

The Ruthven Family Castles
Ruthven Castle later called Huntingtower Castle



Huntingtower is an unusual, well-preserved castle, consisting of three different phases of building. The oldest part is a 15th century rectangular keep of three stories and a garret. Nearby, but not touching the first tower, is a 16th century I-plan tower house. When the castle was built, the only communication between the two was a wooden bridge. Towards the end of the 16th century, a connecting range of

three stories was built, containing a stair shared by the entire keep.

Picture shows the linked towers of Huntingtower Castle

The property was held by the Ruthvens (see Dirleton Castle) from the 12th century, and was originally called Ruthven Castle. Mary, Queen of Scots visited here in 1565 while on her honeymoon with Darnley. In 1582 the 4th Lord of Ruthven kidnapped the young James VI and held him in Huntingtower for a year. The Earl was beheaded in 1585 for his trouble.

In 1600, a later Earl of Gowrie and his brother were murdered in Gowrie House. The Ruthvens forfeited, and their name proscribed. The castle, renamed Huntingtower, remained a royal property until Charles I gave it to William Murray, 1st Earl of Dysart. It later passed to the Stewarts, and was used to house laborers.



The larger tower has been added to -- the difference in the masonry can still be seen where they added stories. The walls were plastered, and the ceiling were decorated. Some rooms have fine painted ceilings, mural paintings, and plasterwork in place. The painted ceiling in the eastern tower is one of the earliest of it's kind, dating from 1540. Another unusual feature is the dovecote inside the garret of the western tower.

The space between the towers (although filled in during the 17th century) is called Maiden's Leap. A daughter of the Earl of Gowrie was supposed to have jumped the distance between the towers (9'9", over a 60' drop!) when she was about to be discovered in the apartments of her lover. She leaped back to her own tower and was in her own bed by the time her mother appeared to check on her. The two eloped the following night.



The castle and grounds are reputed to be haunted by 'My Lady Greensleeves'. Her footsteps are heard along with the rustle of her gown and she has even deigned to appear on several occasions.



Originally, Huntingtower was two separate tower houses, then connected with a large hall



Like Neidpath Castle, Huntingtower is a reminder of how comfortable and luxurious these castles can be. Far from the rough stone piles we see today, they were painted and decorated, with plaster cornices, elaborately decorated doors. Rooms were plastered and bright, with natural light. It's sometimes hard to see the comfortable homes these castles once were, but Huntingtower was a good example.



Another well preserved example of the decorations in Huntingtower



One of the few examples of decorated ceilings in Scotland.

Huntingtower
2 miles northwest of Perth
North of A85
West of A9
Historic Scotland

<http://www.frii.com/~phouka/travel/castles/huntingtower/huntingtower.html>

Wee Guides to Scotland
Huntingtower Castle, Perth
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A well-preserved and interesting castle, Huntingtower consists of a 15th-century keep, a nearby but not touching 16th-century L-plan tower house, and a later small connecting range. Some rooms have fine painted ceilings, wall paintings, and there are decorative beams in the hall. The property was held by the Ruthvens from the 12th century, and was originally called Ruthven Castle. Mary, Queen of Scots, visited the castle in 1565. In 1582 the 4th Lord Ruthven, who had been made Earl of Gowrie in 1581, kidnapped the young James VI - in the 'Raid of Ruthven'. James was held at Huntingtower for a year until he escaped during a hunting trip. The Earl was beheaded in 1585. The Ruthvens were forfeited for treason in 1600 after the 'Gowrie Conspiracy' - a plot to murder James VI - their name proscribed, and the castle renamed Huntingtower. Huntingtower passed to the Murray Dukes of Atholl. The Jacobite general Lord George Murray was born here; but by the 19th-century Huntingtower was used to house laborers. It was put into the care of the State in 1912. The space between the battlements of the two towers is known as 'The Maiden's Leap'. A daughter of the 1st Earl of Gowrie is said to have jumped from one tower to the other. While visiting her lover in his chamber, and about to be discovered by her mother, she leapt to the other tower and returned to her own bed before her mother caught her. She eloped with her lover the following night. The castle and grounds are said to be haunted by a 'Green Lady'.

Directions: Off A85, 3 miles NW of Perth.

Ownership: HS

<<http://www.scotland2000.demon.co.uk/weeguides/images/tel.gif>> 01738 627231

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Dirleton Castle

The yellow stone bulk of Dirleton sits on a stone bluff overlooking vast gardens.



Dirleton, which is located in the center of town in a large and well-kept garden, began as an earth and timber castle built by John de Vaux, Seneschal to Alexander II's consort Marie de Coucy, a Norman family that settled in Scotland with David I in the 12th century. A cluster of stone towers was built on the existing mote around 1225.

The castle was besieged in 1298 on Edward I's orders by English forces led by Anthony de Beck, and the castle surrendered. Later it was retaken by Robert the Bruce in 1311. It may have been dismantled as part of Bruce's policy to prevent it from being used by the English. It had probably been repaired in 1363 when it was seized by William, Earl of Douglas. Dirleton passed to the Halliburton family in the 15th century, and then to the Ruthvens.

James IV paid a visit in 1505. Lord Haliburton's daughter Janet married William, 2nd Lord Ruthven, Extraordinary Lord of Session and Keeper of the Privy Seal in



1515. It was he who built the Ruthven lodgings inside the curtain wall. Patrick, 3rd Lord Ruthven, and his son William were implicated in the murder of Rizzio, Queen Mary's favorite, at Holyrood Palace in 1566. William returned from exile in 1581 and abducted James VI and ruled in his name until the king escaped. He was

finally executed in 1585 for his part in the attack on Stirling Castle. Dirleton was granted to the Earl of Arran, but it was eventually returned to the Ruthvens. The vaulted cellars, including kitchen, bakehouse, and brewhouse. In 1600, John, the 3rd Earl, was killed in Perth during an assassination attempt against James VI, after which the family name was abolished and the lands were acquired by Thomas Erskine. Dirleton was given by James VI to Sir Thomas Erskine who was created Earl of Dirleton and Earl of Kellie. His son Alexander sold the estate in 1625 to James Douglas. James Maxwell purchased Dirleton in 1631, and created Lord Dirleton in 1646.

In 1649, several men and woman who were accused of witchcraft were imprisoned in the castle and later burned and strangled in the stables. Dirleton was once again besieged in 1650 by General Lambert on behalf of Cromwell. The castle fell when a mortar brought down the drawbridge and inner gate. It was destroyed, but soon after partially restored and used as a hospital. It was left to decay after it was purchased by John Nisbet in 1663, and a new house built at Archerfield to replace the crumbling castle.

Looking up from the gardens to the walls of Dirleton.



This front cluster of towers is joined by a curtain wall to another round tower to the northeast, and then a final tower to the north. Both of these secondary towers are newer work on old foundations. Some of the lower rooms of the original towers are hewn out of the rock on which it's built. The pit prison is dug into the rock, as are the bakehouse, the well, and several large

and bright cellars. The kitchen has two huge fireplaces, and the courtyard also includes a stables within the curtain wall.



The front facade, including huge drum towers and an actual drawbridge.



In the vaulted kitchens. The oldest part of the castle is built around a large drum tower and a rectangular tower. The upper chamber would have been the lords chamber, with an domed ceiling. The entrance to the castle is over a wooden bridge across the wide ditch, with a drawbridge and portcullis. There isn't a lip on the stone wall for the drawbridge, and only about the last 11' of the wooden bridge was moveable.

The chief structure of this castle was the enormous round tower facing south, about 37' in diameter. The plinth of this tower is splayed out for support. The tower contained three stories, two of them vaulted, and was polygonal inside. It is not a complete cylinder -- the northwest face was chamfered off. To the west is a square tower, also dating from the same period. Emerging from the north west of this tower is another tower, quite a bit smaller than the first.

[Ruthven Barracks]

The remains of the small residence hall built by the Ruthvens

The 16th century Ruthven Lodging was built against the 13th century walls, overlooking the courtyards. It contained molded string courses, square headed windows, and a round gunloop. The eastern wing, the 15th century Haliburton range, was also built around the 13th century curtain wall and links the two original towers (now reduced to their bases). This was the main entrance, with murder hole above, guardroom, and portcullis.



Roof of the drum tower.

The rubble roof of the big drum tower, with the meeting chamber below

The drum tower contained a large, arched room with a ceiling made of stone rubble. It appears to have a large capstone in the center of the room. The fact that it is still standing attests to the strength of the structure.



The stone ceiling of the meeting chamber in the drum tower



The formal gardens on the grounds of Dirleton.



A window antechamber in the thickness of the wall still lets in a lot of light.



Most staircases that we found in castles were narrow spirals, sometimes a bare three feet in diameter. With a thick stone pillar in the middle, the stairs were literally stacked with the exterior walls, as the picture below (sort of) shows. Some castles had huge, wide staircases, with treads several feet wide, but most are tiny and very steep. In most of the Historic Scotland-held castles, a rope twines around the center pillar like a handrail. It's such a perfect solution, it must be the original.

Dirleton

Lothian

North of A198

2 miles west of North Berwick

National Trust for Scotland

<http://www.frii.com/~phouka/travel/castles/dirleton/dirleton2.html>

A brief history; The yellow clustered towers of Dirleton Castle high on its rocky knoll strikes an imposing sight. It was originally surrounded by a deep fresh water filled ditch which heightened its position. Also the present victorian gardens around the castle give a false impression since the whole area was bog and marsh land which added to the castles outer defenses. To the east was a wooden Barmkin which enclosed the castles town.

The first stone castle was raised by the Anglo-Norman De Vaux family around 1225. With additions by the Halyburtons in the 1300's and the Ruthven family in the 1500's. The 1st castle consisted of four round towers and 2 square towers set randomly around the site which was dictated by the shape of the rocky knoll.

In 1298 the castle was attacked and occupied by King Edward I of England. Later in 1311 King Robert the Bruce had the castle recaptured and two of its great round towers were slighted to ground level to make it unserviceable to the English.

In 1350 a great rebuilding work was undertaken by the Haliburtons, a new gate house kitchen, vaults and great hall were built on the stumps of the earlier 13th century towers.

In the 1500's the Ruthvens added a walled garden outside the castle and a new oblong Ruthven range to the courtyard of the castle. Also a bee hive doo'cot and a wall replacing the earlier barmkin palisade was added to the castle-town.

In 1650 a group of Scottish moss troops were operating from dirleton attacking Cromwells convoys. Cromwell then bombarded the castle using mortar pieces to tear open the gate house and entered by storm.

In 1663 the castle passed to the Nisbet family and was abandoned as a residence in favor of a new manor house at Archerfield. The castle then became the local quarry used to build walls and cottages locally.

http://www.impressions.uk.com/castles/castle_2.shtml



Dirleton Castle

<http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/features/featurefirst255.html>

Dirleton is a 13th century castle which stands on a rocky knoll, dominating the centre of the picturesque village of the same name. Constructed originally by the De Vaux family around 1225, it was one of the most formidable castles of its time. However, it was captured by an English army under Bishop Anthony Bek of Durham (1298) and was only recovered by Robert the Bruce in 1311. Bruce pulled down much of the castle to ensure the English armies could not make future use of it. Rebuilt by the Halyburton family in the 14th C., who added a new gatehouse, kitchen and Great Hall, and further augmented by the Ruthven family (15th C), but destroyed once again by General Monk (1650). It passed to the Nisbet family (1663), but was quickly abandoned as a residence in favour their new and more comfortable house at Archerfield. Stone was looted from the site to build houses and walls in the local area.

The castle is now in the care of Historic Scotland and substantial ruins remain, including the draw-bridge, chapel and a pit-prison. The ruins are surrounded by fine gardens, including the World's longest herbaceous border verified by the Guinness Book of Records in 1999 and a well-preserved beehive Doo'cot from 1550.

