

## II.

## TOLQUHON CASTLE AND ITS BUILDER.

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## I.

The Castle of Tolquhon, one of the most interesting of the sixteenth century baronial mansions in which Aberdeenshire is so rich, is situated in the parish of Tarves, in the eastern part of the ancient Thanage of Formartine. Of this eastern part it formed the chief messuage, as Fyvie was of the western; and when the Prestons, lords of Formartine, failed in the main line, the Thanage was divided between the husbands of the two co-heiresses—Tolquhon thus being acquired by Sir John Forbes (a brother of the first Lord Forbes), who in 1420 had married Marjorie, second daughter of the deceased Sir Henry Preston.<sup>1</sup>

Whether "Preston's Tower"—so called as far back as 1732<sup>2</sup>—which forms the oldest part of the castle, really dates back to before Tolquhon became a separate property under the Forbeses, it would be hard to say: but there is nothing about its architectural features at all inconsistent with a date about the end of the fourteenth or early in the fifteenth century, and the traditional name of the tower may therefore perhaps be accepted as genuine. At Fyvie there is also a Preston Tower. The "tower and fortalice" of Tolquhon are mentioned in a charter dated 2nd December 1536.<sup>3</sup> At all events this "auld tour," with whatever barmkin walls and "laich bigging" may have adjoined it, was deemed sufficient for the needs of its owners until in 1584-9 (as inscribed on its walls) the castle was greatly enlarged by William Forbes, the seventh laird. Notices extant about this gentleman reveal a rather remarkable and attractive personality, cultured and enlightened beyond the average Aberdeenshire laird of his period. He founded and endowed a hospital in connection with the parish church of Tarves, "for four poor men who were to eat and lye here and to have each a peck of meal and three shillings, a penny and two-sixths of a penny Scots weekly; also some malt, peats, etc."<sup>4</sup> An inquest held on 15th February 1717 tells us how this charitable bequest was managed at that time. It was found

<sup>1</sup> *Collections on the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, pp. 352-3.

<sup>2</sup> *View of the Diocese of Aberdeen*, in *Collections, ut supra*, p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>4</sup> *Collections, ut supra*, p. 330.

that "the Beidmen had ane peck of meal and 40 pennies each in the week, and had ane grey gown the one Martinmass and a Coat and Breeches the other, and that the tenants of Meikle Ythsey were as much bound to winn and lead peats to them as they were to pay their farmes;"<sup>1</sup> also that they had "ane hide for Shoes." In the Bede house was "a big chest with four locks and lids for their meal . . . and four Beds for the said Beidmen." "The Beidmen at their entry had a Chest, Bed, Bedcloaths, pot and pan, and cloaths once in two years." Fifteen years later it is recorded that while the fund is managed "very carefully, conform to the will of the mortifier," the house is "gone to Ruine." In the same year (1732) we read that "the meal and money they still have; but their house, which is slated, is neglected and quite waste."<sup>2</sup> And on 25th June 1735 the minister reports a melancholy state of affairs. The Beidmen were originally provided with a house "which used to be kept in good repair, sufficient furniture, and a large kail yard, and punctual payments of their money: but now the house is ruinous, the roof off, the furniture gone, and the yard misapplied so far as he knows; nor are the payments made to proper objects, at least to the satisfaction of the Kirk Session."<sup>3</sup>

The Bede house, or rather, its modern successor, still exists to the south-east of the village, and contains a stone with a much defaced Latin inscription in relief, commemorating its foundation by William Forbes of Tolquhon.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to founding this hospital, our laird erected for himself a stately tomb in the south aisle of the parish church of Tarves. This monument (fig. 1) is a remarkable example of the bastard Gothic of the period. Its general design remains thoroughly medieval, but much of the detail is pseudo-classical in character. This is particularly seen on the arcade in front of the tomb-chest, and in the balusters on either side. The grotesque animals on the extrados of the tomb-arch are quite in the whimsical and vigorous style so often found in sculptured work of this period in the north-east of Scotland;<sup>5</sup> while the "mort's head" on the tomb-chest represents the incoming of a degraded taste that reached its climax in the two following centuries. On the dexter spandrel is a shield of florid design, showing the Forbes arms, with an esquire's helmet and the motto SALUS PER CHRISTUM, while on either side of the shield are the laird's initials and below it the date 1589. On

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* rents.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> T. Mair, *Narratives and Extracts from the Records of the Presbytery of Ellon*, pp. 298-300.

<sup>4</sup> For a partial decipherment of the inscription, see A. Jervis, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions in the North-East of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 351.

<sup>5</sup> See *Proceedings*, vol. lxiv. p. 93; vol. lxv. pp. 152-3.

the sinister spandrel a similar shield, having a man's hat for a crest, bears the arms of his wife, Elizabeth Gordon of Lesmoir, impaled with those of Forbes, together with her initials and the superscription DOCHTER



Fig. 1. The Tolquhon Monument in Tarves Kirkyard.

TO LESMOR. Portrait statuettes of the laird and his lady support the tracery on either side. The total height of the monument, to the top of the heavy battlemented cornice, is 7 feet 6 inches, and its over-all breadth is 8 feet 8 inches.

A curious licence, dated 8th February 1582, was granted to William Forbes by James VI, relieving him from all military duties because he was suffering from "ane dolour and diseaiss in his ene, proceeding be

ane distillatioun out of the heid," and further permitting him "to eit flesche with thrie or foure with him in companie in the forbidden tyme."<sup>1</sup> His fame is commemorated in elegiac strains by the Latin poet, Arthur Johnstone of Caskieben, whose language seems to imply that King James had visited the castle—a circumstance which might account for the interest he displayed in the laird. The poem was evidently designed to be inscribed upon his tomb in Tarves:—<sup>2</sup>

"DE GULIELMO FORBESIO TOLCHONO.

*Auisset cum prole domum Tolchonus et arvis  
Confectus senio sponte reliquit humum.  
Condidit hunc tumulum quo conditur ipse, supremum  
Expectans animo nil metuente diem.  
Hunc prope pauperibus devotos aspicias agros  
Tectaque mortali non violanda manu.  
Nec procul his domini surgunt palatia, regis  
Non semel hospitio nobilitata sui.  
Has terris monimenta dedit Tolchonus, et inter  
Has operum moles crescere vidit opes.  
Quantulus, exuvias si spectas corporis, alti  
Si pensas animi munera, quantus homo est."*

The reference to the Bede House at Tarves—"tectaque mortali non violanda manu"—has now an ironic ring in view of its recorded history as we have summarised it above.

The most interesting monument that the old laird has left behind him is undoubtedly the very considerable extension which he built to his castle, converting the cramped "auld tour" into a spacious mansion laid out upon a design much more ambitious than was usual among the houses of Aberdeenshire country gentlemen of the period. And a mortification of his property, dated 3rd December 1589<sup>3</sup>—six weeks after the work of building was finished—makes it clear that the castle was furnished in keeping with its architectural pretensions; for in the list of his effects are included: "my haille siluer wark, buikis, bedding, tapestrie, neprie, timmer wark, artalyerie, wther furniture insyght and plenising quhatsumewer." Elsewhere in the same inventory he dwells, with what seems a touch of pardonable pride, upon the ample accommodation provided by his new mansion, enumerating "within the wallis

<sup>1</sup> *Collections, ut supra*, pp. 353-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Epigrammata Arturi Ionstoni, Scoti, Medici Regii, Abredoniae, excudebat Edvardus Rabanus, cum Privilegio*, 1632, p. 21. The poem must have been written a considerable while after the laird died in 1596, for at that time Johnstone was only eight years old. The allusions make it clear that it is to the seventh laird, and not to his son, who was also called William, that the poet refers.

<sup>3</sup> *Collections, ut supra*, pp. 354-5.

of my houiss, tour, and place of Tolquhone," "my hallis, gallareis, chalmeris, vardrepe, kitchingis, stabillis, sellaris, lednaris, pantreis, librellis, or wther office houissis quhatsumewer."

We like to think that the laird who thus classed his "buikis" as next in value to his plate was a scholar of sorts. His library was long preserved at Whitehaugh, in the Howe of Alford, where the representatives of the Tolquhon Forbeses settled after their dispossession from their ancestral home: but most unfortunately it was dispersed piecemeal about the middle of the last century. In Beattie's correspondence, preserved in the Aberdeen University Library, there is a letter from Mr Forbes Leith of Whitehaugh, dated 26th April 1779, in which he states that he had lent Dr Beattie certain "Old Musick Books which had belong'd to my predecessors, and were found by me among some small remains of a valuable Library, which my Gt. Gt. Grandfather, Wm. Forbes of Tolquhon, possess'd about 200 years ago—I find many of his books mark'd in 1588, he was then aged 38 years, and he lived till 1643. Whenever I can recover any bearing his name—or that of Geo. Ogilvie, with whom he was connected, I think them an Acquisition."<sup>1</sup> It was, however, not the builder of the castle, but his son, the second William, who died in 1643.

Some particulars of the library are preserved in a short notice, over the initials J. M., which will be found in *Notes and Queries* for 10th September 1859.<sup>2</sup> I imagine that the author of this notice was James Maidment. In it he speaks of William Forbes of Tolquhon as "a great book collector," and as to his library he says that "the very rare and curious volumes which recently came from the north, and were disposed of in detached portions by Mr Nisbet in Edinburgh at various times, made it a matter of regret that the library was not sold in its entire state with a proper descriptive catalogue." Maidment (if he be the writer) is dealing particularly with an edition of Erasmus's *Apophthegmata*, quarto, 1533, written on the flyleaf of which was a letter in the hand of Florentius Volusenus (Florence Wolson, the author of the *De Tranquillitate Animi*) presenting the volume to his friend John Ogilvie, parson of Cruden. Ogilvie in return is requested to send a little nag (*equuleum*) as Wolson proposes to go to the country, and requires the use of a horse. He reminds Ogilvie of the pleasure he sometimes had derived from Erasmus; and he makes many enquiries about their mutual acquaintances, and in particular sends his love to Master Hector Boece. The book had subsequently come into the possession of the laird of Tolquhon,

<sup>1</sup> Beattie Correspondence, letter C. 327 (Aberdeen University Library).

<sup>2</sup> Second series, vol. viii. p. 203.

as appeared from his autograph on the title-page, thus: "William Forbes of Tolquhon, 1588."

In the Library of the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney—now housed, under an arrangement with the Synod, in the University Library at King's College—is preserved another book that had belonged to the old laird. It is a folio edition, in a modern binding, of the works of Joannes Damascenus, printed at Basel by Henricus Petrus, March 1535. On the title-page (fig. 2) is our laird's autograph, in a bold and cultured hand, full of character: "*Villeame forbes of tolquhone, 1588.*" Beside it is the autograph of his descendant, Beattie's correspondent, John Forbes Leith of Whitehaugh, and the date 1778. But what makes this book still more interesting is the fact that underneath the device of Henricus Petrus is pasted in the *ex libris* of Robert Reid, Abbot of Kinloss from 1526, and Bishop of the Orkneys from 1541 until his death in 1558.<sup>1</sup> Reid was one of the foremost churchmen of his day, distinguished alike as a statesman, a builder, and a patron of learning. He was a great lover of books, and erected a splendid vaulted library at Kinloss.<sup>2</sup> The association of this book with Kinloss at once arouses our interest, when we remember that Florence Wolson, to whom the other book (which came into Tolquhon's possession in the same year) had belonged, was a "Moray Loon"—born, as he himself tells us, near the River Lossie. After being educated at Aberdeen University, Wolson went to Paris, probably to the Scots College, which was founded in the first place for students from Moray. In Paris he entered the service of Cardinal Wolsey as tutor to his nephew, Thomas Wynter, Dean of Wells, who at that time was studying in the French capital. This connection with Wolsey involved Wolson in various diplomatic activities, and he is known to have visited London in 1534. The terms of his letter to John Ogilvie, parson of Cruden, accompanying the gift of the *Erasmus*, make it quite clear that Wolson was then in the north country; and it seems reasonably certain that he seized the opportunity of his mission to England in 1534 to revisit the scenes of his boyhood. The date of this visit was certainly after 1533, in which year the *Erasmus* was printed, and before 1536, in which year died Hector Boece, to whom he sends his greetings. Now Ogilvie also had been brought up in Moray, and we know from Wolson's own testimony that they had been youthful

<sup>1</sup> The latter part of the book contains a few marginal glosses in Reid's handwriting.

<sup>2</sup> "*Hoc anno 1538 extruxit amplissimam bibliothecam, testudinibus tamen munitam contra ignem, ubi primum fuerat deambulatorium Thomae Chrystall abbatis—Ferrerius, Life of Abbot Robert Reid, in Records of the Monastery of Kinloss, ed. J. Stuart, p. 57. Cf. ibid., p. 51: instituit praeter satis copiosam in omni disciplinarum genere bibliothecam . . . et ne quid desit iam aggrederetur domum elegantissimam quadrato lapide in quo libri asserventur.*"

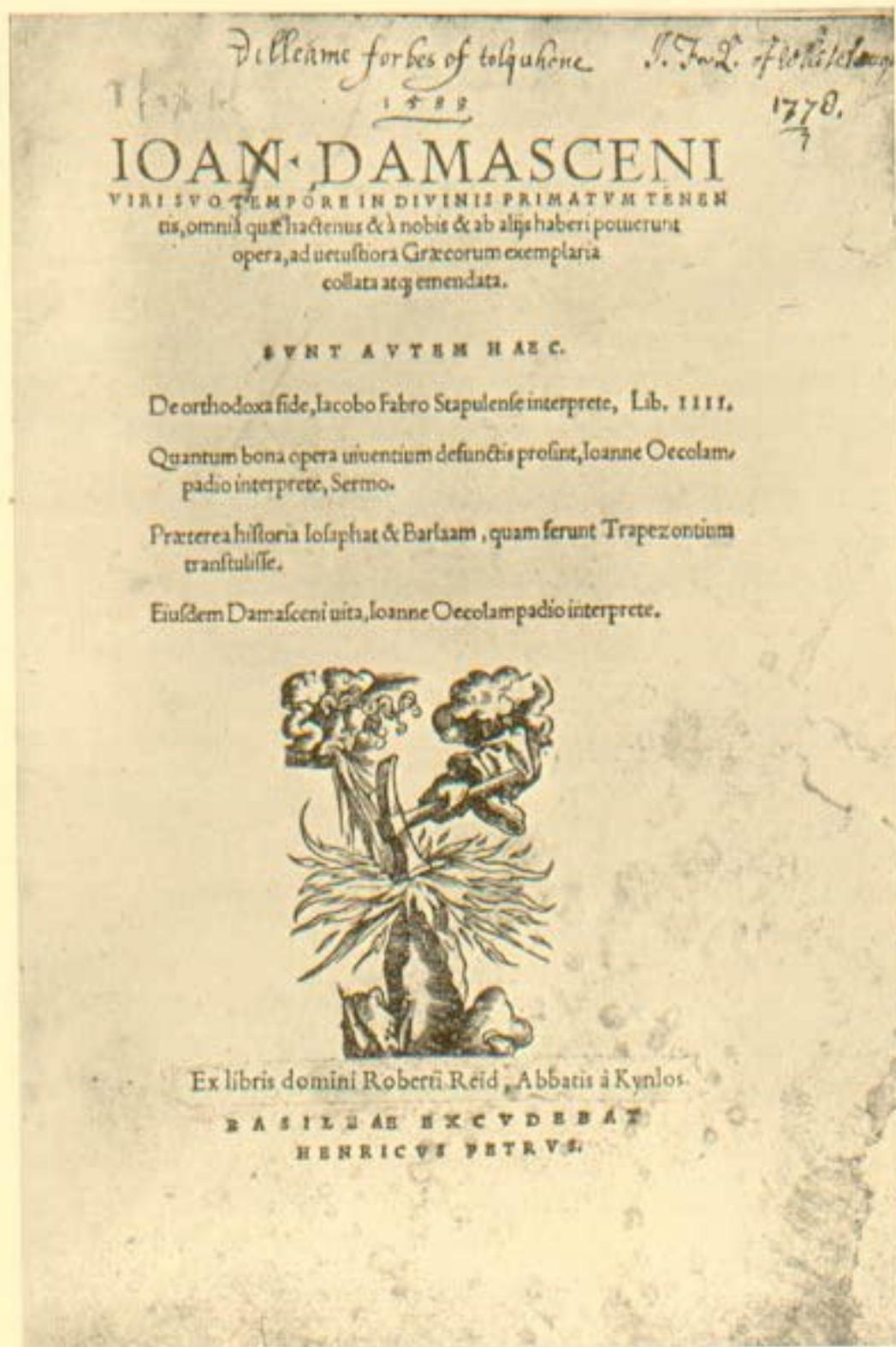


Fig. 2. Joannis Damasceni Opera (Basel, 1535), with bookplate of Robert Reid, Abbot of Kinloss and Bishop of the Orkneys, and signature of William Forbes, seventh laird of Tolquhona.

companions in their walks and literary discussions along the banks of the Lossie.<sup>1</sup> It will be noted that both books, the *Erasmus* and the *Damascenus*, came into the hands of William Forbes in the same year 1588. May the *Damascenus* also, therefore, have come from the library of John Ogilvie, and may it have been a gift to him from the Abbot of Kinloss? If both Ogilvie and Wolson visited Kinloss between 1533 and 1536, the *Damascenus*, which was printed in March 1535, must have been newly in Reid's hands, and the date of their visit is thus practically restricted to the latter year—a circumstance wholly in accordance with the known fact that Wolson was in London in 1534. (He was back in Paris in September 1535, and on the 19th of that month he started from Chalmont on the journey to Italy that resulted in his appointment as professor of eloquence at Carpentras.<sup>2</sup>) And, if all this be true, how did two books that belonged to Ogilvie come into the possession of the laird of Tolquhon in the year 1588? Is it a coincidence that our laird's son and successor married an Ogilvie—Janet, daughter of Sir George Ogilvie of Dunlugas, who evidently must be the George Ogilvie, also an owner of books, with whom, according to Forbes Leith in his letter to Beattie, the laird of Tolquhon was connected? John Ogilvie, the parson of Cruden, in 1555 was created by Pope Paul IV a Canon of Aberdeen,<sup>3</sup> and was still alive on 1st November 1570, when he witnessed a feu charter of certain lands in Old Aberdeen.<sup>4</sup>

Of course we have been wandering in a realm of pure conjecture, though it is conjecture with more than a dash of probability in it. But it is enough to have placed on record two books that belonged to our scholarly old laird of Tolquhon, and to note that they associate his library with a group of distinguished and highly cultured men—the last and, in some respects, the finest flowering of the medieval church in Scotland.

Two other volumes belonging to the old Tolquhon Castle library were in the possession of the late Miss Fyers, Camp Cottage, Kirkton of Maryculter, a descendant of the family. One of these books, which unfortunately lacks the title-page, is an interesting folio in *lettres bâtarde*, printed in Paris by Maistre Nicole de la Barre, 1518. The work is entitled *Croniques et Mirouer Hystorial de France*, a translation of the Latin original by Robert Gaguin. On folio AAii, *recto*, with which the

<sup>1</sup> "Dum ego et Joannes Ogilvius, qui nunc apud Scotos Crodanam regit ecclesiam, vir ut generis claritate ita literis et moribus ornatissimus, una (nam multum una esse solebamus) in ripa Lossaei amnis deambularem, principium illud sermonem Horatii (nam Horatius prae manibus erat) . . . nobis occasionem dedit," etc. Volusenus *De Animi Tranquillitate*, ed. 1751, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers (Foreign and Domestic)*, Henry VIII, ed. J. Gairdner, vol. ix. p. 131, No. 395.

<sup>3</sup> *Ant. Aberdeen and Banff*, vol. iii. pp. 119–20.

<sup>4</sup> *Fasti Aberdonenses*, pp. 128–9.

copy, which is in a late eighteenth-century binding, now begins, is the signature "Williame Forbes of Tolquhon, 1588," and also that of John Forbes Leith of Whitehaugh, 1778. Other owners, who have left their names on the last page, were "Jhone Meldrum, Marchemond Herald," and "Thome Meldrum burgis of Aberdene."

The other volume is a large folio blackletter Bible, printed at London by Christopher Barker in 1583. It is of interest, because it bears on the title-page the signature of George Ogilvy. On folio 532, *verso* (being the blank page at the end of the Old Testament), William Forbes, the twelfth and last laird, has entered the particulars of his marriage to Anna Leith, daughter of John Leith of Whitehaugh, and the births of his children, three sons and two daughters. Very curiously, the names and dates have been carefully blacked out.

Doubtless other books belonging to the old laird still survive, scattered about the public and private libraries of Great Britain and America: but inquiry has failed to trace any of them.

In 1550 our laird, who three years previously had succeeded his father, fallen at Pinkie, was bound over in two thousand pounds, for his son and "friends" (*i.e.* relatives), not to trouble the Provost and Baillies of Aberdeen.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the dispute may have been, it left no abiding ill-will, for on 27th October 1578 he was elected a burges of the city.<sup>2</sup> As a witness to writs his name is constantly found, and it is clear he was a much respected man whose assistance in legal matters was constantly sought by his neighbours. He added considerably to his patrimony, purchasing in 1585 the lands of Woodland, Knaperna and half of Tullimad.<sup>3</sup>

In national affairs his appearances are few, but uniformly creditable. On 2nd September 1574 he signed at Aberdeen the "Band of the Baronis in the North," professing allegiance to the Regency of Morton.<sup>4</sup> And on 30th January 1580, along with other northern barons, he was directed by the Privy Council, in accordance with measures then being taken to compose the feud between the Gordons and the Forbeses, "to subscribe sic formes of assuirances as salbe presentit unto thame, notit by the clerk of Counsale, to induir unto the first day of August nixt to cum, within XXIII houris nixt eftir they be chairgit thairto, under the pane of rebelloun."<sup>5</sup> On 23rd April following it was reported to the Council that the required assurance had duly been given.<sup>6</sup> But the quarrels were too deep-rooted thus easily to be composed, and on 10th July

<sup>1</sup> *Reg. Council Aberdeen*, vol. i. p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> J. Davidson, *Genealogy of the House of Tolquhon*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Reg. Privy Council*, vol. ii. p. 401.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

Tolquhon associated himself with others of his name in renewed complaints against the Gordons.<sup>1</sup> On 19th February 1589 he sends in a petition to the Council, stating that he ought not to be included among those whom Lord Forbes and the Master of Forbes are charged to enter before the King and Council as pledges for the good conduct of the Forbeses, seeing that he is not a tenant of Lord Forbes, but is "ane gentilman holding his landis immediatlie of his Majestie, and the same landis and his dwelling lyand in Buchane, and he, his haill tennentis and servantis, being subject to the course of justice." It would be unreasonable, he urges, to "burdyn the said complenair that duellis laich in Buchane with the disobedience of ony brokin men of the surname of Forbes" residing in Mar and Strathdon. The Council admitted the force of his contention, and granted the exoneration that he craved.<sup>2</sup> Our laird's loyalty and restraining action upon his tenantry amid the inveterate feuds of the time are again appreciatively referred to in connection with a complaint by two of his tenants on 24th June 1590.<sup>3</sup>

William Forbes did not live long to enjoy the comforts of his "houiss tour and place," for he was dead before 22nd March 1596.<sup>4</sup> What has been stated to be his portrait by Jamesone, in the possession of Lord Saltoun and formerly at Philorth House, is reproduced in *Musa Latina Aberdonensis*: but unfortunately it is a portrait not of our laird but of his son, also William, whose daughter married Sir Alexander Fraser of Philorth—hence the reason for her father's portrait being there. In 1596, when our William Forbes died, Jamesone was only six or seven years old. Probably the old laird's expenditure had outrun his means; at all events, throughout the next century the family fell more and more into embarrassment. The tenth laird made a bold effort to right himself by participation in the Darien Scheme, whose collapse spelt ruin to the House of Tolquhon. In 1716 the estate had to be sold, and on 5th September 1718 the eleventh laird, who had refused to abandon the home of his fathers, was wounded and dislodged by a party of redcoats.<sup>5</sup> Tolquhon ultimately passed to the Earls of Aberdeen, and a portion of the castle was inhabited as a farmhouse until well into the last century. In 1929 the ruins were handed over by the Earl of Haddo to the custody of the Ancient Monuments Department of His Majesty's Office of Works.

Mr J. C. M. Ogilvie Forbes of Boyndlie has in his possession the original manuscript of Matthew Lumsden's *Description of the Genealogie of the House of Forbes*, as continued down to 1667 by William Forbes of

<sup>1</sup> *Reg. Privy Council*, vol. iii. p. 401.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 493-4; cf. p. 576.

<sup>4</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 15. The date is given as 17th February 1596 by A. and H. Tayler, *The House of Forbes*, p. 396.

<sup>5</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Leslie. That this Boyndlie manuscript is Forbes's original draft is clearly shown by the fact that it contains at the end of it a number of memoranda and jottings about further matters which Forbes wished to clear up with a view to making the treatise still more complete. For the most part these memoranda are concerned with minute details of local genealogy; but at the head of them is the following surprising statement:

"Nota the renowned Navigatour Martine Forbisher is descended of the house of Tolquhone but tyme hath worne out the knowledge of his parents."

The authorities upon Sir Martin Frobisher know nothing about this alleged Scottish descent. It would be extremely interesting were confirmation of it to be forthcoming.

## II.

To the March 1925 issue of the *Aberdeen University Review* I contributed a full descriptive survey of the ruins in their then condition. It is sufficient, therefore, in the present paper to resume the main features of the castle, and to describe in greater fulness the new details revealed in the course of the operations carried out by the Ancient Monuments Department.

Whereas most of the contemporary mansions in Aberdeenshire were built upon one of the numerous varieties of the tower-house plan, William Forbes chose to erect his "new wark" on the design of a rectangular block enclosing a court, Preston's Tower being incorporated into the north-east angle of the additions. This courtyard (see plans at end, figs. 12, 13) measures 68 feet by 50 feet. In the centre of the north front (figs. 3, 4) is the gatehouse (fig. 5) which, with its arched portal, flanked by sturdy drum-towers with heavily grated windows, and enriched with moulded stringcourses, grotesque figurines, fanciful gun-loops, and coats-of-arms, has an unusual and somewhat imposing effect. The gatehouse is dated 1586. It is balanced on the east side by Preston's Tower, and on the other side by a round tower (figs. 3, 6, 10) salient from the north-west angle of the castle. This round tower corresponds to a square tower (fig. 7) projected at the south-eastern angle—the whole arrangement thus forming a remarkable and very well thought-out application, to a courtyard castle, of the so-called Z-plan, in which angle towers are écheloned at each of two diagonally opposite corners of the main building. Beside the gatehouse is a panel with the following



Fig. 3. Tolquhon Castle: view of North Front.

[Photo, D. L. Mead.]



Fig. 4. Tolquhon Castle about 1840.

*From the painting by James Giles, R.S.A., now at Whitehaugh.*

finely cut inscription:—AL·THIS·WARKE EXCEP·THE·AULD·TOUR·WAS·BEGUN·BE·WILLIAM·FORBES·15·APRILE·1584·AND·ENDIT·BE·HIM·20·OCTOBER·1589.

The principal apartments occupy the south side of the quadrangle and take the form of a long building with a "jam" or staircase wing attached. In the basement, which is vaulted, are the kitchen and three cellars, with two service stairs to the main floor above. Midway in this wing a round staircase tower (figs. 7, 8) projects upon the courtyard,

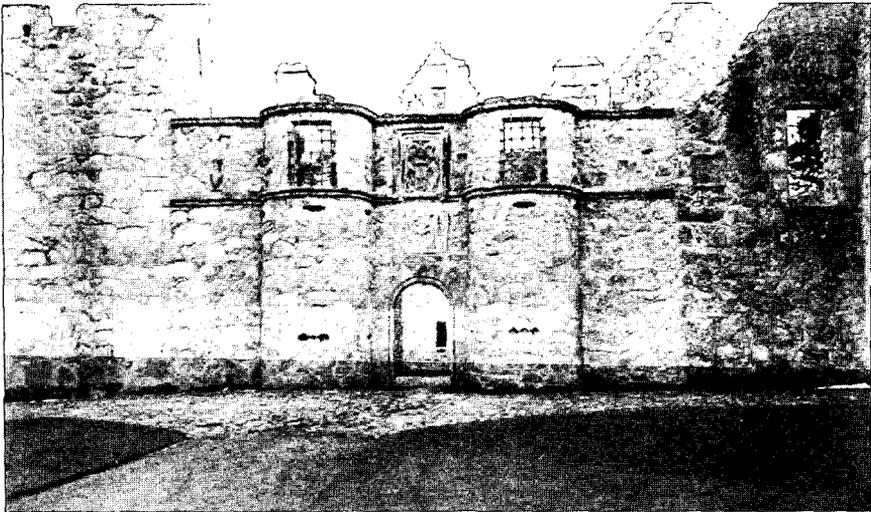


Fig. 5. Tolquhon Castle: view of Gatehouse.

[Photo, D. L. Medd.]

and contains in its basement a stone shelf for dishes, conveniently placed for the service window in the kitchen. The main entrance in the "jam" is a fine arched portal, and within a spacious scale-and-platt stair, mounting over a vaulted guardroom, gives access to the first floor. Here is a handsome and well-lit hall, measuring 37 feet by 19 feet, with a sandstone pavement of hexagonal flags interlocking with smaller squares. Beyond the hall is the solar or private room, off which opens a small oratory. Access to the upper storey is obtained by a wheel stair in the drum tower, which above the eaves level is corbelled out into a picturesque corbie-stepped cap-house. There is a secret chamber, perhaps a "lug," forming an entresol in the end wall of the private room, and reached by a hatch from the floor above. Over the main stair landing in the "jam" are two storeys of living rooms, served by a small wheel stair.



Fig. 6. Tolquhon Castle: view looking northwards along West Front.  
*Drawn by James Giles, R.S.A., 1838.*

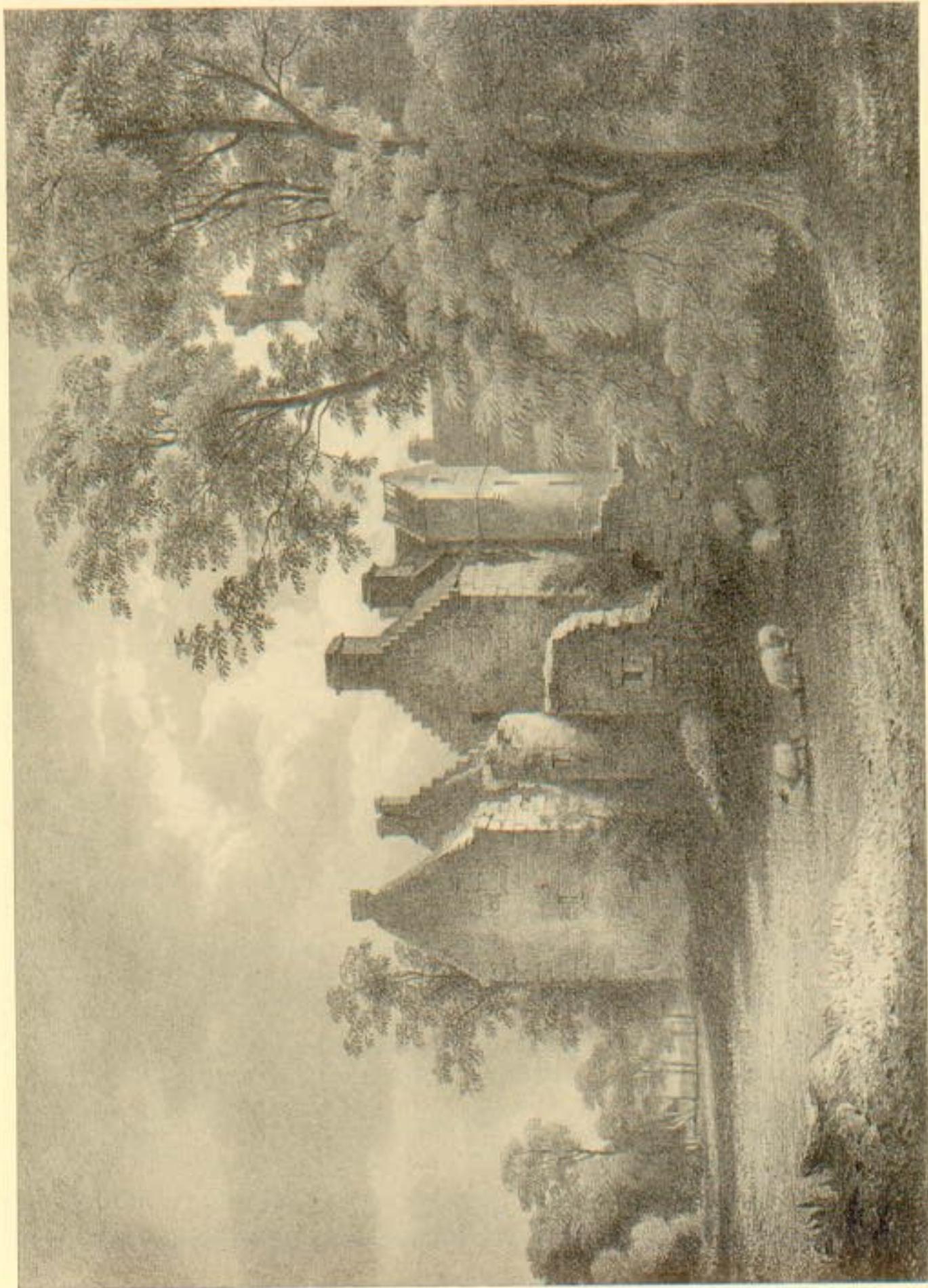
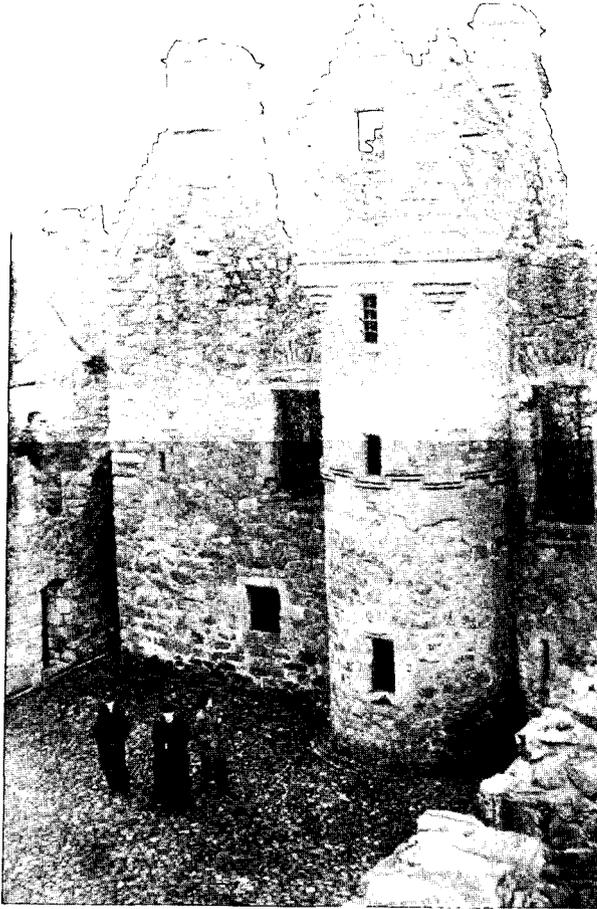


Fig. 7. Tolquhon Castle: view of East Front and South-East Tower.  
*Drawn by James Giles, R.S.A., 1838.*

This main portion of the castle forms a building by itself, and was constructed as a unit. It is structurally separate from the east wing,



[Photo, D. L. Medd.

Fig. 8. Tolquhon Castle: Tower in Courtyard.

and the west wing was later built on to the "jam"—as appears from a well-marked joint. The west wing is of two storeys, containing in the basement vaulted cellars and a brew house, and on the first floor a spacious gallery, measuring 57 feet by 14 feet. In the round tower at

the north-west corner are a vaulted cellar and two bedrooms, the lower one vaulted, and the upper one being reached by a small turret stair.

The north or gatehouse wing again forms a structural unit, set in between Preston's Tower and the west wing. As it is dated midway in the building period, it was probably erected next after the south or main wing, and the two lateral wings completed last of all: although it is equally clear that the whole castle forms one design, and was so contemplated from the outset. The north wing contains in its basement the trance and guardhouses all vaulted, and on the upper floor an extension of the gallery, with alcoves in the drum towers.

The east wing, which is greatly ruined and has not been vaulted, appears to have provided offices in the basement and guests' rooms above. At its south end is the bakehouse, with two ovens in the square tower, the two upper storeys of which were bedrooms, reached by a turret stair. Through a hatch in the floor of the lower bedroom a small "pit" or prison is reached, behind the ovens.

The only other castle in the north of Scotland that at all closely resembles Tolquhon Castle is Boyne, near Portsoy. Here the symmetrical quadrangular lay-out, not being impeded by an older tower, is carried out with even greater *konsequenz* than at Tolquhon.<sup>1</sup> Somewhat similar accommodation, though on a less symmetrical design, is provided by the "palace" at Dunnottar:<sup>2</sup> while the newer building of Edzell Castle<sup>3</sup> also has points of resemblance to Tolquhon. Between the old house of Schivas, also in the parish of Tarves, and the south wing of Tolquhon, the resemblance in plan is so close, and the details, such as the ornate gunloops, are so precisely similar, that it is hardly possible to doubt they are both the work of the same master mason.<sup>4</sup>

An interesting feature about Tolquhon Castle is the large outer court (see plan, fig. 14), with a fore-gate (fig. 9) and "laich-biggings," including a dovecot at the north-east corner. On the west side of this there still exists an ample pleasance (see plan, fig. 14, and illustration, fig. 10) showing a cruciform arrangement of trees in two broad intersecting avenues of sombre old hollies and yews. If this lay-out is also due to the seventh laird, we are still more impressed by his advanced ideas. Connected with the pleasance are a curious series of twelve small recesses, probably for skeps, in the forecourt wall (fig. 10). Similar provision may be seen in the precinct wall at Pluscarden Priory, and in

<sup>1</sup> See my description of Boyne Castle in *Trans. Banff Field Club*, Oct. 1931, pp. 69-81.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Dunnottar Castle*, 3rd ed., pp. 41-8.

<sup>3</sup> See my paper in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxv. p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> See description of Schivas by Mr J. Fenton Wyness, F.S.A.Scot., in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxiii. pp. 384-91; also *Country Life*, vol. lxxxiv., No. 2165 (July 16, 1938), pp. 68-9.

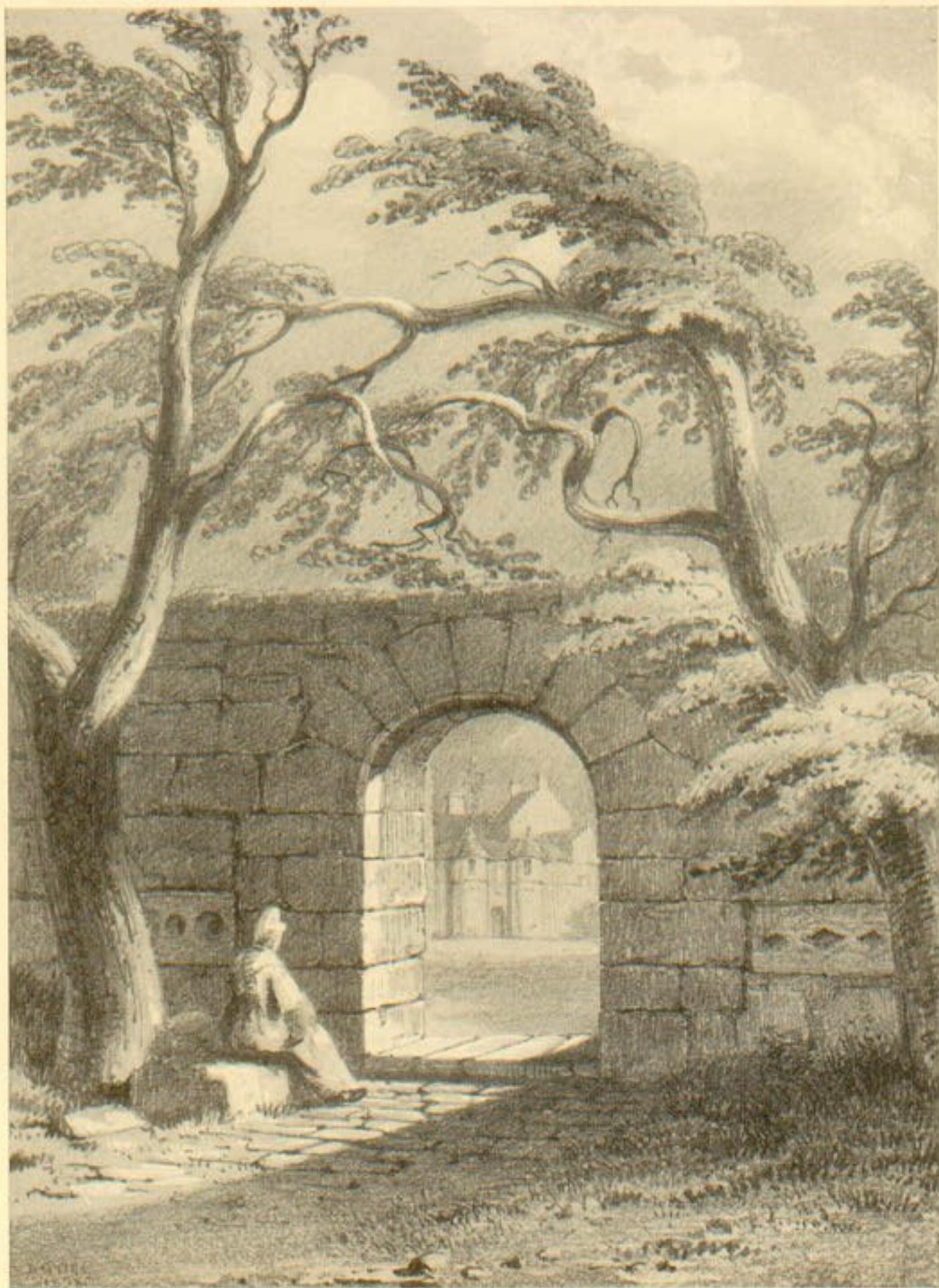


Fig. 9. Tolquhon Castle: the Forecourt Gate.  
*Drawn by James Giles, R.S.A., 1838.*

one of the old walls in the policies of Hatton Castle, near Turriff. All round the castle are the survivors of fine old beech and ash trees. The state of these ancient policies, before the castle was taken over by His Majesty's Commissioners of Works, may be best recalled in a passage



[Photo, D. L. Medd.]

Fig. 10. Tolquhon Castle: view in pleasance, looking towards North-West Tower.

from the third chapter of *Kenilworth*, which is so apt in every particular that it might well have been written about Tolquhon:—

“They stood now in an avenue overshadowed by such old trees as we have described, and which had been bordered at one time by high hedges of yew and holly. But these, having been untrimmed for many years, had run up into great bushes, or rather dwarf trees, and now encroached, with their dark and melancholy boughs, upon the road which they once had screened. The avenue itself was grown up with grass, and, in one or two places, interrupted by piles of withered brushwood, which had been lopped from the trees cut down in the neighbouring park, and was here stacked for drying. Formal walks and avenues, which, at different points, crossed this principal approach, were, in like manner, choked up and interrupted by piles of brushwood and billets, and in other places by underwood and brambles. Besides the general effect of desolation which is so strongly impressed, whenever we behold the contrivances of man wasted and obliterated by neglect, and witness the marks of social life effaced gradually by the influence of vegetation, the size of the trees and the outspreading extent of their boughs, diffused a gloom over the scene, even when the sun was at the highest, and made a proportionate impression on the mind of those who visited it.”

The principal discoveries that have been made, during the conservation proceedings, are in connection with clearing out Preston's Tower. Above its basement only the two outer walls remain, and these in a greatly ruined state. The interior walls had fallen into the court and filled it with a mass of ruin. Preston's Tower measures 40 feet 6 inches by 29 feet, and at ground level the walls are 7 feet 6 inches thick. On its north-west corner three corbels of a machicolated "round" or angle turret still exist, at a height of 45 feet above ground. The masonry of the "Auld Tour" is much more massive than that of the later buildings, being composed of larger boulders with fewer pinnings. A vaulted cellar occupies the basement, and is lit by a single loophole on the north and west faces. The entrance, defended by outer and inner doors, is in the south wall. Although the upper part has now disappeared, voussoirs lying amid the ruins show that it terminated in a pointed arch having a hood-mould, bevelled above and hollowed underneath, resting on plain stops of which the west one was carved with a rosette. This detail is quite in keeping with a date about the end of the fourteenth century. Midway in the east side of the entrance passage a straight mural stair leads up to the hall on the first floor. In the west wall there has been a service stair, descending from the screens end of the hall as a vice and finishing with three straight steps down into the cellar, the lowest being at a height of 9 inches above the floor. This arrangement is very unusual. The hall is now greatly ruined. At its northern or dais end is a large fireplace, 7 feet wide, with jambs showing a filleted and quirked edge roll between hollows. The hall was lit by a large window on either hand, with seats in their ingoings: the west window was blocked when the gatehouse wing was built. In the north-east corner is an aumbry. The main stair enters the hall at the south-east corner, and here also is placed the garderobe. In connection with William Forbes's additions a door was slapped through so as to give access to the east wing.

In clearing away the fallen stones which encumbered the tower, an exceedingly fine heraldic stone was discovered (fig. 11). It displays in bold relief a shield of heater pattern bearing arms, a cross-crosslet fitchée for Leith between three bear's heads muzzled and coupéd for Forbes, surmounted by a tilting helmet, mantled and having a bear's head as a crest. William Forbes, the fifth laird, who succeeded in 1509, married a daughter of Leith of Barnes. On the dexter spandrel is carved in high relief a symbol resembling an early form of arabic numeral four. This stone is one of the first pieces of medieval heraldic sculpture remaining in the north of Scotland.

Close south of Preston's Tower the castle well was discovered. It is

5 feet in diameter and 19 feet deep, cradled in rubble. The well is inconveniently near to two doors in the eastern wing, than which it is probably older.

Removal of the ruins of the fallen Preston's Tower has enabled a complete plan of the east wing to be made. Its middle compartment in the basement contains a vat, with a drain to the outside. The gutter which runs round the newer buildings is not continued round Preston's Tower, the walls of which are built upon a foundation of boulders. Both at the north-west and south-east corners of the tower, tusks of the early barmkin wall still remain, and portions of this wall seem to be embodied in the present outer wall of the east wing. The courtyard is neatly cobbled (see fig. 8).



Fig. 11. Heraldic Stone found among ruins of the "Auld Tour."

The work of consolidation disclosed a number of interesting features in the sixteenth-century buildings, notably a fine carved pendant in the west window of the hall. It retains a slender iron ring which may have been used for hanging a bird cage. Among the miscellaneous carved

fragments that have been found are two pieces showing that there has been a second royal coat-of-arms, as well as the one on the gatehouse. Probably this other one was on Preston's Tower.

One of the lamentable results of the dilapidation that overtook Tolquhon Castle during the last century has been the disappearance of its painted ceilings. People still living remember their last mouldering traces. All that is known of them is that the joists in some of the chief rooms were covered with scripture texts.<sup>1</sup> No doubt they were similar in character to those which still charm us at Crathes and Delgaty. The total destruction of these paintings is the more to be regretted, because we may be sure that so cultured and imaginative a *bauherr* as our old laird would have finished his ceilings with decorations of uncommon interest.

In the course of their operations in tidying up the old policies, the Commissioners of Works have formed a lovely lakelet on the south-east side, where formerly was an ugsome swamp, and have planted divers flowers on its banks. Out of the ruined "laich-bigging," on the

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. ii. p. 343.

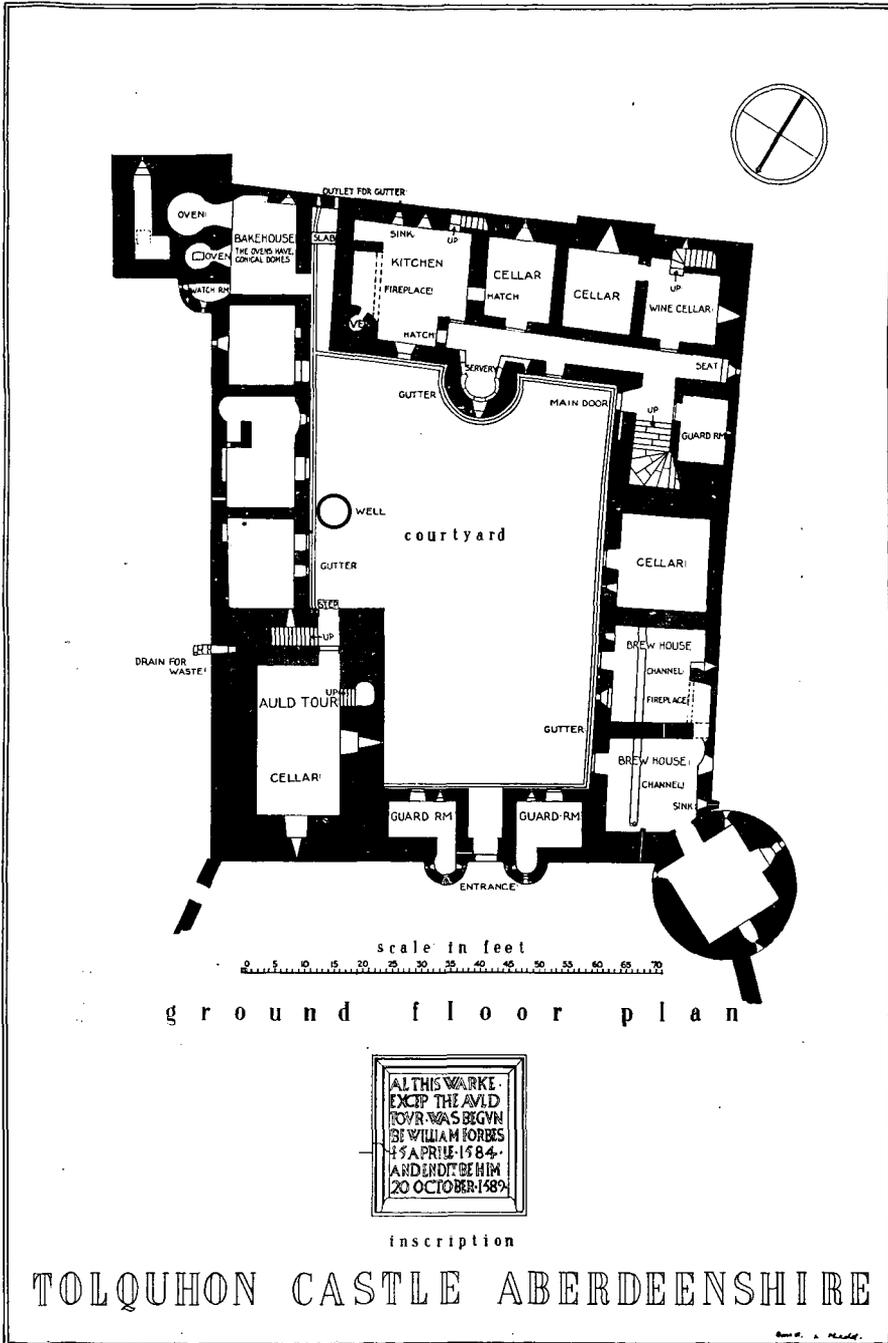


Fig. 12. Tolquhon Castle: Plan of Basement.

east side of the forecourt, a charming little keeper's cottage has been fashioned. For all these doings of the Ancient Monuments Department no praise can be too high. Thus carefully tended and shielded from all further dilapidation, the Castle of Tolquhon has become one of the most delightful, as it is certainly one of the most interesting, baronial ruins in Aberdeenshire. Only a decent road of approach is necessary for its attractions to become fully known to lovers of the picturesque and admirers of our national heritage in architecture.

I am particularly indebted to Mr David L. Medd for the admirable series of measured drawings and photographs which he has prepared for this paper. The views of the castle by Giles are reproduced by courtesy of the Council of the Third Spalding Club.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE.

Since the foregoing was in type, yet another volume belonging to the erudite old laird has turned up in Aberdeen University Library. It is *De Scripturae Sanctae Authoritate, Certitudine, Firmitate et Absoluta Perfectione . . . Henrychi Bullingeri Libri duo*, addressed to Henry VIII, quarto, Zurich, 1538. On the title page is the signature *Willeame forbes of tolquhone*, and also (twice repeated) that of an earlier owner, Alexander Arbuthnot, Principal of King's College, 1569-83.

The two volumes belonging to the late Miss Fyers have now been acquired by Aberdeen University Library.

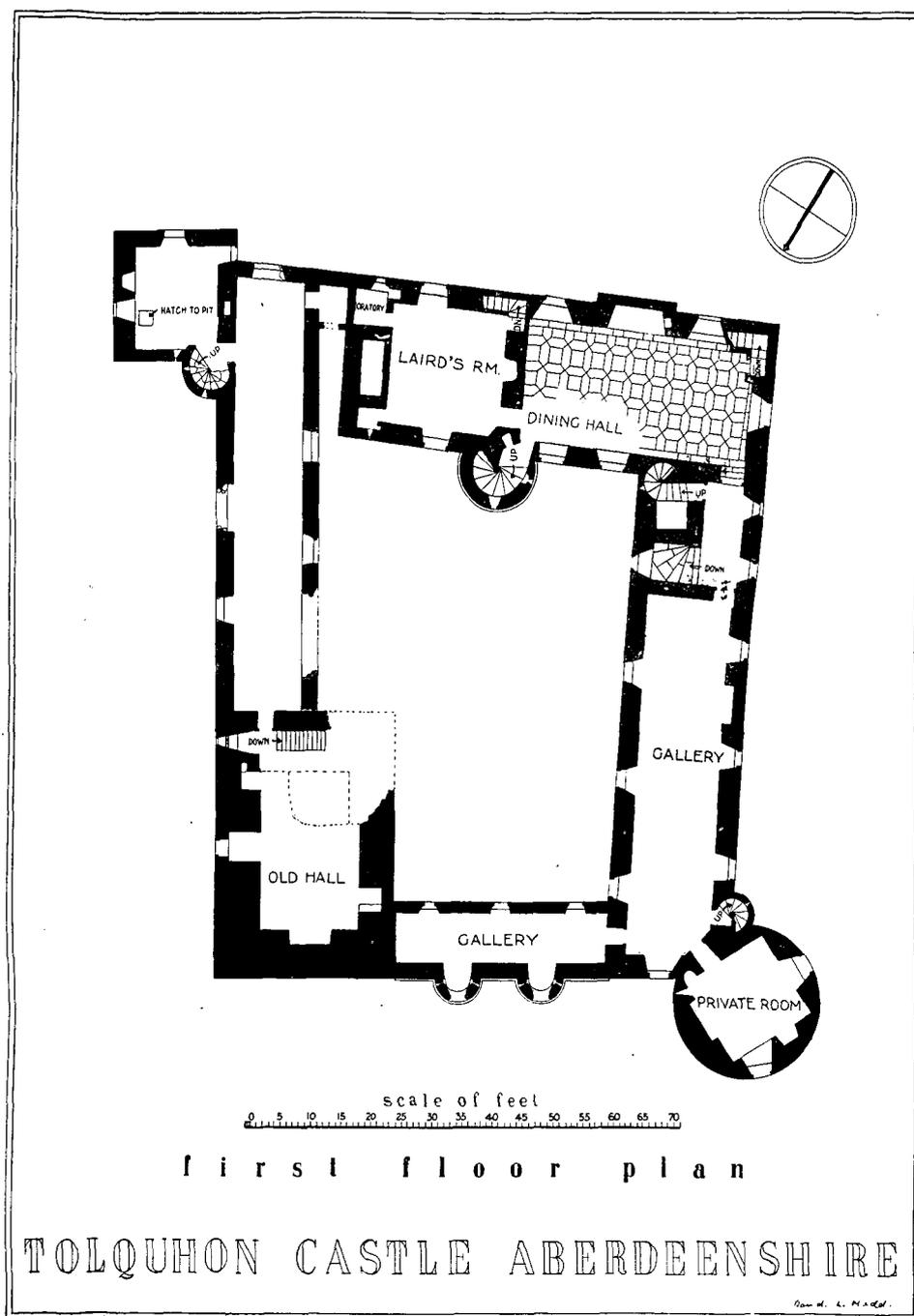


Fig. 13. Tolquhon Castle: Plan of Main Floor.

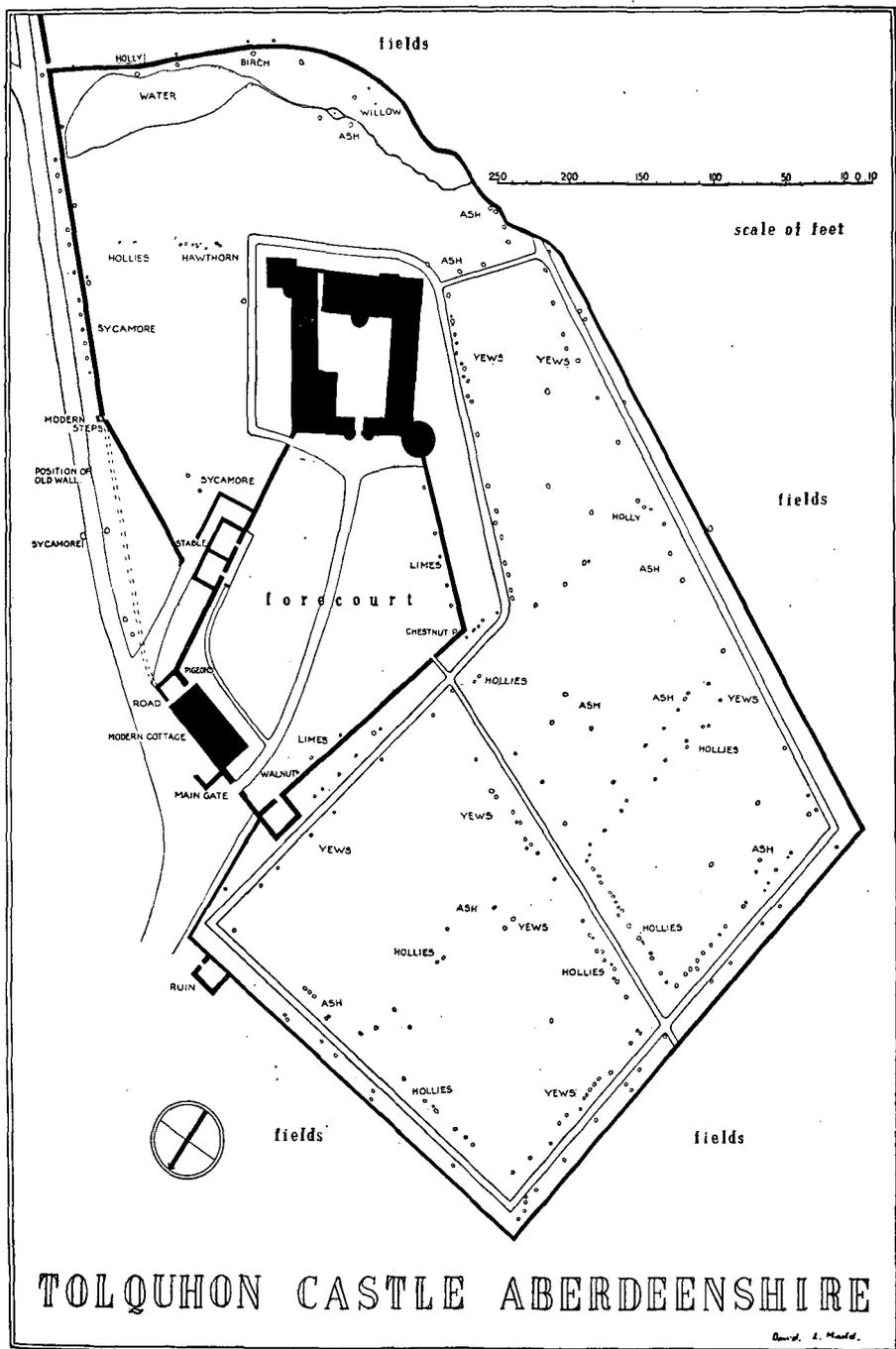


Fig. 14. Tolquhon Castle: General Plan, showing Lay-out of Pleasance.