

# HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



# FIELD MONUMENTS

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

4 DISTR:CT <b>NAIRN</b>		5 PARISH <b>CROY AND DALCROSS</b>		1 SITE CODE H N H 8 4 N W 0 0 2	
7 AREA STATUS		8 SITE STATUS <b>A LISTED</b>		2 NGR N H 8 1 4 0 4 9 3 6	
11 CONCORDANCE os NH 84 NW 2		12 FORM <b>STANDING STRUCTURE</b>		3 QUAL CE	
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS		9 REGIONAL STATUS		6 SITE NAME <b>KILVARAVOCK CASTLE</b>	
10 LAND USE <b>LAND BUILT UPON + OPEN WOODLAND</b>		13 DIMENSIONS <b>12 0m x 9 6m</b>		10 GENERIC TYPE <b>CASTLE TOWERHOUSE</b>	
22 SOILS		17 CONDITION <b>INCOMPLETE</b>		14 PERIOD/DATE <b>15th - 17th C</b>	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF <b>STEEP HILLSLOPE ON FLANK OF *</b>		15 DATING METHOD <b>TYP</b>	
20 LAND USE		21 GEOLOGY		18 SHAPE	
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION		19 THREAT AND DATE	
26 ASPECT <b>NE : SE : SSE</b>		27 ALTITUDE <b>65 : 75m OD</b>			

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)

29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1906: 6 'MAP
2. MACGIBBON, D + ROSS: 1887: CASTELLATED AND DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF SCOTLAND: VOL 1: PP 384-6 PLAN
3. WALLACE, TD: 1928-25: TRANS INV. SCI SOC + FIELD CLUB: VOL 9: PP 343-344
4. HBM(SDD): 1985: BSAHI LIST: NAIRN DISTRICT: LISTED
5. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1978: 1/10 000 MAP

OVER /

30 GROUND PLAN NO.

AO/63/241/5

31 GROUND PHOTO NO.

AO '64 '174 '2

32 SLIDES NO.

33 HR. AP. NO.

34 NMR. AP. NO.

35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE

36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION

37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

38 SAMPLES

39 PALYNOLOGY

40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.

41 SMALL FINDS

42 MUSEUM/LOCATION

43 OTHER

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER

45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER

46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT

47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT

48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS

49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE

50 RECORDER: DATE

SM: 25 2 1987

51 CHECK: DATE

GS: 27.2.1987.

52 TEXT "(NH 8140 4936). Kilravock Castle." (1)

"NH 8140 4936 Kilravock Castle originally consisted of a quadrilateral keep 39ft(12.3m) by 31ft(9.6m) Licenceto build was granted in 1460 and confirmed in 1475 The keep, though it has 14th C and 15th C characteristics is probably of the latter date In the 17th C the keep was enlarged into a castle by the unusual manner of adding a square staircase to the SW angle and a large rectangular building, attached to that, in order to form the south front of a quadrangle". (2) (3)

OVER /

BOX 25 "\*\* FULL DETAIL OF THE CASTLE OF KILVAROCK ON FLANK OF RIDGE"

BOX 29'6. CLOSE BROOKS:1986:THE EXPLORING SCOTLANDS HERITAGE:HMSO: :P96-7 No 42  
7 TRANTER. N: :THE FORTIFIED HOUSE IN SCOTLAND: :VOL 5:PP 138  
.139 + ILLUSTRATION

BOX 52 "IN more recent times...omitted in plan. other buildings have been added to the north of the main base and a wing has been extended along the west of the quadrangle". "The castle is generally as described as above, and is still occupied. The owner Mrs Rose, Kilvarock Castle, Croy, Nairnshire, believes that the keep was built in the 15thC with later 16th and 17th century additions(second phrase) but all records have been destroyed". (O.S.F.I:NKB:11.8.64) SEE CONTINUATION CARD FOR REST OF TEXT +ILLUSTRATION  
"NH 8140 4936 Kilvarock Castle" (5)

KILRAVOCK CASTLE, NAIRNSHIRE.

Originally this castle consisted of a quadrilateral keep, 39 feet by 31 feet, situated on the top of a steep bank above the river Nairn, and seven miles up from the town of the same name. The lands of Kilravock were acquired in the thirteenth century by Hugh Rose of Geddes, and have been in the same family ever since. The keep probably belongs to the fifteenth century, but it possesses few features whereby its age may be determined. The simple corbel table and bartizans of the parapet (Fig. 332) might even be of the fourteenth century; but the way in which the angle of the parapet over the staircase is carried up to form a watch-turret indicates a later date. In the History of the Family of Rose, by Rev. Hugh Rose, minister of Nairn, it is stated that in 1460 the Baron of Kilravock obtained a licence from the Lord of the Isles "to fund, big ande upmak a toure of fens with Barmkin ande bataling upon quhat place of stryngth him best likis within the Barony of Kyrawok." The existing keep was probably built soon after. It has the ordinary characteristics of fifteenth-century towers, such as walls 7 feet in thickness, small windows in deeply-recessed bays, chambers in the walls a newel staircase in the thickness of one of the angles, a high window over the fireplace, and the adjoining wall-chamber off the hall.

In the seventeenth century the keep has been enlarged into a castle surrounding a courtyard in a rather unusual manner. A square staircase (Fig. 333) was built adjoining the south-west angle, and a large building attached to it, so as to form the south front of the quadrangle. The basement floor of this building contains vaulted cellars, with a vaulted passage giving access to them.

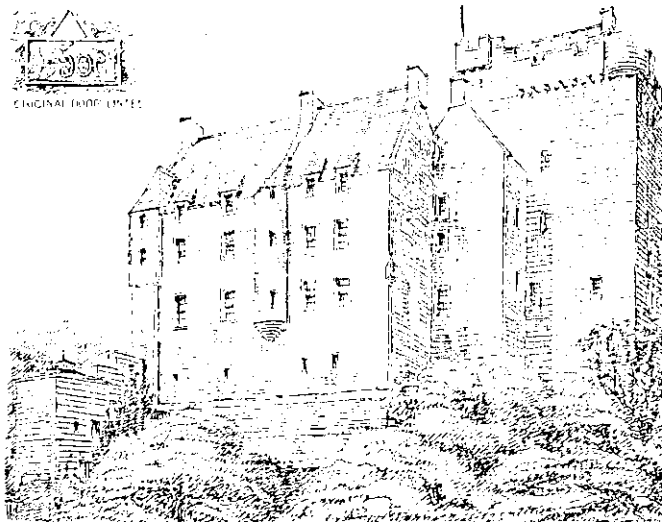


FIG. 332.—Kilravock Castle. View from the South-West.

The entrance doorway—the original lintel of which (see sketch, Fig. 332) is lying in the grounds—is in the staircase tower, and is

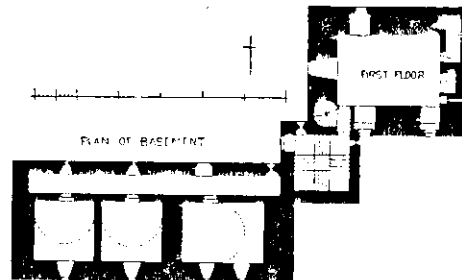


FIG. 333.—Kilravock Castle. Plans.

defended with a wide shot-hole from the basement passage. Other shot-holes from the staircase flank the keep, explaining the object of the builder in planning the stair tower as he has done. The upper rooms of the south block are of a modern character, with private turret stairs, and angle closets, such as are usual in the seventeenth century, the stairs being arranged so as to give separate accesses to the various apartments. Although there is a corridor on the basement floor, there was none on the upper floors, the rooms on which occupied the full width of the block, and had separate access by the turret stairs.

In more recent times other buildings have been added to the north of the main house, so as to suit modern requirements, and a wing has been extended along the west side of the quadrangle, but these additions

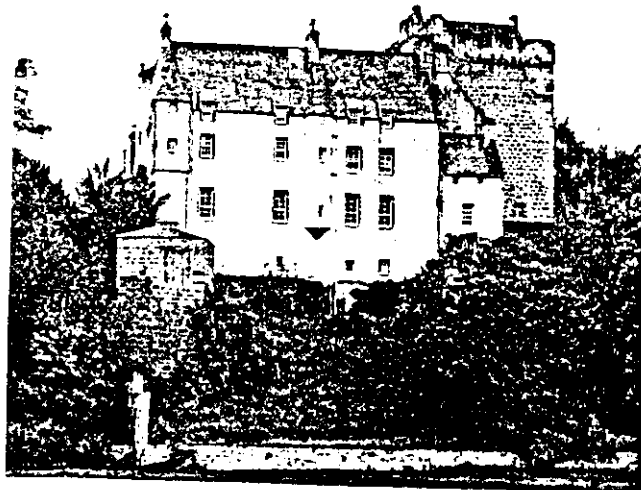
42\* Kilravock Castle,  
Nairn District  
*15th and 17th centuries and later.*  
NH 814493. 10 km SW of Nairn, signposted off  
B 9091. (Open one day a week, April to  
September.)

The early tower dominates the later, more domestic additions to this attractive castle, which stands on the edge of a cliff above the River Nairn. The lands of Kilravock have belonged to the Rose family since the 13th century, and the family still live here.

Hugh Rose received a licence to build 'a tour of fens' from the Lord of the Isles, then also Earl of Ross, in 1460. This 'defensive tower' has a corbelled wall walk, open turrets called bartizans at the corners (similar open bartizans at Cawdor (no. 41) were given conical roofs in the 17th century), and a gabled attic roof. Inside the tower a wheel stair in the wall gives access to single rooms on four floors and to the wall walk. The first-floor hall has its old wooden beamed ceiling, blackened by smoke or fire. A chimney lintel carved in 1666 for the wedding of Hugh Rose and Margaret Innes has been moved from this room to the entrance hall, and replaced by a modern fireplace. The upper room has the usual vaulted roof.

In the 17th century a large domestic wing was added to the tower, linked by a square stair tower. Its harled walls contrast with the bare stone of the old tower. The passage and storerooms on the ground floor are all vaulted, with the main rooms on the floor above. Here two turrets for spiral stairs are corbelled out giving extra access to the rooms above. Four dormer windows break the line of the high pitched roof. On the north side of the castle two service wings of varying height and later date form a small entrance court. Much of the interior was remodelled in the later 18th century. The present drawing-room now has a corniced and coved ceiling, a Venetian window in the end wall, and an Adam style chimneypiece. There is an 18th century staircase with carved balusters, and the castle is furnished with family furniture and pictures.

Below the castle on the river side is a small 15th/16th century corner tower with a stone-seated privy in the ground floor chamber and a dovecote above, accessible only by ladder. Around the castle are woodland, a tree garden and nature trails.



(6)

The family of the Roses of Kilravock, anciently one of the most powerful in the North, settled in Nairnshire during the reign of Alexander the Third. Hugh de Ross was the proprietor of Geddes in 1230, as appears from his signature to the original Charter of Beaully Priory. He acquired the lands of Kilravock in 1293, receiving a Crown Charter of the barony from King John Baliol.

Hugh Rose, seventh Baron, built the tower of Kilravock, having obtained licence by patent to do from John, Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, 18th February 1460, which was confirmed in 1475 by King James III. The tower is a strongly built, massive, square pile, in excellent preservation, with a range of high-roofed additions, and is perched on a rocky bank overlooking the Nairn. Hugh Rose, known as the "Black Baron," the tenth of his line, who died in 1597 at the age of 90, was a noted laird, and did much to improve the amenities of the Castle by tree-planting. Some of the "Black Baron's" oaks may still be seen, and aroused the admiration of visitors, with their gnarled branches overhanging the bushes and underwood.

To Hugh, the "Black Baron," fell the honour of entertaining Mary Queen of Scots, who stopped at Kilravock on her return from her eventful visit to Inverness in 1562. Her Majesty's bedroom is still in its original state. It has no fire-place, and is neither lathed nor plastered, while the floor consists of great boards roughly sawn and nailed together. This Hugh, who lived through all the troublous times of Mary's chequered reign in peace and amity with men of all parties and both religions, would seem to have been somewhat of a humourist, as in a law paper still existing, a submission between him and two of his neighbours, he signs his name in the following fashion:—Hutcheon Rose of Kilravock, "ane honest man, ill-guided between you baith."

The representative of this ancient family did effective service in the cause of the Government in the Rebellion of 1715. During the '45 the Castle of Kilravock received visits from Prince Charles Edward and the Duke of Cumberland. Prince Charlie's visit took place on 14th April 1746, two days before the Battle of Culloden. Although the laird was a strong supporter of the Government, the Prince was kindly received and entertained to dinner, and charmed his host and hostess by his affability. He asked to see their children, kissed all three of them (sons), and praised them for their beauty. Perceiving an old viol'n, the Prince requested the laird to play him a tune. Kilravock, who was a good musician, played an old Italian Minuet, remarking, when he had concluded, that he believed it was a favourite with His Royal Highness. "That it is so, Mr Rose," returned the Prince, "is certain, but how ye came to know this I am at a loss to guess." The famous old violin was shown to the party on Saturday.

A drinking cup formed out of a large nut, and used by the Prince, is preserved at the Castle, and was much admired by the visitors. The Prince's name is engraved on the cup, and the date, 14th April 1746. The Duke of Cumberland, who called at the Castle on the following day, is said to have upbraided Kilravock, but on the circumstances being explained, he remarked that Mr Rose had acted quite rightly.

Robert Burns who visited Kilravock during his notable visit to the Highlands in 1787, sounded loud the praises of the place, and "Burns' Oak" is still an object of curiosity.

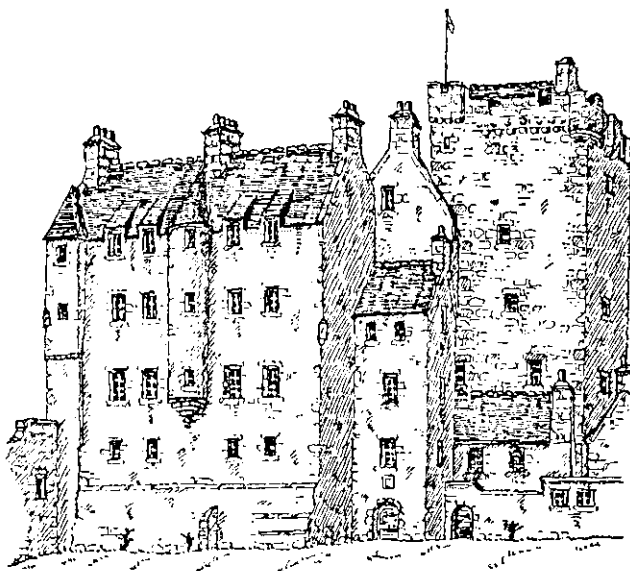
Under the intelligent guidance of Mr Willis, head gardener, the party had a highly instructive ramble through the policies, examining some magnificent trees and shrubs. A gigantic specimen of Tilka spruce, the largest in Great Britain, measures 22½ feet in girth, and is about 120 feet high. The woods of Kilravock are rich in beeches, ash, oak, cedar of Lebanon, and fir.

[138]

## KILRAVOCK CASTLE

This impressive and composite castle of the Roses, dating from the 15th and the 17th centuries, stands amidst a large estate, on a rocky bank above the meadows of the River Nairn, about seven miles south-west of Nairn. The original fortalice, a simple, free-standing oblong tower, or keep, rises to the east of the present range of building, and dates from 1460, when Huchone de Ross, 7th Baron, was given royal licence 'to fund, big ande upmak a toure of fens with Barmekin ande bataling upon quhat place of strynth him best likis within the Barony of Kylrawok'.

This massive tower, of coursed rubble 7 feet thick, rises five storeys to a simple parapet on individual corbels, topped by a gabled garret storey. There are open rounds at the angles, save to the south-west, where rises the turnpike stair, surmounted at parapet level by a squared caphouse. The windows throughout are small. In the 17th century the castle was much enlarged. First, a square stair-wing, rising to a gabled roof, was built abutting the south-west corner. Then, to the west of this addition, the main southern 17th-century five storey-block was erected, with a steep gabled roof, a semi-circular stair-turret corbelled out above main first-floor level in the centre of the south front, and another stair



7

in a squared projection, hardly to be called a tower, rising at the extreme south-west angle. Later and lower work was added, in something of a clutter, to the south-east and north-west.

The original door to the keep was at the foot of the stair in the south-west angle, now enclosed by the square wing. It was defended by a wide splayed gunloop from its basement passage. There are other shot-holes elsewhere. The basement is vaulted and there are wall-chambers in the thickness of the masonry. There is a high window above the Hall fireplace, on the first floor. The basement of the south block is also vaulted and contains a range of three cellars, with a vaulted access passage to the north. As there was no similar corridor on the upper floors, and the rooms take up the full width of the house, the two projecting stair-turrets to the south are necessary for access.

There is some dispute as to the origins of this ancient family of Rose of Kilravock. One suggestion is that they are descended from the ancient Celtic Earls of Ross; another that they spring from the Norman de Roos family. Formerly they were designated 'of Geddes', which lies about five miles nearer Nairn. A Hugo de Roos, Dominus de Geddes, was witness for Sir John Bisset of Lovat, of the foundation charter of Beaulieu Priory in 1219. His son, another Hugh, married the heiress grand-daughter of the said Bisset, and so acquired the lands of Kilravock. They were erected into a barony for still another Hugh Rose in 1474, by James the Third. Hugh, 10th in succession, in 1545 purchased much land from the infamous Bishop Hepburn of Moray, who was busy anticipating the Reformation and lining his own pockets. This laird, in a submission between two quarrelling neighbours, signed himself as 'Hutcheon Rose of Kilravock, an honest man ill-guided between you baith'.

Mary Queen of Scots visited Kilravock in 1562, during her progress into the North to bring down the power of Gordon. Hugh, 16th laird, entertained Charles Edward here, two days before Culloden, and played a minuet for the Prince on his violin; and the Duke of Cumberland, who came the day after, remarked that he understood that the laird had been entertaining his cousin --but for once seems to have exacted no vengeance, perhaps because one of Rose's daughters was married to Duncan Forbes of Culloden. Robert Burns was here in 1787.

Happily, the Roses are still at Kilravock.