



## The history of Haughton House

Haughton House was originally **built in 1791** and was the home of the Farquharsons, who owned two-thirds of the parish of Alford. They bought the house in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The original Haughton House was the L-shaped cottage by the River Don. The family added the main house, which wasn't completed until 1854. Now, the cottage, mansion house and ice house are all listed buildings.

The Farquharsons had six daughters, three of whom died in childhood. The other three never married and because this left no male heir, in 1925 Miss Elizabeth and Miss Ann Farquharson sold the house to a Mr C Spence, of the Forbes Arms Hotel in Bridge of Alford.

From that time, the house was used for a number of different purposes. First the Spence family ran it as a **shooting/fishing hotel**, and it remained so until (it is thought) about 1959. At that point they sold it to a group of nuns (the Carmelite nuns of Oxford) who used it as a **convent**. They had planned to build a factory that would produce communion wafers. However, they didn't manage to get this off the ground. Many people believe the house is haunted by a friendly nun, who likes to sit on the stairs and give people a gentle push on their way up or down.

The next venture was a **school for 17 Catholic boys**. The people who ran it installed a large fire escape, dormitories, ablution rooms and a central heating system (of sorts). As is the case with the nuns, money ran out and the school had to close. Links with Catholicism didn't stop there though, as the house was then used as a **church** and home for a local priest. This continued for about two years; there was even a **confessional box** installed next to what is now the pool room.

After lying empty for several years, it was eventually **sold to Aberdeenshire County Council** in 1970, who bought the house itself, as well as the 52-acre estate, for the grand sum of £6,500.

In 1972 (helped by a grant from the Countryside Commission for Scotland), the house was converted to a caravan and camping site, with a picnic area and visitor centre. **Margaret and Jim Black** were the first wardens on the site, and enjoyed the job so much they remained in their posts until 1986. Jim then looked after the grounds until his retirement.

Husband and wife team **Hugh and Debbie Ballantyne** became the new proprietors in March 2012. Aberdeenshire Council operated the holiday park at Alford until then.