

Tulloch Castle, Dingwall

by Barbara Abbot of Dingwall Museum

Tulloch Castle is a 16th century tower house with 19th & 20th century additions, probably built over an older structure. Standing on Tulloch Hill, it has views over Dingwall, the Cromarty Firth, and hills to the West. It is said that the first keep was built by “Norsemen” in the 12th Century - though unlikely given how close the castle was to Dingwall Castle.



The Bains

The first Bain, Alexander, was a burghess of Dingwall before he died in 1513. His son, Duncan, became 1st Earl of Tulloch and built a keep in 1542. The south-west corner of Tulloch Castle dates from that time - a large rectangular tower with a circular stair tower. The vaulted basement, known as “the dungeon”, has gun loops and the keep walls are 2.5m thick. The main hall still has its original grand fireplace. Above was another floor and garret. Sadly, there is no evidence of the rumoured secret, underground tunnel to Dingwall Castle! As Dingwall Castle fell into ruin, Tulloch Castle became the most prominent building in Dingwall. In 1633 John, 4th Laird of Tulloch and 3-time Provost of Dingwall, built a new east wing. It’s fine 17th century plaster ceilings still survive but by 1762 the estate was bankrupt. Kenneth Bayne, 8th Laird, sold it to his cousin, Henry Davidson (a London lawyer and army agent) as Davidson’s father had married Kenneth’s daughter.



The Davidsons

The Davidsons invested heavily in renovating the castle in 1675 and 1747, and rebuilt Tulloch Farm in 1774. They owned the estate until the early 20th century. All six Davidson lairds served locally as Lord Lieutenants, Provosts, or M.P.s for Cromarty. In 1789, Duncan commissioned leading architect, Robert Adam, to build the folly, Caisteal Gorach, on Tulloch Hill. He also financed the building of a local *Caisteal Gorach* school, parish church, canal and many other major works.



Tulloch Castle's Ghost - The Green Lady

Duncan's son was a favourite of Queen Victoria and nicknamed "The Stag". He had 5 wives, 18 children, and was rumoured to have had at least 30 illegitimate children!

One of his daughters, Elizabeth, fell downstairs to her death when she ran away after seeing her father with another woman. Her ghost, **The Green Lady**, is believed to regularly haunt the castle, and Elizabeth's portrait still hangs in the Great Hall today.

The Green Lady is one of only a few ghosts ever to be captured on film, prompting several paranormal investigations. Balls of light, orbs and icy cold patches of air have been seen and felt; and clicks, bangs and thuds recorded on film, with no explanation ...

The Last of the Tulloch Lairds

The Old Statistical Account (1791-99) refers to the "beautiful grounds attached to Tulloch Castle", with its walled gardens on either side. Sadly, major fires in 1838 and 1845, destroyed the East wing, along with most of the estate records.

The 6th Davidson Laird took over in 1889, restoring and extending the castle and farm steading. He died in 1917 leaving the castle to his wife, who continued renovations from 1918-1923. On her death in 1947, the castle passed to Douglas Vickers (of Vickers aircraft company).

During World War II, the Castle was used as a hospital for Dunkirk casualties. Much later it was leased as a dormitory for Dingwall Academy's female students from the West Coast. By the late 1900's it was again falling into disrepair, and was purchased and converted into a hotel. Today, it is a four-star hotel that still retains many of its original features including the vault (or 'dungeon'), beautiful stained-glass windows, the fireplace, an ornate staircase, and the 250 year-old panelled Great Hall.

A [Clan Davidson Museum](#) has been created at the rear of the hotel, and the Davidson family cemetery is located nearby within the original grounds.



Clan Davidson Museum



The Great Hall & Fireplace

Further reading and credits <https://canmore.org.uk/site/12953/tulloch-castle>.

Photos and some text courtesy of 'Stravaiging around Scotland' / Andy Sweet, and www.bespokehotels.com.