

Ardrossan Castle, Ayrshire: a preliminary account¹

by David H Caldwell

DESCRIPTION

Ardrossan Castle has been completely ignored in all works on castellated architecture ever since the comprehensive work of MacGibbon and Ross and, when they saw it, it was a sad ruin shrouded in its own debris so that these two worthy gentlemen failed to make much of it (MacGibbon and Ross 1889, iii, 301). The castle had been ruinous since the seventeenth century, and although some slight work was done on it at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the Earl of Eglinton – mainly the removal of rubble to expose the cellars – it was not substantially touched until 1911 when the Town Council, with much intelligence, had most of the debris cleared away and the surviving walls restored and pointed. Dr Ross was at this time asked to submit a report, but this is really not more illuminating than his earlier account in *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (Ross 1911). H J Weir of Kirkhall, a local antiquarian, wrote about the castle and the barons of Ardrossan in the local newspaper at the end of last century (Weir 1880), giving the most complete genealogy of the Ardrossan family so far and Guthrie basically derived his information from this account (Guthrie 1904). But none of these have any claims to treat the architecture or history of the castle very thoroughly and besides are rather dated.² It would thus seem by no means too soon to reconsider this neglected but most interesting ruin.

The word *Ardrossan* is Celtic for small high promontory, and this aptly describes the situation of the castle. The coast sweeps round at this point in two bays, with a rocky promontory jutting out in between, rising up steeply into the Castle Hill of a height of over fifty feet (fig 1). However, much of this topographical detail has now been obscured by the modern town which has grown up round the foot of the hill, partly on reclaimed ground. Weir³ tells us that there was an inlet of the sea called Seggany Point Loch, reaching up to just S of the castle and old maps, especially Blaeu's, clearly show this (fig 1 inset). In fact, there has apparently been a considerable accumulation of sand all along the Ayrshire coast even since the seventeenth century and Pont's description of the situation of Ardrossan Castle goes to confirm that Blaeu's map was not badly drawn: 'Ardrossan Castell, so named in respecte it is situated on a suelling knope of a rocke runing frome a tounge of land advancing from ye maine land in ye sea and almost environed with ye same, for Ross in ye ancient Brittitche tounge signifies a Biland or peninsula.' (Dobie 1876, 9.) This 'suelling knope of a rocke' (NS 23254228) is detached from the main promontory by a ditch to the W, c 100 feet (30 m)⁴ across, and artificially deepened with a stone revetment now almost entirely buried beneath a modern rubbish dump (fig 2). To the N was another ditch probably almost entirely man made, now only showing as a slight hollow in the ground while on all other sides the ground slopes off very steeply (fig 3). The castle itself takes up the whole summit of this hillock, enclosing a small central courtyard. To the NE there is a large keep or gatehouse, the NW corner of which still stands to just below

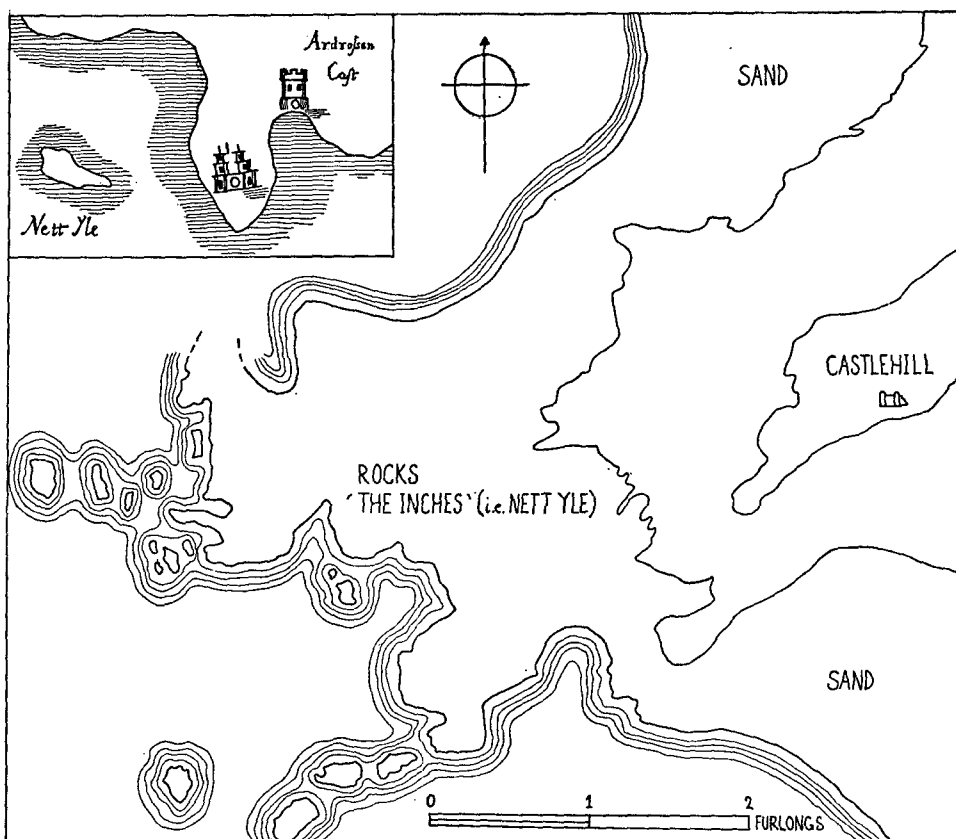


FIG 1 Ardrossan coastline before the building of the modern town from 'Proposed Plan of Ardrossan Harbour' (1816). Inset: early seventeenth-century coastline from Blaeu's map, based on Pont

battlement level and it also has two cellars below ground level; a range of buildings with a well off a deep passage lies up against the curtain wall to the west, which still survives to a height of over 10 ft (3 m); a second tower lies to the south of this at the SW corner, the vaulted ground story of which still survives as an open-ended arch; and to the S of the keep, on the E side of the courtyard there was another building now only represented by its foundations (fig 4).

In order to establish a chronological building sequence, four main phases have been distinguished. These do not necessarily represent four different periods of construction, but undoubtedly more. Nor has any 'pre-castle' phase been considered, though the remains of a slight rampart on the hillock mark the site out as being similar to other small homesteads along the coast near by, and the adjacent Castle Hill is rich in grass markings and other indications of man's making.

Phase I is distinguishable by the largish hewn blocks of grey sandstone used, with some blocks of pink sandstone – especially in the curtain wall – and basaltic rock from the hill itself intermixed. The bottom part of the gatehouse, the well, the bottom portion of the N and W curtain wall, and most of the building to the south of the gatehouse are attributable to this phase, which apparently represents the first building in stone on the site (fig 4). The exterior walls are very thick, as much as 11 ft (3.35 m) in the keep, while the interior walls tend to be about 4 ft (1.22 m).

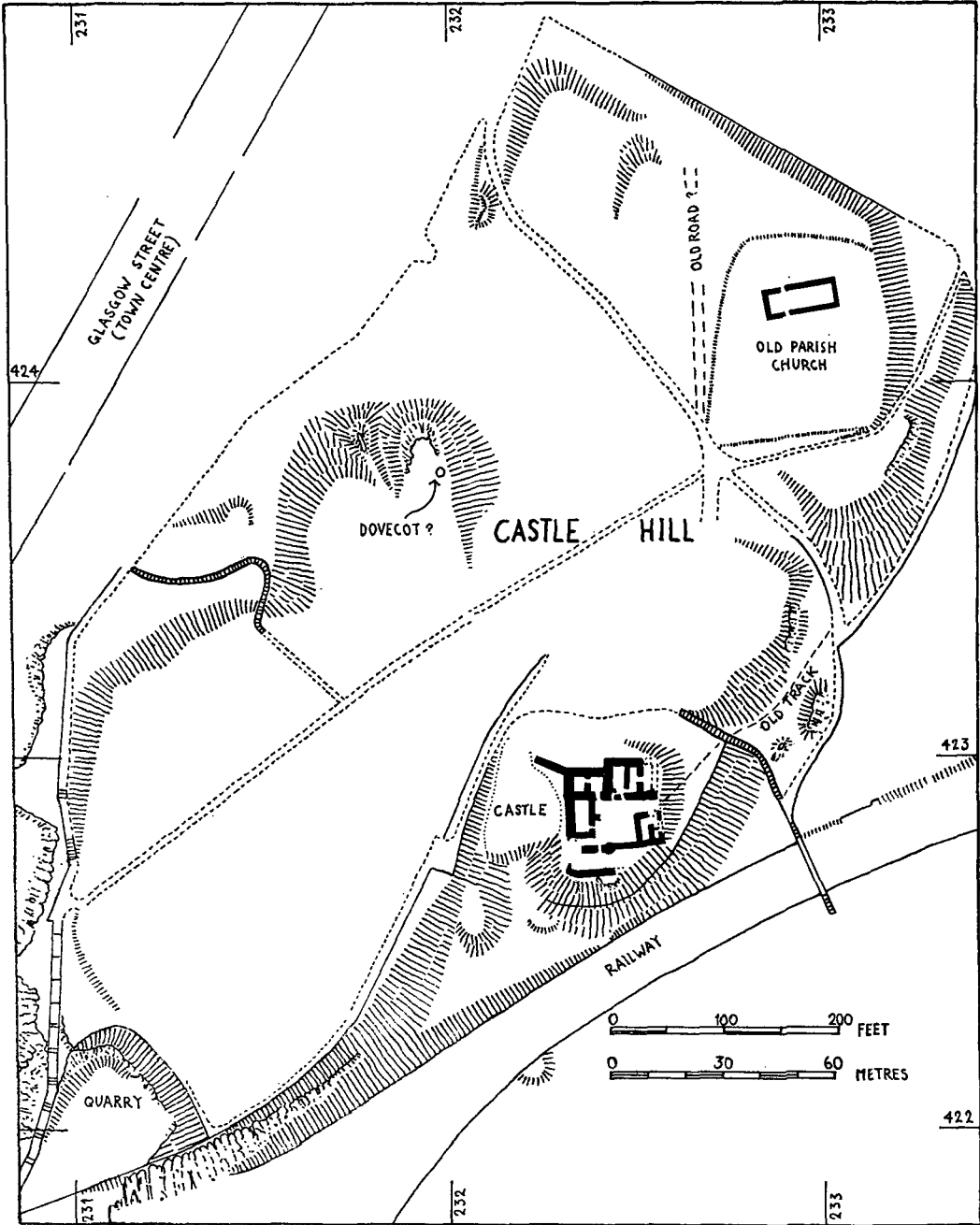


FIG 2 Castle Hill (based on OS 50 in map with sanction of controller of HMSO. Crown copyright reserved)

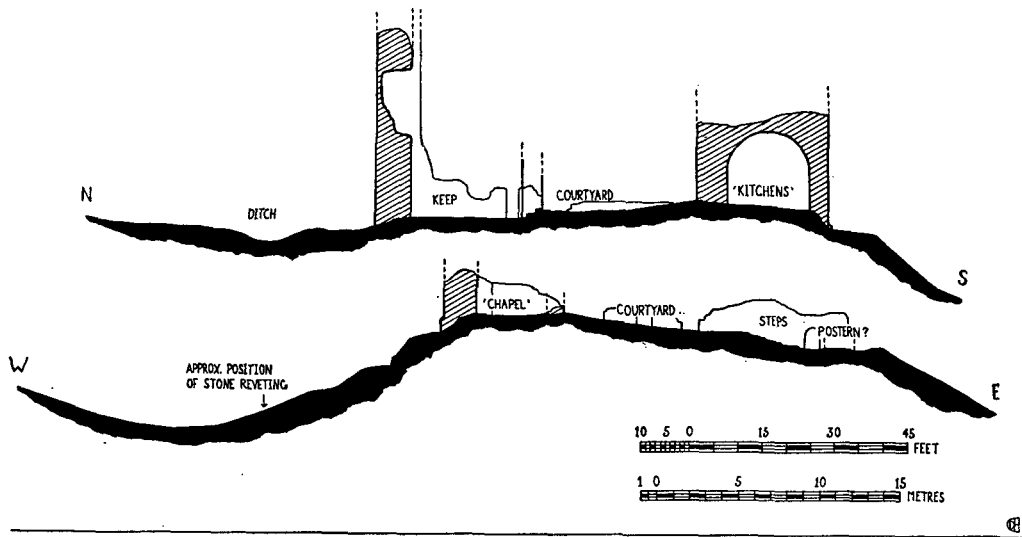


FIG 3 Ardrossan Castle sections

The gatehouse is a rectangular structure, *c* 50 by 35 ft (15.23 by 10.66 m) with an exterior wall to the exposed north of 11 ft (3.35 m), plus a small chamfered plinth, and elsewhere of 5-6 ft (2.43-2.74 m). Underneath its eastern portion lie two vaulted cellars each 22 by 8½ ft (4.60 by 2.40 m) and 12 ft high to the top of their vaults (3.66 m), opening off each other, and entered down a flight of steps in the one to the east through an arched doorway in the S wall of the gatehouse (fig 5). Both cellars are built of very neat rubble. The course of stones just below the springing of the vault is in the eastern one slightly recessed - just enough to take a mezzanine floor. These are undoubtedly the cellars known as 'Wallace Lardner' (see below, p 217). They are matched by another pair of similar dimensions on the ground floor immediately above.

The remaining portion of the ground floor was taken up by a vaulted entrance pend 11 ft wide (3.35 m) and which must have been at least 17 ft high (5.17 m). This led through a large pointed entrance in the N wall of the gatehouse right through to an entrance into the courtyard (pl III-IV). Both ends of the passage were secured by doors with large wooden bars, the recesses for which still survive in the walls. The outer entrance about 17 ft high (5.17 m) and almost 12 ft wide (3.66 m) narrows to a width of almost 8 ft (2.43 m) and a height of 12 ft (3.66 m). Here it takes the form of a round arched doorway.

The curtain wall of the castle extended from the W face of the gatehouse for a distance of 35 ft (10.66 m) westwards where it turned a right angle to enclose the W side of the hill, continuing right underneath the later tower at the SW angle. It is about 6-7 ft thick at its base (2.74-2.13 m) and has a chamfered plinth towards the exterior. Half-way along its W face the wall changes direction slightly and at this point a garderobe shoot emerges at the outside. A rebuilding of the inner face of the curtain wall at this point may indicate that the garderobe was in a mural chamber at ground level. No traces of a curtain wall can now be traced along the S side of the castle or connecting up with the gatehouse and other buildings on the E side.

The castle was provided with a well which also dates to this phase. Unfortunately, it has been the policy of the Town Council, who have the responsibility for the castle, to keep the

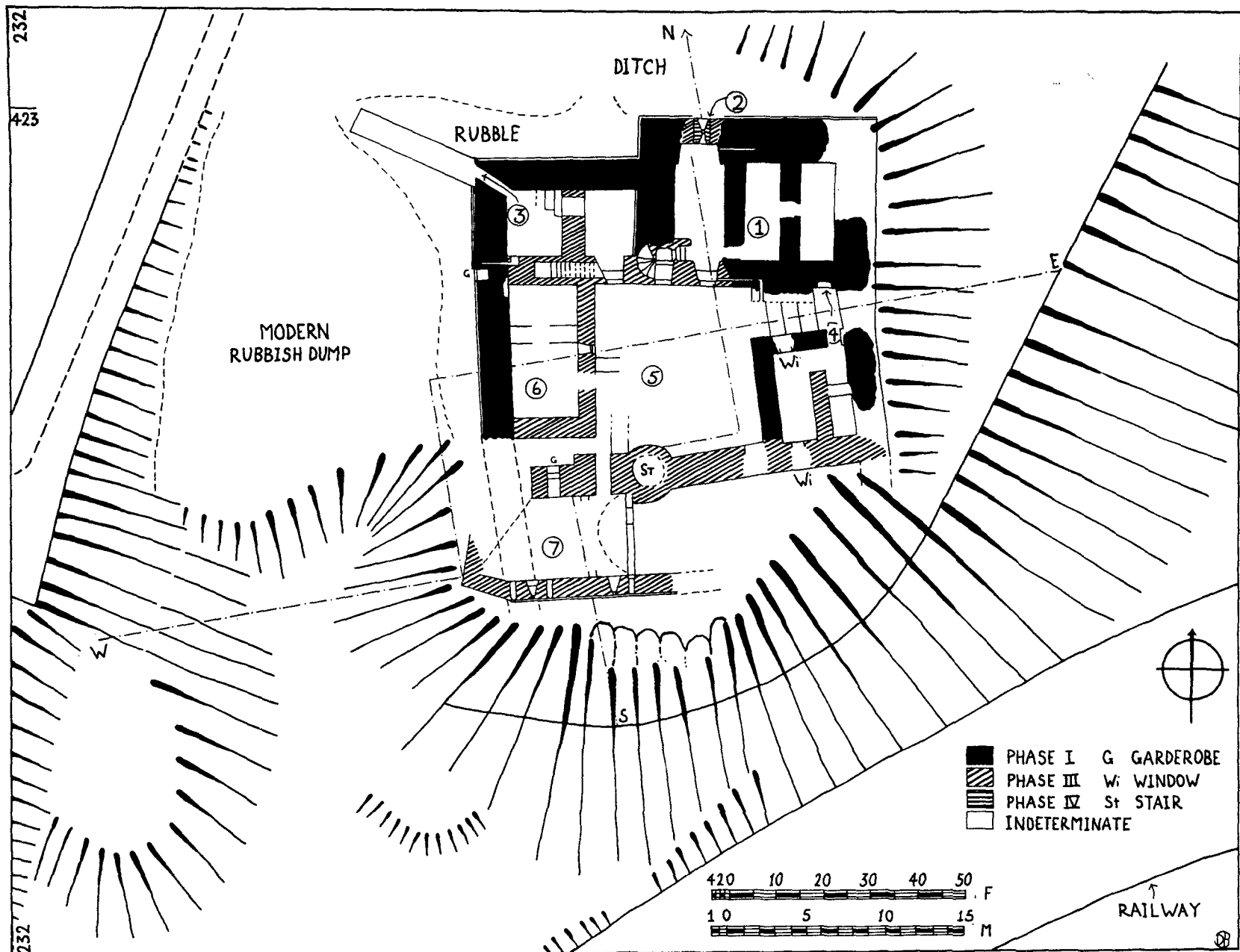


FIG 4 Ardrossan Castle plan: 1. gatehouse or keep; 2. original entrance; 3. well; 4. 'Wallace Lardner'; 5. courtyard; 6. 'chapel'; 7. 'kitchens'.

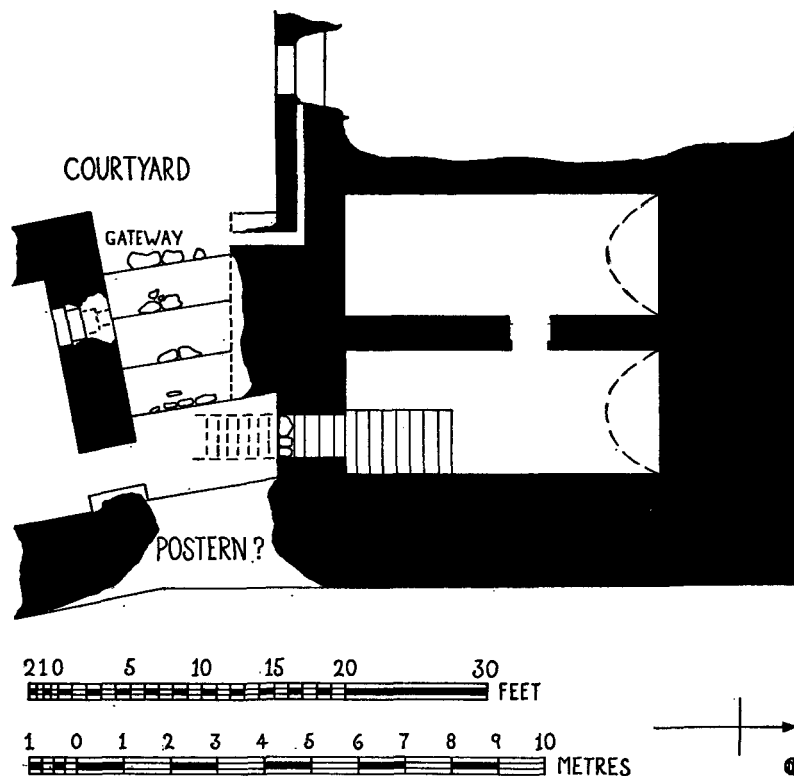


FIG 5 Ardrossan Castle: 'Vallace lardner', cellars under gateway

well and cellars blocked up. However, some recent vandalism enabled the well and cellars described above to be entered, and a survey to be made of the cellars; but there was no time to plan the well, so that my drawings and description are from memory only and rough drawings made at the time without the use of any type of measuring apparatus (fig 6).

The well lies at the end of a dog-leg passage, steeply stepped, which extends down into the castle ditch from the NW corner of the curtain wall (pl V). The passage, entered through a doorway cut right into the right angle formed by the curtain wall and down a flight of steps from the level of the room in which it is situated, firstly slopes down very gradually and diagonally beneath the wall. Then it passes through a doorway with a shouldered lintel. Beyond this doorway the passageway descends steeply down a flight of steps, apparently for a distance of about 22 ft (4.60 m) and to an estimated depth of about 20 ft below ground level (6 m). The passage itself is composed of the same neat rubble work as in the cellars under the gatehouse, and was ventilated by a small opening in the northern wall. The roofing is of large sandstone lintels which step down in correlation with the steps. The well itself lies at the bottom of the steps. Ross describes it as being 4 ft square (1.22 m) by 8 ft deep (2.43 m) – it is now full of rubbish again (Ross 1911). Over the well itself there is a semicircular vault of exceedingly fine grey sandstone ashlar. The passage actually continues for a short distance beyond the well, ending in a mass of rubble – more probably because the outer casing of masonry has been lost than because this is the blocked entrance to a 'secret tunnel', as local tradition suggests.

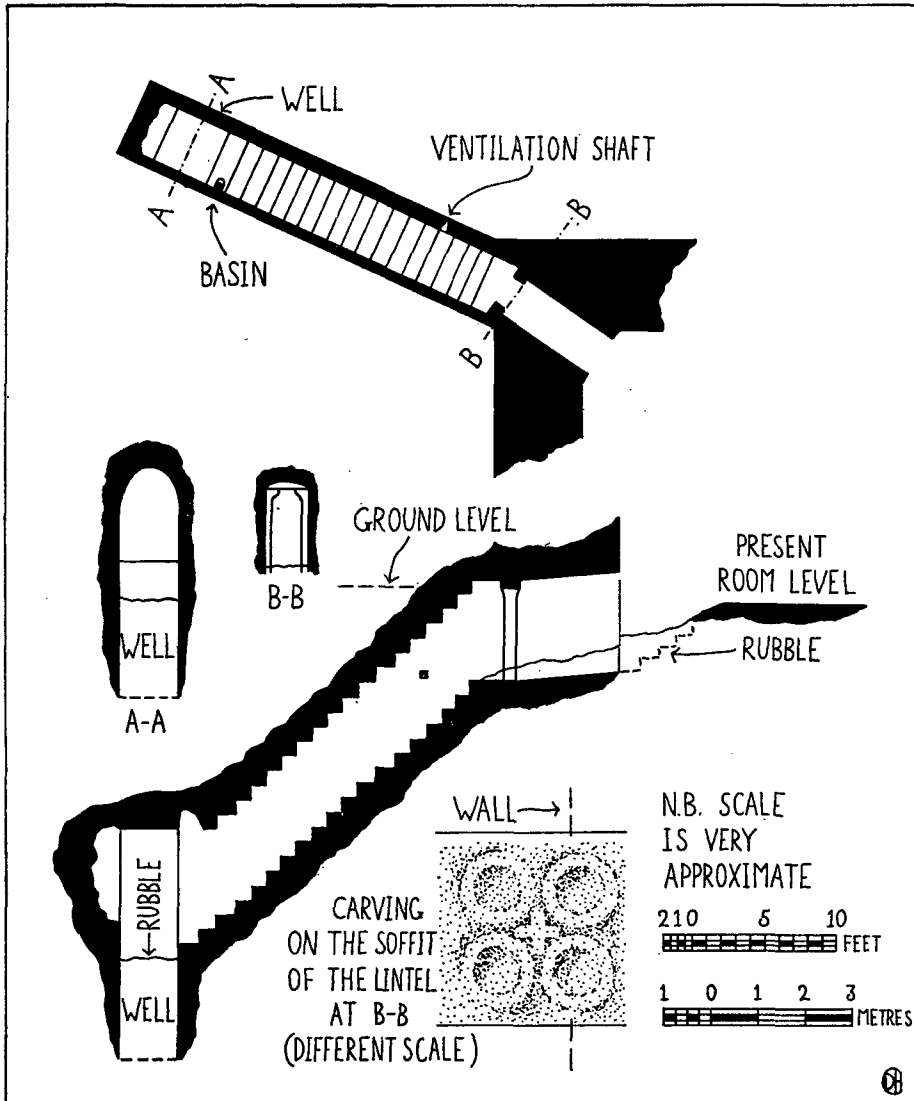
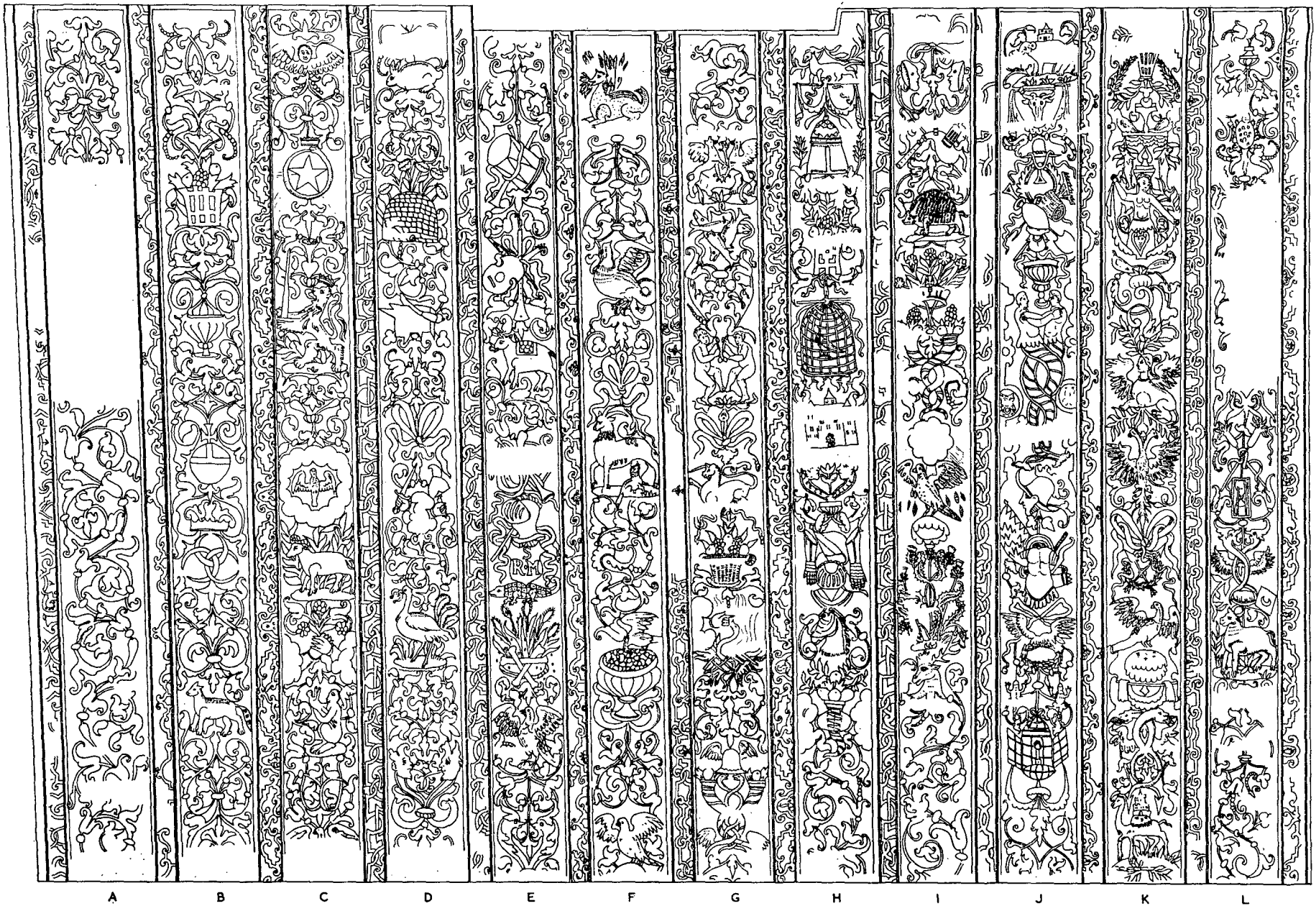


FIG 6 Ardrossan Castle well: plan and sections (based on rough drawings)

Timothy Pont, the topographer, writing sometime between 1604 and 1608, tells us that: 'Ther is (one) thing to be admired in the fontaine of frech vatter vich is in a vault in this castell for it lyke to ye Sea: ebbs and flowes tuo seuerall tymes each 24 houres.

Its bankes to passe doeth tueiss assay
And tueisse ayaine reter each day.

The resson is from ye ebbing and flouing of ye salt sea vich enuironys ye rocke queron ye castell standes and at each surge vith horrible repercussions regorges the frech vater not letting issew from its spring and so makes the fontaine suell.' (Dobie 1876, 9). There is no reason to disbelieve Pont in this, although it does not seem to have been the case in 1911. At that time it was

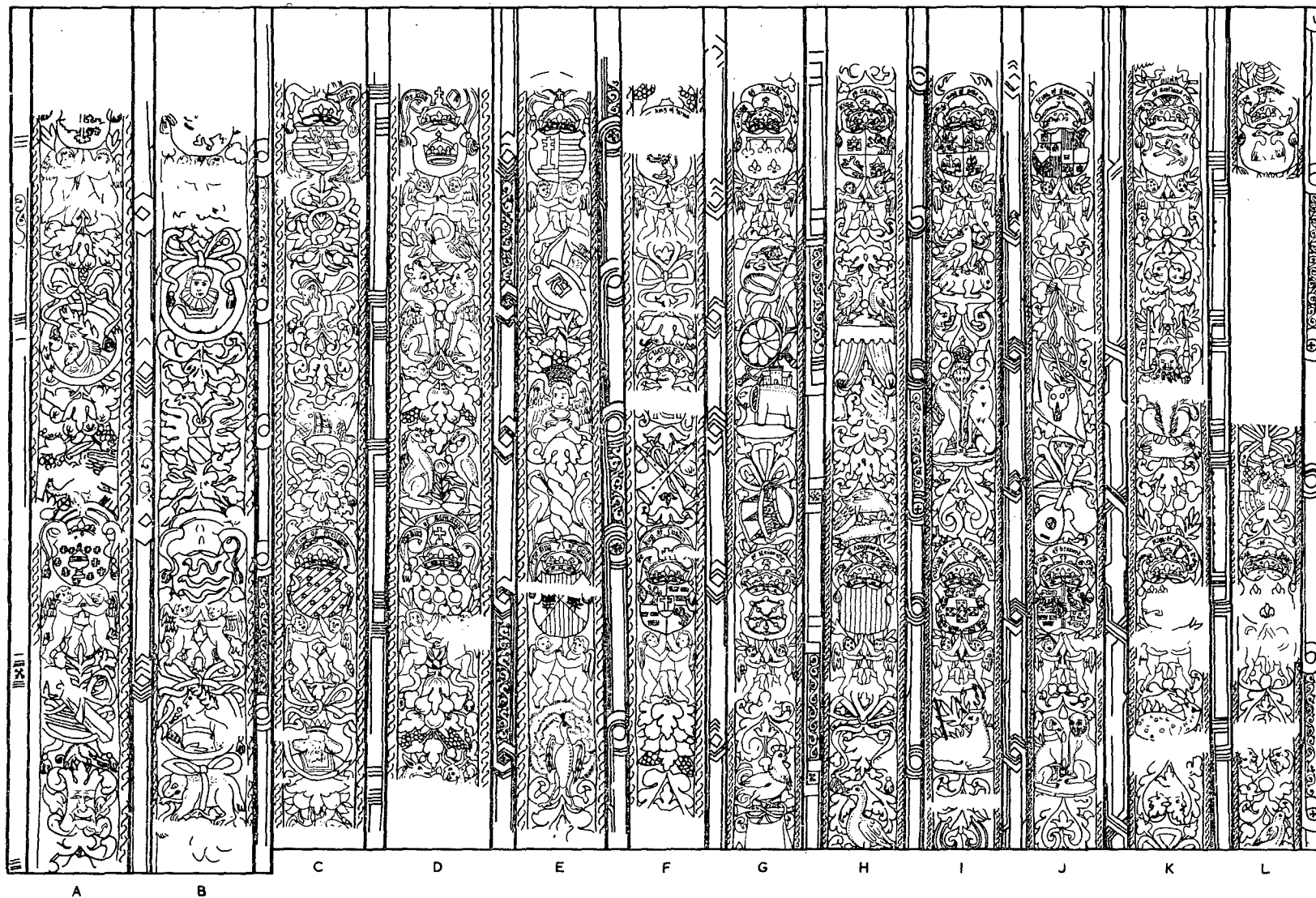


INCHES 12 6 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 FEET

ROSSEND CASTLE
PAINTED CEILING

MINISTRY OF WORKS,
EDINBURGH. 1958.

Fig 2 Open-beam ceiling from Rossend Castle - reconstruction drawing



INCHES 12 6 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 FEET

NUNRAW
PAINTED CEILING

MINISTRY OF WORKS,
EDINBURGH. 1958.

FIG 3 Open-beam ceiling at Nunraw - reconstruction drawing. Note that this ceiling has been moved and is now somewhat smaller than it was originally.

possible to draw water from the well, but there are only conflicting reports about the state of the water or whether the small stone basin carved out of a solid block of red sandstone and projecting from the wall just next to the well flowed water.

Curiously enough, we have another reference to the well of Ardrossan, contemporary with Pont's, in the account of Commissary Maule of St Andrews, written about 1611. He gives a description of Panmure Castle, even then in ruins, in which he states: 'Within the cercuit of the clos, and thear quhar the drawe wel lies, in my opinion, has bein the donion or cheif hows of the quole Castel, and hes had the wel in the ground thearof within the towre, for the ground of the towre dois seime to have compassit the sam on al sydis, efter the coustom of many of the auld strengthis in Scotland, for albeit the rest of the Castel wes vingene, zit the donion 'mycht keipe heawine watter at command. The lyk is to be seine in ane auld hows belongine to the earle of Eglintone, callit Ardrossene, quhar the wel is in the grownd of ane towre: as also in the castel of Kildrwy, in the grytest towre, callit the Snawe towre, the wel is withine the sam.' (*Panmure Registrum*, vol 1, cxliv.) This account is interesting from several points of view. For one thing, Ardrossan Castle is not a very obvious one for Commissary Maule to have chosen for a comparison unless he had actually seen it himself. Secondly, the situation of the well at Ardrossan does not seem to answer this description, not in the seventeenth century or any other time. We can get out of this difficulty in two ways. We can presume that there was, at least at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a means of getting from the gatehouse to the well without going out into the open courtyard – for instance, there could have been a doorway off the stair in the SW corner of the gatehouse giving access to a story above that of the room from which the well passage leads off, or a corridor round the N and W sides of the courtyard connecting the gatehouse with the adjacent range of buildings; but while both these propositions are not in themselves particularly unlikely, they still do not really conform to the conditions of Commissary Maule's description. On the other hand we can presume that there was another well in the castle that has not yet been uncovered. There seem to have been plenty of sources of water in the near vicinity of the castle, e.g. a spring in the hollow next to an old trackway to the NE of the castle, but one would surely not have dug such a tunnel to a source of water outside the castle walls as was dug if there was a source of water within? The problem must at present be left unsolved.

A much more obvious comparison, to my mind, to the well at Ardrossan, is the well in Yester Castle (East Lothian). This lies at the end of a similar passage sloping down steeply from the well-known 'Goblin Ha', apparently the vaulted undercroft of a tower, and must be about the same date or rather slightly earlier than Ardrossan. The well at Hailes Castle (East Lothian) is also down some steps away from the castle, but in the bottom of a tower built to enclose it also dating to the thirteenth century.

When the well was cleaned out in 1911, some fragments of leather sandals – now in the North Ayrshire Museum, Saltcoats – were found, as well as a small red clay jar with a loop handle covered with a brownish black glaze and chevron ornamentation around its upper part. Dr Ross dated it to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. It was for long kept in the Burgh Chambers, Ardrossan, but was apparently broken at some time and all attempts to trace it after this mishap have failed.

One further feature of the well must be mentioned here. That is a carving on the soffit of the lintel of the doorway in the well passage before it descends down the flight of steps (fig 6). The carving is in relief, composed of four circles with a small equi-armed cross set in between, each circle blossoming forth from each of its quadrants. One immediately thinks of this stone as being a re-used grave-stone, and, in fact, the carving compares with some grave-stones

in nearby Kilbirnie churchyard which seem to be twelfth or thirteenth century in inspiration if not in date (see Dobie 1880, for illustrations). Guthrie notes that when the railway was cut into the slope just to the S of the castle some early Christian graves were discovered (and destroyed).

The N and W walls of the building to the S of the gatehouse are also assignable to this phase. The walls are 4 ft thick (1.22 m) and built of blocks of grey sandstone. It is separated from the gatehouse by a flight of steps leading down from the courtyard to the entrance to the cellars under the gatehouse, and it seems these steps were vaulted over and protected at the courtyard end by a doorway secured by a draw-bar (fig 5). This building would then have formed a jamb to the gatehouse. Its entrance was opposite to the doorway to the gatehouse undercroft and the space in between was apparently unvaulted – perhaps so that supplies could be hauled up to the upper floors. There was probably also a postern in the E curtain wall at this point.

The remains of phase I seem to represent a castle consisting of a forward projecting gatehouse block, backed by a courtyard, datable to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The shouldered doorway in the passage leading to the well is the most conclusive suggestion of this date. Such doorways occur, of course, in some of Edward I's Welsh castles, and also much nearer at hand at Morton in Dumfriesshire (Cruden 1963, 96). The entrance to the gatehouse is also early in form, and the appearance of the masonry with its chamfered plinth to some extent also suggests this early date.

The plan of phase I is unique, though parallels can be suggested for various aspects of it. With its rectangular form, lack of flanking towers and size fairly close to seventy feet square it compares with the 'simple rectangular castles of enclosure' isolated by Dunbar (Dunbar and Duncan 1971, 7), and including the castles of Achanduin, Duart, Innis Chonnell and Roy. Some of these castles, like Roy, Inverness-shire (MacGibbon and Ross 1887, 1, 65, fig 44), and Achanduin on Lismore, Argyllshire (MacGibbon and Ross 1890, 3, 77, fig 34), have small towers projecting from one corner, which to some extent flank the entrance gateway. The castle at Ardrossan could be a development from these twelfth- early thirteenth-century castles, with the corner tower developing into a large gatehouse block. The castle of Skipness across the water from Ardrossan in Kintyre also bears comparison with its rectangular shape, chamfered plinth and gatehouse with large pointed entrance (RCAMS 1971, 165-78, no. 314), and likewise Loch Doon castle further south in Ayrshire, where the shape of the small island it was erected on may have conditioned its polygonal shape (MacGibbon and Ross 1887, 1, 98, fig 51).

However, the unique feature of the plan of Ardrossan is the gatehouse, which was not merely designed to control the gateway but was also the keep and main residential block of the castle, unlike the much smaller gatehouse at Skipness, and while one can hardly compare the gatehouse at Ardrossan with the great Edwardian gatehouses, for instance at Harlech, the idea behind it may be a pale reflection of that which inspired Harlech. Near by, at Dundonald, at about the same time the powerful Stewarts were erecting a castle similar in concept, though here the gatehouse consisted of a passageway flanked by two D-shaped towers, as at Criccieth in the Lleyn peninsula of Wales (Simpson 1950, 47; Cruden 1963, 121).

It is impossible to be precise about the date of Ardrossan castle, but on the basis of our present knowledge (documentary evidence is inconclusive – see below) a date in the later thirteenth century would seem most suitable for the first phase. Ardrossan can thus join the increasing number of stone castles known to exist previous to, or contemporary with, the Wars of Independence. Its position on the shores of the Firth of Clyde overlooking a good harbour is of considerable strategic importance.

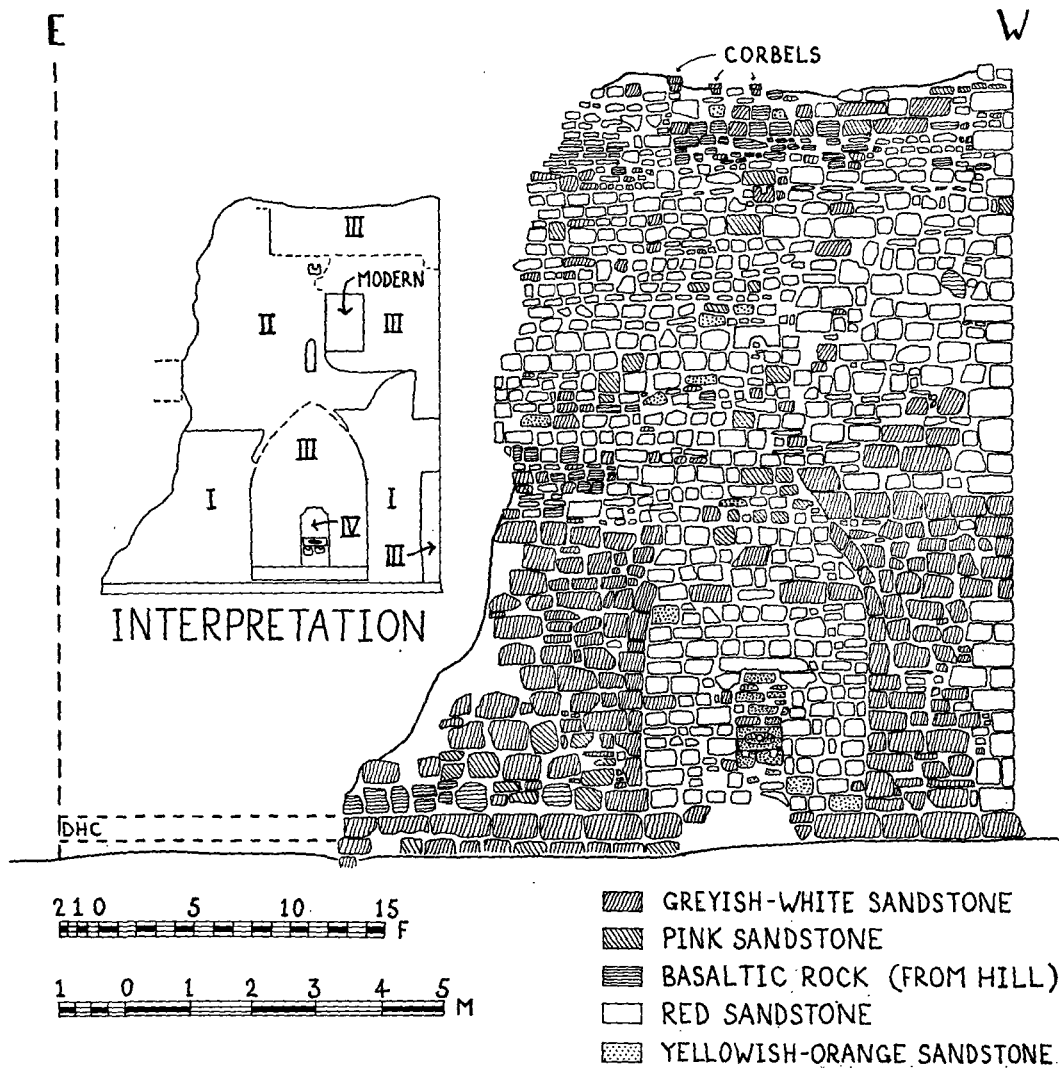


FIG 7 Ardrossan Castle: N face of gatehouse/keep (slightly foreshortened)

Phase II represents a substantial rebuilding, the basic new building material being blocks of red sandstone, tending to be rather smaller than in phase I, and some material reused from phase I. Red sandstone is available in the immediate vicinity of the hill.

The gatehouse was rebuilt from first-floor level up, the building not being as high as it stands today. The phase II battlement level can be seen encased in later masonry around the top of the gatehouse, with its parapet flush with the outer wall surface (pl III). A merlon and drainage shoot (see fig 7) are identifiable in the N wall face. The building still seems to have functioned as a gatehouse, and a recess let into the haunch of the vault just above the entrance doorway may have housed a winch for hoisting a portcullis, while a small lancet window just above the point of the entrance arch, blocked up in later masonry, would have been ideal for keeping a watch on the approaches to the castle. A straight stairway ascended in the thickness of the N wall, perhaps from the first floor, right up to the battlement walk, from which another three

steps or more ascended to a turret (?) at the NW angle. The means of access from the ground floor to the first is not known from this stage, but it is interesting to see the defensive precaution of having this stair separate from the stair connecting the upper stories.

It is also interesting that the gatehouse was divided by a N-S wall throughout its entire height into two separate units, perhaps not even directly connected with each other. Such a feature is by no means common, but occurs in the rather later towerhouse at Craignethan in Lanarkshire. This arrangement at Ardrossan may have been purely structural, since if the gatehouse was vaulted over at roof level – which seems very likely – the area to be roofed may have been too large for the builders to span with one vault. On the other hand, this division of the gatehouse into two major sectors may represent an attempt to separate the lord's private quarters from those of his followers, the control of the entrance gate being firmly in the lord's hands.

Above the entrance passage there were a further two stories, and in the eastern portion were two tiers of vaulted cellars plus the cellars below ground level.

Work carried out elsewhere on the castle connected with this rebuild of the gatehouse is rather difficult to demonstrate. It is also very difficult to date this work, except in relationship to the work of the previous and succeeding phases. The work probably represents a refurbishing of the castle after a destruction during the Wars of Independence.

Almost all castles built in Scotland during the fourteenth century took the form of towerhouses, while many of the older castles were rebuilt or strengthened. Ardrossan castle remained exceptional in its small rectangular form with large gatehouse block. Only in Doune castle in Perthshire does it find a distant, and probably later, relation, in that the gatehouse was the main residential block of the castellan. Other castles also developed with courtyards and gatehouses, but these were later developments of the fifteenth century, e.g. at Crichton in Midlothian, and besides, the gatehouse here and elsewhere was not the unique residential block and keep it was at Ardrossan.

Of the castles compared to Ardrossan in phase I, many apparently suffered rather less during the Wars, if at all, and consequently required no drastic reconstruction at this time. A notable exception is Dundonald, and here, some time in the second half of the fourteenth century, Robert II built a large towerhouse on the surviving walls of the gatehouse and, as we shall see, the gatehouse at Ardrossan was transformed into a more traditional Scottish type keep or towerhouse, probably in the early fifteenth century.

All this suggests that the refurbishing of Ardrossan castle in the form of a courtyard castle with forward projecting gatehouse block in phase II took place at an early date in the fourteenth century, and the possibility is even suggested that the phase II gatehouse was constructed before 1328, during the Wars of Independence.

Phase III saw extensive new building, probably over a long period of time, the basic building material still being red sandstone.

The gatehouse was again remodelled at this time, perhaps after a further destruction. It was the NW section of the gatehouse which needed rebuilding from first floor up, and, of course, this was the weakest point in the phase II gatehouse, owing to the stair contained at this point in the thickness of the wall. The gatehouse now lost its role as such, being transformed into a rather more typical keep or towerhouse. The old entrance was reduced in size to a small doorway which may have acted as a postern, and a small opening in the wall above may have had something to do with hoisting a drawbridge. Inside, a mezzanine floor was inserted in the old entrance tranche, and a turnpike stair was inserted at the SW corner, with an entrance off the old entrance tranche and another on to the courtyard.

The first floor of the western portion now had a large window (blocked up this century)

with window seats overlooking the N and a slit window overlooking the curtain wall to the W. There was apparently also a fireplace in the W wall. The floor above this has the remains of a very fine fireplace of a type quite common in Scotland in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century – a type of fireplace which can be seen at its best at Cardoness in Kirkcudbrightshire. It is a pity that no typological studies have yet been made of these fireplaces which can only be described vaguely as being 'Late Gothic'. The fireplace at Ardrossan still has one complete jamb in position.

It was during this phase too that the keep was heightened. A small fireplace of chamfered blocks of red sandstone in the N wall is all that remains of another storey. The stone-work above the old battlement level is of a patchy nature with much reuse of previous stone-work. Three corbels yet survive on the N face of a projecting parapet, and most of the ashlar quoins of the NW corner were renewed from the ground up. The keep was known as the 'Read Tower', Pont tells us, no doubt owing to the red sandstone used in its rebuilding (Dobie 1876, 9).

To the W of the keep and along the W curtain wall was a range of buildings which also seem to fit into this phase. The range presumably replaces an earlier, perhaps of wood. Some recesses in the curtain wall may be beam holes belonging to an earlier building. Immediately to the W of the keep were two vaulted chambers, the further west one containing the entrance to the well. Also in this chamber is a drainage shoot leading out to the ditch just next to a garderobe shoot. A stair ascended to an upper floor immediately to the S of this.

In his report, Dr Ross wrote: 'In the north west side of the courtyard the excavations have revealed what appears to have been a chapel, lying east and west. In its south wall there are two windows and a door towards the west which have a decided ecclesiastical appearance with broad splays on the jambs and a check on the ingoing of the window for glass.' (Ross 1911.) There is one such window cill *in situ* in the E wall of this western range, but this position does not seem to agree with Dr Ross's description. In fact, unless Dr Ross has got his orientations entirely the wrong way round it is difficult to reconcile his description with the surviving remains. That there should have been a chapel here does however seem a valid hypothesis.

At the SW corner of the courtyard are the remains of another tower, now surviving only as a large open-ended arch looking out over the ditch to the W, with the old curtain wall just traceable running across it and out under its southern wall. It is rectangular in shape and may have measured about 40 by 30 ft (12 by 9 m). Weir and Guthrie, followed by MacGibbon and Ross, considered this to represent the remains of the castle's kitchens since two sinks pass through its S wall; in cutting the railway line at the bottom of the hill at this point a midden of bones and broken pottery was cut through, but this in itself is not sufficient evidence since obviously rubbish was going to be thrown out where it was going to fall furthest away from the castle itself and the kitchens were just as likely to be next to the source of water.

The vault of this building is rather curiously built in two distinct parts, although the side walls do not indicate the building was too. The part to the W is of very finely jointed ashlar, much of it curiously of grey sandstone, while the E part is of very rough red sandstone blocks. The S wall also shows a curious admixture of different types of stone and one wonders if much of the material is not from some earlier structure.

Positioned in the S wall, overlooking the sea, are two very interesting window slits which find their nearest parallel in the proto-gun-ports of the curtain wall at Threave in Kirkcudbright. They are long narrow slits with deeply splayed embrasures with waist high cills extending through the entire thickness of the wall (4 ft/ 1.22 m) but whereas the slits at Threave are merely simple oblongs those at Ardrossan swell out into roundels at the bottom for taking a gun-barrel, and, in fact, one of the cills has a small circular hollow worn into the stone which may be the mark of the crutch of one of the guns used.

In the N wall a doorway gives access to the courtyard, while along from it is the bottom of a garderobe shoot with a small tunnel through the thickness of the wall, under the opening, in order to facilitate the removal of filth. A turnpike stair ascended to first-floor level at the NE corner of the tower and another rose from first-floor level in the SE corner. Also at this level two small turrets or garderobes hung on corbels over the southern wall.

This tower, the wall enclosing the S of the courtyard and much of the building to the S of the keep are all considered as the one unit here, since the stone-work seems to be similar and there is no evidence of any straight joins in the masonry. Presumably the S wall of the tower must have continued eastwards to meet up with the E curtain wall, but there is now no sign of an enclosing wall to the SE portion of the castle. The ground slopes away here steeply and any sign of a wall may long since have tumbled away and been removed when the railway was cut. What there may have been in this SE sector is beyond conjecture – access to it was gained by a doorway from the courtyard and one from the ‘kitchen’ tower.

We noted above how the entrance to the castle through the keep was drastically reduced in scale to a small doorway – only 3½ ft wide by 7 ft high (1·07 by 2·13 m). It would seem hard to believe that this was still the main entrance to the castle especially since it was completely blocked up in the next phase anyway. It may have been very desirable to make a more protected entrance, especially with the introduction of firearms. The old entrance was very exposed being on the most accessible outer façade of the castle, and it was impossible to direct any flanking fire upon it. However, we are left now with the problem of where the new entrance could have been. We have noted the likelihood of a postern to the south of the keep next to the entrance to the cellars and convenient for the unloading of stores especially from the sea; but the only access to this gateway would have been up the steep slope of the hill of the castle itself which it is just possible to walk up but not ride up. Such an approach would have been rather inconvenient and not particularly sensible.

The other possibility for an entrance is the tower previous writers have labelled the ‘kitchens’. It is possible a passage passed through this though not the full 17 ft width (5·17 m) of its vaulted ground floor. This would have meant an approach from across the ditch to the W, probably involving a wooden bridge of up to 90 ft in length (27 m) which is about 20 ft (6 m) longer than the bridge at Dirleton, East Lothian, and about 10 ft (3 m) shorter than the width of the ditch spanned at Urquhart in Inverness. However, it is still a considerable width to span and the depth of the ditch would have made it even more awkward – but by no means inconceivable or impractical. It is interesting to note here a feature we have not hitherto noticed about the well passage. Apparently following its course on the ground surface there is a wall which does not seem to have any structural relationship to the well passage below, even allowing for considerable exaggeration in the downward slope of this passage as shown on plan (fig 7). It is impossible to assign this wall to any phase. It is articulated with a course of large hewn blocks of red sandstone to match with the chamfered plinth of the adjacent curtain wall, but it must be later than the curtain wall since it is built up against it with a straight join. This wall would have effectively prevented any flanking movement of an enemy round the western side of the castle where there was apparently a considerable berm between the curtain wall and the edge of the ditch, and would have provided flanking fire for a hypothetical entrance here. However, the problem of an entrance is something that will only really be solved by excavation.

It is only possible to date the work of phase III in very general terms. The fine ‘Late Gothic’ fireplace in the keep ought to date to the fifteenth century while the two proto-gun-ports in the ‘kitchen’ tower must have a date similar to those at Threave. These Simpson dates to the very early sixteenth century (Simpson 1967, 5). Cruden on the other hand dates them to the time

of the great siege of Threave in the 1450's and on typological grounds this date seems more likely, especially since they occur in association with dumb-bell and key-hole type ports (Cruden 1963, 216). It is also possible to date such things as the windows in the keep and the 'chapel' in very general terms to the fifteenth century.

All the work undertaken in this phase represents the work of the Montgomeries after they acquired the castle in the second half of the fourteenth century, and is typical of the work carried out elsewhere in Scotland at this time. An attempt has been made to make the castle more comfortable to live in, while at the same time improving the defences by the erection of another tower and the removal of the entrance to a less accessible point in the castle walls.

Phase IV is represented by very little work, but of significance. The building material used was blocks of a yellowish-orange sandstone. The old entrance through the keep was now finally blocked up, a wide-mouthed gunport being inserted and the slit window overlooking the W curtain wall was blocked up leaving a small aperture about the size of a gun-port. Wide-mouthed gun-ports generally occur after the beginning of the sixteenth century, although the ones at nearby Law Castle may be as early as 1468.

The end of phase IV saw the final destruction of the castle, traditionally by Cromwell, and certainly the castle was in ruins by 1689 as we read in *The Montgomery Manuscripts*: 'I have seen it at a small distance, it is now Ruinous and uninhabited, a large Pile and hath Spacious Courts and high walls; it looks noble (tho a Skeleton) and is bravely Scituated over the Sea. only the Keeper of the Stone Walled Park (belonging to it) lives in some of the vaults thereof, or Lone buildings adjoining to it as I was told in Summer 1689 when I went that way.' (Montgomerie 1864, 461.) From then the state of the ruins must have deteriorated until this process was arrested in 1911. It is known that the ruins were pillaged for stone for the building of the tenth Earl of Eglinton's walled parks at Ardrossan about 1748, and no doubt on numerous other unrecorded occasions.

If we can place any trust in Pont's story of the destruction of the castle by Wallace, there must have been a settlement on the Castle Hill at least as early as the late thirteenth century (see below p 217). In the testament of Hugh, second Earl of Eglinton, 1546 we find him leaving £20 to 'the pure (poor?) householdaris of Ardrossan' (Fraser 1859, 2, 142) and on Blaeu's map of Cuninghame a settlement can clearly be seen on the hill (fig 1). In fact the whole of the Castle Hill was probably enclosed at least by the seventeenth century, for Montgomery of Rosemount who saw it in 1689 speaks of the stone walled park attached to the castle and also loan buildings adjoining it (Montgomerie 1864, 461). Grass markings on the hill today seem to indicate the presence of old buildings. The circular remains presumably of a dovecot still survive on the highest part of the hill to the W of the castle and the foundations of the parish church to the NE (fig 2). Weir claims that in his day distinct remains of buildings could be traced on the height just to the S of the church enclosure and according to his manuscript to the E of this was the castle orchard of about two acres in extent; and a little to the N of the church was the gateway and lodge protecting the entrance – all removed by the tenth Earl of Eglinton about 1750.

The manuscript also claims that when the Earl of Eglinton's pavilion was being built to the SE of the castle where Seggany Point Loch was supposed to be (i.e. on site of present Church of St Peter): 'The body of a man was found extended at full length among the sludge and decayed sea-wrecky matter. A boat's anchor and other things, were also found showing that boats had anchored in a little loch below the castle approached from the sea at high water.' (Weir 1880.) We know that Sir John de Montgomerie, occupier of the castle at the beginning of the fifteenth

century had at least two ships, one called *la Wynyne* licensed by Henry IV to trade abroad and in England (Bain 1887, 4, nos 697, 743). Pont tells us that on the island off the shore here (Nete Yle . . the Inches) the Earl of Eglinton had a 'salmond fisching by Netts' (Dobie 1876, 25). It is also noteworthy that it would have been possible to get all the way from Ardrossan to Eglinton castle – about six miles away – by small boat up the Garnock and Lugton water.

HISTORY

No archaeological or architectural account can be complete if it ignores the documentary evidence which survives about a site or building. It is a great misfortune, however, that for a castle such as Ardrossan we can offer little more than a few scraps of genealogy. The early records of the Montgomeries were presumably lost when Eglinton Castle was sacked by the Cuninghames in 1528, and the cartulary of Kilwinning Abbey has not been seen now for a few centuries.

Timothy Pont, the topographer, noted at the beginning of the seventeenth century that: 'this castell wes for money ages possessed by the BARCLAYES for in a charter of Sir Richard Moruell Lord Cunninghame etc. to the monastery of Kilwinning Richardus de Berclay dns de Ardrossen is a vittnes.' (Dobie 1876, 10.) In his account of Cunninghame, Pont states on five separate occasions that he has consulted the records of Kilwinning Abbey, and on numerous other occasions gives information he could hardly have obtained from elsewhere. Thus we can hardly doubt that in 1140 a Richard de Barclay was Richard de Morville's vassal for the lands of Ardrossan. What we can doubt is the assertion of most historians that the succeeding lords of Ardrossan were also de Barclays. We have from various documents of the time what must amount to a fairly complete list of the holders of Ardrossan before the Montgomeries acquired the lands in the fourteenth century and they are all without exception styled 'of Ardrossan'.

Crawfurd, writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century, knew of a charter of Hugh de Morville to the abbey of Kilwinning in the reign of Malcolm IV (1153-1165) to which a Richard de Barclay, Lord of Ardrossan, was a witness, but perhaps Crawfurd is merely misquoting Pont (Crawfurd and Robertson 1818, 121). At any rate, Pont's account lay forgotten by genealogists until the later nineteenth century and Crawfurd's successors were content to leave the local family as Ardrossans up to this time, when a veritable local tradition appeared to the effect that the ancient owners of Ardrossan were de Barclays. That this tradition can not be anything but recent is confirmed by the legends of the 'De'il o' Ardrossan' which have, in comparison a fairly respectable pedigree and seem to be in no doubt that the family was Ardrossan of that ilk.⁵

Where recorded, twelfth-century holders of Ayrshire lands are often different in name from the thirteenth-century and later holders – for instance, Pont notes that the twelfth-century holders of Blair were called Francisci and Dobie presumes that this family also assumed the name of their estates for we find a family of Blair from the thirteenth century, and Scottish landowners were usually referred to by the name of their chief seat (Dobie 1876, 80 ff). But we rarely find at such an early period as this Anglo-Normans as distinct from Anglo-Danes, Flemings, etc, losing their already acquired surnames in favour of the names of their new Scottish estates. Names such as Barclay, Montgomerie, Vaux, and Morville had already been fixed as surnames and we do not read of families of Eagleshame or of Dirleton or Lauderdale but of Montgomeries, Vaux, Morvilles, Lords of these places. It is different with incomers into Scotland from different sources such as Flemings, who do not yet seem to have acquired crystallised surnames to the same extent as the Anglo-Normans. It therefore seems to be rather a weak argument that because a twelfth-century holder of Ardrossan was a de Barclay all later recorded holders also were.

Moreover, all the succeeding barons have names which are quite legitimately Celtic in origin (despite their Latin form in documents) and the fact that a family of de Barclays who held the neighbouring lands of Kilbirnie were thought to be a branch of the family at Ardrossan is also more likely to favour this interpretation, since if the family were really all along de Barclays of Ardrossan it is rather odd that this surname should only be recognised for a cadet branch and not the main line. The de Barclays of Kilbirnie may still have been descended from Richard de Barclay, Lord of Ardrossan in the twelfth century.⁶

After Richard de Barclay, the next recorded holder of the lands of Ardrossan is Arthur de Ardrossan, who occurs as a witness in various documents datable to the closing years of the twelfth century and the very beginning of the thirteenth. Thereafter quite a few references to the Ardrossan family are traceable in contemporary documents, but it is by no means possible to build up a genuine or accurate genealogy as many have tried in the past. It is only of interest to note here that in the thirteenth century the family held lands further north of Freskyn de Moray, Lord of Duffus, and of Malise, Earl of Strathearn. Most of the references to the Ardrossan family have been collected by Weir and Dobie (Weir 1880; Dobie 1876).

However, when we come to the period of the Wars of Independence rather more light is shed on the Ardrossan family, and consequently on the fate of the castle.

In 1296 we find Godfrey de Ardrossan swearing fealty to King Edward of England at Montrose, and subscribing the Ragman Roll, as did most of his contemporaries (Bain 1887, 2, nos 770, 823); but soon afterwards Ardrossan was in the hands of an English family installed by Edward, for we find in Edward's correspondence the following petition in the year 1305: 'John de St. John to the King and council. The king gave his father Sir John de St. John (whose heir he is) all the lands and tenements to which Sir John de Baliol succeeded on the death of his mother Devorgoyl, with fees and advowsons of churches; under which grant Sir William Latimer "le Peer", to whom the King gave the land of Ardrossan, did homage to the late Sir John de St. John, who died seised. On Sir William's death, one Sir Thomas Latimer entered into Ardrossan, not as son and heir but as a stranger and without the Petitioner's leave, whose bailiffs disputed his entry. Whereon Sir Thomas went to court, and persuaded the King that the lands were held in Chief of him, tendered his homage in deceit of the court and to the petitioner's damage, who prays remedy.' (Bain 1887, 2, no. 1615.) Thomas seems to have managed to retain his position in Ardrossan, for the petition was endorsed and Thomas ordered to 'distain for the homage and services in arrear, according to the custom of these parts'.

Sir William Latimer 'le peer' is well attested as a commander of Edward in Scotland, and we find him as Keeper of Berwick and Captain on the March (Bain 1887, 2, nos 1165, 1081). Of Sir Thomas Latimer we know next to nothing, but it is not hard to see how it came about that these English nobles got established in Ardrossan.

At the great siege of Stirling castle, surrender by the Scots to Edward in 1304, we find the Scottish force being led by Sir William Olyfard along with Fergus of Ardrossan and his brother Robert, and judging by their names, the contingent they led was composed of men from Ayrshire. This Fergus was apparently the legitimate successor to Godfrey de Ardrossan, and we find several references in Bain's *Calendar of Documents* relating to his imprisonment in Corfe castle in Dorset, and Newcastle, and the imprisonment of his brother Robert in Rochester castle. An apparent attempt by the Scots in 1308 to regain their release was unsuccessful, Edward perhaps considering these prisoners too valuable or important to release (Bain 1887, 3, no. 51). It would seem evident that the Latimers were installed in Ardrossan while Fergus was held prisoner in England.

However, late in 1305, we find a Hugh de Ardrossan taking possession of his lands after

paying homage to William de Bevercotes, Edward's chancellor of Scotland (Bain 1887, 2, no. 1696). Five days later on the fifteenth of October he was subjected to a fine of the value of his lands and rents for three years, for 'amendes de trespas' (*Foedera*, 2, 970). Thereafter we find Hugh trying to regain possession of his lands of Syppeland in Dumfries, given him by John de Baliol, for on his forfeiture these had been granted to Dougal Makduel (Bain 1887, iv, no. 1815). We do not know if he was successful, but the land was certainly regained by his descendant after the Wars (Robertson 1798, 13, no. 97).

Hugh was thus reinstated immediately after John de St John was petitioning King Edward for the removal of Sir Thomas Latimer from Ardrossan, and while Fergus de Ardrossan was a prisoner in England. It can hardly be doubted that the lands Hugh was taking possession of were Ardrossan,⁷ especially since Fergus was given other lands on his restoration in 1312. It seems as if the family of Ardrossan was backing both sides in the War at this time. However in 1312, Fergus de Ardrossan and his brother were released, and Fergus was given, by King Edward, the Barony of Bishopland near Kirkintilloch, part of the temporalities of the see of Glasgow (Bain 3, no. 265).

The glimmer of light shed on the fortunes of the Ardrossan family at this time is only of passing interest as far as the castle is concerned, but is fascinating in showing the fortune of an important family of the time. Ardrossan had been held of John de Baliol, and it is thus not surprising that the holders of Ardrossan, in common with most of the other landholders in Cuninghame gave the Bruce cause little known support until after Bannockburn. A late and doubtful source would even have us believe that Fergus de Ardrossan was with Wallace at the battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297 (Abercromby 1711, 1, 529). Certainly, he was not holding Stirling castle in 1304 for Bruce, and his submission to Edward II the year before Bannockburn hardly indicates support for Bruce at this time either.

However, after Bannockburn, the family of Ardrossan retained their lands, unlike many of their neighbours, principally the de Rosses, who were disinherited by Bruce. Barbour tells us that Schir Fergus de Ardrossane accompanied Edward Bruce on his expedition to Ireland in 1315, and styles him as 'ane knycht rycht curageous' (MacKenzie 1909, 267). Dalrymple is our only (doubtful) source for his death, recording that he was one of two Scottish commanders who fell at Arscoll in Kildare on the 26th January 1316 (Dalrymple 1797, 2, 72). It was either he or his successor who was one of the thirty-one Scots Barons, and the only one from Ayrshire, who signed the famous Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. About the same time he received a charter confirming to him and his heirs the lands of Ardrossan with the pertinents in fee and property by all their righteous meiths and divisions in one entire and free barony, 'cum furca et fossa soc et sac thole et theme et infangandthef' and all other liberties etc (RMS, i, 10, no. 51).

The only later recorded member of the Ardrossan family is Godfrey of Ardrossan, who witnessed a document in 1357 (Robertson *Index*, 75, no. 86). Soon afterwards, the lands of Ardrossan passed to the Montgomeries of Eagleshame. There has, however, been much controversy as to how this took place. Suffice it to note here that the lordship of Ardrossan may either have reverted to the crown on the death of the last baron of the Ardrossan family and been regranted to Sir Hugh de Eglinton, a noted poet, from whom it passed by his sole surviving heir, Elizabeth, to Sir John de Montgomerie, or it may have been regranted to Sir John himself. An alternative explanation that Sir John acquired Ardrossan by marriage of the Eglinton heiress does not fit the facts (see the documentation provided by Fraser 1859) and a previous marriage by Sir John to an Ardrossan heiress seems unlikely. It is interesting that the Legend of the 'De'il o' Ardrossan', whose very purpose was to explain why the Ardrossan line failed, makes no mention of an heiress.

Sir John de Montgomerie was with the Douglas at the famous battle of Otterburn and according to Froissart (ed. 1812, 2, 399) and the ballad (Fraser 1859, 1, 14), after the death of the Douglas he took Sir Henry Percy 'the Hotspur' prisoner and forced him to build Polnoon castle at Eagleshame as a ransom. He died somewhere between May 1400 and July 1401 (*Scots Peerage*, iii, 428); and was succeeded by his son, also Sir John, who styles himself as 'knight, Lord of Ardrossan'. He took a prominent part in the affairs of his time. He was one of the commanders in the Douglas' army at Homildon Hill in 1402 when he was captured. He then served as a hostage for Douglas in 1408 after his capture at Shrewsbury, and in 1423 was one of the hostages for James I. The English must have had a high opinion of him, judging by the large income they gave him (*Foedera*, 10, 307). He was succeeded by his son Alexander before 1429, and he was created first Lord Montgomerie and his son first Earl of Eglinton in 1506. For full references on the Montgomeries the reader is referred to the adequate accounts and documentation elsewhere – especially *The Scots Peerage* and *Memorials of the Montgomeries* (Fraser 1859).

We know even less about the history of the castle than its owners. Through an almost complete lack of documentation and precisely datable architectural features it is impossible to attribute the building or rebuilding of the castle to any of its known occupiers. Probably the first surviving reference to an actual castle at Ardrossan occurs in a document as late as 1484 (Fraser 1859, ii, 45) but, as we have seen, the castle was certainly much earlier, and almost certainly existed before the lands of Ardrossan were temporarily held by the English at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Already in this work we have made reference several times to Timothy Pont's *Topography of Cuninghame*, and to him we are indebted for the following account: 'in this castell ther is a touer named ye read touer and in it a vaulte called Vallace lardner, for this castell being in ye possessione of ye English, Vallace used this stratageme he sett a housse hard by the castell a fyre yat these quho kept ye castell not suspecting aney fraud came out to ye ereskeu of the housse quhome they (imagined) by accident to have taken fyre Bot Vallace with a veill armed companey (g)ifs them a very hote velcome and kills them euery mothers sone and furthwith forces ye castell and vins it. in this deepe vaulte in ye bottome of ye read touer flange he ye carcatches of these English vich to this day gaue it the name of Vallace lardner' (Dobie 1876, 9). There is no particularly good reason for dismissing this story as a legend. After all, when Pont visited the castle this alleged event had taken place only three hundred years beforehand and was still commemorated by the name 'Vallace lardner', so that it is not inconceivable that it has some basis of truth. We noted above how Ardrossan was extensively rebuilt not long after or even during the Wars, after it is known to have been held by two Englishmen.

What events or changes in the fortunes of the occupiers of the castle conditioned its further rebuilding we cannot say with any certainty. As to the final destruction of the castle, allegedly by Cromwell, we cannot say much either. If the tradition is correct that Cromwell destroyed the castle in person and indeed he had good reason to destroy the stronghold of the Earl of Eglinton, this must have taken place during his campaign into Scotland in 1648 or in 1650, but both are most unlikely and there is no evidence to suggest Cromwell ever passed by Ardrossan. All the same it is more than likely that Ardrossan Castle was dismantled by Cromwell's troops, traditionally to use the stone in the building of the great fort at Ayr. The ruins give the impression that the castle was systematically destroyed, but that this was also to gain building material for a work 20 miles away does not seem sensible, even if the material was transported by sea, and besides it is obvious from the surviving ruins and older pictures that not enough stone could have been removed to make the effort worth while. By an order of the Privy Council in 1663 a charter was granted to Hugh, Earl of Eglinton under the Great Seal of the fort commonly

called the Citadel of Ayr, and other building enclosed, extending to about 11 acres, in consideration and in compensation in some part of the damages the Earl and his father had sustained in their several engagements for the Royal interest by the sequestration, forfeiture and firing of the estates, demolishing and plundering their houses by the late cruel usurper' (RMS 1660-68, no. 506, 254).

The role of the castle

Ardrossan Castle through its life seems to have been a fortress, or castle, rather than merely a fortified house, a dwelling house with display of fortification, as is the more usual Scottish concept of a noble's house. In the twelfth century, Ayrshire was remote from the royal authority and dangerously near turbulent Galloway, with an outlook on the western Isles. Hence the earliest twelfth-century Lords in these parts were strong men, there to hold the country down. Such was Hugh de Morville, who was given the Lordship of Cunninghame and Largs, and his successor Richard. The earliest holders of Ardrossan owed allegiance to the de Morvilles and in their turn were expected to control their part of the Lordship of Cunninghame. When first built, Ardrossan Castle was thus not just the home of the local landowner but the administrative centre of a unit of land. The question is, how big a unit of land?

In Robert I's grant of free barony to Fergus de Ardrossan in 1320 we are told that this includes: the holdings of the lands of William de Potteconill, Richard de Boyvill, Laurence de Mora, Gilbert de Cunynburgh, William Ker, Richard de Kelcou and all the land and tenement of the Lin within the tenement of Dalry (RMS, 1, 10, no. 51). The lands of William de Potteconill must have been the lands of Pitcon in the parish of Dalry and those of William Ker, Kersland in the same parish. The lands of Lin also still exist. The lands of Ryesholm in Dalry were for long held by the Boyles (i.e. Boyvilles) (Dobie 1876, 194) and the lands of Swinlees with Caerwinning Hill were long held by a family of Kelsò (Dobie 1876, 230); but as for the holdings of Laurence de Mora and Gilbert de Cunynburgh we know nothing, although we might guess the lands of Baidland for one. At any rate, it seems that the barony of Ardrossan in 1320 consisted of all the present parish of Ardrossan, minus the lands of Monfode and plus a large proportion of the parish of Dalry (fig 8).

Presumably this area of land was basically that granted in the first place to Richard de Barclay who may also have held the contiguous lands of Kilbirnie since we find a cadet of the de Barclays installed there from an early period.

By 1484, when an instrument of sasine was made out in favour of Hugh, Lord Montgomerie of the Lordship of Ardrossan we find it consisted of the following: 'all and whole the lands and lordship of Ardrossan, extending in all to the hundred and twenty pound lands of old extent with the castle and fortalice of the same, with an island Seilcrag (the Inches?) a stone of white cheese annually from the lands of Monfoid and with the fishing of Eist Saltcottis and tenandries and pertinents extending annually to two hundred and forty pounds and also to the tenandries of the said lordship of Ardrossan which are not adjacent, namely to the twenty merks of the lands of old extent of carrisland (i.e. Kersland) then to five pounds of the lands of old extent of Badlen and finally to ten pounds of the lands of old extent of Skelmurlye' (Fraser 1859, 2, 45). Ardrossan Castle was apparently also the chief seat of the Montgomeries at least until the time of Alexander, first Lord Montgomerie, for his father styles himself in the documents of the period as 'knight, Lord of Ardrossan'. It may have been Alexander who first made Eglinton his principal residence, and thereafter it seems Ardrossan was not lived in very frequently, though it was kept up as a residence and as a place of strength to the very end. During the protracted feud of the Montgomeries with the Cuninghames in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Earls of Eglinton

no doubt had to rely on Ardrossan more than once, and no doubt had to take up their residence here in 1528 when the Cuninghames sacked Eglinton Castle.

After the battle of Langside we find the Privy Council of which the Earl of Glencairn, chief of the Cuninghames, was a member, 'ordanis lettres to be direct, to charge the personis underwritten, and all utheris, havans keparis and detenaris of the houssis and castellis particularie eftir following to deliver the samyn to the officioris executouris of the saidis lettres, to be kepit be thame and sic utheris as salbe appointit thairto; and to devoid and red thameselffis,

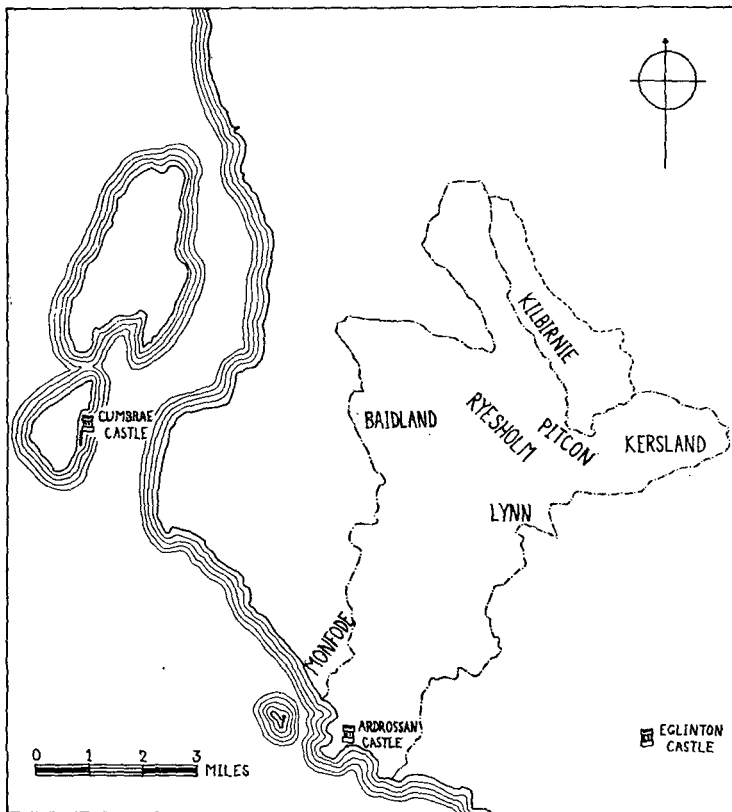


FIG 8 Barony of Ardrossan, according to Bruce's charter of 1320, and lands of Kilbirnie

thair servandis and gudis and all utheris being thairin, furth of the samyn within sex houris nixteftir the charge, under the pane of tressoun. . . Hew Erll of Eglintoun the castellis and fortalices of Eglintoun and Ardrossane.' (RPC Scot, i, 626.) But one doubts very much if the Earl of Eglinton would have vacated his castles and even more that the Privy Council had the power to make him. It is probably only a coincidence that in the same year of 1568 the Earl of Eglinton drew up a contract with George Elphinstoun, a 'glasinwricht' in Glasgow, to uphold and maintain the places of Ardrossan, Eglinton, Polnoon, Glasgow, Cumbrae and Irvine in glass work (*New Statistical Account, (Ayrshire), 1842, 272*). At least it reflects a concern for the upkeep of these properties.

However, by the time of Cromwell, when castles such as Ardrossan were not safe against the artillery of armies such as Cromwell's, we find Ardrossan's role as the stronghold of the

Montgomeries lost in favour of the tower on a little island beside Little Cumbræ. Its one and obvious advantage was its inaccessibility and during Cromwell's incursion into Scotland in 1650 we find the Earl of Eglinton making use of it as his ultimate stronghold. Principal Baillie tells us in his correspondence that he fled here with Lady Montgomery while Cromwell was making his way to Glasgow (Fyfe 1927, 170), and in the following year Charles II allows: 'It is our pleasure the number of fortie men which the Lord Montgomerie hath raised and doeth maintaine in at the Isle of Comrie, may be allowed to him in this new levie for so many out of his owne or his fathers proper lands. Given at our Court at Sterlin, the 30 of July 1651.' (Fraser 1859, 2, 316.)

This document, more than any destruction, marks the end of Ardrossan Castle. Castles had not been built to stand up to drilled armies with siege guns, only refuges like Cumbræ castle could hope to escape for long the ravages of artillery by their remoteness. Thus there could have been no point in rebuilding Ardrossan castle, as such, ever again. The Montgomeries had plenty of other more suitable houses to live in, and Ardrossan was neglected until the building of the new town in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

NOTES

- 1 The author is indebted to Mr J G Dunbar of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland for helpful advice and criticism in the preparation of this paper.
- 2 MacGibbon and Ross, and later Ross himself, recognised nothing in the castle earlier than the end of the fourteenth century, nor did they make any attempt to work out a building sequence. Guthrie, apparently unaware of the work of MacGibbon and Ross, unhesitatingly ascribes the castle to the twelfth century, but on no sound basis of fact or observation.
- 3 Weir is a generally reliable source of information. Unfortunately he makes use of a manuscript for much of his topographical and legendary detail, the information in which he claims came via Alexander Bartlemore, a servant of the 10th Earl of Eglinton, from Susan Kennedy, wife of the 9th Earl.
- 4 Measurements in metric are not taken from measurements on the ground but are computed from the measurements in imperial.
- 5 These legends can be traced back, according to Weir's manuscript, to a tradition in the Eglinton family. The oldest extant version dates to the late eighteenth century and is in the North Ayrshire Museum, Saltcoats.
- 6 Pryde's suggestion that the family of Ardrossan was really surnamed Ross is not in the least convincing. It is based on the fact that three people mentioned in a spurious document of 1205, all surnamed de Ross, have forenames which occur in the Ardrossan family (Pryde 1958, 17).
- 7 Hugh (and other Scots) are described as '*de mesuage les avant-ditz*' (*Foedera*, 2, 970).

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