

DRUMINNOR CASTLE

Druminnor was the seat of the Chiefs of Clan Forbes for over 500 years, from 'times past the memory of man' until it was sold by the 16th Lord Forbes in 1770. Castle Forbes, as it was normally called, was the stage for much of Forbes history, witnessing their rise to dominance in the province of Mar and their long decline, ground down in the great feud with the Gordons. Of the seven magnate centres in the north-east, Druminnor is the only one still occupied as a family home.



At its peak, the castle comprised two courtyards of buildings surrounded by a massive barmkyn wall, with a formal entrance forecourt to the west and extensive walled gardens to north and south. The 'Old Tower', enormously tall and famously 'dark', may have been built before 1300. About 1430 Alexander 1st Lord Forbes added a large Hall block, the only part of the castle which has survived. Over the next 580 years Castle Forbes was constantly changing: it was attacked by the Gordons in 1449, sacked by the Douglasses in 1452, refortified in 1456, captured and partly demolished by the Gordons in 1571-3, substantially rebuilt in 1577, seized by the government in 1584, raided by Lord Forbes's sons in 1592, captured by Royalists and defended against Forbes attacks for two years in 1645-47, repaired and remodelled in 1660-61, frequently attacked by Jacobites in 1689-90, besieged by Jacobites in 1746, partly burned by accident in the 1750s, three-quarters demolished in 1800 including the 'Old Tower', doubled in size and transformed into a modern country house in 1841, altered in 1869, and finally halved in size again in 1960-66. Since 1966 it has been resting.

Of the 33 known owners of Druminnor all but two were descendants of Duncan Lord of Forbes, the first Forbes on record. The origins of the Forbes family are obscure, but probably they were a branch of the Celtic royal dynasty which became Earls of Mar by 1100. When the 9th Earl died in 1373, the earls' position as leaders of the native people of Mar passed to John Lord of Forbes. John's son Sir John 'with the black lip' (died 1406) had seven sons, from whom all Forbesees are descended. The eldest son, Alexander, was the most successful of all the Forbes chiefs. Over a long career as Lord of Forbes (1406-49) he established himself as the leading power of Mar, greatly increased his landholdings, married the King's niece, added 'ye house of Drumynnour' to the 'Old Tower' of his forbears and was one of the first Lords of Parliament, probably from 1429.

Alexander Lord Forbes's successors were soon eclipsed by the explosive rise of the Gordons, Earls of Huntly, who by 1500 were unchallenged as the dominant magnates of the North. The Forbesees refused to accept Huntly's superiority and for 200 years successive generations stubbornly resisted ferocious attacks by the Gordons. It was an unequal struggle: the Earls of Huntly, as the principal agents of the Crown in the government of the North, could call on the whole might of the state in pursuing their objectives; while the Forbesees' only asset was the tribal loyalty of the people of Mar. The milestones in the history of the feud include the judicial murder of John Master of Forbes 1537, the battles of Corrichie 1562, Tillieangus 1571, Craibstane 1571 and Glenlivet 1594, the Massacre of Corgarff 1571 and the Civil Wars of 1639-54; not to mention the Kindling of the Kirk of Kearn, when the Gordons burned the kirk with a congregation of Forbesees, and the Druminnor Dinner, when fifteen Gordons were murdered by mistake.

By 1600 the Gordons had succeeded in battering Lord Forbes into political insignificance, while Huntly had been made a Marquess. By 1700 Lord Forbes was bankrupt and dependant on a government pension and most of the Forbes territory had been sold: Huntly had become Duke of Gordon. At last in 1770 James 16th Lord Forbes paid off his inherited debts by selling half of the residue of the Lordship of Forbes including Druminnor, the original Castle Forbes. He migrated across the Braes of Forbes to the house of Putachie, which was rebuilt in 1815 and renamed 'Castle Forbes'; the Lords Forbes have lived there ever since.

The purchaser of Druminnor in 1770 was John Grant of Rothmaise. In 1800, his son Robert demolished most of the castle including the Old Tower and the Kirk, leaving only the 1430 Hall block. In 1841, Robert's daughter & son-in-law added a large Jacobean-style wing, containing the main living rooms of 'Druminnor House'. The Grants were lairds of Druminnor for six generations, until debt took them in their turn in 1955. The estates were split up: Druminnor House was bought by Margaret Forbes-Sempill, a daughter of Craigievar, restoring it to Forbes ownership after a gap of 185 years. In 1960-65 she demolished the 1841 additions and restored what was left of the old Forbes castle.

In 1975 Druminnor was bought by Andrew Forbes of the Pitsligo & Monymusk branch. And so, while the Gordons left Huntly long ago, the Forbesees still possess their oldest stronghold, the *chief chymnies* of the *duchus* of Forbes.

OWNERS OF DRUMINNOR

1 Duncan Lord of Forbeys, charter 1271/2
built the Old Tower of Druminnor

2 John Lord of Forbes, killed at the Siege of Kildrummy 1306
Alexander de Forbes, Captain of Urquhart Castle, killed 1303

3 John Lord of Forbes, killed at Dupplin 1332

4 John Lord of Forbes, Sheriff of Aberdeen 1374

5 Sir John 'with the black lip', Lord of Forbes, hereditary Crouner of Aberdeenshire, d. 1406

6 Sir Alexander Lord of Forbes, Sheriff of Aberdeen, d. 1449
cr. Lord Forbes c1429, built 'ye House of Drumynnour' 1430-40

7 James 2nd Lord le Forbes
licence to fortify & embellish Druminnor 1457

8 'Grey Willie' 3rd Lord le Forbes Duncan of Skene &
CORSINDAE

Alexander 4th Arthur 5th John 6th William 2nd of Corsindae
2nd son

12 William 7th Lord
restored Druminnor 1577

13 John 8th Lord

14 Arthur 9th Lord

15 Alexander 10th Lord

16 William 11th Lord
remodelled Druminnor 1660-1

17 William 12th Lord

18 William 13th Lord **20 James 15th Lord** = (2) Mary of Pitsligo (1) = John yr of Monymusk
d 1709

19 Francis 14th 21 James 16th Lord
sold Druminnor 1770

General James
17th Lord
rebuilt Castle
Forbes 1815

Mary = Sir John
Forbes Hay

Mary Hay = George of West Coates
banker in Edinburgh
George Edward of Colinton

Canon Edward
Rector of Hamilton & Turriff

Nigel 22nd Lord Forbe

32 Andrew
bought Druminnor 1975

Malcolm 23rd Lord Forbes
Castle Forbes

33 Alexander
present owner of Druminnor

Mr Duncan of **MONYMSK**
bought Monymusk 1549

William 2nd of Monymusk

Sir William 3rd of Monymusk
cr baronet 1626

Sir William 4th of Monymusk
Covenanter 1639-54

Sir John 5th of Monymusk

Sir William 6th of Monymusk
sold Monymusk 1712

Patrick of **CORSE**
David 'trail the axe'
2nd of Corse
Patrick 3rd of Corse

William 4th of Corse
2nd son

'Dantzig Willie' of
CRAIGIEVAR

Alexander 4th Lord Pitsligo
Jacobite, forfeited 1746

John Master of Pitsligo dsp 1784

23 John Grant of Rothmaise
bought Druminnor 1770

24 Robert Grant of DRUMINNOR = Henrietta Forbes
demolished the Old Tower 1800

Capt Alexander Foulerton = **25 Eliza Grant 3rd**
added Simpson wing 1841

26 Robert Foulerton Grant 4th of Druminnor

John 18th Lord Sempill

Philip Holland = **27 Charlotte 5th of D.**
developed the garden

28 Philip Holland Grant 6th of D.

= **29 Maud Grant**

31 Joan Wright
sold Druminnor 1975

Sir William of **PITSLIGO**
killed at Arbroath 1446

Sir Alexander 2nd of Pitsligo
William yr of Pitsligo

Alexander 3rd of P.
John 4th of Pitsligo
Alexander 5th of Pitsligo

Alexander 7th of Pitsligo

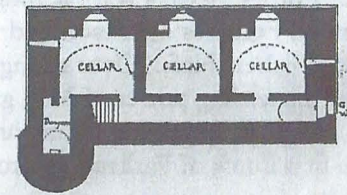
Sir John 8th of Pitsligo
Alexander 9th of Pitsligo
cr Lord Pitsligo 1633
Alexander 2nd Lord Pitsligo

Alexander 3rd Lord Pitsligo

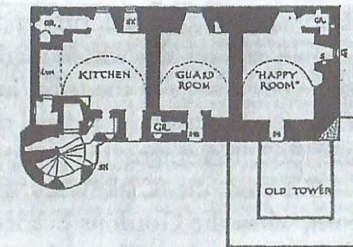
whence **NEWE**

22 Capt John Forbes 8th of Neue
bought & sold
Druminnor 1770

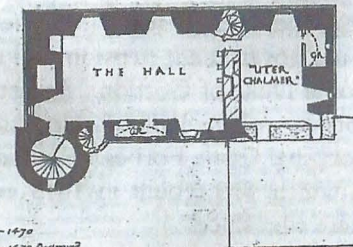
DRUMINNOR, ANCIENTLY CASTLE FORBES



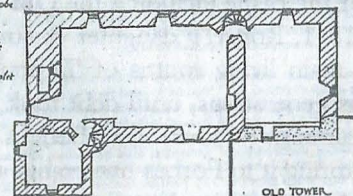
LOWER GROUND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

- 1440-1470
- 1470-1670 Destroyed
- 1660
- 1662
- DA "Dren" Bars
- CA Grate Hole
- C Grille
- S Self Box
- SH Stair Hole
- SK Sink
- W Water Outlet



0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 Feet