

# The Pineapple



The Pineapple, or the Dunmore Pineapple, is one of Scotland's most remarkable buildings. Standing a mile north of the village of Airth, it was built by the 4th Earl of Dunmore, John Murray, in 1761 as a birthday present for his wife Susan, in the form of a pavilion from which to view the walled gardens of Dunmore Park, the family estate. Why did the Earl top off his pavilion with a pineapple? Presumably to show that he could.

Pineapples had been discovered in the Caribbean by Christopher Columbus in 1493, and over the following centuries had become rare and highly prized delicacies in Europe. Symbols of power, wealth and hospitality, they had increasingly come to be used by architects to decorate gateways, door lintels and other detailed features on their buildings.

Dunmore's Pineapple sees this trend taken to its eccentrically logical conclusion: and it may well be the only case of someone forming the entire roof of a building in the shape of a pineapple. Perhaps surprisingly, the architect who designed the Pineapple is uncertain, though some have attributed it to the Scottish architect Sir William Chambers, who is known to have produced a number of distinctive buildings in London's Kew Gardens.

The top of the Pineapple stands 45ft above the level of the walled garden to its south. On its north side, outside the walled garden, it stands 37ft above the surrounding landscape. A line of four large stone vases top the wall, two on either side of the Pineapple. These conceal chimneys that originally topped off a heating system within the garden walls. This was intended to promote the growth of exotic specimens (doubtless including pineapples) in the greenhouses that originally lined the inside of the north wall of the garden, either side of the ground-level portico.

By the 1970s the walled gardens had become overgrown and the buildings adjacent to the Pineapple were in danger of collapse. In 1974 the Countess of Perth gifted the buildings, gardens and policies to the National Trust for Scotland. Working with the Landmark Trust they restored the Pineapple to its former glory, and it can now be rented out as a holiday home from the Landmark Trust. Access for residents is

from the north side, while those viewing the Pineapple do so from the garden to the south after parking in the small car park outside the garden.

While the Pineapple has been restored, other elements of Dunmore Park have fared less well. In the 1822 a new mansion also called Dunmore Park (or Dunmore Park House to avoid confusion) was completed here for George, 5th Earl of Dunmore. This was partly demolished in the early 1900s, and the remains suffered from fire in the 1980s. Also in Dunmore Park are the remains of Elphinstone Tower, which date back to 1504. A church built close to the tower in the 1820s has disappeared altogether. The remains of the house and tower are not easily accessible to visitors to the park, and it's best to think of the Pineapple as a structure to be viewed in its own right.