

CAIRNBULG CASTLE, ABERDEENSHIRE. BY W. DOUGLAS
SIMPSON, M.A., D.LITT., F.S.A., F.S.A.Scot., Hon. F.R.I.A.S.

Read May 9, 1949.

Cairnbulg Castle, the seat of Lord Saltoun, stands in the north-eastern knuckle of Scotland, the bold promontory of Buchan that divides the North Sea from the Moray Firth. It is about two miles south-east of Fraserburgh, and three-quarters of a mile due south from the coast in Fraserburgh Bay. The castle is in the parish of Rathen. Its site is a fairly prominent mound of stiff boulder clay, resting on the quartz-schist which here forms the country rock. Probably this mound has first of all been artificially shaped so as to support an early timber castle, and subsequently cut down into a platform for the existing stone building. The mound was surrounded by a moat, yet traceable on the east side. In the middle of last century this moat still retained water.¹ Part of it, to the north of the castle, near the present lake, is even now soft and muddy, so that cattle are liable to be bogged there. The castle overlooks the south bank of the Water of Philorth, a sluggish stream that has long since reached its base-level, and now forms a tidal channel up to a point a little above the castle. Just below it the stream is spanned by Philorth Bridge, a two-arched stone structure replacing a

¹ See for example the illustration opposite p. 141 in the first edition of J. B. Pratt's *Buchan* (1858).

wooden predecessor which was in existence at least as early as 1723.¹ Below the bridge, the stream winds on through pleasant links of crisp turf and blown sand, and enters the sea by a channel which it has cut for itself in the broad crescent of Fraserburgh Bay. On the landward sides the castle was formerly protected by marshes, considerable remnants of which still exist.

The quartz-schists are nowhere exposed *in situ*, being heavily blanketed with boulder clay. From the included stones of this the materials for the

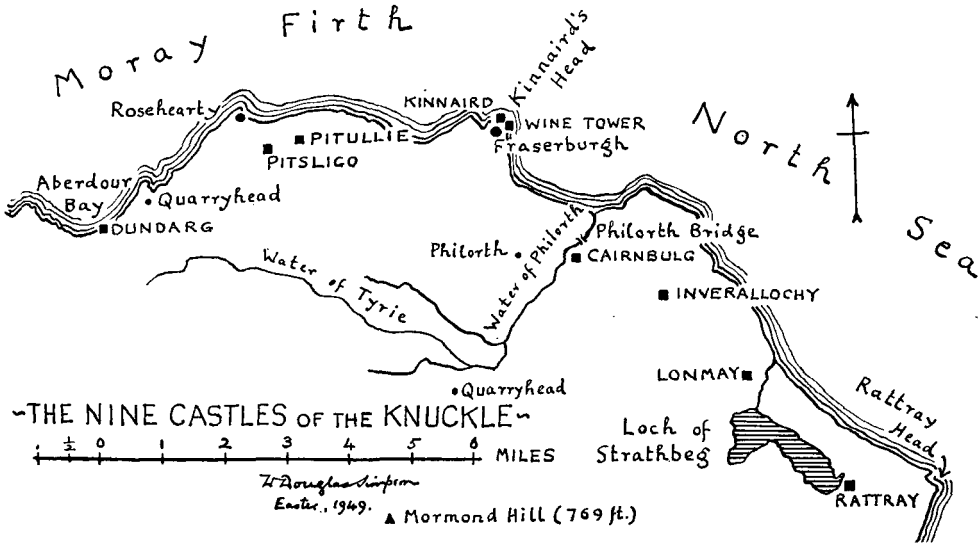


Fig. 1. Map to illustrate the position of Cairnbulg Castle.

rubble masonry of the castle have been gleaned; with the result that its walls may be described as a kind of petrological museum, so varied are their contents. Gneisses, schists, quartzites, crystalline limestones, granites, felsites, diorites, gabbros and other representative rocks of Buchan may all be identified in the masonry. For dressed work two different kinds of material have been used: knotted schist, green or purplish in colour, belonging to the large area of this formation which extends to the westward of the quartz-schists; and a deep red sandstone, obtained probably from one or more of the numerous small old quarries along the coast in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen. This sandstone belongs to the Gamrie-Turriff outlier, and is of Middle Old Red date. It is, however, not impossible that the sandstone came from the quarry at Delgaty, which was in existence at least as early as 1375, and until 1479 belonged to the Barony of Philorth, of which Cairnbulg Castle is the capital messuage.² Limestone for building could

¹ Macfarlane's *Geographical Collections*, ed. Sir A. Mitchell, vol. i. p. 55.

² *Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, vol. iv. p. 88. Another quarry, now represented by Quarryhead and Quarryburn, west of Rosehearty, is on record in 1408 (*Fraser's of Philorth*, vol. ii. p. 220), but this is in the knotted schists.

be obtained either from the calcareous Broadsea schists of Fraserburgh or, nearer at hand, from Quarryhead of Rathen, where a band of this rock, of excellent quality, was long worked for building purposes.¹ Timber, we may suppose, will have come from farther afield. In 1793 we are told that there is no native wood in Rathen, and that the plantations in the parish were no older than the beginning of that century.² Possibly the wood may have been brought by sea from Speymouth, or even from much farther afield: in 1631 timber for Castle Fraser, also in Aberdeenshire, was imported from Norway.³ Even local bog-oak might have been used to some extent, for in the parochial description of 1793 we are told that the mosses of Rathen "abound with oaks of a large size; some in such a state of preservation as to be fit for many useful purposes." The clay-slates of the Moray Firth coast, at Melrose or elsewhere, will have supplied material for the roofs.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

This large and strong castle, towering up amid the links of a desolate part of the Buchan coast, strikes the spectator with astonishment. The reason for its presence in this lonely spot has been admirably discussed by Lord Saltoun in a pamphlet-guide which he has prepared for visitors.

"Between Rattray Head and Aberdour Bay in Aberdeenshire there lies a stretch of coast running north-west for about 14,000 yards and due west for about 11,000 and further. The first portion consists of a succession of sandy bays, in one of which there existed at one time an opening (now blocked by sand) into a landlocked salt-water basin, and in another there is still a burn running into the sea, which also has become winding and less active than it was within historic times. The coast facing north on the other hand is rocky and in many places inaccessible, gradually rising towards the west to the high lands about Troup.

"The whole 25,000 yards of coast contains the remains of nine castles [fig. 1]. In two cases neighbouring castles were almost certainly successors one of another, Pitsligo and Pitullie, and the Wine Tower and Kinnaird. There is also another, Inverallochy, whose position is not easy to account for on the same reasoning as the rest. But if we reckon seven castles to the 25,000 yards, five of them lie in the eastern portion, while only two lie on the north coast, and these front the more accessible parts of that seaboard. In contrast, the landward district shows no similar wealth of these ruins, the nearest probable being that of Fedderate, some 12½ miles from Fraserburgh.

"Such a distribution can most easily be explained by the necessities of coast defence, an impression which is strengthened by the situations of the individual castles, except Inverallochy. Rattray commands two sandy stretches of coast, and the easternmost point of the coast. Strathbeg [*i.e.* Lonmay] commanded the entry to the landlocked basin. Cairnbulg commands the mouth of the burn, and both it and Wine Tower command Fraserburgh Bay, the best landfall in the neighbourhood.

¹ *Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. vi. pp. 4, 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³ *The Deeside Field* (1931), p. 62.

“Whatever date, therefore, be assigned to existing remains, it is only reasonable to believe that the sites, or the more important of them, were occupied by some form of strong post before the discontinuance of the Viking raids, say, before the end of the thirteenth century.”

With the foregoing argument I find myself in full agreement. It appears to me most probable that the Castle of Cairnbulg, though not the existing structure, will have originated, like other early castles in Buchan, under the rule of the great Anglo-Norman family of the Comyns, who obtained possession of that old Celtic province in 1214, and presumably were the first people to introduce the feudal castle into this sequestered part of Scotland. Not that we need exclude the possibility of such structures, timbered earth-works in the fashion of the period, having been erected by the old Celtic mormaers who preceded the Comyns, and who, at least as early as the reign of Alexander I, had begun to style themselves *comes* or earl in the Anglo-Norman or feudal fashion.¹ In any case, we must clearly look to the requirements of coastal defence as the reason for their foundation. Throughout the twelfth century the shores of Buchan had reason to fear the Viking descents, and as late as 1151 Eystein, King of Norway, sailed down this coast and sacked the royal burgh of Aberdeen.² We know that the great Norse invasion which came to grief at Largs in 1263 led to a strengthening of the national defences in various parts of Scotland, and the scare may well have led the Comyn Earls of Buchan to look to the protection of their exposed seaboard by the planting of castles at commanding points.

The ancient history of Cairnbulg Castle is fully set forth and documented in the seventeenth Lord Saltoun's great work on *The Frasers of Philorth*, so that only a brief summary is called for here. The barony of Philorth came into the hands of the Frasers, of the old family of Touch-fraser, in Stirlingshire, in 1375, in virtue of a grant to Sir Alexander Fraser of Cowie and Durris, from Sir Walter Leslie, the husband of a sister of the grantee's wife. In the next year mention is made of “the manor-place of Philorth,” which indicates the existence then of a residence upon the barony.³ That this seat was at Cairnbulg appears to be proved by an indenture made there in 1360;⁴ and, as I believe, the lower part of the existing great tower of the castle may well date back to that period. There is little of dramatic incident associated with the history of the castle. Its owner during the Civil War, Andrew, Lord Fraser, was a prominent Covenanter, and in March 1644 judged it prudent to retire to Cairnbulg Castle for safety. In the quaint narrative of Spalding,⁵

“the Lord Fraser also, being wnder feir, causit cast in his aites vpon onlabourit ground, thairefter to teill the samen, rather then to haue thame in barnes or

¹ *Scots Peerage*, vol. ii. pp. 250-1.

³ *Frasers of Philorth*, vol. i. p. 116.

⁵ *Memorials of the Troubles*, vol. ii. p. 323.

² See my *The Earldom of Mar*, pp. 8-9.

⁴ Laing's *Scottish Seals*, vol. i. p. 175, No. 990.

stakis, for feir of plundering. He causis translait his victuall, of the barony of Stanywod, out of the girnellis of Wattertoun be nicht to Muchallis.¹ He sendis and bringis his children fra the scoolis in Abirdene, and down to Cairnbulge gois he out of the get, leaving sum men to keip the place of Mvchallis with all furneshing necessar."

The castle was then in Lord Fraser's hands as a result of an appraisal or forced sale which had been made, before the "Trubles" commenced, by the tenth Lord Saltoun, who was heavily in debt. Subsequent efforts to have this sale annulled proved unsuccessful, and in 1666 Lord Saltoun built himself a new mansion, which he styled the House of Philorth, about a mile inland, and in full view of his ancestral castle. Philorth House remained the seat of the Lords Saltoun until it was burned on 25th March 1915. Meantime Cairnbulg had been sold by the last Lord Fraser in 1703 to Colonel John Buchan of Auchmacoy, an ancestor of the present Earl of Caithness. In 1802 it was purchased by the third Earl of Aberdeen on behalf of his natural son, John Gordon, and on the latter's death in 1862 it was sold to the trustees of Mr William Duthie, a well-known Aberdeen shipbuilder, "who established the first regular line of vessels between Britain and the Australian colonies."² Long before that time the old castle had fallen into utter ruin. In 1781 it was still inhabited, as appears from a tombstone in the old churchyard at Fraserburgh, which bears the following inscription: "Here lys the body of George Marten, Lawfull son to James Marten, Presently residing at the House of Cairnbulge, who died January the 8, 1781, aged 18 years."³ Next year, however, the place was dismantled, "the haille Timber, Slates, Iron and Glass" being exposed for sale. It is specified that "the joists and couples are all oak. James Martin at the castle will show these articles to any person inclining to purchase."⁴ During a great gale on Christmas Day, 1806, "the venerable castle of Cairnbulg suffered much, one of the side walls being entirely beat down and great part of the roof blown off."⁵ On 14th March 1809 a public roup of "from 60 to 100 full-grown ASH, also some PLANES, etc., all in prime state for cutting," took place at the castle.⁶ This entry is interesting as showing that latterly at all events the castle had been enclosed by considerable timber.

In 1896-7 the ruined castle was restored as a habitable dwelling by Mr John Duthie.⁷ The architects were Messrs Jenkins and Marr of Aberdeen. After Mr Duthie's death, Cairnbulg was bought back, in 1934, by the

¹ That is, Muchalls-in-Mar, now Castle Fraser, Aberdeenshire, as distinct from Muchalls in the Mearns.

² J. B. Pratt, *Buchan*, 4th ed., p. 239.

³ J. A. Henderson, *Aberdeenshire Epitaphs and Inscription*, p. 259. Cf. A. Jervise, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions*, vol. ii. p. 60.

⁴ *Aberdeen Journal*, 26th August 1782, p. 4, col. 1.

⁵ *Op. cit.* (14th January 1807), p. 4, col. 3.

⁶ *Op. cit.* (8th March 1809), p. 1, col. 3.

⁷ For an account of the restoration see *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 11th September 1897.

present Lord Saltoun, the representative of its founders, thus reasserting the validity of old Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy:

“While a cock crows in the North
There'll be a Fraser at Philorth.”

DESCRIPTION.

The castle (fig. 2) consists principally of a large and strong tower-house, measuring 41 feet 1 inch in length, east and west, by 29 feet 8 inches in breadth, over walls which in the basement are nearly 7 feet thick, laid without foundation on a bed of clay. To the south-east corner of this tower-house was subsequently attached a long house, known formerly as the “low work,” measuring 77 feet 2 inches in length by 29 feet in width, having at its south-eastern corner a strong round tower, 27 feet in diameter. Previous to its restoration in 1896-7 the castle was a total ruin (Pls. IX, 1, X and XI). The tower-house and the round tower were fairly well preserved, though the former was “in a very rent and torn condition,” but the building between them had, in a great measure, disappeared. At the restoration the two towers were repaired and reroofed, and what is to all intents and purposes a new building, embodying the remnants of the old walls, was erected between them. In its ruined state, the castle is described by Dr Thomas Ross in the great work on *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*,¹ of which, along with Dr David Macgibbon, he was the joint author. Besides his plan and drawings various other illustrations of the castle, before its restoration, exist, notably those by James Giles, R.S.A., drawn in 1839, which have been published by the Third Spalding Club.² Good photographs are also available, showing the state of the building before it came into the restorer's hand.

Attached to the east end of the south wall of the tower-house, and connecting it with the later building, is a square staircase tower—or “jamb” as it would have been called in olden times—which contained a newel stair, about 4 feet 6 inches wide. Most of this stair had already fallen, and a further portion of it collapsed during the restoration, so that the “jamb” has had largely to be rebuilt and the stair renewed, from bottom to top, in wood. This “jamb” was regarded by Dr Ross as an integral part of the original tower-house. In that case we should have expected to find the door in the usual (though not invariable) position in such tower-houses of the L-plan, namely in the re-entrant angle. Actually it is on the east side of the “jamb,” in the re-entrant angle not of the old tower but of the new building—a fact which, by itself, would raise the suspicion that the “jamb”

¹ Vol. i. pp. 309-13.

² *Aberdeenshire Castles*, pls. xx, xxi: reproduced herewith as pls. x and xi by permission of the Club.

belongs to the new building rather than to the old tower. The walls are now all masked with harling, but old photographs show very clearly that Dr Ross was wrong in regarding this staircase "jamb" as contemporary with the

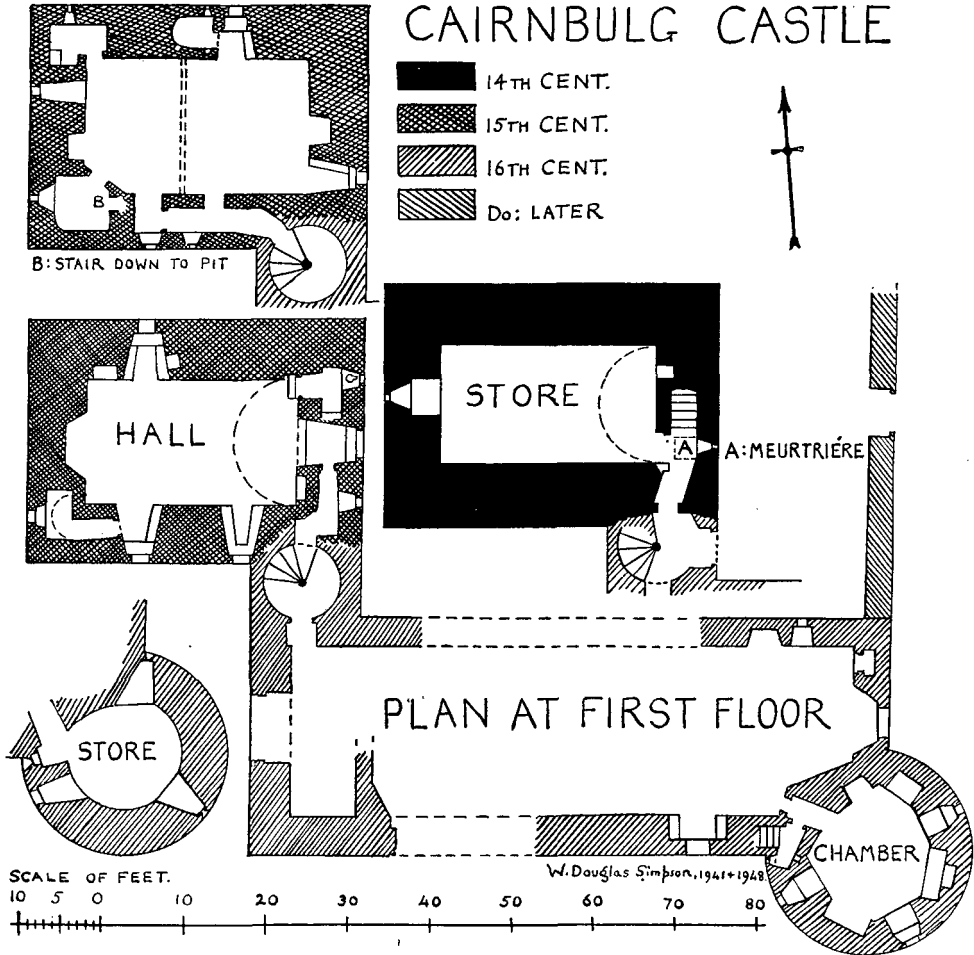


Fig. 2. Cairnbulg Castle: plans.

rectangular tower. In these photographs the masonry of the "jamb" is seen to butt without bond against the south wall of the tower, the facing-stones of which pass in behind it; while the jamb of a first-floor window is partly concealed by the later walling which comes against it. On the east side of the tower-house the photographs show the irregular joint where the masonry of the stair "jamb" meets that of the older tower, the quoins of which were evidently first removed, except in the lower portion of the tower

as far as about the first-floor level, in which part of the quoin of the original south-east angle, with the later staircase wall butting against it, is clearly seen in one photograph. Even to-day, when the masonry is concealed by harl, the slight change in the alignment of the wall face, where the stair "jamb" meets the tower, is quite evident. The corbelled projection at the wall head on the east side (seen in Pl. X), which now seems meaningless, is probably the end of a square turret capping the original south-east angle, and covering what we shall see was the primary entrance below.

Further proof that the staircase "jamb" is an addition will be found in the passage by which it now gives access to the hall on the first floor of the tower-house. This passage enters the hall by a window bay: and, as in it the masonry is exposed, the passage is seen to have been obviously forced. Moreover, the passage (as Lord Saltoun has pointed out) has a step-down and a downward slope from the stair, so as to adjust the level—another clear indication that the newel stair is an addition to the tower. Originally, it thus appears, the window bay had a wall-closet opening off it, like that which survives unaltered at the south-west corner of the hall: and the back wall of this closet was slapped through so as to convert it into a passage from the newel stair.

Not only is the staircase "jamb" an addition to the tower-house, but there is evidence that the upper portion of the latter is later than its basement. As shown in one of the photographs, a change occurs in the character of the masonry in the west wall at the first-floor level. Below this the work is in medium-sized boulders very carefully coursed in horizontal bands, giving a kind of striated texture such as is not uncommon in fourteenth-century building. Above this the masonry is in random rubble in larger boulders, quite uncoursed, and showing a fairly free use of pinnings or smaller packing material.

The original entrance to the tower-house seems to have been set in a recess, or opening of two orders, on the ground floor at the east end of the south front. The red freestone jambs of the inner order still remain; they are very well formed, high in the course, and show a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chamfer. The stones are much weathered, and clearly were once exposed to the outer air, before the newel staircase was built against the door. Inside, a straight stair, 2 feet 9 inches broad, roofed over with rough ascending lintels, leads up in the thickness of the east wall, entering the hall by a door at the north-east corner. On the landing was a stone laver, like that which occupies a similar position in the tower of Dunnottar Castle, *circa* 1395. This old straight stair is now blocked, and the landing thereby converted into a mural closet, in which the rake of the roof at the stair-head is still apparent. The door by which this closet (as it now is) enters from the hall has a bowtel moulding *on the inside*, towards the closet, clearly showing that it once was the door by which the hall was entered from the stair. The stair itself was

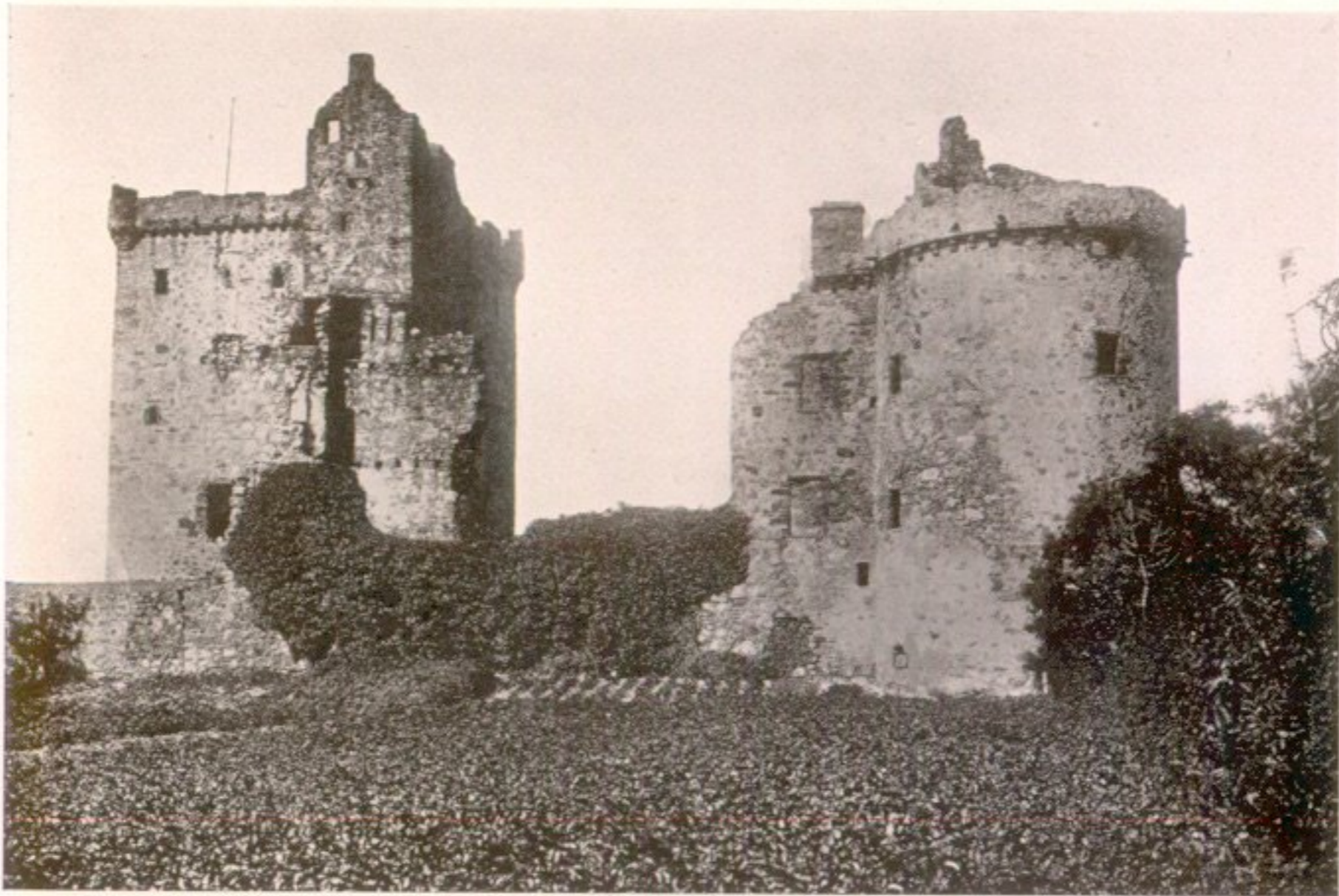
covered by a carefully constructed square *meurtrière* or murder-hole, opening from the window bay of the hall above it. Though now boarded over in the window bay, this *meurtrière* is fully displayed in the stair below.

The plain barrel-vaulted cellar of the tower-house, 9 feet in height, still retains the marks of the boards used in its centering. In the usual way, the vault was built subsequent to the side walls of the tower, as may be seen at its west end, where the vaulting partly covers the rough voussoirs of a loophole bay. There is said to be a well in the north-east corner of the cellar. The door into the cellar from the stair foot is a round arch, wrought in red freestone with a $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch chamfer, and the whole northern half of the arch is formed of one large voussoir.¹ This suggests early work, probably of the fourteenth or early fifteenth century; and the cellar door much resembles that of the tower-house at Pitsligo Castle, built soon after 1424. The fresh condition of the dressed stonework at this door contrasts significantly with the weathered condition of the original outer door beside it. The arrangement of the straight stair, ascending from an entrance door at the end of one side of the tower, and covered by an internal *meurtrière* from a window bay in the hall, is most unusual, but it is found also in the great tower at Dunvegan Castle. Elsewhere I have argued that the Dunvegan tower dates from the late fourteenth century,² and I have suggested that its builder was Malcolm, the third Chief of the Clan MacLeod. Perhaps it is not without significance that Malcolm's mother was a sister of Sir Alexander Fraser, grandfather of the first Baron of Philorth. Despite the different generations, no great interval in time separates the two men, MacLeod's dates being *circa* 1320-70, while Sir Alexander Fraser obtained Philorth in 1375. It is also worth noting that Sir Alexander Fraser's father-in-law, William, fifth Earl of Ross, from whom he obtained the barony of Philorth, was Lord of Skye. Sir Alexander himself was a cousin of the King, his grandfather having married David II's aunt, the Lady Mary Bruce. So powerful and well-connected a baron will have been a likely person to replace the early earthwork castle at Cairnbulg by a ponderous tower of stone in the new fashion of the fourteenth century.

The great vaulted hall on the first floor of the tower-house again recalls that of Pitsligo, and may well be of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, though there are now no details about it that enable its date to be more narrowly fixed. The hall measures 25 feet 4 inches by 16 feet 7 inches, and is 18 feet 6 inches high to the crown of the vault. At the hall-level the outer walls are 6 feet 7 inches thick. The fireplace in its west end measures 8 feet in width. It is in a grey schistose rock which was used for the dressed

¹ In the fourteenth-century tower of Belsay, Northumberland, one-half of the arched head of the doorway to the great hall is similarly built in a single large voussoir. The same mode of construction is also found at David's Tower in Edinburgh Castle, erected 1361-78.

² *The Book of Dunvegan*, vol. i. pp. xxxix-xlii.



[Photo: Valentine.]

1. Cairnbulg Castle from the south, before restoration.



[Photo: Valentine.]

2. Cairnbulg Castle from the south, after restoration.



3. Cairnbulg Castle from the North-east, by James Giles, R.S.A. (1839).

W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON.



4. Cairnbulg Castle from the South-west, by James Giles, R.S.A. (1839).

W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON.

work in the later buildings, and its slender bead moulding shows that it is no older than the sixteenth century. At the restoration it was enclosed by a modern mantle of stone.

The hall has a single window on each of the north and east sides, and two windows on the south side. These windows have arched bays, the eastern one being specially large and provided with a raked vault so as to cast as much light as possible upon the vaulted ceiling, which was probably painted. The south-east and north-west windows have stone side benches, and the south-west window has one such bench, the west ingoing containing a door which admits to a large vaulted mural chamber in the south-west corner of the tower-house. This chamber is lit by a good window in the west wall. In the east ingoing of the north-west window is an aumbry, and there is another in the main wall to the west of it. A third aumbry, now closed, is in the east wall south of the large window.

The floor above this at present forms a single large room, but in the original arrangement it was divided into two. It has a fireplace in either end wall, of which the east one retains its old jambs, with a bead moulding like that of the hall; the western fireplace has been modernised. Each room was reached by a door from a flat-ceiled mural passage in the south wall, leading from the newel stair. In each of the north and east walls is a window, with an arched ingoing and a stone side bench. From the north window a door on the west side admits to a small garderobe, with a window and a couple of aumbries. At the north-west corner a low arched door gives access to a dog-legged garderobe, lit by a narrow loop and ceiled with stone slabs. Its raked shaft is well preserved. In the west wall of this flat is a narrow window. At the south-west corner is a mural closet, large enough to contain a bed, or rather a bunk. It has a good window, and is now ceiled in wood. In its east wall a narrow door gives access to a newel stair, ceiled with flat slabs, which descends, very steeply, to a vaulted prison formed in the haunch of the hall vault below. It is lit only by a narrow loop, subsequently widened. As the floor of this is wood, hollow below, it is probable that under this prison is a "pit," or place of more rigorous confinement. The arrangement of this prison somewhat recalls a similar feature in the fifteenth-century tower of Comlongan, Dumfriesshire.

The old corbels of the third floor still remain, and are of one rounded and filleted member, in reddish freestone; but two corbels at the west end of the north wall are in green schist, and consist of two members, the upper filleted. Both corbels are weathered, and one is much shattered; and (as we shall see) it is most likely that they are not *in situ*.

The third floor of the tower-house was arranged similarly to that below and, like it, was divided into two rooms, both reached by separate doors from a flat-ceiled mural passage in the south wall. It has a window, with arched ingoing, in each of the north, east and west walls. The north window

has a garderobe off it, just like the one below, and, like it, ceiled with flat slabs. The garderobe has a window and two aumbries, one large. In the south wall of this floor is a large window, into the bay of which opens the door from the mural passage. At the south-west corner of this floor is a large vaulted chamber, lit by a window, and at its north-west corner a dog-legged garderobe, flat-ceiled, and with two aumbries and one small loop. In each gable wall is a fireplace, now built up; the east fireplace has had a bead moulding.

The position of the mural passages on the second and third floors suggests that the former access to these floors was by a stair at the south-east angle of the tower-house, and that when the "jamb" was built, the passages, by an easy alteration, were made available for the new stair. It appears, however, that there was also a straight stair, or system of stairs, in the north wall; and this may have been the original means of access before the tower was reconstructed in the sixteenth century.

The internal doorways of the tower-house are, in general, carried out in red freestone, showing a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chamfer on jambs and lintel. On the interior dressed work mason's marks are much in evidence.

Externally, the tower-house is cased in modern harl. It shows the beautifully profiled entasis so usual in old Scottish buildings. To the coping of the merlons the height is about 58 feet: to the chimney heads about 70 feet. Where not modernised, the windows have red freestone or green schist margins with a plain heavy chamfer—in one case with a quirked edge roll. On the main portion the parapet oversails on corbels of two filleted members, and similar corbelling carries the jutting or projecting feature which, as already suggested, may represent a square turret at the original south-east corner. At the other three corners, open round angle turrets are borne on three courses of continuous corbelling, above which are individual corbels similar to and ranging with those of the main parapet. All round the building these corbels support a cavetto-moulded base-course on which rests the parapet wall. To a large extent the battlements are restored, but they had raised and chamfered margins round the merlons and embrasures. The gargoyles are plain dished weepers. The concrete wall-head paving is modern, and so is the corbie-stepped cap-house. The main door to the staircase "jamb" at ground-level is on the east side, and is a full centered arch, measuring 6 feet in height and 4 feet in breadth, with a half-engaged, quirked edge roll. It is carried out in green knotted schist.

The upper part of the staircase "jamb," which fell during the restoration of 1896-7, was then rebuilt, with crow-stepped gables like the old one (Pl. IX, 1 and 2). The latter was an addition, and before it fell, a couple of corbels on the south front (seen in Pls. IX, 1, and XI) remained to mark the open parapet with which the "jamb" was originally crowned. Probably at the restoration these two corbels were salvaged from the wreckage, and reinserted in the

second-floor room of the tower-house, as suggested above. Old photographs (Pl. IX, 1), show that the cap-house chimney was more ancient than the skewers of the gable, which butted against it, and it thereby appears that the "jamb" had always had a living-room, or living-rooms, above the stairhead.

From the foregoing analysis it is evident that this noble tower-house, for all its superficial aspect of uniformity, is in reality a very complex structure, containing work of several different periods. The basement may be as old as the latter part of the fourteenth century; the main structure seems to date from the fifteenth; the parapet looks like work of the early sixteenth century; and the staircase "jamb" was added when the long house was built on to the old tower subsequently in the same century.

The "low work" is said to have been erected, *circa* 1545, by Sir Alexander Fraser, the seventh baron of Philorth. A royal charter to him, dated 1541, twice refers to "the maner place and castell of Phillorth, now biggit or to be biggit," indicating that additions to the building were then projected or in progress.¹ In an *Account of the Family of the Frasers*, compiled in 1720, it is stated that "Sir Alexander Fraser of Philorth, commonly called 'Glied Sandy,' . . . did build the low work of the house of Cairnbuilg."² The basement of this "low work" contained a row of four vaulted offices, served by a corridor along the north side. The eastmost vault formed the kitchen. Above this was the great hall, having the withdrawing-room at its east end. The hall had a large window in the west gable, and its fireplace was in the south wall near the west end. The withdrawing-room had a window, with stone side benches, in the south wall, another window in the east wall, beside which was an aumbry, and in the north wall a small fireplace and a narrow loophole.

The round tower at the south-east corner (see Pls. IX, 1, and X) is of unusual size and massiveness, and the suspicion is raised whether it was not older than the long house, having perhaps formed an angle tower at the corner of an early barmkin wall, like those still preserved at Threave Castle. The tower contains four storeys, the walls being about 5 feet 6 inches thick. Its basement was rudely circular in plan, and dome vaulted, but the crown of the vault either had fallen or was cut out during the restoration. At this level the tower was pierced by three gun-loops, with wide horizontal mouths, one flanking either main wall and a third commanding the field. This gun-loop opens below a narrow oblong window. The first floor forms an octagonal room with a fireplace, three windows, and deep-arched wall recesses in the remaining faces of the octagon, the recess on the east side having an aumbry. All the internal details have been modernised. According to Dr Ross, "the plaster still remaining on the walls of this room is covered with painted ornament." Off the entrance passage, on the right, is a mural garderobe,

¹ *Frasers of Philorth*, vol. ii. pp. 241-2.

² *Some Account of the Family of Fraserfield, or Balgownie, and their Ancestors*, p. 9.

with a flat stone ceiling and the usual aumbry (now blocked) and loophole. Its door is well formed in red freestone. Into this garderobe ascends a straight service stair, now closed, coming up from the kitchen in the main building. The second floor is similar in its arrangements, and here also there seems to have been a garderobe off the entrance passage, though it is now boarded up. The third floor of the tower has been completely remodelled. Externally, the round tower (Pl. IX, 2) is crowned with an open parapet in all respects similar to that of the tower-house. The battlements and wall-walk are modern, and so is the inner cylinder, likewise battlemented, which rises over all to a height of some 40 feet: but this is a reconstruction of the old arrangement (see Pl. X), which must have had a very French aspect, recalling, on a small scale, the towers of Pierrefonds, or Cæsar's Tower at Warwick Castle, and in two Scottish examples, on James IV's tower at Holyrood Palace and on the angle towers of the curtain wall at Craigmillar.

The lower parapet of the round tower is continued along the east gable of the main building, which is old and shows one original, oblong window. The north-east turret of the main building is likewise mostly unaltered: its corbelling is identical with that of the turrets on the tower-house. The lower part of the north wall of the main building, in its eastern portion, is likewise ancient, and retains a recess with a conduit for admitting water into the kitchen. Before the restoration, the parapet was also continued along the south wall of the main building, and across its west gable into the staircase "jamb." So far as it is preserved, the old dressed work of the round tower and long house appears to have been mostly carried out in the green schist preferred by the later builders at Cairnbulg Castle.

On the east side of the castle was a square courtyard which was cobbled with beach pebbles, and enclosed by a wall with an arched gateway in the eastern front (Pl. X). This gateway had a quirked edge roll, and above it was the empty panel for a coat of arms. The jambs, which are wrought in green knotted schist, have been reset as a garden door.

I am indebted to Lord Saltoun for permission to study the castle, for much kindly hospitality there, and for information on various points.