



FREELAND HOUSE

THE PLACE IS IN EVERY
RESPECT SUITED FOR
THE RESIDENCE OF A
FAMILY OF WEALTH
AND DISTINCTION

Freeland House

The first reference to a Freeland in Forgandenny was made in 1500, and suggests that part of the land had been granted a suspension of teinds in lieu of payment to a local official. Freeland was synonymous with the lands of Bercleysheuch, site of the original homestead of the Barclays of Forgandenny who settled in the late twelfth century, and a fortalice was built later on the lands of Coventry, which were contiguous with Bercleysheuch. Thomas Oliphant took a 19 year lease of the lands in 1544, and was probably the builder of the first fortalice named Freeland on a site just south east of the present building. In 1563, Alexander Ruthven, the younger son of William 2nd Lord Ruthven, received a longer lease of the lands of Coventrie with houses, tower, orchard, fortalice and manor place of Freeland. It is not known exactly when the later tower house and wing with a turnpike stairway was built to the north west of the old fortalice, but it served as home for six generations of Ruthvens through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It would be likely that rebuilding and alteration over that time, ordered by the third Lord Ruthven prior to his marriage to Janet Nisbett, created the building mentioned in 1733 by the architect John Douglas.

1733 Contract James Ruthven and John Douglas, Architect.

To pull down the old wing on the middle of the north side of the House of Freeland and to double the said house to the north side where the wing is to be taken away the full length of the present House of Freeland and 18' wide within the walls and three storeys high - The first story to sink underground for offices, the second to be of the same level as floor within the first story of the present house of Freeland where the drawing room and Dining room presently are and of the same height. The third uppermost story to be a foot and a half higher walls than the uppermost story of the present house of Freeland if the walls will allow and to put a good and sufficient roof upon the said new building and a little flatter than the roof of the present house s as the two roofs be level at the top notwithstanding of the ods of the height of the walls.

To be good stone work with plain hewn doors, windows and corners and chimney heads with 5 pairs of concave jams and hearths finely polished and the make good and sufficient vents so as not to smoke and to make said roof of good and sufficient redwood sawn out of logs and well sark and slated with slate from Drummahourm quarry and the old roof and new to be joined with a lead gutter and to divide the same in offices, rooms, closets and stairs, etc.

The sunk story to be plastered. 2nd story the Dining room to have fine doubled flooring and to be all boxed with fine redwood quarter round and raised panelling. The stairs of stone well polished and the nursery to be floored as the uppermost story of good common flooring and boxed all round.

2 new doors on the passages from the new building to the old and all the windows of the second and third storeys to be made of two inch thick wanscoat and crown glass, the first story to be of inch and half wanscoat and good common glass and to alter the positions of the old house.

100 pounds sterling betwixt the 1st July next to come and the like sum of one hundred pounds at the term of martinmas thereafter and the sum of £125 17/- at the term of Whitsunday - and to furnish John Douglas with the horses to carry the stone, lime, timber and slates and to quarry the stone. To furnish workmen upon Lord Ruthven's charge. To rid the ground for the sunk story of the new building.

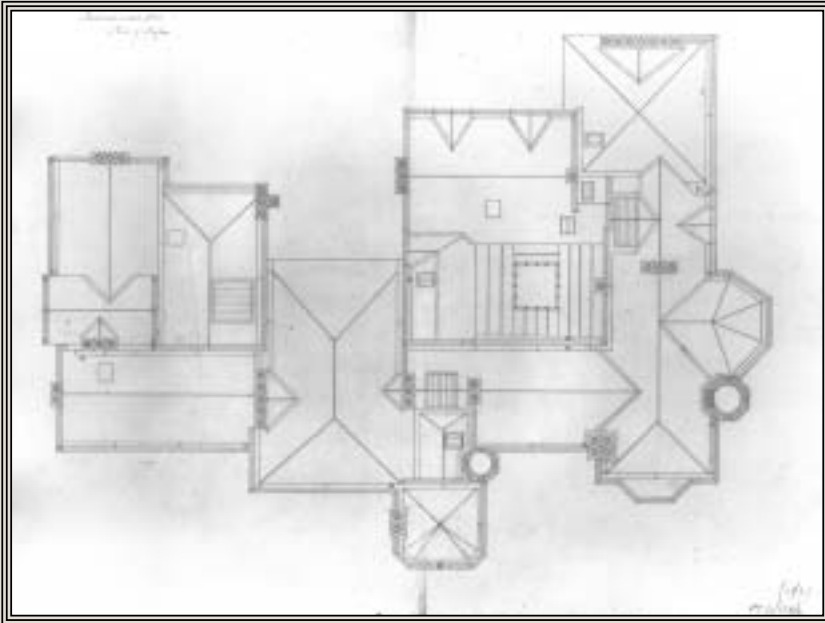
The Drawing room to be in the old house where the dining room is at present - both to be boxed the same. Lord R's dressing room and his Lady's woman's room in the uppermost story of the new building remain unfinished at his option.

witnesses

Henry Balfour Esq of Dunbog

Tomas Morison, servant to Lord R

On 14th March 1750, a fire destroyed a major part of the house, and burned essential belongings including all the estate papers and family patents. How much of the fabric was destroyed is not really known, but the property became habitable soon afterwards as Lord Ruthven was there organising the payment of bills, associated with the linen manufacture and bleaching at Brigend in Forteviot, and the number of servants had increased - a matter that caused considerable distress to the session. In 1753, Edward Rutherford paid out one thousand and eighty pounds for repairs to Freeland House out of the balance of the rents of the estate, so we know that the initial fire did not completely destroy the original house. An incident between servants, which came before the session in March 1756, indicates that the kitchens of Freeland House were back in operation, and Lord and Lady Ruthven were in residence. From later reports that one of the wings was never rebuilt, we can deduce that an older part of the house was destroyed, which included an east wing. The house was not completely rebuilt until after the enclosure of the estate, which occurred from 1760. The survey map survey of 1774 shows three buildings at the Freeland



Collingwood Lindsay Wood 1830 – 1906

mansion. One was the old mansion running east-west, and the second was a wing to the south on the west end of the building: both these structures were later incorporated into the present mansion. The third building was another wing on the east end which was shown unattached to the main building, and may be part of the wing that was reported as being still incomplete when it was demolished in the 1820s.

Construction on the estate must have continued for some time as John Fisher was still the building foreman in 1779; Patrick Robertson was still resident at Freeland as mason to Lord Ruthven in 1777, and Laurence Oliphant, the mason at Clerkhill, was paid in 1784 for laying a pavement round the house so far as completed. A sum of about five hundred pounds was paid out in 1770 for the stables built by the West Belling Park, and occupied by Lord Ruthven's stable manager, James Young, and the coachman, William Archibald from early 1769. An inventory of the stables made in 1790 indicated a modest structure:

2 coach horses	£20
2 mares at Freeland	£21
1 foal	£7/7
1 Quoy - three years old	£3/13
a cow	£3
a stack of hay	£2/2
a chaise and harness	£16
Arms	£14
Apparel	£20
2 watches and seals	£8/8
2 saddle horses	£25
horse furniture	£6/6

The 1774 survey map also shows the existence of a steading on Freeland at the end of the village road north of the gardens and west of the new beech avenue, which may actually be the porter's lodge known as Westgate, or Freeland West Lodge, formed from the old Mid-Mains of Freeland. 'Though the existence of the roadways to the house is known from the maps, the other porter's lodge, named Eastgate, which stood at the point where the estate road met the new Dunbarney road, is only known about through the occupant. In February 1783, John Kettle, a Yorkshire estate worker who was

brought north eight years earlier with his son, John, by Lord Ruthven to administrate the estate forestry improvements, had completed the eight year residency qualification for application to the poor roll. It was mentioned that John Kettle had been at the Freeland East Lodge since its construction, and had got married, for a second time, to a local girl, Jean Ritchie. This information would imply that the lodge had been built after the survey for Stobie's map and before February 1783.

A description written in 1787 states

The house of Freeland consists of a body and one wing, the other being not yet built. Its architecture is simple but elegant. Immediately behind the house is a piece of ground somewhat like a crescent, which receives the house into its bosom, and shelters it from the north with a sort of copse consisting of fruit trees, tall yews, variegated hollies, and flowering shrubs. The middle of this spot is an orchard resembling the section of a circle, and divided into four parts by grass walks, which run from the back of the house as their center, and are a sort of radii to the crescent. Each of these divisions is forced with a hedge of beech or thorn mixed with sweet briar, and flowering shrubs and entwined with honeysuckle.

Lord Ruthven had every intention of completing the mansion house at Freeland, and employed the architect Edward Blore to draw up designs. Blore's notions, like those of a Tudor mansion for Sir David Moncrieffe by his contemporary William Burn, were never implemented. There is no evidence that Blore ever saw any of his ideas in practice at Freeland, but at least William Burn had the pleasure of erecting the southeast lodge at Moncrieffe in Tudor Gothic style, while some small changes were made to the mansion house. William Burn's association with the area began with his father Robert whose architectural plan for the Belsches of Invermay was, similarly, never implemented. William had been a pupil of Robert Smirke who was in the process of completing Kinfauns Castle at this time. In 1823, William was asked to design the Palace Block for the new Main Street at Bridge of Earn, which had been designated the new turnpike road in April when twenty three plots on the west side and thirty six plots on the junction between the old road and the Kilgraston road were allocated for sale from the Moncrieffe estate. The sale was at Seaton's Inn in May, and that winter Sir David Moncrieffe bought the old bridge for twenty-five shillings. William Burn's greatest feat at this time was the design for a new church at Kinnoul for Lord Kinnoul which was exhibited in Perth in September 1824, spectacularly



Freeland House before 1873

coinciding with the lighting of the Perth gaslights for the first time. This must have attracted considerable interest as he became the sole architect for Lord Kinnoul, extended Pitfour Castle for the Richardsons, and was the architect for the new Murray Royal Hospital. While this was being built, he created designs and directed the construction of the extension of old Duncrub House for Lord Rollo, built Pitcairns House at Dunning for John Pitcairn, completed the reconstruction of Fettercairn House for Lord Ruthven's cousin Sir William Forbes, and build a new mansion at Dupplin following the devastating fire on 20th September 1827; building work at Dupplin started on 2nd November 1827. Burn's pupil Andrew Heiton continued working in the area for many years with his son, Andrew.

In a letter from Perth to his sister dated May 31st 1827, Lord Ruthven laid out his intention *to make alterations and additions to the manor house by inclosing, planting, draining, erecting farm houses and offices in outbuildings for the estate, and also building new offices and stables and other necessary erections suitable to the mansion house.* The architect William Burn had just completed the new house at Fettercairn for Lord Ruthven's cousin, Sir William Forbes. The clerk of works appointed by William Burn was William Buchanan, who started work on the site at the end of the summer,

but a Mr. Richardson was in charge of the main stonework under the supervision of William Brown before then, and they were finishing the stairs at the beginning of August – the stone all came from *Jacksteers Quarry*. William Buchanan supervised a very large labour force, costing around a hundred and fifty pounds a month, from the start of September to the beginning of December when the two-storey west wing with the bedrooms was completed. On 2nd October 1827, Lord Ruthven wrote from Tunbridge Wells to William Buchanan about the plans for the windows of the new building and those that were being put into the drawing and dining rooms of the old building on the north side. He mentioned that *he has agreed with William Burn to put a skylight in the roof to light the lobby.* William Burn was supervising at the site himself from late in December, when he reported that *most of the internal flooring has been completed*, until the end of January 1828. The new construction was on the south side of the building and folded round the old house on three sides. The ground floor remained as servants' quarters and offices, and a new south entrance and stairway opened onto the lobby on the first floor. A photograph, taken before the later additions around 1880, shows the final effect as a sprawl of buildings with high chimneys and towers flanked by two extensions to the south, while the west wing was an extension to the old house nestling in the middle.



All the glazing was completed at Freeland on 19th May 1828 after two days again under the supervision of William Burn. Lord Ruthven wrote from London on the 19th May that *William Burn had agreed to oversee the work at Freeland and look over the estimates*. There had been some dispute about Buchanan's supervision at Freeland, as he was also working at Dupplin, and there were problems with raising the water height for the new building following the start of the plumbing. Most slating had been completed by 31st May, although some work by James Laurence continued until January 1829. Bell-hanging was finished by 23rd September and the plumbing completed during October. Lord Ruthven visited the site on the 12th December 1828 and agreed that his own man, Peter Morrison, should be overseer with the co-operation of James Nicol who had to come from building work at Hamilton to replace William Buchanan while he was occupied at Dupplin. The next two years were spent in plastering and painting: each room had an extravagant ceiling and the lobby was given special favour. It wasn't until the autumn of 1829 that John Fraser painted the skylight and the front and west windows, while James Annan completed the plastering in the dining room, drawing room and a new library in the south-east extension. It wasn't until the 14th of November 1831 that William Burn considered the work complete and passed control to Robert Murray. Murray supervised the completion all the internal wood panelling, and iron work such as fire grates and door locks. The balcony on the east end was completed by January 4th 1832, some five years after work had begun, but the covers and pavements around the house were only completed by James Cairns in 1835. The stable, courtyard and offices at Freeland were completed according to the designs by July 3rd 1830. William Burn may have designed the buildings, but left the supervision and changes to William Mackenzie, the Perth city architect, who used Peter Morrison

to supervise the whole project and James Thomson of Pitfour to do the masonry work. This was because the plans were changed a lot during construction to concentrate on the new stables, while the proposed pig houses, slaughterhouse and byre court were removed. New houses were built for the coachman, the groom and the shepherd, but the laundry and dairy were adapted from the former washhouses with specific instructions *not to use ashlar from the old gate pillars*. However, further changes followed in October 1831 so it wasn't until March 29th 1832 that Robert Murray finished the necessary woodworking for the creation of Freeland New Stables. An icehouse was built, on the slope to the north of the mansion, and provisioned by Alexander Gow, the innkeeper in the village; filling the icehouse took four men just one day.

The parishioners were finally made aware that the Freeland estate was for sale when the advertisement appeared in the Scotsman on 3rd September 1873, *subject to the sanction of the court if a suitable offer be made*. The two and a half thousand acre estate was advertised with a Mansion House *rebuilt about forty five years ago on plans by the late Mr. Burn. It is in the Elizabethan style, and of peculiarly pleasing design; it is beautifully situated on the banks of the Earn, surrounded by extensive policies and Woods. The Gardens are extensive, the Offices large and commodious, and the place is in every respect suited for the Residence of a family of wealth and distinction. It is not often that an estate in so eligible a neighbourhood, so conveniently situated, and with so many residential attractions, is offered for sale. In terms of the statute under which it is proposed to sell the Estate, it can be disposed of by Private Bargain only*. The sale was in the hands of Messrs Lindsay, Jamieson and Haldane, Accountants, while the estate could be viewed by appointment with Messrs Mackenzie and Dickson, Solicitors, Perth.



The estate was sold in its entirety by Walter Lord Ruthven to Collingwood Lindsay Wood of Hawlish Hall, Durham, who had taken a temporary lease of Urrard House. The deed of disposition was made on 15th May 1874. By April 1876, the mansion house had been extended with a new bedroom wing, a north entrance and a chapel. The loan to cover the improvements on the Ruthven estate was given sasine in 1882 on security of £10,000 by Collingwood Lindsay Wood of Hawlish Hall, Durham, to the Standard Life Assurance Company.

The Freeland estate was purchased by Edwin Martin Stewart of the Carntyne Steel works in 1917, who may have intended living at the mansion later, but was broken up for sale soon after and the policies, including the mansion house were purchased in 1920 by Harry Riley of Strathallan School, Bridge of Allan, as new premises for his expanding school.

GRMR

¹ Edward Blore was one of the best known architects of the time. He designed many churches and mansions in England, as well as major buildings in Ireland, Russia and Australia. In 1830 he became the royal architect for William IV and continued in the position for Queen Victoria. His best known constructions were at Buckingham Palace, when he replaced John Nash; Stowe, for the Duke of Buckingham, and Lambeth Palace. In 1851, after the completion of Buckingham Palace, Marble Arch was moved by Edward Blore to the northeast corner of Hyde Park at the end of Oxford Street. The only Scottish house that I can find designed by Blore is Corehouse, for the advocate George Cranstoun, in the Elizabethan style, and completed in 1827, but Blore did work with William Burn, who designed the interiors, on Harlaxton Manor, Lincolnshire, in 1838.



James Lord Ruthven 1777 – 1853