

Access

Duff House Mausoleum is situated just under a mile from Duff House along a rough track, in a beautiful and peaceful spot above the River Deveron. The original Duff House estate was much larger than that shown on this map, but is now privately owned.



There is little parking at the Mausoleum but plenty near Duff House itself. However there is a marked walk through the woods - see separate FoDH leaflet for full information about various points of interest:



1. Collie Lodge
2. Vinery
3. The Barnyards
4. East Lodge
5. Fife Gates
6. Laundry
7. Dogs' headstone
8. Fishing Temple
9. Ice House
10. Parkland
- 11. Mausoleum**
12. Playground
13. Golf Course

The Mausoleum is kept locked at all times except for Guided Tours (contact Duff House/Historic Environment Scotland for more information) and some Doors Open Days (contact Aberdeenshire Council for more information).



There are three large steps to get into the Mausoleum, and although the outside is fairly flat, it can be quite muddy.

Duff House itself is an Historic Environment Scotland managed fully furnished period Country House and part of the National Galleries of Scotland with an extensive collection on display. Open every day 11-5 Apr-Oct, last entry 4.30pm. Thu to Sun Nov-Mar 11-4, last entry 3.30pm. Tel 01261 818181. HS members free entry. Admission fee applicable except to shop, tea-room and toilets. Disabled access to all floors.



Duff House Mausoleum



- completed in 1792 by 2nd Earl Fife, James Duff;
- believed to be built on the site of St Mary's Chapel - part of a Carmelite monastery;
- the crypt contains the remains of the first five Earls and a number of other relatives;
- has some excellent examples of "Coade" stone (and a not so good one !);
- the gate is an elaborate and excellent piece of 18th century iron work, believed to be made in the Banff Foundry;
- the external tomb came from St Mary's Kirkyard in Banff; an interesting story from 1912 relates to it leaning away from the wall;
- there is an inscription referring to Robert the Bruce, now inside;
- a rare (in the UK) plant "Abraham Isaac Jacob" has established a foothold close to the Mausoleum.



James Duff, son of the First Earl Fife, built the family Mausoleum between 1790 and 1792. He had his parents and other family members moved to the crypt, some with memorials. He instructed his Factor, William Rose, that his parents should be placed at the river end, although there is no plan of the crypt, and three slight different lists of its occupants! The three larger stone slabs in the middle of the floor are where the stairs used to be; the crypt was filled with sand in 1911.

When the foundations were being dug a number of bones were found, and it is thought that these were Carmelite monks buried around what was St Mary's Chapel (said to have been dedicated by King Robert the Bruce in 1324), as part of a monastic site. "Mount Carmel" (or Mount of Colleopard) a few hundred yards to the south, a man-made mound was built by cups or pots of soil carried by penitent monks – or so one story says; or perhaps it was a fort to protect the nearby ford across the river !

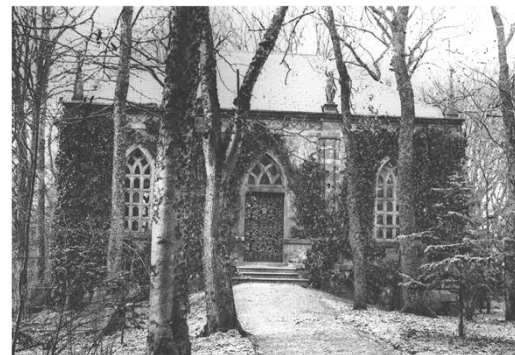
The Carmelite bones were placed in a "massy" (massive) urn on a pedestal – the base of which can still be seen near the SE corner. There is a story linked with the Provost Douglas monument (1663) on the outside south wall. The 2nd Earl had this taken from the old churchyard in Banff, and in front of the present wording had a stone placed referring to Robert the Bruce; which is the semi-circular stone now inside the Mausoleum. The story is that Provost Gordon was so upset at his monument being moved, that he shook and shook, and not only did his tomb move away from the Mausoleum wall (now repaired), it shook the pedestal, and the urn containing the monks remains rolled into the river.

The tomb has typical NE Scottish carvings including crossed bones to remind people of their mortality, and stalks of wheat as a reminder life goes on. The written inscription on the second panel is translated as "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. They rest from their labours and their works follow them."

The 2nd Earl also had some family tombs moved – with permission – from Cullen Old Church, but these have since been returned.

The memorials to the first five Earls can be seen; the sixth Earl who was made the first Duke of Fife on his marriage to Louise, the Princess Royal (daughter of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII), is buried elsewhere.

The peaceful location of the Mausoleum makes it a very special place; so much so that a couple of weddings have taken place; also an afternoon tea with invited guests including the 4th Duke and Duchess of Fife!



When the Mausoleum was first built it had painted glass in the windows which sadly has long since been lost. The main section of the window frames are cut from a single piece of sandstone; one was renewed in 2016. As old photos show there also used to be various pinnacles around the roof, the ones each side of the door being "Faith" and "Hope".

The roof is reported as originally stone tiled, now covered in slate. The main door is a most elaborate and excellent piece of iron work. This is said to have been made in a local Banff Foundry – noting that Banff was a significant shipbuilding port. The letter in the centre is a "J" for James the 2nd Earl. This gate was refurbished in 2016.



The monument inside on the river end to the first Earl (and his second wife – his first wife had once tried to shoot him!) is an example of Coade stone – a poor example as iron supports have rusted and cracked it. Coade stone was the first successful stone mixture that could be moulded, allowing finer detail than could typically be sculpted in stone. The mix was developed by Eleanor Coade. If you look at the frieze around the outside of the whole building this is a good example of it's weathering resistance, where nearly every "rose" is still in perfect condition. This is one of the most northerly examples of Coade Stone – a product that is still made today.



Outside the Mausoleum, just to the north on both sides of the path leading back towards Duff House, a rare plant has gained a substantial foothold. The latin name is *Trachystemon orientalis* – the only plant in this genus - but it's more common name is "Abraham Isaac Jacob". It is part of the Borage family but has flowers with five blue petals that are curled, and with five white and lilac stamens around a single longer central stigma. It flowers March to May and remarkably all plants are the same size. This plant was only introduced into the UK from eastern Europe in 1868, but follows on the tradition that in the late eighteenth century Duff House pleasure grounds had every type of tree known in the UK, and is said to have challenged the beauty of Princes Gardens in Edinburgh.