

Points from the long history of Skelbo, which link it with the history of Scotland, England and Europe, as well as with the story of the Highlands and Sutherland.

1. The name of Skelbo shows that it was an important farmstead of the early Viking age, built around 850.
2. In 1211 Hugo Freskyn gave Skelbo to his kinsman, Gilbert of Moray, later to become St. Gilbert. He made it over to his brother Richard in 1223; Richard was probably killed in the Battle of Embo in 1245, when a band of pirates landed at Little Ferry.
3. In 1290 the Scottish and English Commissioners were at Skelbo, to meet the young Queen of Scotland, the Maid of Norway, who was to marry the heir to the throne of England. It was at Skelbo that they heard of her death in Orkney. This link to the history of both Scotland and England would justify the preservation of Skelbo as a National Monument.
4. Skelbo played a part in the tragic story of Montrose and his last campaign. When he landed in Caithness in 1650, his enemy the Earl of Sutherland installed garrisons in Dunrobin, Skelbo, Skibo and Dornoch. Montrose was defeated at Carbisdale soon after this, by the men of these garrisons.
5. The Sutherlands of Duffus acquired Skelbo in 1529; they gave it another claim as a National Monument. Alexander Duffus played a part in the rising of General Middleton and the Earl of Glencairn, on behalf of Charles II against Cromwell. In 1654, Middleton landed at Little Ferry, close to Skelbo, and stored a large amount of arms and ammunition in Skelbo Castle. The rising was planned in and around Dornoch, but failed in a defeat at Dalnaspidal. After the Restoration, Charles II made Alexander, the First Lord Duffus, and Middleton became a Commissioner.
6. In the Jacobite Rising of 1715, the Third Lord Duffus supported the Old Pretender and as a result forfeited his lands. He left the country for Russia, where he became a Commander of the Tsar's forces in Moscow.
7. In 1746, shortly before Culloden, Skelbo was occupied by a Jacobite force under the Earl of Cromartie, who captured four Hanoverian ships full of arms, lying at Little Ferry, after the Earl of Sutherland had been put to flight. The Earl of Cromartie made Skelbo his headquarters while preparing for Culloden, but later moved to Dunrobin. His force set off for the battle, but was

intercepted by Sutherland militia, and prevented from reaching Culloden. This absence of Cromartie's men was thought to be decisive in the outcome of the battle.

8. Soon after Culloden, Lady Elizabeth Duffus had the care of the motherless daughter of the 16th Earl of Sutherland. She wrote a charming letter in 1747, giving him news of the child's progress, and affording us a glimpse of the domestic life inside the 16th/17th century house within the Castle walls.

9. By 1769 the mediaeval house was largely in ruins, but the house stood until recent times. Skelbo passed into the family of the Earls of Sutherland in 1787; the title of the Barony of Skelbo may still be held by the Countess of Sutherland.