

Glamis Castle



Glamis (pronounced /'glɑ:mz/) Castle, in Angus, Forfarshire, is one of the few fully-restored castles in Scotland. It is an imposing edifice, complete with turrets, battlements and soaring towers – in short, everything a castle should be. It is the home of the Earl and Countess of Strathmore and Kinghorne, and is open to the public. Glamis Castle was the childhood home of Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, best known as the Queen Mother. Her second daughter, Princess Margaret, was born there. Since 1987 an illustration of the castle has featured on the reverse side of ten pound notes issued by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Like every good castle, Glamis is haunted. In fact, when it comes to spooks, spectres and macabre legends, Glamis possesses an embarrassment of riches. It is said to be the most haunted castle in Scotland. Grey and White Ladies Many ancient buildings are reputed to be haunted by either a Grey or a White Lady. Glamis has both. The Grey Lady, whose identity is a mystery, is said to frequent the chapel where she is often seen kneeling in prayer in front of the altar.

Sightings of the White Lady are far less frequent, but from a historical perspective she is a superior class of spook. She is generally identified as Lady Janet Douglas, a former occupant of the castle who suffered great persecution and a violent death at the command of King James V. Janet was the wife of John, the sixth Lord of Glamis. She was widowed in 1528, and went on to marry Archibald Campbell of Skipness, a younger son of the 2nd Earl of Argyll. The two of them made Glamis their home. James V harboured a great deal of ill-will towards the Douglas clan, whom he considered to have become too powerful, and decided to vent his spleen by arresting Lady Janet on a trumped-up charge of witchcraft and conspiracy to poison the king. He imprisoned her in Edinburgh Castle for several years, and then, in 1540, had her burned at the stake on Castlehill. Lady Janet was, by all accounts, very beautiful. She met her horrible end with great dignity and fortitude, and aroused the sympathy of the crowd who had gathered to see her execution. Few believed her to be guilty of the crimes with which she was charged.

Earl Beardie Glamis's most colourful spectre goes by the name of Beardie. His identity is not known with certainty. Some claim that he is the ghost of the first Lord Glamis; others say that he is the ghost of Alexander Lindsay, the 4th Earl of Crawford. One legend has it that the Earl of Crawford, nicknamed 'Earl Beardie, was staying at the castle one Saturday night, and fell into a foul temper because no-one

would play cards with him. The Sabbath was fast-approaching, and gambling was considered an inappropriate pastime for the Lord's Day. Earl Beardie cursed and railed for a while, and brought himself to such a pitch of temper and frustration that he swore he would gladly take on the Devil himself. At that moment, a dark stranger appeared and offered to gamble with him for substantial stakes. The two of them disappeared into a chamber and began to play cards. Outside, the servants could hear shouting and cursing. It was clear that the Earl was losing – and losing heavily. One of the servants, overcome by curiosity, put an eye to the keyhole and was immediately blinded by a dart of flame emanating from within. Earl Beardie appeared at the door and raged at the unfortunate man for interrupting the game. When he turned around, the mysterious stranger had disappeared.

The stranger was, of course, the Devil, who had quitted Glamis having won the nobleman's most precious possession – his immortal soul. After his death, Earl Beardie was condemned to gamble with the Devil for all eternity. Often, at night, the sound of raucous play emanated from the fateful chamber. Eventually, the occupants of the castle had it sealed up. But still, from time to time, the sounds of their unholy game echo through the castle's corridors. A number of guests have reported being disturbed in the night by the ghostly figure of an enormous bearded man.

The best-known legend of Glamis concerns the supposed existence of a secret room which, at some time, was the abode of some kind of monster. One delightfully macabre but rather fanciful version of the legend has it that a vampire-child is born to the family of the Earls of Strathmore in each generation and is hidden away in a sealed chamber. A more popular account has it that the Glamis 'monster' was in fact a hideously deformed child, born to the 11th Earl of Strathmore in 1821. Supposedly, the unfortunate infant was the Earl's first born. But his deformities were so severe that he was registered dead, and locked away in a secret apartment, hidden deep inside the castle walls, with the expectation that he would not survive infancy. Contrary to expectations, he grew to an enormous stature, became fantastically strong and lived for about a hundred years.

It is said that, on the occasion of their 21st birthday, male members of the family were initiated into Glamis's dreadful secret, and shown the location of the secret apartment. Rumours about the 'Monster of Glamis' were rife in late-Victorian times. At one time, a party of guests staying at Glamis are supposed to have sought-out the location of the monster's rooms by hanging towels from the castle windows. Apparently, a number of windows remained towel-less. Today, the ghost of the Glamis Monster is said to frequent what is known as the Mad Earl's Walk on the roof of the castle – a place where the unfortunate creature was sometimes able to take exercise, under cover of night.

In 1486, some members of the Ogilvie Clan sought refuge at Glamis when fleeing from their enemies, the Lindsays. The Lord of Glamis pretended to sympathise with them, and ushered them into hidden room - where he left them there to starve to death. Centuries later, an Earl of Strathmore stumbled upon the location of the hidden room, and found the skeletons of the unfortunate Ogilvies lying inside. The echo of their dying cries still sometimes reverberates through the castle. The black servant-boy This unlucky lad was instructed, one winter's evening, to sit on a stone seat in a cold and chilly castle corridor and await instructions. He was forgotten about, and remained at his post until he died of exposure. The tongueless woman This is the ghost of a servant-woman who supposedly stumbled upon one of the family's dreadful family secrets. The unfortunate lady had her tongue ripped out to ensure her silence. Jack the Runner This rather nondescript spook has occasionally been seen darting around the castle grounds. Contact info Glamis Castle and its grounds are open to the public seven days a week from March to December.