

= Dunnottar Castle =

Dunnottar Castle (Scottish Gaelic : Dùn Fhoithear , " fort on the shelving slope ") is a ruined medieval fortress located upon a rocky headland on the north @-@ east coast of Scotland , about 3 kilometres (1 @.@ 9 mi) south of Stonehaven . The surviving buildings are largely of the 15th and 16th centuries , but the site is believed to have been fortified in the Early Middle Ages . Dunnottar has played a prominent role in the history of Scotland through to the 18th @-@ century Jacobite risings because of its strategic location and defensive strength . Dunnottar is best known as the place where the Honours of Scotland , the Scottish crown jewels , were hidden from Oliver Cromwell 's invading army in the 17th century . The property of the Keiths from the 14th century , and the seat of the Earl Marischal , Dunnottar declined after the last Earl forfeited his titles by taking part in the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 . The castle was restored in the 20th century and is now open to the public .

The ruins of the castle are spread over 1 @.@ 4 hectares (3 @.@ 5 acres) , surrounded by steep cliffs that drop to the North Sea , 50 metres (160 ft) below . A narrow strip of land joins the headland to the mainland , along which a steep path leads up to the gatehouse . The various buildings within the castle include the 14th @-@ century tower house as well as the 16th @-@ century palace . Dunnottar Castle is a scheduled monument , and twelve structures on the site are listed buildings .

= = History = =

= = = Early Middle Ages = = =

A chapel at Dunnottar is said to have been founded by St Ninian in the 5th century , although it is not clear when the site was first fortified , but in any case the legend is late and highly implausible . Possibly the earliest written reference to the site is found in the Annals of Ulster which record two sieges of " Dùn Foither " in 681 and 694 . The earlier event has been interpreted as an attack by Brude , the Pictish king of Fortriu , to extend his power over the north @-@ east coast of Scotland . The Scottish Chronicle records that King Domnall II , the first ruler to be called rí Alban (King of Alba) , was killed at Dunnottar during an attack by Vikings in 900 . King Aethelstan of Wessex led a force into Scotland in 934 , and raided as far north as Dunnottar according to the account of Symeon of Durham . W. D. Simpson speculated that a motte might lie under the present castle , but excavations in the 1980s failed to uncover substantive evidence of early medieval fortification . The discovery of a group of Pictish stones at Dunnicaer , a nearby sea stack , has prompted speculation that " Dùn Foither " was actually located on the adjacent headland of Bowduns , 0 @.@ 5 kilometres (0 @.@ 31 mi) to the north .

= = = Later Middle Ages = = =

During the reign of King William the Lion (ruled 1165 ? 1214) Dunnottar was a center of local administration for The Mearns . The castle is named in the Roman de Fergus , an early 13th @-@ century Arthurian romance , in which the hero Fergus must travel to Dunnottar to retrieve a magic shield . In May 1276 a church on the site was consecrated by William Wishart , Bishop of St Andrews . The poet Blind Harry relates that William Wallace captured Dunnottar from the English in 1297 , during the Wars of Scottish Independence . He is said to have imprisoned 4 @,@ 000 defeated English soldiers in the church and burned them alive . In 1336 Edward III of England ordered William Sinclair , 8th Baron of Roslin , to sail eight ships to the partially ruined Dunnottar for the purpose of rebuilding and fortifying the site as a forward resupply base for his northern campaign . Sinclair took with him 160 soldiers , horses , and a corps of masons and carpenters . Edward himself visited in July , but the English efforts were undone before the end of the year when the Scottish Regent Sir Andrew Murray led a force that captured and again destroyed the defences

of Dunnottar .

In the 14th century Dunnottar was granted to William de Moravia , 5th Earl of Sutherland (d.1370) , and in 1346 a licence to crenellate was issued by David II . Around 1359 William Keith , Marischal of Scotland , married Margaret Fraser , niece of Robert the Bruce , and was granted the barony of Dunnottar at this time . Keith then gave the lands of Dunnottar to his daughter Christian and son @-@ in @-@ law William Lindsay of Byres , but in 1392 an excambion (exchange) was agreed whereby Keith regained Dunnottar and Lindsay took lands in Fife . William Keith completed construction of the tower house at Dunnottar , but was excommunicated for building on the consecrated ground associated with the parish church . Keith had provided a new parish church closer to Stonehaven , but was forced to write to the Pope , Benedict XIII , who issued a bull in 1395 lifting the excommunication . William Keith 's descendents were created Earls Marischal in the mid 15th century , and they held Dunottar until the 18th century .

= = = 16th century rebuilding = = =

Through the 16th century the Keiths improved and expanded their principal seats : at Dunnottar and also at Keith Marischal in East Lothian . James IV visited Dunnottar in 1504 , and in 1531 James V exempted the Earl 's men from military service on the grounds that Dunnottar was one of the " principall strenthis of our realme " . Mary , Queen of Scots , visited in 1562 after the Battle of Corrichie , and returned in 1564 . James VI stayed for 10 days in 1580 , as part of a progress through Fife and Angus , during which a meeting of the Privy Council was convened at Dunnottar . During a rebellion of Catholic nobles in 1592 , Dunnottar was captured by a Captain Carr on behalf of the Earl of Huntly , but was restored to Lord Marischal just a few weeks later .

In 1581 George Keith succeeded as 5th Earl Marischal , and began a large scale reconstruction that saw the medieval fortress converted into a more comfortable home . The founder of Marischal College in Aberdeen , the 5th Earl valued Dunnottar as much for its dramatic situation as for its security . A " palace " comprising a series of ranges around a quadrangle was built on the north @-@ eastern cliffs , creating luxurious living quarters with sea views . The 13th @-@ century chapel was restored and incorporated into the quadrangle . An impressive stone gatehouse was constructed , now known as Benholm 's Lodging , featuring numerous gun ports facing the approach . Although impressive , these are likely to have been fashionable embellishments rather than genuine defensive features .

= = = Civil wars = = =

In 1639 William Keith , 7th Earl Marischal , came out in support of the Covenanters , a Presbyterian movement who opposed the established Episcopal Church and the changes which Charles I was attempting to impose . With James Graham , 1st Marquess of Montrose , he marched against the Catholic James Gordon , 2nd Viscount Aboyne , Earl of Huntly , and defeated an attempt by the Royalists to seize Stonehaven . However , when Montrose changed sides to the Royalists and marched north , Marischal remained in Dunnottar , even when given command of the area by Parliament , and even when Montrose burned Stonehaven .

Marischal then joined with the Engager faction , who had made a deal with the king , and led a troop of horse to the Battle of Preston (1648) in support of the royalists . Following the execution of Charles I in 1649 , the Engagers gave their allegiance to his son and heir : Charles II was proclaimed king , arriving in Scotland in June 1650 . He visited Dunnottar in July 1650 , but his presence in Scotland prompted Oliver Cromwell to lead a force into Scotland , defeating the Scots at Dunbar in September 1650 .

= = = The Honours of Scotland = = =

Charles II was crowned at Scone Palace on 1 January 1651 , at which the Honours of Scotland (the regalia of crown , sword and sceptre) were used . However , with Cromwell 's troops in Lothian ,

the honours could not be returned to Edinburgh . The Earl Marischal , as Marischal of Scotland , had formal responsibility for the honours , and in June the Privy Council duly decided to place them at Dunnottar . They were brought to the castle by Katherine Drummond , hidden in sacks of wool . Sir George Ogilvie (or Ogilvy) of Barras was appointed lieutenant @-@ governor of the castle , and given responsibility for its defence .

In November 1651 Cromwell 's troops called on Ogilvie to surrender , but he refused . During the subsequent blockade of the castle , the removal of the Honours of Scotland was planned by Elizabeth Douglas , wife of Sir George Ogilvie , and Christian Fletcher , wife of James Granger , minister of Kinneff Parish Church . The king 's papers were first removed from the castle by Anne Lindsay , a kinswoman of Elizabeth Douglas , who walked through the besieging force with the papers sewn into her clothes . Two stories exist regarding the removal of the honours themselves . Fletcher stated in 1664 that over the course of three visits to the castle in February and March 1652 , she carried away the crown , sceptre , sword and sword @-@ case hidden amongst sacks of goods . Another account , given in the 18th century by a tutor to the Earl Marischal , records that the honours were lowered from the castle onto the beach , where they were collected by Fletcher 's servant and carried off in a creel (basket) of seaweed . Having smuggled the honours from the castle , Fletcher and her husband buried them under the floor of the Old Kirk at Kinneff .

Meanwhile , by May 1652 the commander of the blockade , Colonel Thomas Morgan , had taken delivery of the artillery necessary for the reduction of Dunnottar . Ogilvie surrendered on 24 May , on condition that the garrison could go free . Finding the honours gone , the Cromwellians imprisoned Ogilvie and his wife in the castle until the following year , when a false story was put about suggesting that the honours had been taken overseas . Much of the castle property was removed , including twenty @-@ one brass cannons , and Marischal was required to sell further lands and possessions to pay fines imposed by Cromwell 's government .

At the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 , the honours were removed from Kinneff Church and returned to the king . Ogilvie quarrelled with Marischal 's mother over who would take credit for saving the honours , though he was eventually rewarded with a baronetcy . Fletcher was awarded 2 @, @ 000 merks by Parliament but the sum was never paid .

= = = Whigs and Jacobites = = =

Religious and political conflicts continued to be played out at Dunnottar through the 17th and early 18th centuries . In 1685 , during the rebellion of the Earl of Argyll against the new king James VII , 167 Covenanters were seized and held in a cellar at Dunnottar . The prisoners included 122 men and 45 women associated with the Whigs , an anti @-@ Royalist group within the Covenanter movement , and had refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new king . The Whigs were imprisoned from 24 May until late July . A group of 25 escaped , although two of these were killed in a fall from the cliffs , and another 15 were recaptured . Five prisoners died in the vault , and 37 of the Whigs were released after taking the oath of allegiance . The remaining prisoners were transported to Perth Amboy , New Jersey , as part of a colonisation scheme devised by George Scot of Pitlochrie . Many , like Scot himself , died on the voyage . The cellar , located beneath the " King 's Bedroom " in the 16th @-@ century castle buildings , has since become known as the " Whigs ' Vault " .

Both the Jacobites (supporters of the exiled Stuarts) and the Hanoverians (supporters of George I and his descendents) used Dunnottar Castle . In 1689 during Viscount Dundee 's campaign in support of the deposed James VII , the castle was garrisoned for William and Mary with Lord Marischal appointed captain . Seventeen suspected Jacobites from Aberdeen were seized and held in the fortress for around three weeks , including George Liddell , professor of mathematics at Marischal College . In the Jacobite Rising of 1715 George Keith , 10th Earl Marischal , took an active role with the rebels , leading cavalry at the Battle of Sheriffmuir . After the subsequent abandonment of the rising Lord Marischal fled to the Continent , eventually becoming French ambassador for Frederick the Great of Prussia . Meanwhile , in 1716 , his titles and estates including Dunnottar were declared forfeit to the crown .

= = = Later history = = =

The seized estates of the Earl Marischal were purchased in 1720 for £ 41 @, @ 172 , by the York Buildings Company who dismantled much of the castle . In 1761 the Earl briefly returned to Scotland and bought back Dunnottar only to sell it five years later to Alexander Keith , an Edinburgh lawyer who served as Knight Marischal of Scotland . Dunnottar was inherited in 1852 by Sir Patrick Keith @-@ Murray of Ochertyre , who in turn sold it in July 1873 to Major Alexander Innes of Cowie and Raemoir for about £ 80 @, @ 000 . It was purchased by Weetman Pearson , 1st Viscount Cowdray , in 1925 after which his wife embarked on a programme of repairs . Since that time the castle has remained in the family , and has been open to the public , attracting 52 @, @ 500 visitors in 2009 .

Dunnottar Castle , and the headland on which it stands , was designated as a scheduled monument in 1970 . In 1972 twelve of the structures at Dunnottar were listed . Three buildings are listed at category A as being of " national importance " : the keep ; the entrance gateway ; and Benholm 's Lodging . The remaining listings are at category B as being of " regional importance " . The Hon. Charles Anthony Pearson , the younger son of the 3rd Viscount Cowdray , currently owns and runs Dunnottar Castle which is part of the 210 @-@ square @-@ kilometre (52 @, @ 000 @-@ acre) Dunecht Estates . Portions of the 1990 film Hamlet , starring Mel Gibson and Glenn Close , were shot there .

= = Description = =

Dunnottar 's strategic location allowed its owners to control the coastal terrace between the North Sea cliffs and the hills of the Mounth , 3 @. @ 5 kilometres (2 @. @ 2 mi) inland , which enabled access to and from the north @-@ east of Scotland . The site is accessed via a steep , 800 @-@ metre (2 @, @ 600 ft) footpath (with modern staircases) from a car park on the coastal road , or via a 3 @-@ kilometre (1 @. @ 9 mi) cliff @-@ top path from Stonehaven . Dunnottar 's several buildings , put up between the 13th and 17th centuries , are arranged across a headland covering around 1 @. @ 4 hectares (3 @. @ 5 acres) . The dominant building , viewed from the land approach , is the 14th @-@ century keep or tower house . The other principal buildings are the gatehouse ; the chapel ; and the 16th @-@ century " palace " which incorporates the " Whigs ' Vault " .

= = = Defences = = =

The approach to the castle is overlooked by outworks on the " Fiddle Head " , a promontory on the western side of the headland . The entrance is through the well @-@ defended main gate , set in a curtain wall which entirely blocks a cleft in the rocky cliffs . The gate has a portcullis and has been partly blocked up . Alongside the main gate is the 16th @-@ century Benholm 's Lodging , a five @-@ storey building cut into the rock , which incorporated a prison with apartments above . Three tiers of gun ports face outwards from the lower floors of Benholm 's Lodging , while inside the main gate , a group of four gun ports face the entrance . The entrance passage then turns sharply to the left , running underground through two tunnels to emerge near the tower house . Simpson contends that these defences are " without exception the strongest in Scotland " , although later writers have doubted the effectiveness of the gun ports . Cruden notes that the alignment of the gun ports in Benholm 's Lodging , facing across the approach rather than along , means that they are of limited efficiency . The practicality of the gun ports facing the entrance has also been questioned , though an inventory of 1612 records that four brass cannons were placed here .

A second access to the castle leads up from a rocky cove , the aperture to a marine cave on the northern side of the Dunnottar cliffs into which a small boat could be brought . From here a steep path leads to the well @-@ fortified postern gate on the cliff top , which in turn offers access to the castle via the Water Gate in the palace . Artillery defences , taking the form of earthworks , surround the north @-@ west corner of the castle , facing inland , and the south @-@ east , facing seaward .

A small sentry box or guard house stands by the eastern battery , overlooking the coast .

= = = Tower house and surrounding buildings = = =

The late 14th @-@ century tower house has a stone @-@ vaulted basement , and originally had three further storeys and a garret above . Measuring 12 by 11 metres (39 by 36 ft) , the tower house stood 15 metres (49 ft) high to its gable . The principal rooms included a great hall and a private chamber for the lord , with bedrooms upstairs . Beside the tower house is a storehouse , and a blacksmith 's forge with a large chimney . A stable block is ranged along the southern edge of the headland . Nearby is Waterton 's Lodging , also known as the Priest 's House , built around 1574 , possibly for the use of William Keith (died 1580) , son of the 4th Earl Marischal . This small self @-@ contained house includes a hall and kitchen at ground level , with private chambers above , and has a projecting spiral stair on the north side . It is named for Thomas Forbes of Waterton , an attendant of the 7th Earl .

= = = The palace = = =

The palace , to the north @-@ east of the headland , was built in the late 16th century and early to mid @-@ 17th century . It comprises three main wings set out around a quadrangle , and for the most part is probably the work of the 5th Earl Marischal who succeeded in 1581 . It provided extensive and comfortable accommodation to replace the rooms in the tower house . In its long , low design it has been compared to contemporary English buildings , in contrast to the Scottish tradition of taller towers still prevalent in the 16th century . Seven identical lodgings are arranged along the west range , each opening onto the quadrangle and including windows and fireplace . Above the lodgings the west range comprised a 35 @-@ metre (115 ft) gallery . Now roofless , the gallery originally had an elaborate oak ceiling , and on display was a Roman tablet taken from the Antonine Wall . At the north end of the gallery was a drawing room linked to the north range . The gallery could also be accessed from the Silver House to the south , which incorporated a broad stairway with a treasury above .

The basement of the north range incorporates kitchens and stores , with a dining room and great chamber above . At ground floor level is the Water Gate , between the north and west ranges , which gives access to the postern on the northern cliffs . The east and north ranges are linked via a rectangular stair . The east range has a larder , brewhouse and bakery at ground level , with a suite of apartments for the Countess above . A north @-@ east wing contains the Earl 's apartments , and includes the " King 's Bedroom " in which Charles II stayed . In this room is a carved stone inscribed with the arms of the 7th Earl and his wife , and the date 1654 . Below these rooms is the Whigs ' Vault , a cellar measuring 16 by 4 @-@ 5 metres (52 by 15 ft) . This cellar , in which the Covenanters were held in 1685 , has a large eastern window , as well as a lower vault accessed via a trap @-@ door in the floor . Of the chambers in the palace , only the dining room and the Silver House remain roofed , having been restored in the 1920s . The central area contains a circular cistern or fish pond , 16 metres (52 ft) across and 7 @-@ 6 metres (25 ft) deep , and a bowling green is located to the west . At the south @-@ east corner of the quadrangle is the chapel , consecrated in 1276 and largely rebuilt in the 16th century . Medieval walling and two 13th @-@ century windows remain , and there is a graveyard to the south .