



Wardlaw Mausoleum, Kirkhill, where Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat was buried. The original structure dates from 1634 and a tower was later added and the roof of the Wardlaw Mausoleum was raised in 1722 by the then Lord Lovat.

The centre of a thousand legends: A short history of Boleskine House

From the Frasers to the modern day – over two hundred years of Scottish history, of a certain former hunting lodge overlooking the Southeastern shore of Loch Ness. Part 1.

Lying eight miles in the Aird to the west of Inverness stands Kirkhill on an eminence overlooking the valley of the river Beaully. The centre of attraction is the kirk and its cemetery where many prominent members of the extended Fraser clan, particularly those of Lovat, have found their last resting place. Among their number are the Rev. James Fraser who ministered in the area for nearly five decades; Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat; and his father, and clan chief before him, the notorious Simon Lord Fraser of Lovat, beheaded at Tower

By Andrew Wiseman

Hill for high treason in 1747. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the mausoleum fell steadily into disrepair, and ceased to be the preferred burial place for the Frasers of Lovat.

On the east wall of the Wardlaw Mausoleum appears an inscription, the words of which were composed many years before his actual death, that curiously reflect the rather eccentric

personality of Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat. Written by himself with posterity clearly on his mind, various honours attained and a noble lineage are proudly announced before a long list boasts of his many achievements – a few of which are unsubstantiated – in both foreign and domestic affairs, all done in the name of Empire: (see grey panel – opposite page).

A contemporary if all too brief an obituary notice duly appeared in the Inverness Journal, a fortnight after his death:

On Friday the 8th instant, the Honourable Archibald Fraser of Lovat, Colonel Commandant of the First Regiment of Inverness-shire Local Militia, sometime British Consul of Algiers, and afterwards Member of Parliament for the County

This Stone is Erected to the Memory of
The Honourable A. C. FRASER
LL.D. F.R.S F.A.S. &.
Lord of BEAUFORT, ABORTARF & LOVETH
SOLDIER, MAC SHIMI 38,
Nephew to JOHN, Duke of ARGYLE;
God-son
to ARCHIBALD, Duke of ARGYLE.

A.D. MDCCLXIV,
While upon a Diplomatick Mission to the
Mahomedan States of *Africa*, he by order of
His Most sacred Majesty GEORGE III effected
a Peace between those States, the Kingdom of
Denmark and the Republic of *Venice*.
He procured Indemnification from the
Empire of *Russia* for Depredations committed
on the *British* Flag, and during his 10 Years
stay in those Countries he, by his King's
permission redeemed *Spanish* Portugese, and
Imperial Subjects at the Expence to those
Courts of two Millions Sterling, while not a
single Briton was sold or taken into Slavery.

A.D. MDCCLXXXII,
He, co-operated with JAMES, Duke
of MONTROSE, in recovering to the
Highlanders the Dress of their Ancestors.

A.D. MDCCLXXXV,
He, at his own Expence and in Person,
survey'd the Fisheries on the West Coast
of *Scotland* and the *Hebrides* & Petitioned for
a repeal of the Duties on Salt & Coals. He
encouraged the Manufacture of coarse Wool,
Hemp & Flax. He laboured to improve the
Soil. He amended the Breed of *Highland* Oxen
and broke them in for Harness. He meliorated
the Dairies. And by affording Employment to
a hardy Race of Men, return'd from serving
their Country in the Wars, he repressed
Emigration and preserved to his Country
their equally valuable services in Peace.

A.D. MDCCXCII,
After quelling Insurrection on the 10.th
of August, he planed the System of legally
putting Arms into the Hands of Men of
Property, and had, when the Empire was
threatened by Invasion, the Satisfaction of
seeing its Adoption & Efficacy.

Born 16.th August, 1736, died 8.th Decr, 1815.

*of Inverness, died at his seat
of Beaufort Castle, in the Aird,
near Inverness, in the 80th year
of his age. He was married to Jane,
only sister of Sir William Fraser,
Baronet, late of Roy Lodge, in
the county of Essex, by whom
he had five Sons, all of whom
predeceased himself.*

*His eldest Son, who possessed
distinguished abilities, sat in the
first Imperial Parliament of the
United Kingdom. He was also
Colonel of the Fraser Fencibles
for a series of years, and went on
service with them to Ireland, where
befell into a consumption from
fatigue, and died at Lisbon, whither
he had gone for the benefit of his
health, in the month of April 1803.
The disconsolate Widow and
Mother still survives to lament
the loss of all her Family.*

The grieving widow mentioned
and mother to John Simon Frederick
was Jane Fraser, who died in 1819 and
was laid to rest in the crypt next to
her husband. Of all Fraser of Lovat's
achievements – which were many –
perhaps his most lasting one, though
absent from his memorial list, was the
house that he commissioned to be
built at Boleskine, on the southern
shores of Loch Ness, and completed
with full masonic honours on the eve
of St Andrew's in 1809.

MAGICAL BIRTHDAY

A day shy of his magical birthday, on
17 November 1899, Aleister Crowley
purchased Boleskine House from the
then-owner Mary Rose Hill Burton.
For the previous eleven months,
so Crowley claimed, he had been
scouring the length and breadth

of Britain in the pursuit of a
suitable property.

Unfortunately Crowley does
not appear to have left any record
of exactly how he came to locate
Boleskine House, although his
friend (and disciple) J. F. C. Fuller
later told one of Crowley's early
biographers, Charles Richard
Cammell, that it had been
largely serendipitous.

Most likely he had been pausing
to enjoy the Highland panorama
whilst exploring the rock climbs
that rise steeply above the southern
shores of Loch Ness, when his eyes
fell upon the house overlooking
the expanse of water below. The
property was attractively situated,
somewhat off the beaten track, and
with a small but rather picturesque
seventeenth-century graveyard
sloping towards the shoreline. He
knew immediately that it would
suit his purposes well, and set his
mind to purchase it. Crowley
would later recount the details of
the acquisition in his *Confessions*:

*But a magical house is as
hard to find as a magical
book to publish. I scoured the
country in vain. Not till the
end of August 1899 did I find
an estate which suited me.
This was the manor of
Boleskine and Abertarff, on
the south-east side of Loch
Ness, half way between
Inverfarigaig and Foyers.
By paying twice as much as
it was worth, I got it, gave up
my flat [in London] and settled
down at once to get everything
in order for the great operation,
which one is told is to begin
at Easter.*

***“Unfortunately Crowley does not
appear to have left any record
of exactly how he came to locate
Boleskine House.”***



COMMANDS A PICTURESQUE VIEW

The classically-styled unassuming Georgian villa commands a picturesque view of Loch Ness and stands above an ancient graveyard where the remains of the old families of the Frasers of Stratherrick, Errogie, Erchite, Faraline, Balnain, Leadclune, Knockie, and, of course, Foyers were laid to rest.

In many ways the house seemed perfect for his purposes with its good size, the more or less north-facing aspect of its frontage, and, most importantly, its relative isolation. Following the strict instructions given in *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*, Crowley would later outline some of the reasons behind his choice:

I picked out Boleskine for its loneliness. Lord Lovat and Mrs Fraser-Tytler, my nearest neighbours, were eight miles away, while Grant of Glenmoriston was on the other side of Loch Ness. Besides, Boleskine was already the centre of a thousand legends.

He contacted the then-owner, Mary Rose Hill Burton, a professional artist, and made an offer on the property. Burton replied that she had absolutely no interest in selling, but when Crowley responded by doubling his initial offer to £2,300, twice the mark value, she reluctantly accepted. Burton had only lived in the house a few years as she inherited it from her mother, Katherine Innes or Burton, who, in turn had purchased the property, on 30 August 1894, from Simon Joseph Fraser, Baron, Lovat of Lovat, the last of the Frasers to have owned Boleskine House.

Having paid the agreed sum plus a further £700 in settlement of an outstanding bond on the property, Crowley became the new legal owner of Boleskine House. In addition to the

main building, with its frontage of terraced lawns and flower boxes, there was a stone-built coach house, along with a separate domestic building called the Brown Lodge next to the main road. To the rear, the thirty-four acres consisted of a formal garden with box-hedge borders together with large areas of lawn, a fish pond, soft fruit garden and orchard. Around eighteen acres of fenced-off undulating paddocks stretched further back to a mature woodland which blended into rough moorland that eventually rose steeply to meet a series of outcrops, consisting mainly of craggy rock-cliffs.

In the archaic terminology of the local land register, he had become the owner of “that piece of ground forming part of the estate of Lovat consisting of

“Burton replied that she had absolutely no interest in selling, but Crowley responded by doubling his initial offer.”



A bearded Aleister Crowley, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), September, 1901 – image courtesy of Ordo Templi Orientis

the Glebe of Boleskine lying within the United Parishes of Boleskine and Abertarff and County of Inverness and extending to thirty four acres and nine hundred and ninety and six decimal parts of an acre or thereby in which is now erected the dwelling house known as Boleskine Lodge.” The property was actually purchased by him under the name of Aleister MacGregor, of 87 rue Mozart, Paris, the residential address of the head of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers.

After signing the legal papers, the new owner of Boleskine House moved into his residence and at once began a campaign to encourage a friend from Cambridge, Gerald Kelly, his future brother-in-law, to obtain parental approval to come and stay with him. Perhaps somewhat presumptuously Crowley assumed that it was Kelly’s ‘True Will’ to do so, and advised him

as to how he might make use of one of the basic weapons in the magician’s arsenal, concentrated visualisation, to achieve that end. It remains unclear if Kelly visited Crowley at this time.

LORD BOLESKINE

Flushed with pride at his latest acquisition of the thirty-four acres of his Highland estate, Crowley took for himself the fictitious, but archaic-sounding title, Lord Boleskine and Abertarff, which he would later shorten to the far more impressively sounding Lord Boleskine. To the locals such actions probably appeared as the conceits of yet another eccentric English milord who had bought a summer residence so that he could indulge in sporting pastimes. Indulge though he most certainly did in hunting, shooting and fishing, his primary reason for being there was something far less likely to endear

him to the local populace: the pursuit of magic.

He had, after all, bought Boleskine House for its relative seclusion, a pre-requisite for undertaking the Great Work, which in this instance was to “obtain the knowledge and conversation of his Holy Guardian Angel.” In simple terms this meant that he sought to engage his conscious mind with the most powerful forces within, creating a spiritual wholeness, clarity and magical strength beyond normal comprehension. In actual terms it was a complex operation involving much preparation and the invocation of a throng of entities, angelic and demonic. Crowley summarised his plans for the operation thus:

One must have a house where proper precautions against disturbance can be taken; this being arranged, there is really nothing to do but to aspire with increasing fervour and concentration, for six months, towards obtaining of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel.

In the next issue, there’s more of the history of Boleskine House, and that of the Fraser family; plus Jimmy Page and his purchase of the ultimate Crowley artefact in 1971; and the nature of Boleskine’s weird reputation...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANDREW WISEMAN is a cultural historian who has over the years developed a keen interest in Boleskine House and its long-held association with the iconoclast and occultist Aleister Crowley. As author of the forthcoming title *Lord Boleskine: Aleister Crowley and the House of the Beast 666*, a full and engaging account of Crowley’s residence at his Highland home will be offered as well as the controversial legacy which he left in his wake.

The centre of a thousand legends: A short history of Boleskine House

Further history of the Frasers and Boleskine. Part 2.

The village of Boleskine was, and still is, a fairly typical small Highland hamlet, known locally as a “clachan” and the surrounding area has long been associated with the Frasers who held the lands since at least the beginning of the fifteenth century. During the early mediaeval period the Mormaers of Moray held the feudal rights over the people and lands around Foyers and Stratherrick, but after the Mormaers were subdued in the thirteenth century, the Grants managed to acquire large estates in the region. Through time the Grants’ influence and possessions in Foyers dwindled as, during the early years of the fifteenth century, they steadily emigrated to nearby Glenmoriston and Strathspey. In 1420, the Frasers acquired their first lands in Stratherrick by virtue of a marriage with a daughter of Patrick le Grant. By the end of the fifteenth century, the last of the Grants had left the district.

The influence of the Grants finally collapsed as the result of a blood feud initiated by Laurence Grant of Foyers and Boleskine when he insulted the young bride of Gruidhear Mòr (“Great Gruer”) of Portclair whilst on a visit to Foyers. The battle between the clans that followed was fought on the waters of a bay about a mile southwest of Foyers which saw the defeat and death of Laurence Grant.

Although he had managed to reach the western shore, Grant was captured as he tried to make his escape through the woods rising above Ruiskich (or Ruskie) and summarily executed. Gruer then took the opportunity to seize Foyers.

The power vacuum which ensued encouraged the Frasers to increase their influence in the area at the expense of the Grants. Foyers itself was then owned by the church, but did not come into Fraser hands until 1541, when it was conveyed to

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William Fraser of Aberchalder, who subsequently became Fraser of Foyers.

IN THE VALLEY OF STRATHERRICK

Boleskine lies in the valley of Stratherrick and was the subject of a seventeenth-century account which provides a geographical description of this part of the central Highlands with its uplands moors, high hills, lochs, forests and abundance of wildlife:

On the east or southeastsyde of Loghnes next to Abirtarff there is a countrey which is called Straharriggaick. And it is alleadged this countrey is the highest countrey in Scotland, and it is likelie to be true in respect that everie countrey which is next to Straharriggaick is below, and it as it were upon a mountaine above all other Countreys. Ane verie

cold Countrey, and eivill, fresh waters thereintill being reid colloured running through Mosses: this countrey is oftymes verie profitable and fertill of corne and abundance of milk...and there is sundrie glenns in this countrey, which is verie profitable for feeding of guidis. And there is a forrest the southeastsyd of this countrie and there is great store of deire in that glen and very manie Raes in all the glenns and woods of Straharriggaick and Abirtarff.

Set in a rugged landscape, between rock and loch, work on Boleskine House was finally completed on 29 November 1809. It is a long, low building rendered in a quasi-classical style, flanked by two double storey wings which extend backwards. The whole of the building’s appearance is one of an extenuated u-shape as a single storey spine contains the main reception rooms with a long corridor of around sixty feet running the length of the house. Its grounds were later embellished with a large formal Italian garden and an artificial lake, stocked with trout. Recollecting a visit



Jimmy Page outside Boleskine House, 1971 – © Douglas Corrance (used with kind permission)

to the house, Charles Richard Cammell described it as having “the appearance of a Tuscan or Roman nobleman’s villa rather than the seat of a Highland Laird. Before the house, the grounds gently slope towards the lochside. Behind rises a lofty granite rampart of sheer rock, cleft by some primeval earthquake.”

The 1990 sale catalogue for the property, which was compiled when then-owner Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin fame put the house on the market, provides some further interesting historical details:

Boleskine House was built in the late Eighteenth Century on land acquired from the Church by the Honourable Archibald Fraser, a relative of Lieutenant General Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat at that time. The Honourable Archibald Fraser reputedly chose this site for a house in order to irritate Lord Lovat, whose lands surrounded the property, in retribution for Lord Lovat’s support of the English during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745.

The associations with the Fraser family can also be seen in the Boleskine Burial Ground situated below the B852. Recognised as a site of historic interest the burial ground holds several of the family graves and is notable for the remains of the original Chapel and Grave Watcher’s Hut. The Grave watcher was employed to prevent body snatchers from defiling the graves. Boleskine House remained in Fraser family ownership until the late Nineteenth or Twentieth Century. Since then there have been several owners. The present owner had enjoyed spectacular scenery and tranquillity of the property for 20 years.

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL FRASER OF LOVAT

The above sketch is slightly inaccurate, for although Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat, eldest son of Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat (nicknamed the “Old Fox”) by his second wife – who, incidentally, would, but for an attainder, have become the 13th Lord Lovat – did indeed

commission the construction of Boleskine House, it was not to irritate his brother Lord Lovat, but rather to annoy Simon Fraser (1760–1842), 8th of Foyers, the last Laird of Foyers of *Sliochd Ùisdein Fhrangaich* or French Hugh’s Progeny. This *Ùisdean Frangach* was, it is said, “the most esteemed of all Lord Lovat’s kin for his frank disposition and love of manly sports.” In any case, Simon Fraser, Deputy-Lieutenant for Inverness-shire, had, in 1802, supported Charles Grant, in a hotly contested parliamentary election which Grant eventually won. Even though Simon Fraser doubtless did this “in consequence of his having married a daughter of Glenmoriston,” from the perspective of Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat he had thereby shown his disloyalty to the Clan Fraser who had backed the losing candidate.

As a local historian and liberal politician Charles Fraser-Mackintosh wryly pointed out, the whole affair “gave mortal affront to the Hon. Archibald Fraser, who, an adept at nicknames, dubbed him for ever after to be no longer known as Simon Fraser, but ‘Simon Grant.’”

According to another clan historian the vengeful Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat “succeeded in obtaining possession by excambion of Boleskine glebe, in the heart of Foyers estate, [and] built Boleskine House upon it,” largely “with a view of placing himself in a position to annoy his unpatriotic clansman the more effectually.” Under the terms of the deed of excambion the Church authorities agreed to transfer the site of the old manse of Boleskine, upon which Boleskine House would be built, on the understanding that Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat would build a new church and manse for them in Stratherrick, nearer to the bulk of the parish’s population. On completion of the house, Fraser of Lovat “resided there a considerable portion of his time, and was a constant source of trouble to Simon Fraser about fences, marches, and other subjects of contention.”

MOST LYRICAL

One of the first and most lyrical descriptions of Boleskine House – then termed the



Bust of Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat, c. 1795, by James Tassie. Photo by Stephen C Dickson and published under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

“Cottage of Boleskin” – appeared in a report on its completion which was published in the *Inverness Journal*:

On the eve of St Andrew was completely finished, with masonic honours, the Cottage of Boleskin, erected by the Hon. A. Fraser of Lovat, on the side of, and embracing the view of Loch Ness, a piece of water 24 miles long, and between 2 and 3 miles broad. Its termination on the left is the water and remarkable cascade of Foyers; and its front the countries of Glenmoriston and Urquhart, with their ancient Castles; on its right Marshal Wade’s Hut, with the passage Faragig, and the stupendous glass fort, and signal hill D’un-d’arthulla with its rocky woodland scenery, equally romantic, but less terrific than Glencoe. Here the new Road of Inverfarragig opens, through weeping Birches, and coppices of Oak, Holly, and mountain Ash, to the hunting country of Stratherick, facing southwards; bounded on the east by the Charr-lake of Ruthven, and on the west by that of Tarff; the centre of Stratherick opens on the evergreen meadow pastures of the forests of Killin, bounded due west by Culachy. Grazings, on whose brows modern Barouche can be driven to a position whence the Western and Eastern Ocean are clearly seen every fine summer’s eve.



A. T. F. Fraser of Abertarff, c. 1810, by the Rev. John Thomson of Duddingston, Inverness Town House – image used with the kind permission of Ann Baile – Highland History and Culture: ambaile.org.uk

The Boleskin Cottage, with its double green houses, facing the rising and the setting sun, its Meranda, whose principal apartment is of forty feet long, embraces more of the simplex munditiæ in the midst of majestic scenery than perhaps any spot in Europe; the body of the Mansion is built of solid silver tissue Granite, and its proportions are pure Grecian Ionic. The wings and offices are of Saxon frame work, white as driven snow; the whole building by a projecting roof of azure Ballachulish slates, harmonizing with the Lake below the Sky above it; and here the snow never lies one day, so that herds of cattle ornament the grounds, at open pasture, in the dead of winter.

During the mid-1830s the grandson and heir to the previous proprietor, Archibald T. F. Fraser of Abertarff (1800–1884) oversaw a major refurbishment of the property, which included extensions to the original building. An advertisement from 1837 not only provides a great deal of detail about the interior of Boleskine House, as well as other facilities available to a prospective buyer or tenant, but also advises that the building works and renovations had cost the then-staggering sum of £4,000:

Boleskine Cottage, which stands on the Southern margin of the Lake, eighteen miles from Inverness, and fourteen from Fort Augustus, in a mild and salubrious climate. The House is a modern well arranged structure, fit for the accommodation of a family of distinction. It contains elegant Drawing-Room, twenty-six feet long (including bow window) eighteen feet wide, and about twelve feet high; Dining-Room of similar dimensions, six Bed-Rooms, and three Dressing-Rooms, &c. &c. the principal Bed-Room being twenty feet square, Water-Closet, vaulted Wine-Cellar, Butler's Pantry Servants' Hall, Housekeeper's Room, Kitchen, Pantry, Laundry, Woman's Sleeping Room, and Men's do. The whole Rooms are supplied with Grates, including complete ranges in Kitchen and Laundry. The Entry-Hall and passages measure 100 feet long in a stretch, relieved by arches, columns, and plasters, terminated by glass-doors at each end. The elaminated plaster-work, papering, and painting is much admired. A never-failing spring of superior quality supplies the cisterns of the House.

Turning to the out buildings, the description continues:

The Offices contain Coach-house fit to hold three or four carriages, roomy Stabling for four horses, Granary, House for Coachman, &c. &c. all very perfect. The Garden is productive. A Porter's Lodge, of elegant design, and Iron Gate with Pillars, complete the place.

In short, no expense or trouble has been spared to render this residence one of the most captivating in the Highlands, having just been completed at a cost of about £4000. The Lands are inclosed, and contain between 40 and 50 imperial acres, whereof 12 acres or thereby are arable, of excellent quality, and 20 acres under young plantation. The station is commanding and much admired by Tourists, having the noble scenery of the Lake right in view, enlivened by the shipping of the

Caledonian Canal. Within one mile are the celebrated Falls of Foyers. The access is easy, as steamers betwixt Glasgow and Inverness ply weekly during the Winter, and almost daily the rest of the Season. The public road passes through the grounds, and the post from Inverness to Fort Augustus goes either to or from daily.

The Shooting and Fishing attached to the place are hardly worth mentioning, but Moors may be rented in the vicinity.

Presumably the money invested on these renovations was calculated with an eye to the potential rental returns on the property which in those days would have commanded premium rates as a first class sporting estate in the central Highlands. In the years that followed a number of notices appeared in the local press advertising the fact that Boleskine House was available for rent. The story of how Boleskine House was inherited by Archibald T. F. Fraser of Abertarff is not without interest as related in the following historical sketch:

When Lovat died in 1815 his children had predeceased him so that the estate passed by entail to Thomas Fraser of Strichen, descendant of the Frasers of Knockie. However, there was a grandson, A. T. F. Fraser, born on the wrong side of the blanket, as the phrase goes. To this boy the old man was much attached and to him he left the unentailed part of the estate—Abertarff; property in Inverness and the old glebe, etc. at Boleskine. Strichen contested this—very ungenerously, considering the magnificent inheritance fate had brought him—but after much unseemly litigation the young lad gained the property as his grandfather intended... Fraser of Abertarff, as he was generally known, only occasionally used his grandfather's 'cottage' and on his death in 1884 it passed to the new Frasers of Lovat who presently sold it. If not a memorial it is a reminder of the last of the old Frasers of Lovat, for long the Lords of Stratherrick.

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Part 3 – A Natural Son

By Andrew Wiseman

Archibald Thomas Frederick Fraser was a natural son of Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat's eldest son John Simon Frederick, who, as Colonel of the Fraser Fencibles, had accompanied them on a campaign to Ireland where his health broke down due to a bout of dysentery brought on, it is said, by over exertion.

His death occurred in April 1803 at Lisbon, where he had gone to recuperate (when his son was only three years old) and, therefore, John Simon Frederick predeceased his own father by some twelve years. Thereafter, Archibald T. F. Fraser became the favourite of his dotting grandfather who oversaw his upbringing and education.

After being presumably schooled locally, he entered Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1814 and for the next three years followed a prescribed curriculum with some distinction. A portrait of the young master A. T. F. Fraser by the Rev. John Thomson of Duddingston (1778–1840), that still has pride of place by hanging above the fireplace in the Chamber of Commerce in Inverness Town House, was most likely commissioned by his grandfather.

The portrait has been described as:

...that of a handsome boy, fair-haired and blue-eyed, dressed in Fraser tartan trews and plaid, feathered bonnet, white stockings and shoes with bows, and a broad white lace collar. The attitude is nearly full-face, the right side and leg slightly advanced, the right forearm across the body and the hand holding the end of a leash which is attached to the collar of a young collie dog. Through the leafage of the landscape to the right is seen a hilly background although the sitter seems to be older, it is said, is that of a



Archibald T. F. Fraser of Abertarff c 1810 – image from *The Highland Clans: The Dynastic Origins, Chiefs, and Background of the Clans and of Some Other Families Connected with Highland History* by Sir Iain Moncrieffe of that ilk (London: Book Club Associates, new rev. ed., 1982)

precocious child of eight years.

By the death of his grandfather in 1815, without legitimate surviving issue, the original line also came to an end. At the tender age of fifteen not only did Archibald T. F. Fraser of Abertarff succeed to the Boleskine estates but also gained the Crown and Barnhill lands in the nearby town of Inverness.

His enjoyment of them was probably somewhat sullied by the aforementioned litigation, which began in 1816 but which was not finally settled until 1872 when its last embers expired in the House of Lords.

The outcome was that the patrimonial estates of Lovat were passed to the nearest collateral heir-male, Thomas Alexander Fraser (1802–1875), 10th of



Simon Joseph Lord Lovat formerly Fraser aka 14th Lord Lovat
Image: [wikitree.com/wiki/Fraser-2281](https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Fraser-2281)

Strichen, under a deed of entail, and thus into that family; whereas, under a disposition, the lands of the Crown and the unentailed estate of Abertarff, comprising Cullachy, Inchnacardoch, and Boleskine, went to Archibald T. F. Fraser, the great-grandson of Lord Simon of Lovat. In spite of his successful career as a gentleman-farmer and the ultimately favourable conclusion of the law suit, Archibald T. F. Fraser must have been burdened by the litigation which dragged on until only a few years before his own eventual demise.

On Archibald T. F. Fraser of Abertarff's death in 1884, Boleskine House's ownership reverted to the head of the house and so became the property of the Right Honourable Simon Joseph Fraser (1871–1933), 14th Baron Lovat, eldest son of the Right Honourable Simon Fraser of Lovat (1828–1887).

For six years, between 1884 and 1890, Boleskine House was tenanted by Fraser of Abertarff's only daughter, Miss Catherine Fraser (b. 1846), known as Miss Fraser of Abertarff, and thereafter, for the next four years, remained vacant.

SEVERED FOR EVER

In 1894 the familial ties of the Frasers with Boleskine House were severed for ever when the house was purchased by Katherine Burton, whose daughter would, in turn, sell it to Aleister Crowley only five years later.

After sixteen years of being sole proprietor, on 5 May 1914, Crowley took – or was rather forced into – the decision to transfer ownership to the Order of Mysteria Mystica Maxima of whom he was the National Grand Master.

Due to Crowley experiencing almost continual financial straits, on 12 July 1918, Boleskine House was sold on to a certain Miss Dorothy C. Brook, in all likelihood the daughter (or near relation) of Mrs Fanny Brook who had been a tenant at Boleskine House from 1915 to 1918.

From then the house was owned by a series of proprietors and, for a short time, in 1968, was the residence of the avant-garde director Kenneth Anger.

As every Led Zeppelin fan knows, Jimmy Page, a scholarly devotee of

Crowley, owned Boleskine House from 1971 until 1991.

This could be regarded as gaining the ultimate Crowley artefact to add to his already large collection of Crowleyana. The local press, wisely ignoring any mention of Led Zeppelin's supposed imminent split, gave a description of the recent sale:

Jimmy Page, the bearded, long-haired pop guitarist has bought Boleskine House on the shores of Loch Ness at Foyers...Boleskine House a single-storeyed building in the classical style, stands in a large garden laid out in the Italian style...Boleskine House was subsequently converted into a private country hotel. It was put up for sale by its Canadian owner, a Mr Halbert Kerr, at a minimum asking price of £14,000... On a visit to Boleskine some weeks ago he told a couple who are acting as housekeepers that he had a place in Reading, but he felt he would have more scope and freedom at Foyers. Some local folk believe Boleskine House is haunted.

Since and even before Aleister Crowley's time Boleskine House has earned itself a sinister or weird reputation and its infamous former owner's presence is still said by some to haunt the place. Boleskine House and Crowley, perhaps better known under the self-made moniker the Beast 666, will in all likelihood remain inextricably linked.

Devastated by a fire perhaps caused by an electrical fault on 15 December 2015, Boleskine House was almost razed to the ground.

Although enough of the original building was saved, its future remained very much in the balance until only recently when plans were revealed by the new owners not only to restore the property to its former glory but also to open up the house to the public as a heritage landmark site. Their plans have been well-thought out and are sensitive to the original building and remaining structure which ultimately will secure the long-term future of Boleskine House for generations to come.



A photograph of Aleister Crowley, taken in New York City circa 1903, during the time of his ownership of Boleskine – image courtesy of Ordo Templi Orientis

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANDREW WISEMAN is a cultural historian who has over the years developed a keen interest in Boleskine House and its long-held association with the iconoclast and occultist Aleister Crowley. As author of the forthcoming title *Lord Boleskine: Aleister Crowley and the House of the Beast 666*, a full and engaging account of Crowley's residence at his Highland home will be offered as well as the controversial legacy which he left in his wake.