

7. THE WATER-GATE PASSAGE AT KILDRUMMY CASTLE.

With the aid of a grant from the Society, the above passage was excavated in 1938 and 1939. The passage (see plan, fig. 1) is cut into the steep slope on the north side of the castle, with which it has no direct communication, the



[*Photo. : Aberdeen Journals, Ltd.*

Kildrummy Castle. The Water-Gate Passage during Excavation.

(*By courtesy of Aberdeen University.*)

W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON.

KILDRUMMY CASTLE.

[*Facing p. 192.*



[*Photo. : J. Craig.*

Kildrummy Castle. Interior of Well-house, looking south.

(*By courtesy of Aberdeen University.*)

upper end opening in a small triangular platform of ground between the edge of the slope, the north curtain wall and the north-east tower. Access to this platform was obtained from the castle by a postern, secured with a portcullis

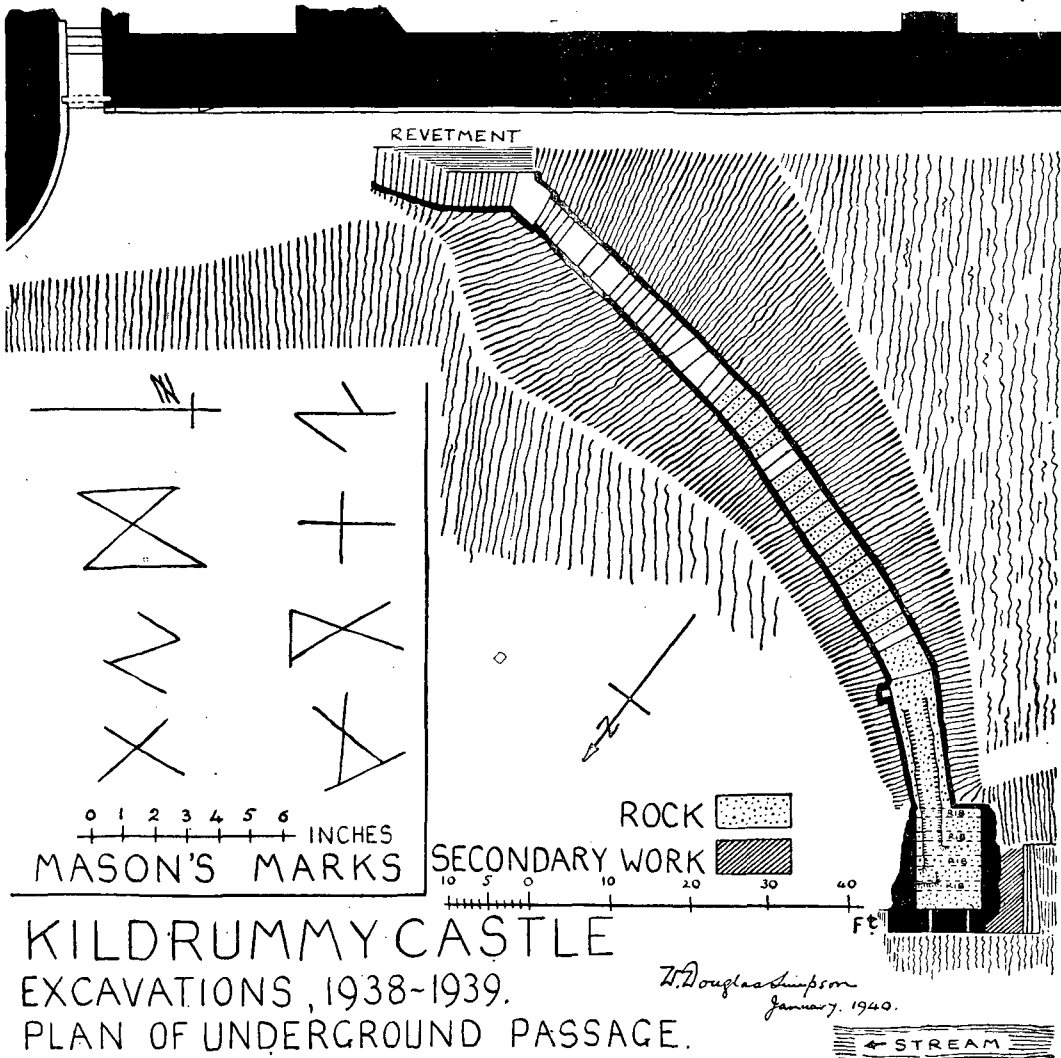


Fig. 1. Kildrummy Castle. Plan of Water-Gate Passage.

(By courtesy of Aberdeen University.)

and covered by the tower (see plan, *Proceedings*, vol. lxii. p. 80, fig. 31). The first part of the passage, about 22 feet in length, consists of 21 steps, at first 5 feet 3 inches wide, but narrowing to 4 feet below. This constriction of the stair is due to the fact that the retaining wall on the south or castle side is ramped

back in a series of offsets, forming 14 stepped courses of squared rubble masonry. In this portion the passage is cut in forced earth consisting mostly of builder's waste. Below this point the passage makes an elbow to the right, and here there is a well-formed freestone gate, closing against the lower part of the stair. From this the stair (Pl. XXX), varying between 4 and 5 feet wide, continues down between walls of rough and smallish stones, sloping backwards somewhat on either side, and not laid in lime. The steps are partly built and partly cut in the living freestone. After continuing in this way for a length of 76 feet, the passage makes another elbow, also to the right. At the angle, on the eastern side, is a roughly formed aumbry. Thereafter the passage continues straight for a length of 16 feet 3 inches, and ends by the waterside in a rectangular tower (Pl. XXXI) the walls of which stand to a maximum height of 8 feet 3 inches. Inside and outside, except for the back wall which is in rough rubble, this tower is faced with finely tooled freestone ashlar masonry (not laid in line), on each stone of which the mason's banker mark is as fresh as when it was cut. The western angle and west outer wall of the tower have been rebuilt in rubble. The total span of the tower cannot meantime be ascertained: as now exposed, it measures about 19 feet in basal breadth, and extends back about 12 feet 10 inches into the bank. The interior chamber measures 12 feet 5 inches by 8 feet 2 inches, the front wall being 2 feet 10½ inches thick. It has been vaulted, on an east-to-west axis, and the vault was strengthened by four stout unchamfered ribs, the stubs of which still remain on the western side. At a height of 4 feet 4 inches in the front wall are two runnels, for delivering water into the tower. The spouts at their inner ends are broken off. At 3 inches in from its exterior the west runnel retains a lead plate, pierced with seven circular holes, evidently for straining the water.

W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON.

For a full account see W. Douglas Simpson, *The Province of Mar* (Rhind Lectures, 1941), pp. 155-161.

◇