



A SOUVENIR OF
GLAMIS

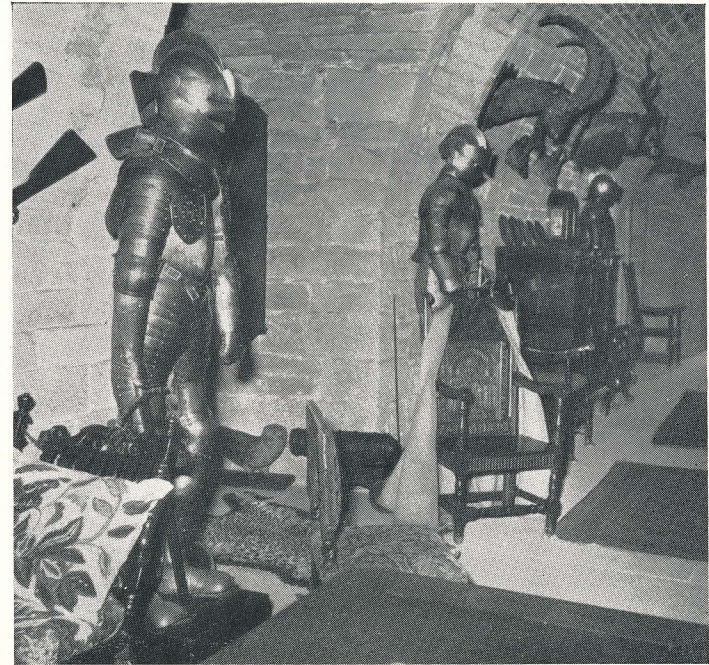


Being a brief history of the Lyon
family and of the castle

By

DAVID SCOTT-MONCRIEFF

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Armour and antique weapons gleam against the massive stone walls of the Crypt, which is part of the medieval L-shaped tower round which the later castle grew.

A Brief History of Glamis Castle

By David Scott-Moncrieff

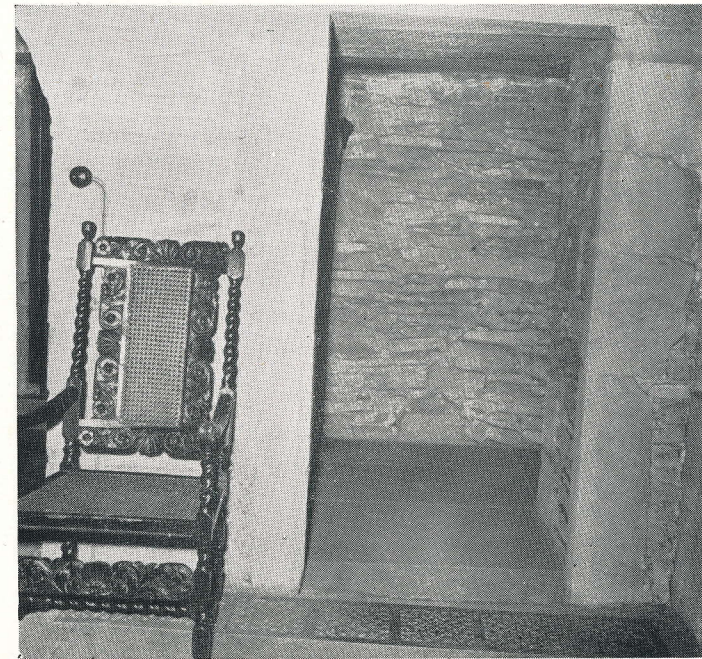
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THE rose-red pinnacles and turrets of Glamis give it, when viewed from a distance, a faery and unreal appearance, as if, at any moment, it might vanish in a puff of stardust. This is perhaps because the upper part of the great castle was built in the seventeenth century, when the advent of artillery had made a nonsense of strong castles, and was built for beauty rather than fortification. The only comparable prospect I have seen is Château Chambord, first viewed from the entrance to the three-mile avenue which approaches it. But while a closer look at Chambord reveals it as a vast shell, empty since the French Revolution, Glamis has all the intimate serenity of a great house that has been lived in, loved and cared for over a period of centuries.

“Every available piece of ground, even to the very mains of Glamis, was mortgaged or pledged in some form to numerous creditors throughout the land.” These words were written of Glamis in the middle of the seventeenth century when Cromwell’s foretaste of Marxian misrule had almost run its course. This was the inheritance to which young Patrick, Earl of Kinghorne, attaining his majority at the age of seventeen, succeeded. Just to make things worse the Castle itself had been occupied by Cromwell’s soldiery, who had done the furniture and appointments no good at all. Young Patrick was advised that “the Estate was irrecoverable,” but quite undaunted, he refused to abandon his ancestral home, and by hard work over many years put the estates of Glamis back on a sound foundation.

Much the same problems now face young Timothy, Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, not much over a dozen years older than his ancestor Lord Patrick on his accession. Two crippling bludgeonings by death-duties have nullified the reserves built up by generations of sound and conservative finance, and to keep his birthright, the home of his ancestors for a thousand years, Lord Strathmore has to emulate the industry, and employment of unorthodox measures, of his forebear in a similar plight. One of the first steps to be taken is to throw open the Castle to the public, twice a week, in return for payment of a small fee. There is precedent for this—Blenheim, Goodwood, and many of the great houses of the land have already opened their doors to paying sightseers. Although, to be quite truthful, for many years now it has been possible, as a concession, by writing for permission to Mr Ralston, factor to the Strathmores for over half a century, to be shown round by the housekeeper when the family were not in residence.

Just consider for a moment, reader, the amount of groundwork and organisation necessary for such an operation. Imagine, if you can, that several thousand sightseers were going to tramp through your own modest home in the day! How would you set about it? Strips of carpeting have to be laid down to save your own. Rooms have to be roped off, alas, because one perhaps in two or three hundred or even more would like to slip a souvenir into his pocket or perpetuate his initials, ill-carved or scratched, on a piece of fine furniture. I came across a curious variation of this mania at the Château of Compiègne in France. The guide told me that the table at which Napoleon signed his abdication had to be put well out of reach because hundreds of apparently unconnected people were all consumed with a passion to burn into the wood with cigarette ends! Guide books have to be written—I’m tackling that one—car parks marked out; old servants, grown up in the Castle and its lore, organised into a rota as guides—a thousand and one details. Fresh problems crop up every moment; there seems to be no end to them.



The great walls of the old Castle are honeycombed with passages built into their thickness, here the hanging arras has been removed to show an entrance to one of these.

But enough of these worries, so many of you will be visiting this lovely place that I must tell you something about it and the people who lived there. Glamis was originally built in a bog. I’m sorry to spoil the pretty whimsy stories of fairy voices chanting “Build the Castle in a Bog where ’twill neither Shake nor Shog,” but my guess is that it was built there, like Ardblair, for sound defensive reasons. In any case there appears, from what scanty record exists, to have been a fortress or strong-place there long before people started to write things down, which was already ancient when Sir John Lyon received the “barony and thanage of Glamys” as a grant from King Robert II. of Scotland in 1372. Four years later he married the King’s daughter and in 1381 was granted the barony of Kinghorne. For those interested in heraldry it is recorded that he was in that year allowed to wear the royal double tressure, flory-counter-flory with royal supporters on his shield of arms. Barely a year later the first Baron Kinghorne was killed by Sir James Lindsay of Crawford. Whether the two great nobles quarrelled and fought it out or whether Lindsay had planned beforehand to waylay and murder “Whyte Lyon”, as he

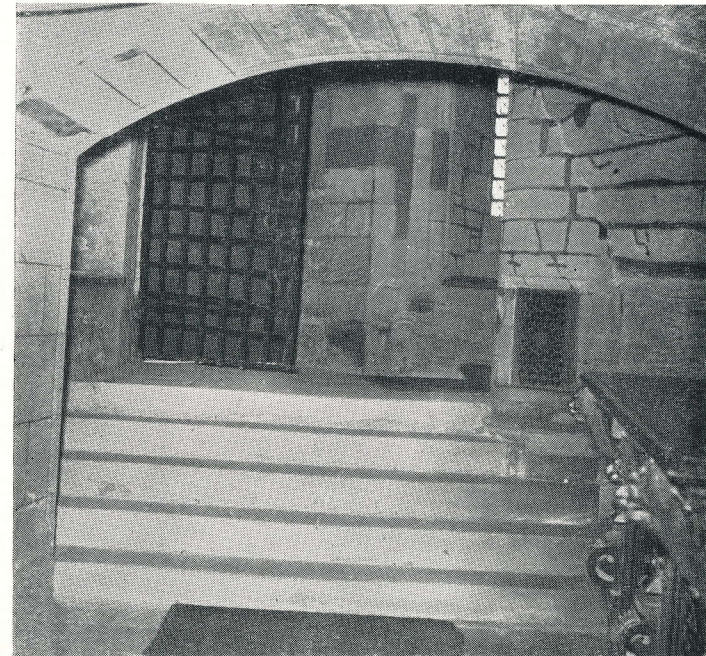
was called, is obscure. His successor, who died in 1459, was made the first Lord Glamis.

Archæologists tell us, as we should expect, that the Castle in its earliest form was a structure of earthwork and timber, but of this no trace remains. We know that the King and his court lived there intermittently from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. A seventeenth-century manuscript tells us that the widow of the first Lord Glamis and Kinghorne, who survived him for another quarter of a century, continued to build the stone castle.

The Lyon family were always close to the throne of Scotland, in fact not only were they connected by the marriage of the first Lord Glamis, but by other close family ties. John, the son of Patrick and Isobel, was a man of great ability and adviser to both James III. and IV. (of Scotland), in fact he was largely responsible for the latter's accession to the throne. But the widow of his son, the sixth Lady Glamis, was the victim, in 1532, of one of the most horrible plots that ever sullied the bloodiest and most treacherous years of Scottish history. James V. of Scotland, had a blood feud against the family of Douglas. He had very good reasons for this, but they are too involved to go into here. Not only was Lady Glamis (the title of Strathmore did not come till much later) a Douglas, but James V. coveted madly the young widow's fine castle. Soon she married again, but that did not save her from her terrible fate. The great witch scare, when panic dread of the unknown drove ordinary decent Scots burgesses to orgies of unbelievable sadism, was not yet at its height, but a denunciation of witchcraft had about as little chance of failure as, shall we say, a denunciation of reactionary politics in Sofia to-day.

At the instigation of the King of Scotland, Lady Glamis was arrested on a charge of witchcraft. The accusations, among them attempting to poison the King from a distance, would have been farcical had not the dreadful sequel been a foregone conclusion. Her sixteen year old son was compelled to watch his kinsmen stretched on the rack, broken on the wheel and tortured with the thumbikins in the hope that some word might pass their lips to incriminate his mother. They died, loyal and silent, but little did it avail poor Lady Glamis who was sentenced to be burned alive for witchcraft, as the English Ambassador in Edinburgh wrote in his report 'as I can perceive without any substantial ground or proof of matter'. She was publicly burned on Castle Hill, Edinburgh, "with great commiseration of the people, in regard of her noble blood . . . of her singular beauty, and suffering all, though a woman, with man-like courage. . . ." King James V. and his French Queen, Mary of Lorraine, promptly moved into Glamis.

From 1538 to 1542 His Majesty held full court at Glamis Castle, much of which was paid for by the seized rents and funds of the Lyon family. He even melted down the silver flagons belonging to them for currency.



In defiance of the Edict of Edward I. of England, stern hammer of the Scots, the front door of the Castle, small enough to be held by one swordsman and guarded by an iron yett.

Mary, Queen of Scots, brought up in the gaiety of the French Court among the sunny châteaux of the Loire was not very happy in dour, rainy Scotland. But we can only suppose that she did not realise the terrible deed by which her father, James V., had acquired Glamis for her courtiers write that they never saw her merrier than during her stay there on her expedition against Huntly to break the power of the Gordons. There is goodly record of this visit, ranging from official documents and private letters to Randolph's personal account saying that although the weather was "extreme fowle and colde . . . I never saw her merrier, never dismayed." Even the Royal menu, written in French, is still in existence. The Four Maries accompanied her, as did her half-brother James, later to become Earl of Moray.

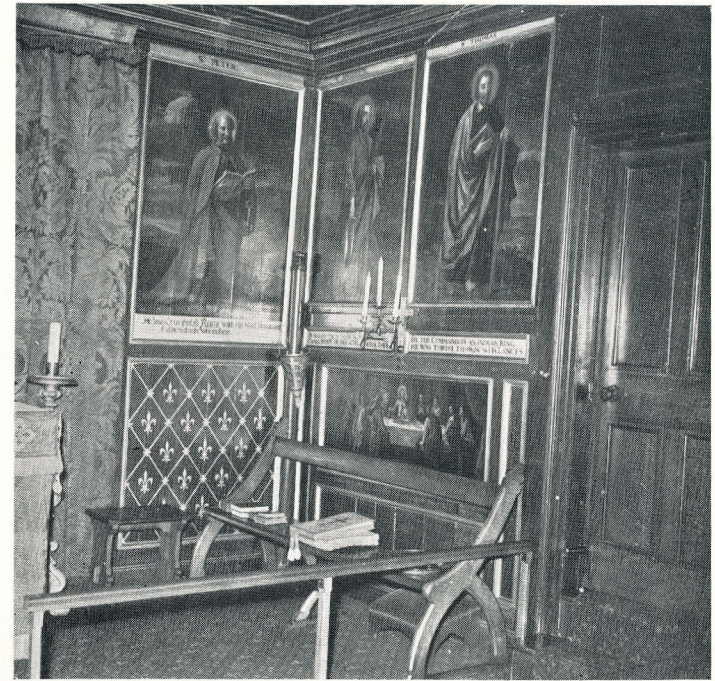
By the end of the sixteenth century, the Lyon family were back in possession, and Patrick, ninth Lord Glamis and first Earl of Kinghorne, was remodelling his home. The advent of artillery (although it was never used against Glamis) had made quite a nonsense of the mediæval castle, even those, like the older parts



The fireplace of King Malcolm's room showing a portion of tapestry embroidered by ladies visiting Glamis and dated 1683.

of Glamis, whose walls were fourteen and fifteen feet thick. So Lord Glamis was much more concerned with such comforts as windows, instead of arrow-slits, and stairways whose primary purpose was not defence. We do know quite a bit about the Castle before he started. It was built on the L plan, consisting of a strong keep, with a wall of enceinte with towers and outbuildings. There were corbelled parapets and outside it all a moat. For anyone interested, the whole chapter and verse with dimensions may be found in considerable detail in MacGibbon and Ross.

The second Earl of Kinghorne carried on the rebuilding, and tradition ascribes a hand in the plans to Inigo Jones, although there is no actual written evidence of this. But there is a definite prima facie case for this theory, for not only is there a marked resemblance of style, but the Lyon family were frequently in London at the courts of James VI and Charles I, so what likelier than that they should have asked the aid of this architect, who in any case was alive till 1652.



The walls and ceiling of the private chapel at Glamis Castle are decorated with paintings by Jacob de Wit, a Dutch artist who had been brought to Scotland to execute work in the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

As we know, young Patrick, third Earl of Kinghorne, succeeded to an estate virtually beggared by the extortions of Cromwell and milked dry by his mother's second husband, Lord Linlithgow, but the gallant young Earl put his back into the work of putting the "irrecoverable" estate back on to a sound footing and paying off the mortgages. Not only that, but he continued the rebuilding of the Castle commenced by his father and grandfather. The greater part of the work was carried out by local joiners, masons, and the blacksmith from Glamis village; and you may see what an exquisite job these simple craftsmen, under the direction of the young Earl, made of it. For they built the Castle substantially as it is to-day. We know the names of these men—Andrew Wright was the joiner and John Walker the smith—and I think they should be honoured for their native skill and talent as well as the two Dutchmen, Jacob de Wit and Jan van Sandvoort, who executed respectively the painting and the carving.

De Wit had been brought over to decorate Holyrood, and when

his work there was over, Earl Patrick entered into a contract with him. The Dutchman seems to have been a pretty slippery customer, for the Earl had to go to law to hold him to his bargain.

Van Sandvoort does not appear to have raised any difficulties, which is not surprising, for he was extremely well paid—nearly £400, a very great sum in those days for a relatively small amount of work. He carved the fine bust of Patrick, first Earl Kinghorne, over the doorway, and probably the lions, gladiators, satyrs, and strange birds over the gateways.

As the renovation of Glamis proceeded, walled courts and formal gardens, as were the fashion in Charles II's time, were laid out round the Castle, together with some really outstandingly beautiful leaden statues. When "Capability" Brown remodelled the grounds he swept all this away. Now I will yield to none in my admiration of Brown as landscape gardener, but I do wish that he had not scrapped those exquisitely lovely statues. Two, however, James VI and Charles I, have been recovered from a dungeon, repaired and re-erected in front of the Castle. A third, a leaden Venus, still graces a grove in the gardens. Sometime between 1671 and 1689, Earl Patrick put up the Great Sundial, the finest I have ever seen, and it stands to-day, exactly where he placed it with great care and calculation, in front of the Castle, on a spot precisely three degrees west of the Meridian of Greenwich.

When the Prince of Orange landed, Earl Patrick Kinghorne, now first Lord Strathmore, came out strongly with the other great Jacobite lords, but on the precipitate flight of King James he decided on a more moderate policy and acknowledged the Dutch monarch. He seems, however, to have been pretty strongly suspect of sympathy towards the house of Stuart, for he was removed from his position as Lord of Session. Before the "Old Chevalier" landed in 1715, he was dead, having set the "irrecoverable" Lyon estates on a sound basis and rebuilt Glamis largely into the form we know it to-day. As he wrote in his own hand:

"And I hope, by the mercie of God, founding againe my familie upon the pillar of justice, I shall be able to transmitt a good pairt of my estate with much less of incumbrance and debt then I found at my entrie thereto."

The third Lord Strathmore, a very young man, came out in the '15; and when the Royalists were routed he led a forlorn last stand, being shot by a musket-ball and sabred by a dragoon. His widowed mother sent the Glamis chaplain to bring back his body for burial in the family vault. His sixteen-year-old brother succeeded to the title, and owing to his extreme youth did not suffer forfeiture or attainder in spite of the fact that he entertained the "Chevalier St George" at Glamis for some days after the battle.

The Chevalier came in company with the Earl of Mar and other gentlemen. We do not know how many men-at-arms, grooms, and varlets were given shelter, but it is recorded that beds were



In the Queen's sitting-room, rich tapestry, panelling, and time-darkened portraits make a fitting background for this seventeenth-century carved cupboard.

made up for eighty-eight gentlemen—which gives you some idea of the size of Glamis. While the "Old Chevalier" was staying he "was touched for the king's evil" in the private chapel decorated by de Wit, and tradition has it that every sufferer who touched the royal person was cured. Be that as it may, a number of the descendants of the participants in this little ceremony in the chapel still proudly possess silver "touch-pieces." These bear on one side St Michael and the Dragon, with the motto SOLI DEO GLORIA, and on the other a three-masted ship in full sail.

It was probably just as well for the Glamis Estates that there was no Strathmore of age to declare for the Jacobite cause in the '45. Seven years earlier Lord Strathmore had been walking peaceably along the street in Forfar when James Carnegie of Finavon Castle, who was brawling with John Lyon of Brigton, "thrust him throw and throw the body (and no sword drawn but his own)." His successor was too young to take part in that disastrous campaign which would in all probability have stripped him of his home and property. He suffered no worse than having "Butcher" Cumberland quartered on him for a few nights and having to provide bread and meat for his men and "bolls of oats" for his horses.



A close-up of some of the magnificent pieces of furniture in the drawing-room, which is of particular interest to the visitor who is also a connoisseur of such things.

It is interesting to follow the changing appearance of Glamis externally in the eighteenth century, before "Capability" Brown laid out the present lawns, parks, and vistas. An old print of 1730 shows much of Earl Patrick's courts and formal gardens still standing. In 1760, the poet Gray, staying with his friend John, ninth Lord Strathmore, writes to Doctor Wharton :

"You descend to the Castle gradually from the south through a double and triple avenue of Scotch firs, sixty or seventy feet high. This approach is full a mile long, and when you have passed the second gates the firs change to limes and another oblique avenue goes off on either hand to the offices. The third gate delivers you into a court with a broad pavement and grass plots, adorned with statues of the four Stewart kings, bordered with old silver firs and yew trees alternately, and opening with an iron palisade on either side, and two square old-fashioned parterres surrounded by stone fruit walls."

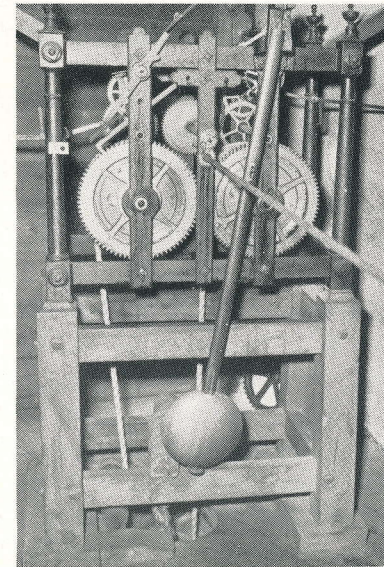
But twelve years later, in 1772, a sketch made by Pennant shows much of this is gone, and an engraving of 1790 depicts all, including the lead statues, to have been swept away.

At the turn of the century the Strathmores appear to have forsaken Glamis for a generation and to have been living on their estates in Yorkshire and Hertfordshire. For Sir Walter Scott, staying with his friend Patrick Murray at Simprim, Meigle, writes :

"The late Earl seldom resided at Glamis, it was, when I was there, but half-furnished, and that with moveables of great antiquity, which with the pieces of chivalric armour hanging on the walls greatly contributed to the general effect of the whole."

The years 1811 and 1849 saw great improvements, which show that a new generation of Strathmores were back in their old home. And in 1890 the west wing was rebuilt. Glamis must be almost the only castle in Scotland where building was carried on in the nineteenth century with, generally speaking, impeccable taste.

Two things happened at Glamis as the twentieth century came in. A dear little girl, every detail of whose childhood is remembered with love and affection by the people on the place, was born. She is now Her Most Gracious Majesty, our beloved Queen. And Lord and Lady Strathmore, her parents, both keen gardeners, laid down two acres of outstandingly beautiful autumn garden, formally enclosed by tall yew hedges. Although there are not now enough men on the place to keep this as it should be kept, it is more than worth a visit.



*For centuries it has told the hours.
The mechanism of the great clock set in front of the main tower.*



These pin-ups, so curiously "period" to-day, were pasted up by wounded soldiers when, during the 1914-18 war, one wing of the Castle was a hospital. Her Majesty, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, as she was then, after training in a London hospital, was nursing, naturally, for she was still in her teens, in some pretty junior capacity. But, when a dangerous fire broke out in the central tower, she at once, as the only member of the family present, took command of the whole situation. It would obviously be some time before fire-brigades could arrive from Forfar and Dundee and she formed servants, tenants, and such nursing staff as could be spared into lines, passing buckets one way and pictures and works of art to safety the other. The fire was held in check till the brigades, who extinguished it, arrived, and the Castle saved. Even to-day, the cool-headed resourcefulness and organizing ability of that teen-age girl are still spoken of.

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