



*The*  
*Boleskine House*  
FOUNDATION

**Press Kit 2021**

## General Information

**Website:** <https://www.boleskinehouse.org>

**Email:** [info@boleskinehouse.org](mailto:info@boleskinehouse.org)

**Boleskine House Foundation Mission Statement:** Our mission is to restore and preserve the historical legacy and heritage of the Boleskine House estate for the greater benefit of the public. Upon its complete restoration, our volunteers intend to use the estate to promote education on the heritage of the house, to welcome the enjoyment of its structure and surrounding gardens, and to help to generate awareness of health and wellness.

Such initiatives will include active outreach into the communities of which Boleskine House and its surrounding land holds significant historic value and benefit. Such communities include the wider community of Scottish heritage and historic environment and academia who value Boleskine to be of significant historic and cultural import.

## Short History

The Boleskine land dates as far back as the sixth century, when Celtic missionaries brought Christianity to the Highlands, and the estate began as a church parish probably around the thirteenth-century, when the Church of Rome first began settling in the area. The house was completed in 1809. It was commissioned by the Archibald Fraser of Lovat (1736–1815). Boleskine House underwent substantial extensions and refurbishments in the 1830s, and having passed through the Fraser family for most of the nineteenth-century, was sold in 1894 to Katherine Burton, whose daughter Mary Rose Hill Burton would sell the estate to Aleister Crowley five years later in 1899. Crowley would own the estate until 1918.

Boleskine House passed through a series of owners throughout the twentieth-century, most notably Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin fame and collector of Aleister Crowley memorabilia. Page oversaw significant refurbishment to the house during his ownership and allowed several friends of his to watch over the place, including Eric Hill, Barrington Colby and Malcolm Dent.

Boleskine House later owned by Ronald and Annette MacGillivray, purchasing the estate from Jimmy Page in 1992. It was later sold to a private Dutch owner, Mrs. Gertruida Johanna Bakker

as her Highland holiday home.

Boleskine House was caught in a conflagration and destroyed in 2015. The estate being in a ruinous condition since with a “Dangerous Building Notice (DBN) served on it by the Highland Council—was placed on the market in April 2019 by Galbraith estate agents as four separate parcels of land. “Lot 1,” which includes the house was placed under offer in April and subsequently purchased by on 26 July 2019. As of 31 July 2019, the house was subject to a violent arson attack, and the remaining 30% of the house still standing was consumed in the fire. Being already in a ruinous state, the house was uninsurable at the time of purchase.

In August of 2019, Keith Readdy along with three other trustees founded The Boleskine House Foundation as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

New board members have since been appointed along with many volunteers to help with the project, ranging from a vast array of skills including IT, marketing, media production, publication, library development, and art direction. The main aim of the Foundation is to restore and preserve Boleskine House as a heritage landmark. It is hoped that The Boleskine House Foundation can one day be more than just the care takers of the estate, but a place that can benefit the local community and as a forum that will enrich people with the importance of history and heritage, including academic-style education in branches of the humanities and sciences, specifically archaeology, local Scottish history, philosophy, along with political and religious history.

### **Current State**

Boleskine House is in a current state of ruin and is extremely dangerous to visit. The Foundation has established policies and procedures for parties wishing to visit, which is limited now due to current travel restrictions regarding Covid-19. It is required for *any* interested party to write to [info@boleskinehouse.org](mailto:info@boleskinehouse.org) for written permission to enter the estate and to comply with both the charity’s rules and the government’s for visiting.

### **Future Plans**

Following the South Planning Applications Committee by the Highland Council on 8 December 2020, The Boleskine House Foundation has been given planning permission to continue its restoration work. It is yet to be decided how the house will operate and function upon completion, however the board of trustees have considered community and charity-driven events

in the future. It is the charity's primary goal for now to save the listed building and get it wind and water secured.

## **Fundraising**

The Boleskine House Foundation seeks creative ways to raise funds, including a “Friends of Boleskine” membership platform, which gives supporters future perks to access our future plans and events. Members at the “Gold” tier level also get a journal twice a year, which features articles on the project.

Other fundraisers have included selling charred pieces of stone and slate that are otherwise unusable in the rebuild of the house, 100% of the profits which is placed directly into restoring the house, paying for professional fees like architects and structural engineers, and paying for labour and materials.

## **Ownership Profiles**

**Archibald Fraser:** Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat (1736–1815) was a British diplomat, serving as consul in Tripoli and Algiers and also as MP of Inverness-shire. He was born on 16 August, 1736 as son to Simon Fraser, eleventh Lord Lovat (1667–1747) and his second wife, Primrose Campbell (1710–1796). Simon Fraser was a Jacobite leader in the Battle of Culloden, and after he was captured for treason and executed at the Tower of London in 1747, Archibald was sent to Glasgow where he attended university from 1750 to 1752. He married Jane Fraser, daughter of William Fraser of Leadclune, Inverness in 1763. Together they had five sons, all of whom Archibald would outlive.

Upon the death of his elder half-brother, Lieutenant-General Simon Fraser (1726–1782), Archibald inherited his family's estates in 1782. He also succeeded his half-brother as MP of Inverness-shire and would hold his seat until 1784. In Parliament, he supported lifting the ban on Highland dress and opposed the East India Bill. He is known as overseeing the establishment of peace in 1764 between Denmark, Venice, and the Islamic states of Africa, and for preventing British subjects being enslaved.

Fraser is known to have been the individual to commission the building of Boleskine House, which was completed 29 November 1809. He died 8 December 1815 and was buried at the churchyard at Kirkhill, Inverness-shire. All of his sons having died before him, his estate passed to his fifth cousin, Thomas Alexander Fraser (1802–1875).

**Aleister Crowley:** Born Edward Alexander Crowley (1875–1947) was a British poet, painter, mountaineer, and spiritual thinker. He is best known for being an esotericist and practitioner of the occult, later starting a new religious movement at the turn of the twentieth-century which he called “Thelema.” He later promoted his movement through a fraternal organisation with roots in Freemasonry known as the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). Thelema can, in short be understood as a spiritual movement that is a blend of the Western and Eastern mystical traditions, including astrology, alchemy, qabalah, Indian yoga, and various Buddhist elements, among others. It asserts a philosophy of self-discovery, self-reliance and personal freedom

Although popular culture and media have often painted Crowley as an evil and diabolical figure, it is more realistic to view Crowley simply as a colourful and eccentric historical figure with nuances that are often difficult to pin down. Two of the best, most recent and unbiased biographies of him include *Perdurabo* by Richard Kaczynski and *Aleister Crowley: The Biography* by Tobias Churton.

Crowley purchased Boleskine House in 1899 because he believed it fit the appropriate conditions for a spiritual retreat, being secluded in the bucolic landscape of Loch Ness. There he underwent an involved prolonged ceremony called “The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage” a ceremony that originates from a 15th-century manuscript outlining in an episaltory fashion instructions on how to communicate directly with the “Holy Guardian Angel.” Crowley began this practice at Boleskine House, but never fully finished, instead having to travel to Paris on short notice. Legends and superstitions later surfaced that because he did not properly “close out” the ceremony, the place became haunted with otherworldly intelligences.

Crowley would later be forced to sell Boleskine by 1918 as his finances became strained. Crowley sold Boleskine House to Dorothy C. Brook, who was a close relative if not the daughter of Fanny Book, a tenant of Boleskine House since 1915.

**Dennis Lorraine:** Known best in history for his involvement with the “Cadco scandal” on the 1960s, Dennis Lorraine purchased Boleskine in 1963, and along with actor George Sanders attempted to swindle millions of pounds in the United Kingdom food production industry. It is for this reason the piggery building was built on Boleskine’s land. It was Lorraine’s intent to farm pigs at Boleskine, or at least appear to be seen doing so. By the time the law caught up with Lorraine, he has sold Boleskine House to Halbert Kerr in 1967, who would run the estate as a guest house until selling it to Jimmy Page in 1971.

**Jimmy Page:** Jimmy Page (b. 1944) is an English musician, song–writer and producer most well-known for being the guitarist for Led Zeppelin. He is widely considered one of the greatest guitarists of all time, *Rolling Stone* magazine having rank him third in the “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.” He has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice, the first time as a member of the Yarbuds and secondly as a member of Led Zeppelin.

As a collector of Aleister Crowley memorabilia, Page purchased Boleskine House in 1970. However, he was not able to visit the house with any frequency due to the house being so remote and having a very busy schedule. Page enlisted the help of several close friends look over the place, including Eric Hill, Barrington Colby and Malcolm Dent.

**Ronald and Anette MacGillivray:** Boleskine was purchased from Page in 1992 by Ronald and Anette MacGillivray, who sought to reestablish the house as a Fraser estate. They also oversaw some of the house’s renovation.