

= Aberdour Castle =

Aberdour Castle is located in the village of Easter Aberdour , Fife , Scotland . Parts of the castle date from around 1200 , making Aberdour one of the two oldest datable standing castles in Scotland , along with Castle Sween in Argyll , which was built at around the same time .

The earliest part of the castle comprised a modest hall house , on a site overlooking the Dour Burn . Over the next 400 years , the castle was successively expanded according to contemporary architectural ideas . The hall house became a tower house in the 15th century , and was extended twice in the 16th century . The final addition was made around 1635 , with refined Renaissance details , and the whole was complemented by a walled garden to the east and terraced gardens to the south . The terraces , dating from the mid @-@ 16th century , form one of the oldest gardens in Scotland , and offer extensive views across the Firth of Forth to Edinburgh .

The castle is largely the creation of the Douglas Earls of Morton , who held Aberdour from the 14th century . The earls used Aberdour as a second home until 1642 , when their primary residence , Dalkeith House , was sold . A fire in the late 17th century was followed by some repairs , but in 1725 the family purchased nearby Aberdour House , and the medieval castle was allowed to fall into decay . Today , only the 17th @-@ century wing remains roofed , while the tower has mostly collapsed . Aberdour Castle is now in the care of Historic Scotland , and is open to the public all year .

= = History = =

= = = Origins = = =

The barony of Aberdour was acquired in 1126 , by Sir Alan de Mortimer , on his marriage to Anicea , daughter of Sir John de Vipont . Sir Alan built St Fillan 's Church , which still stands , next to the castle , in around 1140 , and his family probably built the original hall house in around 1200 , or possibly even earlier . In 1216 , another Alan de Mortimer is recorded granting land to the monks of Inchcolm Abbey . There is no record of what happened to the de Mortimers , but in the early 14th century , King Robert the Bruce granted Aberdour to his kinsman , Thomas Randolph , Earl of Moray (d . 1332) . Moray 's grandson granted the barony in turn to Sir William Douglas of Liddesdale (c . 1300 @-@ 1353) , in 1342 .

In 1351 , Sir William Douglas gave the lands of Aberdour to his nephew , Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith , although he retained the castle for himself until his death two years later . The grant was confirmed by King David II in 1361 . In 1386 Aberdour and Dalkeith were combined to form a single barony , with the principal seat at Dalkeith , near Edinburgh , and Aberdour as a secondary residence . James , fourth Lord Dalkeith , succeeded to the joint barony in 1456 , and was created Earl of Morton in 1458 , prior to his marriage to Joanna , the deaf @-@ mute daughter of James I. The newly created earl expanded the existing hall house , heightening and rebuilding the structure to suit his elevated status . The second earl carried out extensions to Aberdour Castle around 1500 , building a new stair tower and south block .

= = = 16th century = = =

In 1538 James V summoned the 3rd Earl of Morton before the Privy Council , accusing him of non @-@ payment of his feudal dues , and in 1540 he banished the Earl to Inverness . Morton reached Brechin , in Angus , where he signed a deed resigning his lands to his kinsman Robert Douglas of Lochleven . Lochleven was compelled to resign the lands in turn to James V , although he was permitted to keep Aberdour Castle . After James V 's death in late 1542 , George Douglas of Pittendreich and the Earl of Arran assisted Morton in reclaiming his lands , including Aberdour . In return their sons were to marry two of Morton 's three daughters . Pittendreich 's son James (1525 @-@ 1581) married the heiress , Elizabeth , and succeeded , in 1553 , as 4th Earl of Morton .

Aberdour Castle was reserved to his mother @-@ in @-@ law , Countess Katherine , until 1564 , when Mary , Queen of Scots , confirmed Morton 's right to the whole barony of Dalkeith and Aberdour . In 1566 , Morton was involved in planning a rebellion against the Queen , which resulted in the murder of Queen Mary 's secretary , David Riccio , but failed to gain further momentum , and Morton was forced to flee to England . However , by the end of the year he had returned , and by July the following year , Mary was imprisoned and had been forced to abdicate by the Scottish noblemen . Morton was appointed Regent of Scotland , for the child King James VI in 1572 . He undertook extensions to the castle in the 1570s , rebuilding the south block of c . 1500 , and extending it further south to form the present central range . He also drew inspiration from contemporary gardens in England , such as Hampton Court , in laying out the terraced gardens . The Privy Council met at Aberdour Castle in August 1576 , but Morton 's regency came to an end in 1578 . He was later implicated in the 1567 murder of Queen Mary 's husband , Lord Darnley , and executed in 1581 on the orders of the young King .

While Morton was in prison , his lands were given to his nephew , Archibald Douglas , 8th Earl of Angus , but were granted to the Earl of Lennox after Morton 's execution . In 1587 , Lennox returned the Morton lands to Angus , who was now acknowledged as the 5th Earl of Morton . On Angus ' death , in 1588 , the earldom of Morton passed to another kinsman , William Douglas of Lochleven (d . 1606) . William 's son predeceased his father , but his widow , Jean Lyon , continued to live at Aberdour with her third husband , Alexander Lindsay , 1st Lord Spynie (d . 1607) .

= = = The later Earls = = =

William Douglas , 7th Earl of Morton (1582 @-@ 1648) , sometimes numbered as the 6th Earl , inherited Aberdour from his grandfather in 1606 . He was Treasurer of Scotland from 1630 ? 36 , and a strong supporter of the Stewart dynasty during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1639 @-@ 1651) . However , he was compelled to spend much of his fortune in the royal interest , leading him into financial difficulty , and forcing him to sell Dalkeith to the Earl of Buccleuch in 1642 . Earl William built the Renaissance east wing at Aberdour , probably around 1635 . It was certainly standing in 1647 , when an inventory records luxurious furniture , carpets , and tapestries . The walled garden was also built in the 1630s , and improvements made to the terraces . Aberdour was therefore a suitable principal residence for the Earls after the sale of Dalkeith .

The Earls of Morton continued to live at Aberdour , although they never regained their earlier high status . In 1688 the castle was badly damaged by fire , and in 1690 the 11th Earl consulted the architect James Smith . Smith surveyed the damage and drew up proposals for repairing and extending the castle with another wing north of the east range . The Earl also sought estimates for the demolition of the tower house and central range . Nothing ever came of these proposals , although repairs were carried out to the east range , being completed in 1703 .

= = = Final decline = = =

Government troops were stationed at Aberdour Castle during the Jacobite Rising of 1715 . During their stay , a second fire again caused extensive damage . In 1725 , the Mortons bought an adjacent property , Cuttlehill House , which they renamed Aberdour House , and the castle ceased to be a residence . The east range was again repaired , and was used for various purposes , including a school room , a barracks , and a masonic hall . In 1924 the castle and gardens were placed in state care , and continue to be managed by Historic Scotland as a visitor attraction . The south @-@ east wing was initially restored as a home for the custodian , and now houses a cafe . The castle is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument , and the castle , dovecot and walled garden are Category A listed buildings , the highest level of protection for a historic building in Scotland . The grounds , and surrounding former parks , are listed on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes , the national register of significant gardens .

= = Description = =

The castle originally comprised the 12th- or 13th @-@ century hall house , which was extended in the 15th century . In the 16th century the central range was built to the south of the tower house , and new inner and outer courtyard walls were constructed . The east part of the inner courtyard wall is reduced to foundations , but the base of a round tower and a porter 's lodge survive . To the west , the inner courtyard wall remains , enclosing the former service courtyard , which comprises a brewery and bakehouse , with ovens . The east range was added in the 17th century , along the south edge of the outer courtyard . The castle was originally approached from the north , with the entrance moved to the west , along with the 17th @-@ century gate , when the Aberdour railway line was constructed in 1890 .

= = = The tower house = = =

The tower house measures 16 metres (52 ft) by 11 metres (36 ft) on a skewed rectangular plan . The lower two storeys comprise the oldest part of the castle , which can be dated to around 1200 , while the upper parts are of the 15th century . The date for the original building is based on several pieces of evidence . The cubical blocks of masonry , the flat buttress at the north @-@ east , and the splaying , or widening , of the base of the walls , are all indicative of this date . The collapsed part of the south wall also formerly contained an early 13th @-@ century style double @-@ lancet window . The original structure , of a type known as a hall house , was probably of two or three storeys , comprising a first @-@ floor hall over an unvaulted basement , and may have been surrounded by a defensive timber stockade or enclosure . The 15th @-@ century rebuilding added two upper floors , and rearranged the interior . Vaulted basements , including a kitchen , and a spiral stair were inserted , and the heightened wall was topped by a parapet with machicolations ; spaces through which objects could be dropped on attackers at the base of the wall . The tower suffered major collapses in 1844 and 1919 , and today just the basement survives , with only a small section of the south @-@ east wall standing to its full height .

= = = The central range = = =

The central range was begun around 1500 , possibly as a two @-@ storey building containing a great hall , although only fragments of this building remain . The south entrance to the tower house was blocked up , and replaced with a ground floor entrance from the east . A new stair tower , with a broad spiral stair , was built at the south @-@ east corner . Originally topped by a conical roof , this stair gave access to the upper floors in the tower , and to the central range . Around 1570 , the 4th Earl of Morton rebuilt the block , extending it further south to form new apartments . This block , forming the present three @-@ storey central range , includes a vaulted kitchen and cellar in the basement , with suites of rooms above . The two bedrooms on the first floor each have their own closets and garderobes , or privies . The west apartment is accessed from the terraced garden , via another stair to the south @-@ west , and has a private stair which led up to another chamber above , suggesting that these were the Earl and Countesses apartments . The upper storey , whose timber floor is now missing , comprised three more apartments , including one over the stair . The exterior of the block is decorated with a horizontal decorative strip of masonry known as a string course . One first @-@ floor window is decorated with carved stone pilasters and strapwork , in a similar style to windows at Edinburgh Castle and Drochil Castle , in the Borders , both of which were built under Morton 's Regency .

= = = The east range = = =

The east range , of c.1635 , comprises a long , narrow building , with a short projecting wing to the south @-@ east . It is the only part of the castle still roofed . The first floor of the wing is occupied by a long gallery , accessed from the central range , with stables and storerooms below . The long gallery was used for entertaining , and , in 1647 , is recorded as containing 46 pictures and a

harpsichord , among other furniture . In the south @-@ east wing are three chambers , one on each floor , linked by a spiral stair . The first @-@ floor room has a 17th @-@ century painted ceiling , decorated with fruit , foliage , and heraldic emblems . The south @-@ east wing has crow @-@ step gables , and a sundial on one corner . The east window of the long gallery is decorated with pilasters and a pediment . The roof is of 18th @-@ century date , and is lower than the original , resulting in the loss of the triangular pediments which once topped each of the side windows .

= = = The gardens = = =

There were gardens at Aberdour Castle from at least 1540 . The terraced garden dates from the time of the 4th Earl of Morton , who succeeded in 1553 , and comprises four broad L @-@ shaped terraces . At the bottom of the terraces was an orchard , laid out in 1690 , and recently replanted . The extent of the terracing was only rediscovered following excavations in the 1970s , after parts of the garden had been in use as a market garden . Archaeological investigations were undertaken between 1977 and 1980 , to determine whether the lower terraces , which were depicted on a map of 1740 , had indeed existed . Although the foundations of the terraces were found , the remains could not be precisely dated , but are thought to have been constructed in the second half of the 16th century . The high retaining walls were rebuilt in 1981 , and the terraces were laid with grass , since the excavations had not revealed any evidence of historic planting schemes .

A 16th @-@ century " beehive " shape doocot , or pigeon house , is located to the south , containing around 600 nesting boxes . The 9 metres (30 ft) structure rises in four steps , divided by " rat courses " ; projecting ribs which prevented rats from climbing inside .

The 17th @-@ century walled garden covers around 5 @, @ 000 square metres (1 @. @ 2 acres) , with walls up to 4 metres (13 ft) high . It lies to the west of the outer courtyard , and was originally entered from doors in the south @-@ west and north @-@ east corners . These doors have carved pediments , with strapwork and the Douglas heart emblem over the west door , which led to the terraces . The east door led to St. Fillan 's Church , and is carved with the date 1632 , together with a monogram of the initials of the Earl and Countess . A kitchen garden was located across the Kirk Lane , and bee boles are located in the walls . A summer house was built into the south @-@ east garden wall in 1675 , but was demolished in the 18th century . In 1691 , botanist James Sutherland supplied exotic plants , including Persian jasmine , tamarisks and figs , to Aberdour from the Physic Garden in Edinburgh , the forerunner of the Royal Botanic Garden . The later entrance in the west wall dates from around 1740 . During the Second World War , the garden was in use as a market garden and for pig rearing . In the centre of the garden , an early 17th @-@ century polygonal sundial is mounted on a 19th @-@ century base . The sundial was brought here in the 1970s , possibly from Castle Wigg in south @-@ west Scotland .

= = Aberdour House = =

Originally named Cuttlehill , the house was built in the 17th century , and is dated 1672 . It was enlarged in 1715 by its then owner , the Earl of Moray . The Earl of Morton purchased it in 1725 , finally moving out of the dilapidated castle . In 1731 the 12th Earl consulted James Gibbs on improvements . It is uncertain how much of Gibbs ' proposals were executed , although the doorway has a surround in Gibbs ' style . By the 20th century the house was disused , and was redeveloped as private flats in the 1990s . The house is Category A listed , and formerly had its own extensive gardens , which included the surviving 12 @-@ metre (39 ft) high obelisk of 1744 ? 45 , built by the 13th Earl to be visible from his estate at Dalmahoy , across the Firth of Forth .