

# Rowallen Castle

Reginald Muir 1149 - Ayr

Sir David Moore Muir - Ayr - Fokeltle (Polkelly Castle - Fenwick)

Sir Gilchrist Muir Rowallen 1200-1280

Sir Archibald Lord Rowallen Muir 1231-1297

William Muir 1293-1373

Adam Muir 1323-1373 - Ayr

Archibald Muir 1348-1390 - Kilmarnock

Robert Muir 1379-1429 - Ayr

Archibald Muir 1400-1450

Robert Muir 1439-1489 (married Princess Elizabeth Stuart - K. James III)

Sir John Muir 1467-1517

Sir John Muir 1487-1537

Patrick Muir 1511-1561

Thomas Muir 1535-1585



## Rowallen Castle

The castle and barony has been owned or held by the medieval Muir family, the (Boyle) Earls of Glasgow, the (Campbell) Earls of Loudoun, the (Corbett) Barons Rowellan, and more recently by the developer, Niall Campbell.[2] It is said that the earliest piece of Lute music was written at Rowallen.[5] It is said to have been visited by the unfortunate King James I of Scotland when on his way from Edinburgh to England. The first Mure holder, Sir J. Gilchrist Mure was buried in the Mure Aisle at Kilmarnock.[6]

## Origins[edit]

The original castle is thought to date back into the 13th century. Rowallen was said to be the birth place of Elizabeth Mure (Muir), first wife of Robert, the High Steward, later Robert II of Scotland.

In 1513 John Mure of Rowallen was killed at the Battle of Flodden. In 1513 the Rowallen Estate took its present day form.[7]

In about 1690 the estate was home to the Campbells of Loudoun, who held it into the 19th century.[7] The former tower of Polkelly lay near Rowallen and was also held by the Mures, for a time passed to the second son until it passed by marriage to the Cunninghams of Cunninghamhead.

## Construction and other details[edit]

### Rowallen Castle today

William Aiton's map of 1811 showing Rowellan (sic)

The castle is built around a small knoll and once stood in a small loch or swampy area, fed by the Carmel Burn.[4] The southern front of the castle was erected about the year 1562 by John Mure of Rowellan and his Lady, Marion Cuninghame, of the family of Cuninghamehead. This information appears as an inscription on a marriage stone or tablet at the top of the wall: - Jon.Mvr. M.Cvym. Spvvis 1562. The family coat of arms lies to the right. The crest of the Mure's was a Moore's head, which is sculptured near the coat of arms. This is no doubt a rebus or jeu-de-mot on the Mure name, however it is suggested that it is a reference to some feat performed in the crusades against the Saracens.[8] The Royal Arms of Scotland, fully blazoned, are carved over the main entrance, together with the shields of the Cumin family, from whom the Mures claim descent.[3] Over the ornamented gateway is a stone with the date 1616 inscribed upon it.[9]

Engraving of the castle by James Fittler in Scotia Depicta, published 1804

Over the doorway of the porch is an inscription in Hebrew using Hebrew characters which read The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, Psalms. XVI, Verse 5. Such an inscription is so rare as to be unique. Doctor Bonar, moderator of the Free church of Scotland, put much effort into deciphering and translating it.[10] At the front of the castle stood a perfect example of an old loupin-on-stane.[11] A fine well with abundant pure water was present at Rowallen. [12] King William's well is located in the policies of Rowellan.[13]

One of the rooms was called Lord Loudoun's sleeping apartment and Adamson records that almost every room throughout the house has its walls covered with the names and addresses of visitors. Some have also left poems or have recorded the details of their visit in verse.[14]

Sir John and Sir William Muir took great pleasure in the erection of the various parts of Rowallen, and a record was kept of the portions completed by each. Much of their attention was also taken up with the planting of the castle policies.[15]

Part of the castle was known as the 'Womans House' indicating the age when gender separation was the norm for the privileged classes, reflected in the decoration of these apartments and the sewing and other work undertaken by the ladies of the house.[16]

In 1691 the Hearth Tax records show that the castle had twenty-two hearths and eighteen other dwellings were associated with the castle and its lands.[17]