

The old house of Embo is said to have been destroyed by fire towards the close of the eighteenth century. The present building was erected by Mr Robert Hume Gordon when he contested Sutherland, and, according to Mr Sage, he "built this splendid mansion for the purpose of entertaining the electors." He describes it in his *Memorabilia Domestica* as he first saw it on his way to Dornoch in 1801. "The front was of hewn ashlar, and consisted of three distinct houses, the largest and loftiest in the centre, joined to the other two by small narrow passages, each lighted by a window, and forming altogether a very imposing front. The centre house was four storeys high—first, a ground or rather sunk floor, then a first, second, and, lastly, attic storey. The ground or sunken floor contained the kitchen and cellars, and in front of it was a wall surmounted by an iron railing, resembling exactly the fronts in Princes Street, Edinburgh. Outer stairs ascended to the principal entry door, and along the whole front of the building extended a pavement. The lesser houses, or wings, were, each of them, a storey less in height than the central building; and the attic storeys were lighted from the front wall, instead of from the roof, by windows about precisely half the size of the rest, which greatly added to the effect and beauty of the whole. Behind were other two wings of the same height with those in front, extending at right angles from the principal buildings. The interior of the mansion corresponded with its external appearance. The principal rooms were lofty and elegant, ornamented with rich cornices, and each having two large windows." The house is very much to-day what it was in Sage's time.

Embo was for centuries the home of the Gordons of that ilk, who were descended from James Gordon of Drummoy, whose fourth son, John, acquired the property towards the end of the sixteenth century. He was, at first, a loyal and outstanding supporter of the House of Sutherland; but in 1615 he espoused the cause of the Mackays of Strathnaver, and did his utmost to weaken the influence of Sir Robert Gordon in the county.