

Seat of Present Earl Steeped in History, Romance

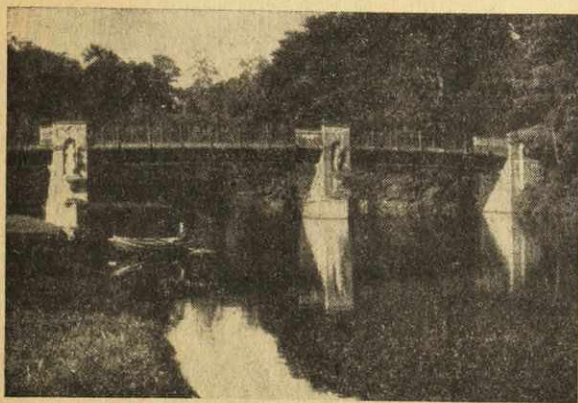
Of Interest to Dalhousians

MacLeod Describes Picturesque Estate Of Dalhousie's Heirs

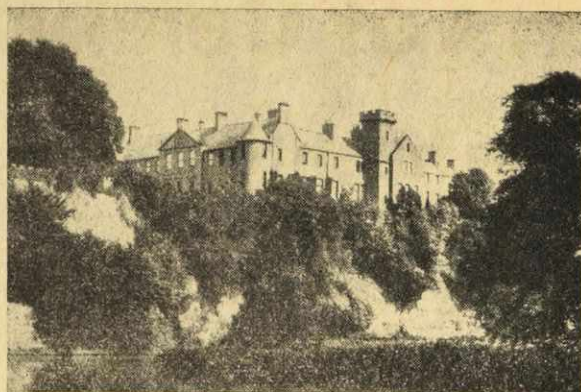
THE DALHOUSIE family was founded by Sir John Ramsay, who rescued King James VI in the Gowrie outrage. The king had been decoyed by Ruthven, the younger of the two sons of the Earl of Gowrie who had been executed when James VI was but a boy. On arriving at his elder brother's mansion in Perth, the King was led from one apartment to another, until he finally reached a little turret where there stood an armed man ready for some violent enterprise. Some of the King's retinue who had followed him heard shouts coming from the turret window and proceeded to make forcible entrance, and it was a page of the King's called Sir John Ramsay who discovered a back stair which led him to the turret where he stabbed Ruthven twice and thrust him down a staircase where two of the royal attendants despatched him with their swords. The grateful King made Sir John, Lord Ramsay of Barns and Viscount Haddington, but later his son had the title changed to Baron Ramsay of Dalhousie. His son was created Earl of Dalhousie. The ninth Earl was a distinguished Waterloo officer serving under the Duke of Wellington and later held high command in Canada, and also was Commander in Chief in British India previous to 1832. It was during his office in Canada that he made possible the founding of Dalhousie College, which our own eminent archivist D. C. Harvey has so ably presented in his Introduction to the History of Dalhousie University. The ancestral seat of all those following Sir John Ramsay was Dalhousie Castle situated about fifteen miles from Edinburgh on the River Esk, not far from Newbattle Abbey, the seat of the Marquis of Midlothian, but on the death of the tenth Earl in 1860, whose Governor Generalship in India has been largely underestimated, the title and the estate were inherited by the Earl of Panmure, who is now the representative of both the ancient families of Ramsay and Maule. This eleventh Earl of Dalhousie was the eldest son of William Ramsay Maule, 1st Baron Panmure (1771-1852) and a grandson of the eighth Earl of Dalhousie. He was born in 1801 and christened Fox Maule Ramsay as a compliment to the Whig of that period. The ancestral seat in Midlothian was now removed to Brechin Castle in Angus, the home of the Maule family, and it is there today that the Earls of Dalhousie hold their sway.

THE CASTLE stands on a precipitous rock rising some one hundred feet above the River South Esk, which at this point forms a deep pool called the "Eedawee" dreaded by young Brechiners as bottomless and it was considered a triumph of great importance in the writer's time when one was able to swim to the other side and rest on its scant rocky ledge, to recover for the return crossing. This forbidden swimming pool was within the Castle property and sometimes the "gamie" would scatter the "dookers" by making his appearance at the most inopportune time; scores of nude figures could be seen scrambling across the "goyle" with their scanty attire grasped tightly, making a hasty escape to reach the safety of the town side. But woe betide the swimmers who were marooned on the opposite side. They had to wait until the uncomplimentary taunts and jeers of the indignant bathers had finally prevailed and the lordly retainer vanished as quickly as he came into the woods beyond the river. The South Esk like other Scottish rivers was famed for the beauty and excellence of its fresh water pearls and near this same spot the pearl poachers "aye did weel" and further down the river near the Brig O'Brechin the salmon poachers carried on their nocturnal dragging when the salmon were running upstream to spawn.

But we have digressed here so let us get back to the Castle and from its rocky eminence take in the beautiful view upstream; not many hundred yards away is a highly ornamental bridge with well sculptured figures resting in niches formed in the supporting piers and appropriately named the Image Bridge. This crossing of the South Esk afforded an entrance to the Castle from the south, an excellently wooded area of noble trees and rich haugh lands beyond which rise the wooded Heights of Burghill. The main entrance to the Castle is on the street of that name near the West Port and typical of many other Castles has a large gate and gate house built in the



... Image Bridge



... Brechin Castle

high stone dyke which bounds the castle grounds and can only be entered when the gatekeeper is satisfied that you have the proper credentials. The Castle underwent a siege in 1303 from the English Army under Edward I and only surrendered to Sir Thomas Maule, its brave governor, being killed. The castle library contains many valuable manuscripts, among these are the Chartularies of St. Andrews, Brechin, etc., also the correspondence of Burns the Scottish Bard and his friend George Thompson. Among its paintings is an original portrait of the Marquis of Montrose by Honhurst estimated at great value.

Interesting to the antiquarian and historian also is the Cathedral and Round Tower which are situated close to the castle in a ravine of great beauty. In ancient days it contained an abbey of the Culdees and a bishopric was subsequently established within it by David I in 1150. The Cathedral Church, (dedicated to the Holy Trinity), founded here and liberally endowed by the same monarch was a stately Gothic fabric with aisles, etc., but these were destroyed by the wretched taste displayed in repairing it in 1807. Adjoining the Church is a Round Tower of which there are only two in Scotland the other one being at Abernethy. It is a circular column of great beauty and elegance about eighty-seven feet high with an octagonal spire or roof of about fifteen feet more making in all about one hundred and two feet in height. It gradually tapers from an external diameter of fifteen feet at the base or sill of door to twelve feet at the top of windows. The door is six and one half feet from the ground. The top lintel contains a representation of the crucifixion; on the sides of the door are effigies of two monks and a grotesque animal in crouching posture on each side of the door sill. It contains no stair and the only access to the top is by ladders placed on wooden floors which rest on circular stone projections within the tower. The walls are four feet thick at the bottom diminishing to less than three feet at the top. Great uncertainty at one time prevailed regarding the purpose and the era of the Round Tower but this has been largely removed by careful researches and the two similar buildings in Scotland may now be placed after the introduction of Christianity, and whatever other purposes they were intended to serve there can be little doubt that they were used as belfries.

THE TOWN of Brechin is situated on the left bank of the South Esk and was a walled town in ancient days having four ports which still remain the names of the four exists from the town; North Port, South Port, East and West Ports. When Brechin was a mediaeval burgh with its characteristic petty customs were collected from incoming traders, and when the writer was residing in Brechin one of the Toll Houses still existed at the West Port. In fact one of the school teachers of that day was known by the nickname Tollie on account of residing in the old toll house. Brechin apart from its monuments in stone of ancient times has nothing to boast of but its immediate environs are steeped in early Scottish history. Let us pass through the North Port which heads directly for Glenesk the Highland domain of the Earl of Dalhousie. First of importance as we pass through this ancient portal; to our right is a natural ravine which has been transformed into a veritable beauty spot, the slopes of which are artistically clothed with ornamental shrubs and trees of various geographical origin. The none too spacious bottom contains several hot houses which have been ably attended to by the tireless efforts of a few generations of gardeners making the Den Nursery as it is called of county wide reputation. One old gardener, Sandy by name, used to admonish his weeders (as the writer well remembers) with a very pert statement in braid Scots: "Pu ilka perlikkit o'it lads" and his eagle eye could spot a weed as a hawk his quarry from on high.

Then as if in vivid contrast to our left is the Gallows' Hill whose name furnishes the description which we need not necessarily rehearse here, and nearby stands the North Port distillery brewing the "barley bree". Continuing northward on the Trinity Road as we reach Trinity Muir, the scene of an annual fair comparable to that in Hardy's Novel "The Mayor of Casterbridge" and thence to the River Cruick where an excellent view of the Grampian Mountains with the celebrated forts of the two Caterthuns are seen about three miles to the left. As a boy the writer has visited those Caterthuns many times when the blueberries were ripe, the slopes of those hills are covered with heather and blueberries and



... Cathedral, Brechin

young Brechiners make this pilgrimage frequently during the berry season. On the top of Caterthun is a large ring of stones several feet high elliptical in shape and all evidently carried from the River Cruick a few miles away. I had often wondered how they managed to get those big stones up there and was assured by my great aunt that the Highlanders passed them from hand to hand up the steep slopes to the top of Caterthun; the explanation sufficed but I still did not understand how the huge stone which stood near the middle of the ring got there and my truthful aged companion told me in a hushed whisper that the devil himself brought that one up.

NOW casting our glance to the right we see the Kirk of Stracathro the scene of King John Baliol's submission to Edward I in 1296. In 1130 a battle was fought in the same neighborhood between David I and Angus, Earl of Murray which ended in the defeat of the latter. The word Stracathro, so I was told in my youth by my same informer was supposed to a contraction of the battle cry of the Scots when facing Edward I "strike and ca through". In broad Scots which the uneducated Scotch use "ca" means drive, hence Stracathro. This has been contradicted by later historians who give it a Roman derivation meaning the Street of the Camps which might signify that the Romans had their camps there when they penetrated far up the east coast of Scotland into Aberdeenshire. At Stracathro near the junction of the West Water and the North Esk stands the mansion house of Stracathro, and a little to the Northeast can be seen the turreted castle of Inglismaldie rising from the adjoining woods. One of our veteran students now attending Dalhousie University in one of the professional courses has during his leaves in Scotland visited Stracathro several times. A large hospital which is built there was used by the military and he was profuse in his appreciation of the hospitality afforded him during his stay at Stracathro. Only last fall when in conversation with him he made this remark to the writer: "If I was there now I would be out stag hunting with the Laird". Leaving the Cruick and traversing another two miles we reach the beautiful village of Edzell with its modern High Street; entrance to which is through a massive stone arch.

Here to the westward about a mile from Edzell stands the extensive ruins of Edzell Castle, the ancestral seat of the once powerful Lindsay family, a descendant of which, Dr. A. W. H. Lindsay, was professor of anatomy and secretary of the Medical Faculty of Dalhousie from 1885-1915. Many hair-raising stories has the writer heard from his guardian of the doings of the fierce Lindsays, one of which lingers freshly in memory to this late day. The burial ground not very far from the castle has a small chapel in the center of it, in which I was told the Lindsays kept their departed prior to being interred in the family vault. The chapel, so I was led to believe, had a tunnel which connected it with the Castle nearby. It seems that one of the ladies who had taken her demise had been placed in the chapel pending her final interment in the family vault. She had been prepared for burial with her rings and other jewellery on her person and it was told to me by my informant that a robber had broken into the Chapel and while taking the rings from her fingers she suddenly revived and lived many years thereafter. The gallows used by the Lindsays was a huge tree with a stout limb growing at right angles to the parent trunk at a convenient height from the ground and was located some distance from the castle in a wooded section near the village of Edzell. I was told that many of the Lindsay enemies had been hung thereon and I felt very much relieved to know that the Lindsays had long since departed from Edzell Castle and the ruins and its immediate environs were now the property of the Earl of Dalhousie. The garden walls of this old castle are ornamented by a number of elaborate carvings in stone. On the east wall are the celestial dieties; on the south are the sciences and on the west the theological and cardinal virtues forming one of the most interesting memorials of its kind in Scotland. I still remember my visit there over fifty years ago; an old worthy with a crooked staff which he used as a pointer in describing the carvings, escorted us on our tour of the garden. I have only one recollection of all his descriptions and it was when he pointed to a small sculptured figure carrying a satchel and addressed me thus: "He is a wee lad like yersel gaen tae schule".

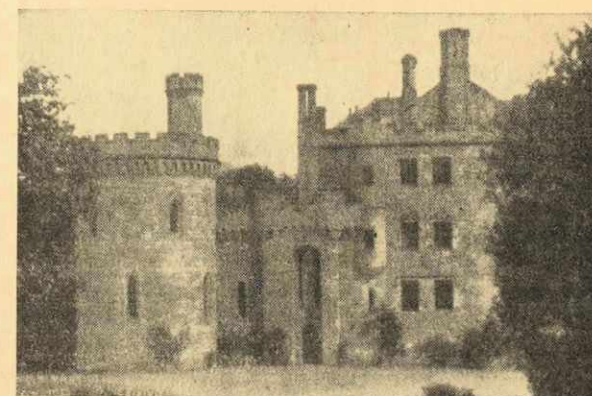
THE donjon was there with its awful blackness and depth. I dropped a stone into it and waited for the resounding thud of its arrival at the bottom. It seemed to take ages. There also was a huge fireplace in the castle kitchen on which an ox could be conveniently roasted at one time, but let us get back to Brechin. It is only a few miles away, those miles packed full of entrancing remnants of early Scottish history. An afternoon can accomplish all we have seen to this moment and there is still ample time to visit the Suspension and Gannochy Bridges which span the North Esk, also to go up Glenesk where the Earls of Dalhousie still hunt the deer and woodcock in the wilds of the Grampians. The shooting lodge of the Ramsays is at Invermark Lodge near to the picturesque and ruinous Invermark Castle.

Whilst speaking of the hunting lodge up Glenesk it might not be amiss to mention a few words about the late G. F. Pearson, LL.B., K.C., at one time Chairman of the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University who during his term in that capacity devoted many hours working tirelessly on behalf of his Alma Mater. When John Cameron, M.D., C.M., Professor of Anatomy, was preparing to make a visit to his homeland Mr. Pearson asked him to call on the Earl of Dalhousie and request of him to send a box of heather complete with soil taken from the Dalhousie Estate. The Earl, who had been badly shaken in World War I, could not be contacted, but the Countess generously acquiesced and a box six foot square and eighteen inches deep was filled with a block of soil and heather taken from the foothills of the Grampians on the Dalhousie Estate. It was shipped by rail to Glasgow, from thence to be forwarded by ship to Halifax, but owing to the big transportation strike at that time the box lay on the quay for nearly six weeks and when it ultimately arrived at the Forrest Building it had little life left in it. Apparently the heather had not yet received sufficient mishandling for a Dominion Botanist made a thorough examination of all the soil in the box before any transplanting could be accomplished. By constant watering, a few green portions survived and some was planted in the Oval at Studley Campus and the rest at the Carleton Campus. The heather did not survive. It was the intention of Mr. Pearson to present each graduate with a sprig of Dalhousie heather when he received his degree. This failed to materialize, but there is still today at the Carleton Campus a square yard of scottish earth which for many years was suitably encircled by a miniature fence and a small plaque nearby which read "Scotland Yard". As if to consecrate this hallowed spot the writer had an Aberdeen lady, the wife of one of our Dalhousie's Medical Staff dance a few steps of the Highland Fling thereon, where rugged Scotia's soil rests peacefully in Nova Scotia's lap.

PERHAPS as a fitting conclusion this article in the December 11th issue of the "Brechin Advertiser" entitled "Our Friends Abroad" "Dalhousie or Dalhousie" might not be considered amiss. Quote: Dalhousie University, Halifax, is looking forward to a fresh period of development and prosperity under the new President Dr. Alexander Enoch Kerr. Dr. Kerr himself is an old Dalhousian, was inducted last month and all kinds of tributes to his gifts of character and leadership were paid on that occasion.

One incident to which the "Halifax Mail" gave some prominence the following morning happened at the inauguration dinner and suggests that among the gifts of the new President is that of "thoroughness". The question was raised at the dinner should the "ou" in Dalhousie be pronounced "OO" or "OW". The President had the answer. Recently he said his "OW" pronunciation had been questioned on several occasions; latterly by no less a person than Mr. Justice Kellock. During lunch in Toronto with the distinguished Justice, Dr. Kerr said Mr. Kellock asked him why some people persisted in the "OW" sound. Upon his return to Halifax President Kerr said he scoured the files of the Dalhousie Gazette and discovered an article by Dr. Schurman, Professor of English at Dalhousie in the 80's. Dr. Schurman, he said had written the Earl of Dalhousie who had replied that probably the uneducated Scot would say "Dalhousie" but that every educated Scot said "Dalhousie". The Dalhousie title was taken from the lands of "Dalwalsey" which may account for the "Dalhousie" pronunciation which is often heard in Midlothian the Dalhousie "calf ground" and apparently it still lingers in Canada.

—"MAC"



... Dalhousie Castle