

The Hamiltons were a powerful family, close to the throne. This brought power, wealth and danger. Some enjoyed dazzling careers as archbishops and rich courtiers. But fortunes could change suddenly and executioners cut short the lives of several great Hamiltons.



THE HAMILTONS ENJOYED DAZZLING CAREERS AS ARCHBISHOPS AND RICH COURTIERS

Hamilton Clan tartan

Brodick Castle



Lochranza Castle



TWO HAMILTONS AT ST ANDREWS

The Catholic archbishops of St Andrews had a great castle near a magnificent cathedral. Both are now in ruins.

This is partly thanks to the brutal execution of one Hamilton and despite the best efforts of another.

Patrick Hamilton was a brilliant young churchman who went to university in St Andrews. In the mid-1520s he rejected Catholicism and became a Lutheran Protestant. His preaching was popular and the authorities, including Archbishop James Beaton, who lived at the castle, had him tried him for heresy.

He was burned at the stake.

Patrick's six hours of suffering, and his reputation for intelligence and gentleness, inspired others to become Protestant and damaged the Catholic cause.

James Beaton was replaced as archbishop by his nephew David Beaton, who became a cardinal, but was murdered by Fife lairds who tricked their way into the castle.

His naked body was hung from the walls.

Beaton's successor was Archbishop John Hamilton brother of the Earl of Arran who was ruling Scotland as Regent. At this point the Hamiltons, were the most powerful family in Scotland, next in line to the throne after the infant Mary, Queen of Scots.

The archbishop rebuilt St Andrews Castle, which suffered enormous damage in the long siege of 1546-7. Being a clergyman did not deter him from warfare and he laid siege to Tantallon Castle in 1544.

Hamilton believed he could change the church from within. In 1549 he called a council at St Andrews to encourage reform and published a catechism designed to bolster public support. But events moved beyond church control and the Protestant Reformation took place in 1560.

A decade later the archbishop's nephew assassinated the Protestant Regent Moray – firing from his uncle's house in Linlithgow. The elderly Hamilton fled to Dumbarton Castle but was captured and admitted involvement – for which he was hanged in Stirling marketplace.

BALMACARA ESTATE

The Balmacara Estate was bought by Sir Daniel and Margaret Hamilton in 1918 and seven years later they made it their permanent home.

In 1947 the estate was bequeathed to the NTS and is now a delightful visitor attraction which features the Lochalsh woodland garden.

The garden, which has a calm and quiet atmosphere, is recognised as a major horticultural achievement given the difficult terrain.

The estate has 20km of footpaths and the lands include traditionally run crofts and meadows rich with wildlife.

While the land has been in use for millennia the farming and woodland management of the past two centuries have created a pleasant blend of natural and agricultural environments.



Blackness Castle

Craignethan Castle



WOMANISER, SOLDIER, COURTIER AND ARCHITECT – SIR JAMES HAMILTON OF FINNART LIVED LIFE TO THE FULL

SIR JAMES HAMILTON OF FINNART

Womaniser, soldier, courtier and architect – Sir James Hamilton of Finnart lived life to the full and left quite a mark on Scotland's historic buildings.

An illegitimate child of the 1st Earl of Arran he was rich and well-connected. He also had a fascination for military engineering.

In 1532 Sir James, aged around 35, built his own residence Craignethan Castle, using the latest architectural ideas. It incorporated what may be Britain's first caponier – an artillery defence built within a ditch.

This was wise as Sir James had many enemies. In 1520 he was prominent in the Cleanse the Causeway skirmish where the Douglases drove the Hamiltons from Edinburgh. Sir James and his father escaped across the marshes on a collier's pony.

In the years that followed he nonetheless played a prominent role at the royal court. He was master of works at Linlithgow Palace and may have helped refortify Tantallon Castle after its capture in 1528.

Sir James also built Cadzow Castle for his half brother. But his masterpiece was his cousin James V's magnificent royal palace at Stirling Castle, in which he invested much of his own money.

Historic Scotland is currently undertaking a £12 million project to return the royal apartments in the palace to how they may have looked in the mid-16th century.

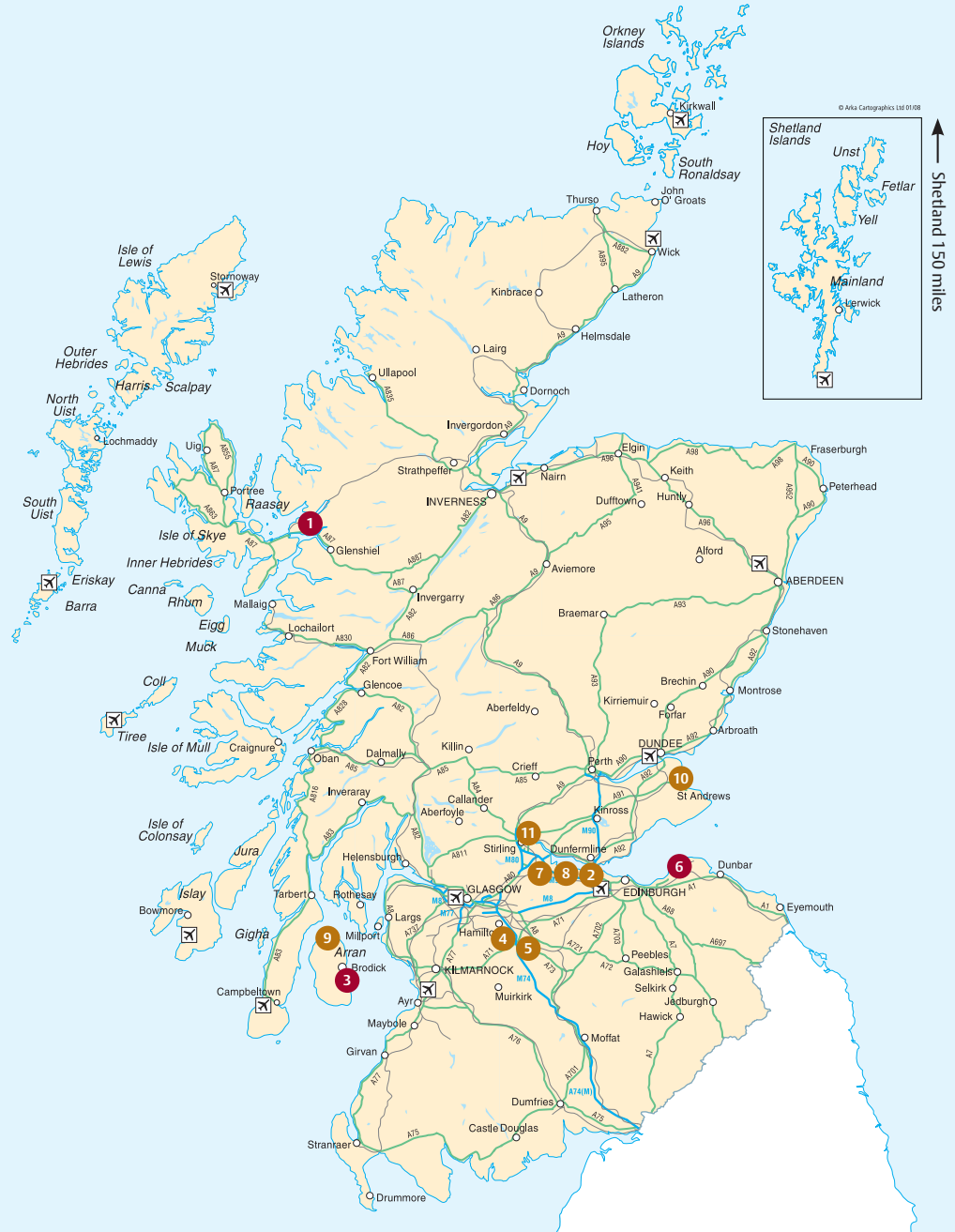
Despite all this, Sir James fell from grace, accused of attempting a royal assassination using a weapon he had invented.

The charges were probably trumped up but Sir James was executed for treason in 1540 – perhaps in part because the king feared the Hamiltons wanted to replace the Stewarts on the throne.

HAMILTON SITES

- 1 Balmacara Estate:**
Donated to The National Trust for Scotland by heirs of Sir Daniel and Lady Margaret Hamilton.
- 2 Blackness Castle:**
Refortified by Hamilton of Finnart for James V. Immensely wealthy, and one of the great military architects of his day.
- 3 Brodick Castle:**
Brodick Castle was the residence of the Hamiltons as Earls of Arran. James III gave it to James, Lord Hamilton, after 1470 and his son became the 1st Earl of Arran. The 2nd Earl of Arran became Regent on the death of James V, and the castle was attacked and burned in 1543 by his opponent, the Earl of Lennox.
- 4 Cadzow Castle:**
Possibly a secondary castle in the Woods built by James Hamilton of Finnart and his brother James Hamilton, Earl of Arran.
- 5 Craignethan Castle:**
Built after 1532 by Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, it has a massive residential tower house, surrounded by fortifications inspired by Italian Renaissance designs. Inherited by James Hamilton, Regent Arran, Duke of Chatelherault, who ruled Scotland until 1554, it was taken by the Crown in 1579 to reduce the power of the family.
- 6 Hamilton House:**
Built for the 10th Duke in 1840.
- 7 Kinneil House:**
Home of the Dukes of Hamilton. First built in 1473 and remodelled in the 1670s by Anne, Duchess of Hamilton.
- 8 Linlithgow Palace:**
Where Hamilton of Finnart carried out major works for James V (including the Outer Entry and Courtyard Fountain).
- 9 Lochranza Castle, Arran:**
Anne, Duchess of Hamilton, bought the castle in 1705, building a chapel nearby.
- 10 St Andrews Castle:**
After the castle had been damaged by Regent, Archbishop John Hamilton rebuilt the entrance façade.
- 11 Stirling Castle:**
Where Hamilton of Finnart built the royal palace for James V at his own expense!

- Key to sites**
- Historic Scotland
 - National Trust Scotland
 - Historic Houses Association



Stirling Castle

St Andrews Castle

Lochranza Castle

