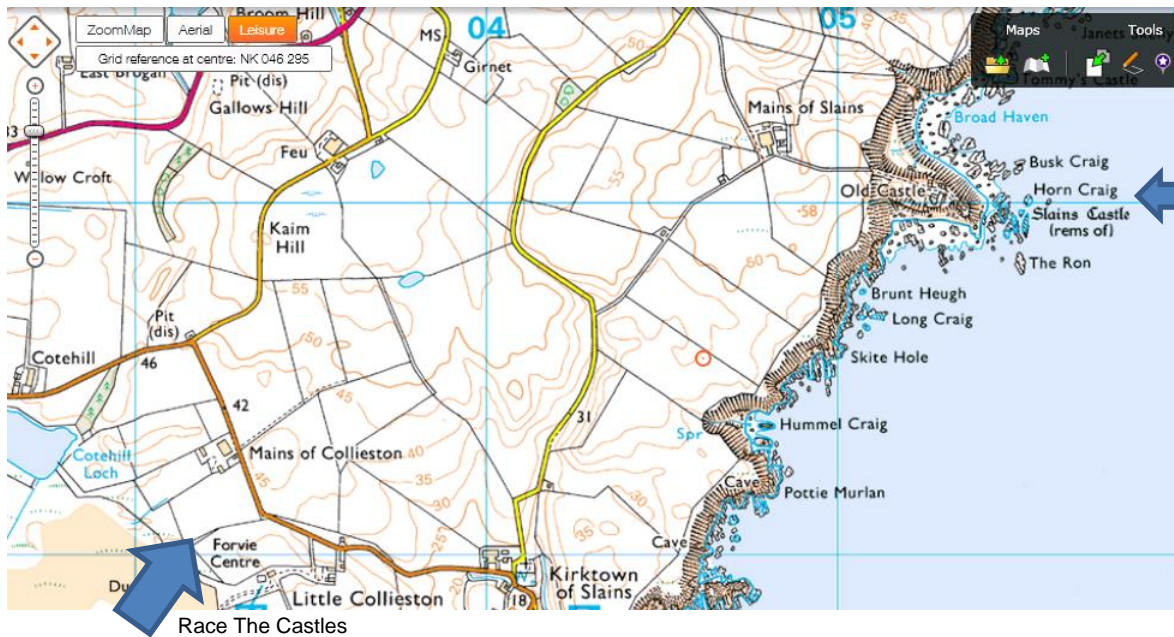


Slains Castle(s)

Old Slains Castle (otherwise known as Old Castle Slains) is a [ruined castle](#) (and a Historic Scotland scheduled monument) near [Collieston](#) in [Aberdeenshire, Scotland](#) Grid Ref NK052 300



Brief History

The 13th-century castle was originally the property of the [Comyn Earls of Buchan](#). After their [forfeiture](#) in the 14th century it was given to Sir [Gilbert Hay](#) by [Robert the Bruce](#) in recognition for his support against the English.

In 1594, [Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Erroll](#) led a rebellion which was put down by [James VI](#) and the castle was destroyed with gunpowder and cannon.

After returning from exile, Hay built a [New Slains Castle](#) on the site of the former [Bowness Castle](#) near [Cruden Bay](#).

In 1895 the author [Bram Stoker](#) visited the area, staying at a cottage near Cruden Bay, and he may have been a guest at New Slains. The castle is commonly cited as an inspiration for Stoker's 1897 novel [Dracula](#).

Old Slains Castle

Old Slains Castle is an example of a 15th-century square tower-house with associated earthworks forming inner and outer wards. Castles such as this reflect local power centres and recipients of royal patronage, such as Sir Gilbert Hay who received the lands of Slains as reward for his loyalty to King Robert I during the Scottish Wars of Independence. Additionally, they have the potential to enable us to understand the impact of feudalism, patterns of land tenure and the evolution of the local landscape.

The Hay family's long association with the castle can be traced to the early 14th century when King Robert I rewarded the loyalty of Sir Gilbert Hay of Errol with the lands of Slains and the title of

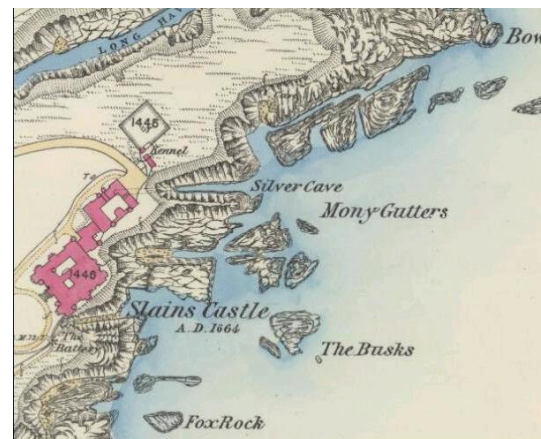
hereditary High Constable of Scotland. Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, the Hay family prospered because of loyal service to the Scottish crown. In 1372, Sir Thomas Hay of Errol married Princess Elizabeth Stewart (daughter of King Robert II), while in 1453 King James II rewarded the loyalty of Sir William Hay in the war against the Douglas family with the titles of Earl of Errol and Lord of Slains. The surviving SE corner of Slains Castle probably belongs to the 15th century.

Slains Castle was destroyed in October 1594 on the orders of King James VI. Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Errol joined the rebellion of George Gordon, 6th Earl of Huntly, and it is possible that the king may have personally supervised the castle's destruction, part of a royal campaign to pacify the region that also included the slighting of Strathbogie Castle. The destruction of Slains can be traced back to Francis Hay's signing of the Treaty of the Spanish Blanks, a conspiracy discovered in 1592, where several (Roman Catholic) Scots Lords reputedly set their names to a blank treaty pledging support to Philip V of Spain and requested military aid. Following the discovery of the treaty, Errol was declared a rebel and a traitor but avoided capture and joined Huntly's uprising in 1593. Lord Errol fought at the Battle of Glenlivet where the rebel force defeated the Earl of Argyll's royalist army.

Following the destruction of Slains and the collapse of Huntly's rebellion, Errol fled to Denmark in 1595 but secretly returned to Scotland the following year and, having publicly renounced his Catholicism in 1597, regained James VI's favour. Errol chose to abandon Slains on grounds that the cost of rebuilding was too high and built the house known as New Slains about 5 miles to the north. New Slains remained in the Hay family's possession until 1913 when the 20th Earl of Errol sold the property.

New Slains Castle

Slains Castle, also known as New Slains Castle to distinguish it from nearby [Old Slains Castle](#), is a ruined castle near Cruden Bay [Aberdeenshire, Scotland](#). It overlooks the [North Sea](#) from its cliff-top site 1 kilometre (0.62 m) east of [Cruden Bay](#). The core of the castle is a 16th-century [tower house](#), built by the [9th Earl of Erroll](#). Significant reconstruction of the castle has been carried out a number of times, lastly in 1837 when it was rebuilt as a [Scots Baronial](#) mansion. At one time it had three extensive gardens, but is now a roofless ruin. Plans to restore the castle have been on hold since 2009.



History

After Erroll was declared a traitor in 1594 Old Slains Castle was destroyed on the orders of [King James VI](#), he fled abroad only returning to Scotland in 1597 where he returned to royal favour. He

abandoned Old Slains and built a courtyard and square tower on the present site. Originally named Bowness, it later became known as New Slains. The wings around the courtyard were extended in 1664 by addition of a gallery or corridor, and in 1707 the entrance front was renewed.

In 1820 [William Hay, 18th Earl of Erroll](#), married [Lady Elizabeth FitzClarence](#), the illegitimate daughter of [King William IV](#) and [Dorothea Jordan](#). In the 1830s the 18th Earl commissioned the Aberdeen architect [John Smith](#) to remodel the castle. This resulted in a virtual rebuilding of Slains in a [Scots Baronial](#) style, including granite facings, in 1836–1837. Gardens were laid out in the late 1890s by the landscape architect [T. H. Mawson](#).

In 1913 the [20th Earl of Erroll](#) sold New Slains, ending more than 300 years of occupation by the family. It was purchased by [Sir John Ellerman](#), the wealthy but secretive owner of the [Ellerman Lines](#) shipping company, who leased it out. In 1925 the roof was removed to avoid taxes, and the building has deteriorated since. It is now a roofless shell, with most of the outer and inner walls standing to full height. In 2004 it was reported that the Slains Partnership was preparing plans for restoration of the building and conversion into 35 holiday apartments. In August 2007 the scheme was granted outline planning permission by Aberdeenshire Council, but the plans were put on hold in 2009 due to the economic downturn.

Architecture

At first inspection the ruin appears to be a blend of several different architectural styles and periods, due to diverse [masonry](#) including older [mortared granite](#), mortared medieval red brick, mortared sandstone and newer well faced granite. In fact most of the architecture seems to derive from a rather cohesive interval 1597 to 1664, which construction is the most expansive and includes the mortared rough granite and medieval brick. The 1836 work adds smoother granite facing that contrasts with the older construction style.

The defensive works of the castle include use of the [North Sea](#) cliffs; an abyss to the west that functions as a deep impassable [moat](#); and a ruined [rampart](#) that would have been the main entrance on the south. The ruins include reasonably well preserved elements of three and four storey structural elements and a basement course over some of the range, especially at the eastern side. There are well preserved basement kitchen works with numerous [firepits](#) and masonry indented storage spaces. The internal doorways are primarily of well preserved wooden [lintel](#) construction, with numerous examples of mortared sandstone and medieval brickwork archways. The interior of the ground level is a maze of passageways and smaller rooms, reflecting a high state of occupancy in 17th-century times.

