

Proud and powerful – the Gordons enjoyed vast authority in the north of Scotland. Their rise to greatness began with the timely decision to change sides and support Robert the Bruce before Bannockburn. A break in the male line of the Huntly branch brought in Seton blood – and a surge to even greater fame and fortune.

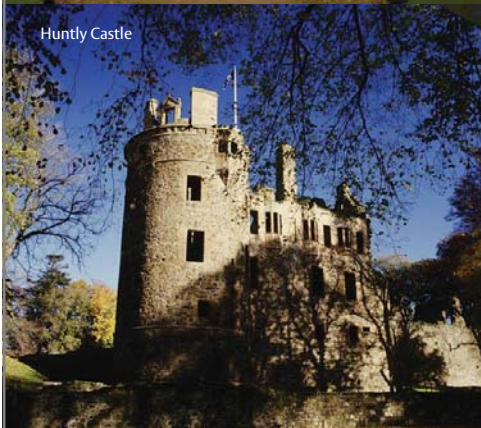


BY 1470 THE GORDONS OF HUNTLY WERE THE MOST POWERFUL FAMILY IN THE NORTH

Gordon Clan tartan



Haddo House Garden & Country Park



Huntly Castle

THE GORDONS OF HUNTLY

The Gordons of Huntly were nothing if not colourful but to begin with they were not Gordons.

Alexander Seton married the heiress Elizabeth Gordon just as the male line of Gordons of Huntly and Strathbogie died out in 1408. He was a favourite of James I and died in 1440, probably in Rhodes, carrying his master's heart on a pilgrimage.

His son, also Alexander, changed the family name to Gordon and became 1st Earl of Huntly. At this point Huntly Castle was a tower house which had replaced a timber peel.

Huntly was a key ally of James II. By the time of the earl's death, at Huntly Castle in 1470, his family was the most powerful in the north.

The castle was remodelled by George, the 4th Earl, around 1550, creating a spacious palace.

When Marie de Guise, queen-regent, visited in 1556 he tried too hard to impress with a 1,000-man guard of honour and lavish hospitality.

Marie's French Ambassador feared that such power could be a threat to the Crown and urged her to 'clip the wings' of the Cock o' the North.

Marie's daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots did the clipping in 1562 when the Gordons rebelled. They met in battle west of Aberdeen – the earl fell off his horse and died and Huntly Castle was wrecked and looted.

A surviving son, George, became the 5th Earl and revived the family fortunes.

The 6th Earl and 1st Marquis, yet another George, joined the plot of the Spanish Blanks in 1594. James VI responded by blowing up part of the castle with gunpowder donated by the people of Aberdeen.

Huntly restored the castle and his relationship with the king. His career had many ups and downs, not least because he was implicated in a series of plots and many distrusted his conversion to Protestantism.

Yet his death in 1636 was followed by a four-week procession carrying his body through northern Scotland, culminating in his burial at Elgin Cathedral.

URQUHART CASTLE

Urquhart Castle by Loch Ness was home to many noble families – and battles were fought for control of the fortress and its surrounding glens.

Among the holders was John MacDonald, Lord of the Isles, who made a treasonable pact with Edward IV of England.

In 1476 John was stripped of his earldom of Ross and James III gave control of Urquhart to George Gordon, 2nd Earl of Huntly.

Despite being the most powerful man in the north-east Huntly, failed to restore tranquillity.

Local unrest and conflict meant that by 1479 the lands were so devastated that it was impossible to collect rents.

Huntly hit on the idea of installing his loyal supporters the Grants. Peace returned and within years the rents flowed in.



Ruthven Barracks

Urquhart Castle



THE SPLENDID RUINS OF AUCHINDOUN CASTLE STAND AMIDST THE RAMPARTS OF AN IRON AGE HILL FORT

AUCHINDOUN

The hill on which Auchindoun Castle stands had a long history as a centre of power.

The splendid ruins of a medieval castle stand amidst the ramparts of an Iron Age hill fort.

Among its owners was Adam Gordon of Auchindoun, brother of the Earl of Huntly.

They tried to hold northern Scotland for Mary, Queen of Scots after she was forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son James VI.

They took control of Aberdeen with 1,500 men and attacked the provost's house.

Aberdeen reluctantly became a regional capital with Auchindoun in charge.

In November 1571 the Master of Forbes, a traditional enemy of the Gordons, attacked but was defeated at the Battle of Crabstane.

However the rebellion against James VI failed and Auchindoun fled to exile in France.

GLENBUCHAT CASTLE

What better way to celebrate a wedding than by building a castle?

Glenbuchat was created in 1590 to celebrate the union of John Gordon of Cairnbarrow and his wife Helen.

Carefully built, with fine heraldry, the castle is beautifully situated above the River Don.

It remained in the Gordon family until 1738 when it was sold to the Duffs.

The castle had previously been a noted centre of support for the Jacobite cause when it was home to the last laird John Gordon, known as 'Old Glenbucket'.

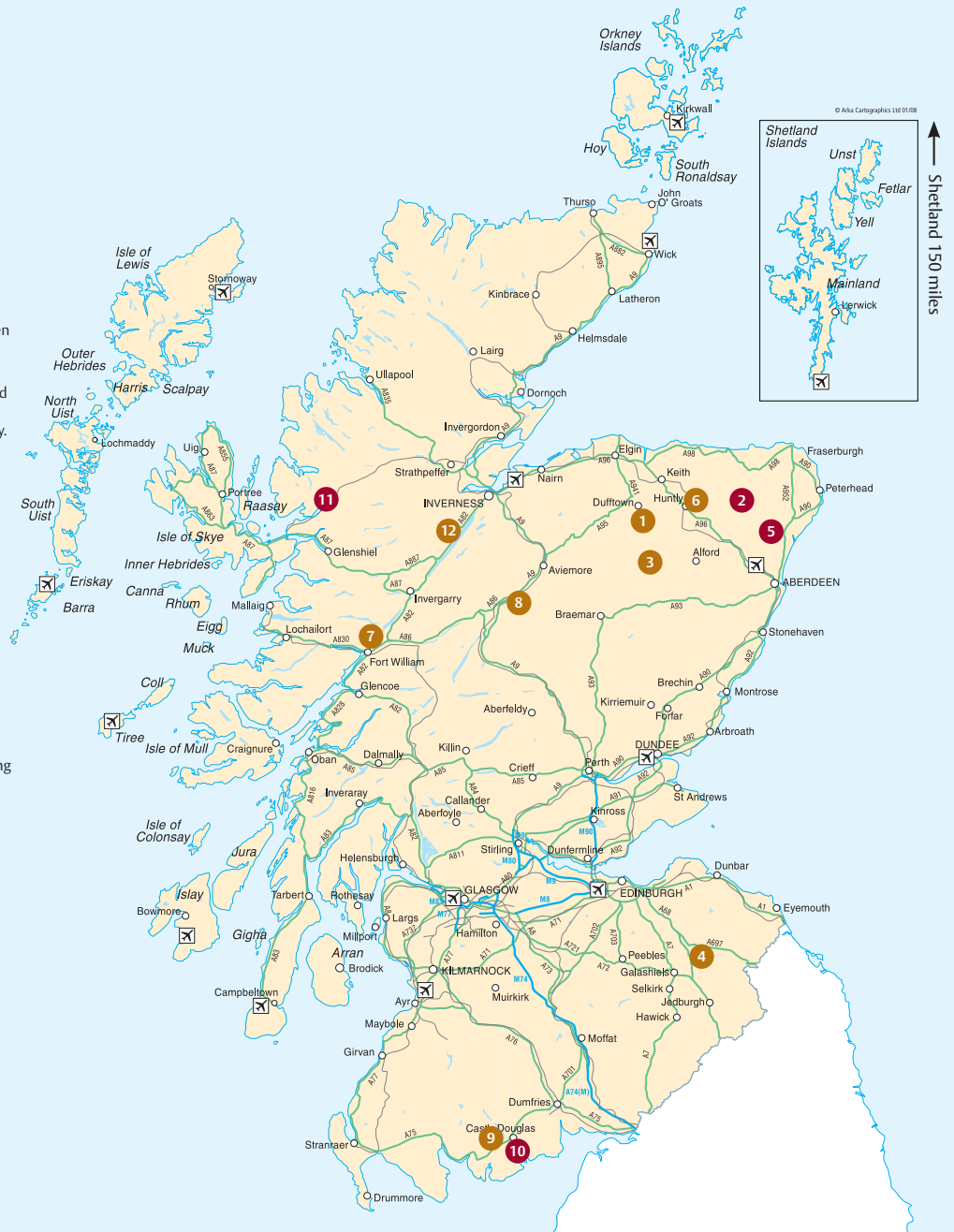
The castle later fell into ruin but underwent partial restoration in the early 20th century and it, along with the surrounding parkland, is now in the care of Historic Scotland.

GORDON SITES

- 1 Auchindoun Castle:**
Came into Gordon ownership in 1535. Home of Adam Gordon, who torched the nearby tower of the Forbeses of Corgarff in 1571.
- 2 Fyvie Castle:**
Briefly held by the Gordons in the 18th century. One of its large towers is known as the Gordon Tower.
- 3 Glenbuchat Castle:**
Built 1590 for John Gordon of Cairnburrow, and later the home of John Gordon of Knockespoek, 'Old Glenbucket', a fervent Jacobite who is said to have given George II nightmares.
- 4 Greenknowe Tower:**
The site of the Gordons' first castle in Scotland, built by Richard de Gordon around 1160. The family moved to Aberdeenshire in the later 14th century after acquiring Strathbogie (now Huntly).
- 5 Haddo House Garden & Country Park:**
Home of the Gordons for over 500 years. Sir John Gordon was made 1st Baronet of Haddo by Charles I after fighting the Covenanters. His support of the King cost him his life. His second son became the 1st Earl of Aberdeen. The present mansion was built for the 2nd Earl of Aberdeen in 1731-6.
- 6 Huntly Castle:**
The Gordon family seat from the later 14th century, named after Huntly in Berwickshire, home of the first Gordons. In the 1440s Alexander Lord Gordon was made Earl of Huntly.
- 7 Inverlochy Castle:**
Came to the Gordon Earls of Huntly in 1506.
- 8 Ruthven Barracks:**
Built on the site of an earlier Gordon Castle. The well in the courtyard is all that remains of their castle.
- 9 Threave Castle:**
Edward Gordon of Threave House passed the castle into state care in 1913. The island castle, along with Threave House and garden, were given to the National Trust for Scotland in 1948 by Major A.F. Gordon DSO, MC.
- 10 Threave House & Gardens:**
Threave was designed in 1871 for William Gordon who made his fortune as a merchant in Liverpool.
- 11 Torridon:**
Much of the Torridon estate passed to the NTS in 1967; the Inland Revenue had accepted it in lieu of duty following the death of the 4th Earl of Lovelace. A further 2,000 acres was received by the NTS as a gift in memory of Sir Charles and Lady Blair Gordon.
- 12 Urquhart Castle:**
The castle belonged to the Earl of Huntly between 1476 and 1509.

Key to sites

- Historic Scotland
- National Trust Scotland
- Historic Houses Association



Fyvie Castle



Threave Castle



Inverlochy Castle

