

= Dunrobin Castle =

Dunrobin Castle is a stately home in Sutherland , in the Highland area of Scotland , and the family seat of the Earl of Sutherland and the Clan Sutherland . It is located 1 mile ( 1 @. @ 6 km ) north of Golspie , and approximately 5 miles ( 8 @. @ 0 km ) south of Brora , overlooking the Dornoch Firth .

Dunrobin 's origins lie in the Middle Ages , but most of the present building and the gardens were added by Sir Charles Barry between 1835 and 1850 . Some of the original building is visible in the interior courtyard , despite a number of expansions and alterations that made it the largest house in the north of Scotland . After being used as a boarding school for seven years , it is now open to the public .

= = History = =

The lands of Sutherland were acquired before 1211 , by Hugh , Lord of Duffus , grandson of the Flemish nobleman Freskin . The Earldom of Sutherland was created around 1235 for Hugh 's son , William , surmised to have descended from the House of Moray by the female line . The castle may have been built on the site of an early medieval fort , but the oldest surviving portion , with an iron yett , is first mentioned in 1401 . The earliest castle was a square keep with walls over 6 feet ( 1 @. @ 8 m ) thick . Unusually , the ceilings of each floor were formed by stone vaults rather than being timber . The castle is thought to be named after Robert , the 6th Earl of Sutherland ( d.1427 ) .

Dunrobin Castle was built in the midst of a tribal society , with Norse and Gaelic in use at the time . Robert the Bruce planted the Gordons , who supported his claim to the crown , at Huntly in Aberdeenshire , and they were created Earls of Huntly in 1445 . The Earldom passed to the Gordon family in the 16th century when the 8th Earl of Sutherland gave his daughter Elizabeth in marriage to Adam Gordon . After the 8th Earl died in 1508 , Elizabeth 's elder brother was declared heir to the title , but a bribe ( writ ) of idiocy brought against him and his younger brother by the Gordons meant that the possession of the estate went to Adam Gordon in 1512 .

In 1518 , in the absence of Adam Gordon , the castle was captured by Alexander Sutherland , the legitimate heir to the Earldom of Sutherland . The Gordons quickly retook the castle , captured Alexander and placed his head on a spear on top of the castle tower . Alexander 's son John made an attempt on the castle in 1550 , but was killed in the castle garden . During the more peaceful 17th century , the keep was extended with the addition of a large house , built around a courtyard to the south @-@ west .

During the Jacobite Rising of 1745 , the Jacobites under Charles Edward Stuart stormed Dunrobin Castle without warning , because the Clan Sutherland supported the British government . The 17th Earl of Sutherland , who had changed his surname from Gordon to Sutherland , narrowly escaped them , exiting through a back door . He sailed for Aberdeen where he joined the Duke of Cumberland 's army . On the death of the 18th Earl in 1766 , the house passed to his daughter , Elizabeth , who married the politician George Leveson @-@ Gower , later created 1st Duke of Sutherland . In 1785 , the house was altered and extended again .

Between 1835 and 1850 , Sir Charles Barry remodelled the castle in the Scottish Baronial style for the 2nd Duke of Sutherland . Barry had been the architect for the Palace of Westminster , home to the House of Commons , and was much in demand . The 14th @-@ century tower , and the 17th @-@ century and 18th @-@ century extensions , were retained , and survive within Barry 's 19th @-@ century work .

Dunrobin Castle railway station , on the Far North Line , was opened in 1870 , as a private station for the castle . The present waiting room was constructed in 1902 , and is a category B listed building .

In 1915 , the building was in use as a naval hospital when fire damaged much of the interior , but was confined to the newer additions by Barry . Scottish architect Sir Robert Lorimer was engaged to renovate the house following the First World War . When the 5th Duke died in 1963 , the Earldom and the house went to his niece , the current Countess of Sutherland , while the Dukedom had to

pass to a male heir and went to John Egerton , Earl of Ellesmere . Between 1965 and 1972 , the house became a boarding school for boys , taking on forty boys and five teachers in its first year . Since 1973 , the house and grounds have been open to the public , with private accommodation retained for the use of the Sutherland family .

#### = = Architecture = =

There are 189 rooms within the castle , making it the largest in the northern Highlands . Much of Barry 's interior was destroyed by the fire of 1915 , leading to the restoration by Sir Robert Lorimer , although he incorporated surviving 17th @-@ century and 18th @-@ century work , including wood carvings attributed to Grinling Gibbons . Externally , the castle has elements inspired by the work of the French architect Viollet @-@ le @-@ Duc , such as the pyramidal roof over the main entrance .

The portion built by Barry uses freestone in broadly the same style as the turreted parts from the 16th and 17th centuries , but borrows significant elements from the Château style . A large quadrangular pile of four stories , with towers at each corner , connects to the older castle by a building of three stories and containing the stately apartments . The tallest tower , containing the entrance , is 135 feet ( 41 m ) high , the round towers being 115 feet ( 35 m ) high and the clock tower 125 feet ( 38 m ) .

St. John 's Well , in the courtyard of the oldest portion of the castle , is one of the deepest draw wells in Scotland , at 92 feet ( 28 m ) . There is no indication as to the origin of the name .

#### = = = Interior = = =

In the entrance hall is a frieze of the armorials used by past earls of Sutherland . The main stairway , decorated with portraits of the Leveson @-@ Gower family , is around 30 feet ( 9 @.@ 1 m ) wide and 50 feet ( 15 m ) high . The panelled dining room , 40 feet ( 12 m ) long and 22 feet ( 6 @.@ 7 m ) wide , has a wall @-@ top Italian Grisaille frieze and a Khorassan carpet , as well as chairs containing the needlework of the 5th Duke 's wife . The drawing room , made from two previous rooms by Lorimer during his restoration of the castle , looks out over the gardens and sea , and contains large Canalettos and 18th @-@ century tapestries , as well as portraits by Hoppner and Reynolds . Housing over 10 @,@ 000 books , the library features a painting by Philip de László of Duchess Eileen , as well as a mahogany Chippendale table .

#### = = = Gardens = = =

The French influence extends into the gardens , completed in 1850 , with Barry taking inspiration from the French formal style of the Gardens of Versailles . Each parterre is set around a circular pool with a fountain , with the essential layout the same since it was created in around 1848 . The total landscaped area is 1 @,@ 379 acres ( 558 ha ) .

#### = = = Museum = = =

A museum displays the trophy heads of animals shot by family members on safari , ethnographic items from around the world and an important collection of archaeological artifacts . The museum retains its Victorian @-@ Edwardian arrangement , and is housed in an 18th @-@ century summer @-@ house adjoining the formal gardens . Historically , the castle is a category A listed building , and the gardens are included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland .

The castle is open to visitors between April and October each year . Falconry displays are held in the castle 's gardens by a resident Falconer .