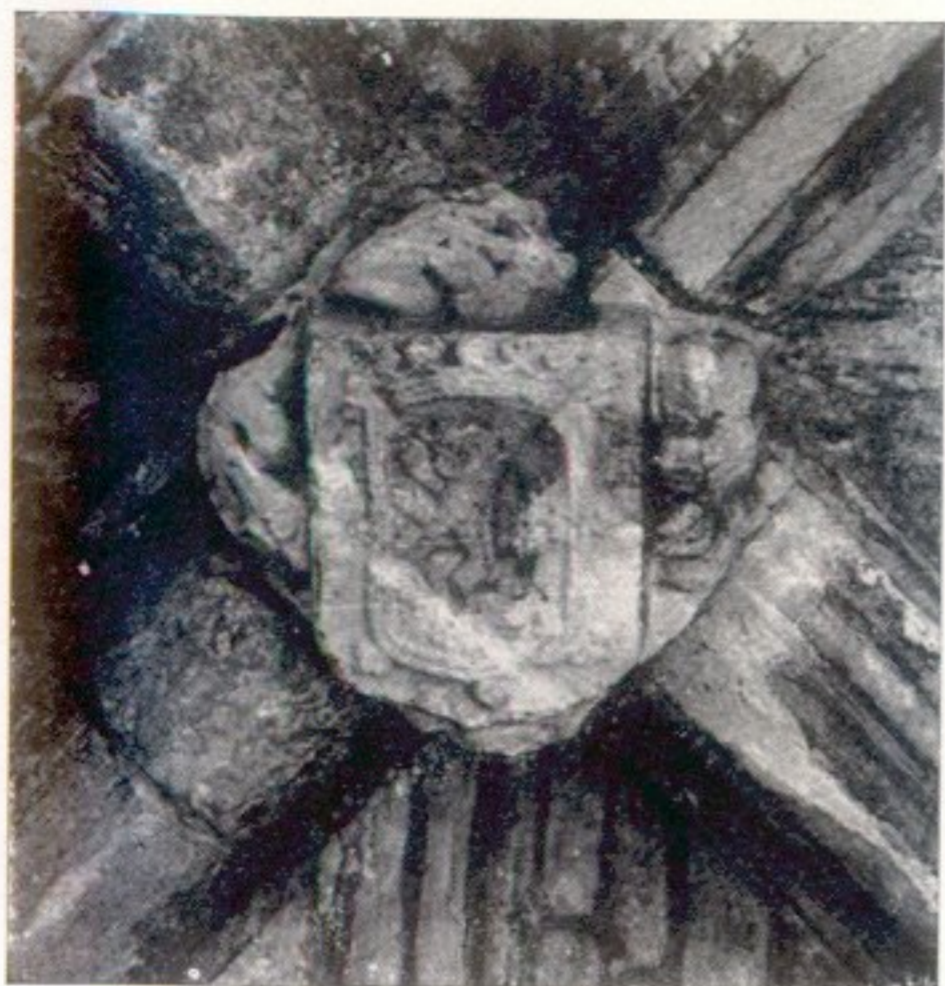
August 1853 at his Shooting Lodge of Auchindroth near Rothes in Banffshire. His remains were conveyed to his family seat of Philorth House near Fraserburgh from where on 25th August accompanied by 'a solemn procession of the tenantry of his estates and the feuars of the town of Fraserburgh' his body was taken and placed in the family mausoleum at Fraserburgh.

No documentary evidence has been found indicating what part the hatchment played in the funeral obsequies; presumably after the required period of mourning it was handed over to the Town Council of Fraserburgh and laid up in its present position.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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a Royal arms, Jedburgh Abbey



b Boss in choir of Seton Collegiate Church



c Hatchment of Alexander George Fraser, 16th Lord Saltoun (1758-1853)