

# Craignethan: the castle of the Bastard of Arran

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## ABSTRACT

*By 1532, Sir James Hamilton of Finnart had come into possession of the lands and pendicle of Craignethan in Clydesdale. He transformed whatever existed on the site (perhaps a tower or grange) into a fortified villa of a plan and quality unique in Scotland and without parallel in Europe, so far as we know. This paper reconsiders Craignethan against some of the many other buildings associated with Finnart. Through these comparisons, distinctive architectural similarities may emerge to help illuminate the question of the extent to which we may consider him an architect.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Lord James Hamilton of Finnart, Knight (c 1496–1540), Baron of the Barony of Avendale, was the eldest (but illegitimate) son of James, 1st Earl of Arran, and the great-grandson of James II. Had he been legitimate, he would have succeeded his father as heir to the throne. After the slaughter of his uncle Sir Patrick Hamilton of Kincavil, in April 1520<sup>1</sup> he became principal adviser to his father and to the Hamilton dynasty in the final phase of what may best be described, by analogy, as the Scottish Wars of the Roses: the battle for supremacy between the two principal noble factions of Scotland – the Hamiltons and the Douglasses. The battle had begun with James II's deliberate humbling of Douglas power and the promotion of the Hamiltons in the 1450s; it reached its climax with the Douglasses' last throw from 1518 to 1528. As heirs to the throne, the Hamiltons had most to gain by supporting the Stewarts; after 1528 they rose to become Scotland's primary family under the King. Arran was elderly, and was regarded as indecisive and ineffectual. The man who had 'greatest stroke about him' was his eldest son, Finnart.<sup>2</sup>

He had been prominent at the court of James V for over six years when he became head of the Hamilton family and Tutor of Arran after his father's death in March 1529, a position which he held until mid-1538. His numerous royal appointments included hereditary Sheriff of Lanark, Sheriff of Bathgate and Linlithgow, Bailie of Lesmahagow and Carstairs, and Coroner of the Upper and Inferior Wards of Clydesdale; he was auditor of the Exchequer for four years. He was Keeper and Captain of the Castles of Hume, Dumbarton, Blackness, and of the Palace of Linlithgow. In 1523 and 1533, he was a leader of the Scots army against English invasion. During the 1530s, he was a frequent judge and justiciar. Close to the King (possibly even pander to the King), he was his 'lovit familiar'. His Court appointments included Master Sewer, Master of the King's Stables, and – ultimately – the highest-remunerated royal official of them all: Master of Works Principal, at the princely sum of £200 per annum.

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James Hamilton, his father's eldest son, was knighted and had been granted the lands of Finnart, near Greenock in Renfrewshire, by 1513. He was almost immediately immersed in the political convulsions following the death of James IV at Flodden in 1513 and the arrival of the Regent Albany in 1515. He accompanied Albany back to France in 1517, making two trips between the Scottish Council and the French king, before finally returning to Scotland in October 1518 to take up custodianship of the demolished Hume Castle. His participation in the factionalism of the next 10 years (as his family swung this way or that – towards the Regent Albany, towards the Queen Dowager, even towards the Douglases in 1526, and finally and most effectively towards the King) enabled him to amass a power base and an extraordinary landholding. That landholding increased exponentially after 1529 to make him, by the time of his execution, one of the richest and most extensive landholders in central Scotland.

From his appointment to Hume Castle in 1518 onwards, there are repeated implications of Finnart being engaged in building: in Clydesdale, at Cambusnethan (1522), Cadzow (1525), Boghouse of Crawfordjohn (from 1526), Craignethan (from 1531), and Avendale (1533); in West Lothian, at Linlithgow (from 1534), Blackness (1535); the Mansion House at Greenock (1538), and the Royal Palace at Stirling (1538–40). He also became owner, keeper or occupier of Dean Castle, Kilmarnock (1535), and in West Lothian, of Kinneil (1529–38), a town house in Linlithgow (from 1531), Ochiltree (1526), Houstoun (1526), and Midhope (1535), amidst many other properties. His spoor may be evident at Tantallon, East Lothian (1528).

Finnart's role as principal adviser to the King diminished after 1537, and once his legitimate half-brother attained his majority in 1538, his role changed. Buchanan – who knew him – claimed that Finnart became a primary judge in the burgeoning heresy trials. Proof has not yet been established. What is certain, however, is his role in royal construction. In September 1539 he was appointed as Master of Works Principal – a new royal appointment at a uniquely high salary, double that of even the Warden of the March. On 1 January 1540, he and his men (there is a strong implication of a team) were given royal authority to enter any of the King's buildings to mend and repair 'where the need is'.<sup>3</sup>

Politics overwhelmed the proposal. In July, Finnart was seized and on 15 August 1540 he was subjected to a show-trial on two points of treason: first, that he had conspired with the Douglases to murder the King at Holyrood 12 years earlier; and second, that he had fired a missile from a machine of his invention from the campanile at Linlithgow to the King's danger. The former charge was ludicrous: if there had been a conspiracy, it would certainly not have been to the benefit of the Douglases, in whose defeat Finnart had been so instrumental. Any conspiracy against James V would only have been intended to advance the Hamilton family's occupation of the throne. There was, however, some substance to the second point. Something indeed had happened at Linlithgow, since both John Crummy (Master of the King's Entry at Linlithgow, and a Finnart acolyte) and James Nasmyth (a Linlithgow burgher) were also charged with being involved in firing a machine at the King in Linlithgow, and later respited. The result was preordained. Finnart was beheaded the same day, protesting in terms almost identical to Cardinal Wolsey some years before, that if he only had served his God with the same degree of devotion that he had served his King, he would not have come to such a pass (Lesley 1830, 158).

## CRAIGNETHAN

Craignethan (NS 815463) occupies a triangular promontory just west of the Clyde valley to the north of Lanark, bounded by the deep glens of the Nethan and the Mylneburn (illus 1). It consists of an inner and outer ward separated by a deep rock-cut ditch, protected by a caponier. (This is the



ILLUS 1 Craignethan from the air (Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland)

only example of this covered musketeers' emplacement, devised by Francesco di Giorgio, of this date yet discovered in Scotland, although there is something not dissimilar in Blackness). Both wards appear rectangular with square towers at the corners. The outer ward, almost square, is lined by a token single-storey wall, with token projecting corner towers (originally also single storey), which once enclosed gardens, orchards, and service buildings. The inner ward was defined by a high wall, extraordinarily thick along the western flank, with taller corner towers of varying scale and size, but also with towers midway down the north and south flanks as well. Toward the rear of this enormous towered courtyard sits a powerful double-pile lodging. The outer ward is almost square; the inner an attenuated rectangle precisely double the length to width.

Those approaching up the bluff from the mill in the Nethan valley – the only likely principal approach – would have been afforded a view of an entire towered citadel (illus 2), a more geometric, compact and Scottish version of Chinon (Loire et Cher) which Finnart may have visited when in France. The view would have been unique in Scotland, only remotely mimicked by Linlithgow once Finnart's rebuilding had been completed. The dominance of towers may derive from Roman inspiration (Campbell 1995, 302–35). Tall square towers rising from the corners of a courtyard represented the noble aspirations of a Renaissance prince. Fondness for this form of



ILLUS 2 The castle from the south, c 1881, showing its citadel-like appearance (*Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*)

building may have been more widespread than has been realized. Hamilton Palace (under Finnart's control 1529–38), Drumlanrig (the property of Finnart's ally, James Douglas of Drumlanrig, from whom he bought nearby Terregles), and Blairquhan (property of Finnart's friend James Kennedy of Blairquhan), were each square corner-towered courtyard buildings, harled with stone dressings.<sup>4</sup>

#### CRAIGNETHAN'S ROLE

We can only surmise Craignethan's establishment. After Finnart's forfeiture, it was garrisoned as a royal castle (in an area bereft of royal castles), with a complement, probably, of Captain, factor, two assistants, master gunner, two other gunners, and approximately five others, mainly farm servants.<sup>5</sup> These, at any rate, are the only staff recorded between 1535 and 1545. It was a reasonable, but not extensive permanent establishment. Naturally, many more would have been accommodated when Finnart was in residence.

So what role did Craignethan play in Finnart's life? Construction had begun by 1532, and was almost certainly complete by May 1536 when he welcomed James V and the Court (Somerville 1834, 348–9) to his daughter's wedding celebrations there. (This may explain features like the caponier, if the event was (in part) to demonstrate Finnart's architectural ideas to the King). Upon Finnart's forfeiture it was from Craignethan, that his deeds, great screen, expensive chapel ware, clock, 20.5 kg of silver including five silver dining tables (but excluding his eighteen

spoons, two silver salt cellars, and two silver flagons) – to say nothing of the box of over £1,500 worth of gold coins – were collected by a succession of porters sent by the King for delivery into royal hands in Edinburgh.<sup>6</sup>

Whereas Craignethan was evidently where Finnart kept all that was most precious, it may not have been his official seat of power. Much business was transacted from his town house in Linlithgow, some from Kinneil, and some from Hamilton. Moreover, in 1533, he excambioned his lands of Ochiltree, in Ayrshire, for those of Avendale whose castle dominated the centre of Strathaven, where an ancient route between Glasgow and Carlisle crosses with one from Edinburgh to Ayr. It was from Avendale, that Finnart took his preferred Charter title ‘Baron of the Barony of Avendale’.<sup>7</sup> Since Strathaven is not far from Craignethan (and secondary sources allege that Finnart reconstructed this castle – which the building tends to support, see below) the two existed in counterpoint. Avendale was strategically important (which Craignethan was not), and a highly visible expression of authority, whereas Craignethan was intended to be the seat of the dynasty which Finnart sought to establish. The role of Craignethan may be assumed to have been largely private and personal.

Because of its location off the principal highways, on a high peninsula in a fertile valley, it would be almost inconceivable that you could take Craignethan by surprise. The occupants would always know you were coming, with several days’ notice. The artillery fortification has led some to believe that this was the place of last resort. The truth is broader. Whilst always a ‘strong house’, it was Finnart’s château in the country, set in a lovely spot with fine views, providing security, peace and relaxation.

### *The plan of the inner ward*

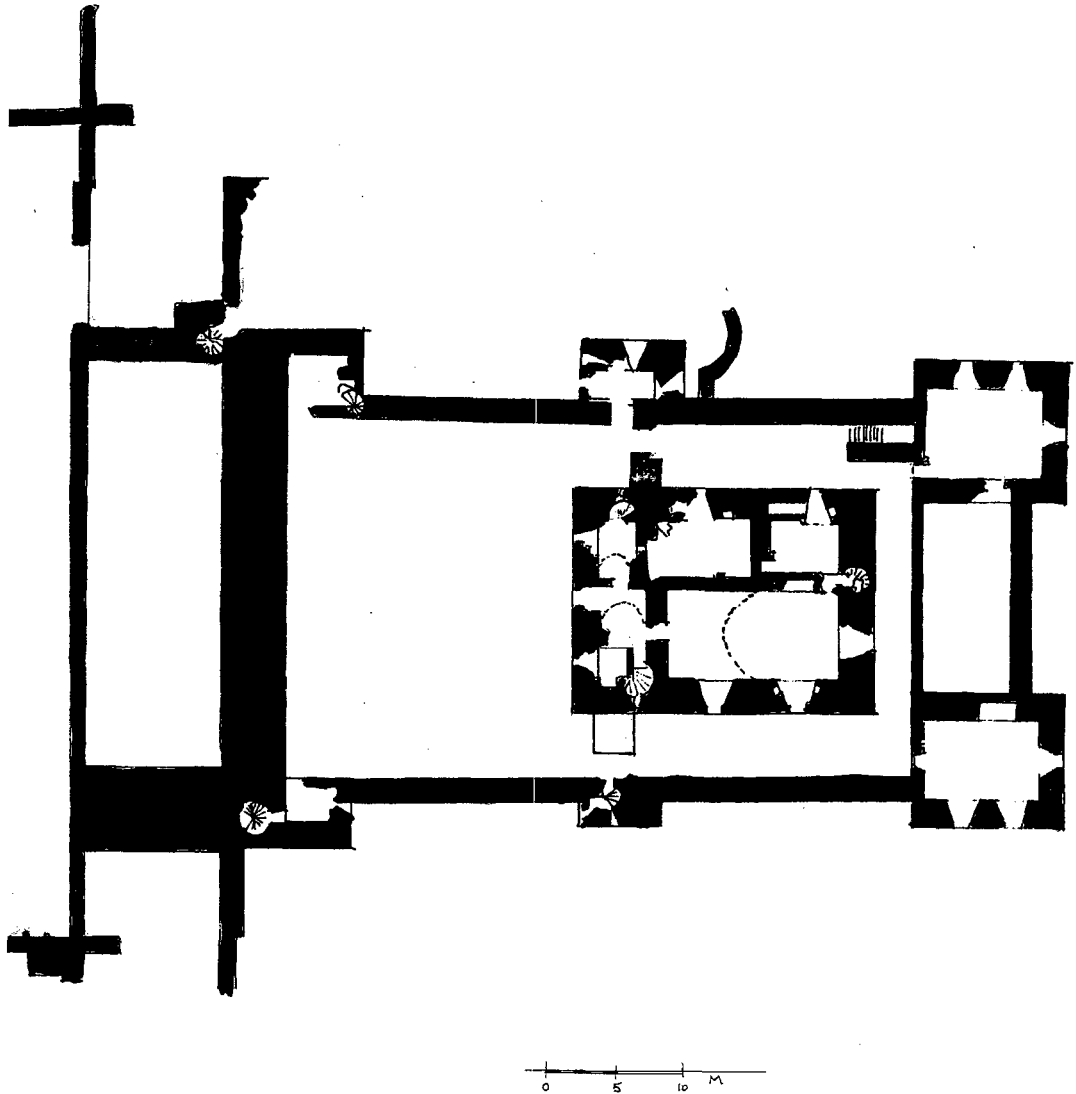
The inner ward (illus 3 & 4) is an attenuated rectangle set on its narrow axis, protected against artillery on the high ground to the west by a 4.9 m thick wall lining the dry ditch. The wall thickness of the remainder, the enclosure and the south-east tower, is generally 1.7 m, and that of the Lodging 2.6 m. A wall over 3 m thick would normally have contained chambers, staircases or perhaps casemates.<sup>8</sup>

The outer proportions of the inner ward are almost exactly 1:2 (56.7 m long and 28.4 m wide); this is identical to the proportions of the Main Chamber of the Lodging (21.2 m long by 6.1 m wide) which, itself, stands, free-standing, toward the rear of the enclosure. Close to the midpoint on each side wall, there is a shallow tower: the southern one is solid, containing solely a stair to roof level and parapet, whereas the northern contains a dog-legged entrance, possibly a postern gate. The rear (eastern) wall of the enclosure, overlooking the ravine, was composed of two massive corner towers – the southern probably a chapel and the northern a kitchen – with a structure between.

### *The façade of the Lodging*

No other structure in Scotland bears any resemblance to the Lodging. To call it a tower-house is to misunderstand its horizontal proportions (it probably never rose above three storeys), the significance of the principal chamber being on the ground floor, and the rigid geometry of the entire composition. The only apertures that gazed out from the once-harled plinth of its western façade are four cannon mouths (one blocked) and a doorway, symmetrically focused upon an armorial panel. That symmetry extended to the parapet, to the carefully determined locations of the elaborately carved waterspouts in the form of ornate cannon barrels, and to the central corbelled projection, flanked by similar ones at the corners. The parapet and turrets are distinctive not just by being in the finest worked polished ashlar, but by being brought to a sharp triangular apex.

The off-centre placing of the unequal gables of the double-pile façade that lay behind, and the necessary chimney-stacks – particularly that of the kitchen – would have disturbed this apparent symmetry;



ILLUS 3 Conjectural reconstruction of the ground-floor plan, based on information from Historic Scotland

but because they were set back 5.2 m behind the façade, perhaps neither was visible from ground level. They do not figure in Timothy Pont's elevation of c 1592 (National Library of Scotland: Pont 34d). By contrast to the forbidding entrance façade with its composition uncannily like a human face, the other three façades of the Lodging are completely free, punctured by enormous windows and two columns of slit windows to the stairs at the entrance end of both north and south façades.

The outer enclosure is entered through a gate at the centre (illus 5), more or less axially focused upon the inner court and the entrance of the Lodging – in a manner resembling the way Finnart's outer chivalric gatehouse to Linlithgow was focused axially on his new inner entrance. The geometry and symmetry of both enclosures reinforce the sensation of a formal axial route through the centre of the western wall of the inner



ILLUS 4 The view east, across the outer ward to the inner ward and the Lodging

enclosure. That, also, is what is implied in Pont's elevation which is without parallel in any other of Pont's drawings; even though, by that date, the western façade would have been demolished in the siege of 1570.

A central entrance may seem inconsistent with the gate-tower that survives half-way along the north wall of the inner ward; particularly when comparable flanking entrances, tightly controlled at the side to filter the enemy, exist at Tantallon, East Lothian (where there is hypothetical Finnart involvement), and Blackness, West Lothian (known Finnart involvement). Yet it is curious that the Lodging has no cannon loop covering the side entrance tower, whereas there are four facing west. That, and the striking axial formality of the composition, implies that the side entrance may have been a subsidiary entrance to allow soldiers into the northern enclave by which they gained protected access to the artillery defence in the ditch. Craignethan's appearance from the west would have been a vision of strict but blank geometry of mass and procession. A reconstruction (illus 6), based upon Pont's elevation, implies a composition deeply Roman in character.

### *The plan of the Lodging*

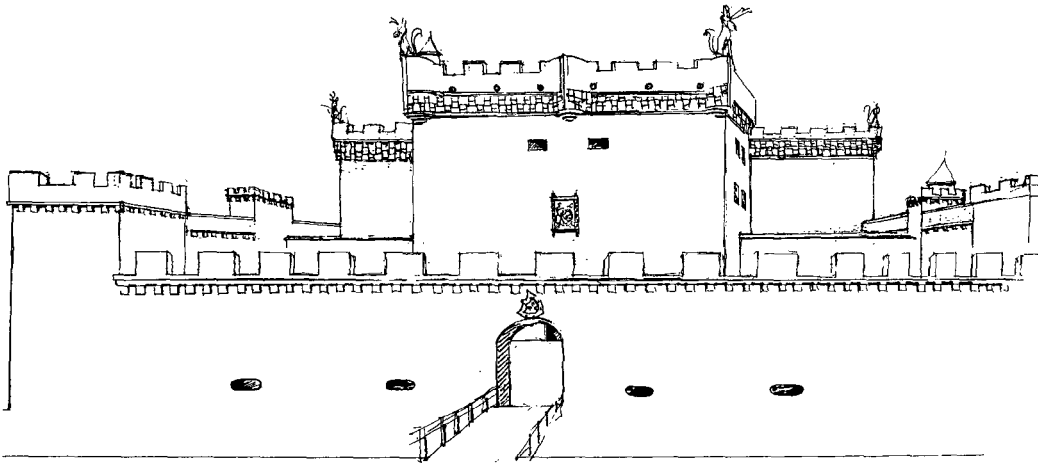
The plan is as unusual as its façade, and much more closely resembles the rational planning of the 18th and 19th centuries than what we have previously assumed to be the norm in early 16th-century Scotland. It is unevenly double-pile (approximately one-third to two-thirds on internal dimension) which was very rare in Scotland at this time. Chimney-stacks rise almost entirely through the centre of the building, distributing heat





ILLUS 5 The Lodging, from the entrance to the outer ward (*Crown copyright: Historic Scotland*)





ILLUS 6 Conjectural reconstruction of the western facade, based on measured surveys c 1870

throughout. The cross wall (illus 3) divides the Lodging into principal chambers to the south and service chambers to the north. Within the great height of the Main Chamber, a mezzanine is installed to the north, providing a substantial chamber above the kitchen, and a strongroom above Finnart's own chamber.

There are two entrance halls in the Lodging – the principal one almost cubic in volume, the lesser one smaller. The principal one leads to the Main Chamber and to the principal staircase; the lesser one leads to the kitchen and to the lesser staircase. There is a metaphorical 'green baize door' on your left as you enter this building: a device some 300 years before its time. Entrance halls of any sort are rare in Scots buildings of this date: and there is none as tall, gracious and as well built as Craignethan's, although the Palace of Stirling's gallery provides a comparable function. Split halls, such as this, have no parallel.

Just as innovative is the fact that the principal apartment – the Main Chamber – is entered directly from ground level. Even the beautifully vaulted ground-floor rooms at Tulliallan, near Kincardine, were subordinate chambers. The entire Scots experience at this time would have been of the necessity to climb stairs to the principal apartment. Indeed, with one notable exception – the 1538 Palace of Stirling which Finnart built at his own expense for the King – it is not until the early 17th century and the tentative arrival of the English influence in Culross Abbey House, Fife, and Auchterhouse, near Dundee, that a principal apartment is to be found at ground-floor level. The dominance of the first-floor *piano nobile* was to remain until the late 18th century.

There is a wholly isolated room at the end of the north section, presumed to be Finnart's own chamber, warmed both by its own fire and by radiated heat from the fireplaces of both the Main Chamber and the kitchen. The mezzanine chamber above, reached by an access stair too tiny to have had any formal or ceremonial use, was probably therefore a strong room. It was the most defensible and private spot in the entire mansion. There was no direct access to the room above it which, emphasizing the complex interlocking of the plan, must have formed part of the principal bedroom apartment reached from the south-west staircase.

### *The Main Chamber*

The outer hall and the Main Chamber (illus 7) occupy the ground floor to the south of the cross wall, rising double height to an ashlar vault (the one at right angles to the other). Lined by a smooth stone bench, the Main Chamber is an enormous, beautifully scaled, well-lit apartment with the extraordinary formal

Craignethan Castle  
Levenmouth  
Stirling



ILLUS 7 Elevation and section of the Lodging; measured survey c 1870 prior to Lord Hume's clearing out and stabilization of the fabric (Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland)

proportions of a double cube. (Had it had a flat timber ceiling rather than a stone vault the space would have been more easily recognizable.) There is a slight taper<sup>9</sup> – the room is, on average, 6.1 m wide and 12.2 m long, rising 6.1m to the apex of the vault. This, and similar proportions elsewhere at Craignethan, constitute a key component of Finnart's signature,<sup>10</sup> in contrast to the somewhat organic pattern of growth usual in Scottish architecture, and imply an *a priori* design or 'platt'. Two key chambers in the Palace of Stirling, one in Linlithgow, the principal ones in Kinneil, Midhope, and Dean Castle (amongst others) likewise have the proportions of 1:2. In most cases their height is conjectural, and their exteriors substantially altered.

Craignethan's Main Chamber is lit by two huge windows facing south, and a further huge window at the east end, with a higher and less elaborately detailed window above. The explanation for the latter might be that when the Lodging was first built, there was plentiful light through the ground-level east window; but once the east wing of the courtyard had been built, it would have been so close to the Lodging as to block its light; this higher addition would have been the remedy. There are stone benches lining the walls, and the main fireplace, now destroyed, was in the northern cross wall, beside the door to Finnart's private room. Just beside it, there is a projecting corbel, with no apparent purpose. Perhaps it was a fixing point for the screen of Craignethan that the King later secured to himself. A broad ledge half-way up the west wall, reached from the main stair, may have been a minstrels' gallery.

### *The basement*

The basement of the Lodging is entered from both sides of the cross wall and takes the form of four main chambers, one with a well, and a pit-type chamber behind the principal stair descending from the main entrance hall. A parallel but subsidiary stair leads up the north wall from the well and stores to the kitchen. A water-spout leads from the well chamber through into the service corridor to the east, presumably to feed water into the north-eastern kitchen. In the west wall of the northern cellar there is a blocked opening.

### *The mezzanine*

On the west side of the kitchen chimney, the mezzanine floor, reached by the lesser front stair, contains a good apartment over the kitchen; this apartment is sufficiently substantial to be worthy of an important household officer, such as the Constable. On the far side, as described earlier, is Finnart's strongroom.

### *Upper floor*

The lesser stair leads on up to a further floor which appears to have been at the same level on both sides of the cross wall. There was another, substantial and well-lit apartment above the mezzanine. Whereas this floor is now linked on both sides of the cross wall, it was probably not always so. The high stone-vaulted halls below provide the plinth for a gun emplacement, 2.75 m broad, with what appears to have been two full west-facing casemates, and a huge cupboard, possibly for powder and shot.

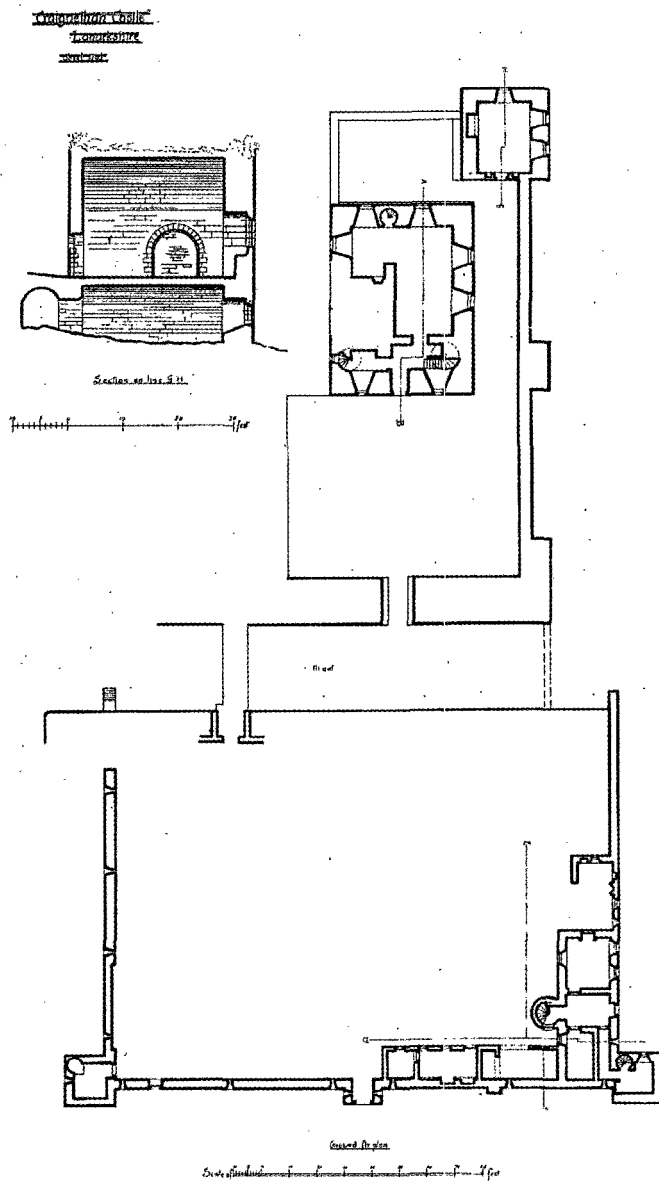
The strategy of the Lodging reveals itself at this level. It has been designed as two separate but conjoined components. Facing west, its vaulted structure running north/south, is a defensive artillery façade, 5.2 m thick (almost identical in thickness to the western wall of the inner ward). At ground level, there are the two halls and two stairs, with gun emplacements; at the upper level, it contained the two cannon emplacements with casemates and the cupboard, possibly for powder and shot. Sheltering behind it is the gracious, well-lit Lodging, its vaulted structure running east/west: two structures, two functions, vaulted at right angles to each other for stability and protection. The upper floor of the Lodging, behind, was reached by the principal stair (south) which may have debouched part way down the south wall, perhaps between two of the three large well-lit chambers each with its fireplace on this floor. Two of these rooms (east and north-east) must have opened into each other, implying a single apartment. You cannot now tell whether there was further space within the roofs lit by dormer windows. There is no sign, within the Lodging itself, of a further stair. The main stair stops, and the lesser stair debouches into the parapet.

### *The parapet*

The parapet walk runs a full storey above the casemate level and, likewise, appears to have been able to take guns. It probably extended the full 5.2 m back to the gables of the residential quarters behind. It had wonderfully decorative water-spouts in the form of scrolled cannon, and plentiful heraldic beasts for the apex (Hamilton antelopes). Although the decorative corbel table and parapet may have run right round the building, the rooms below are flush with the wall, and any wall-walk could only have squeezed between the parapet and the roofs – rather as Finnart later created in the Palace of Stirling. The Stirling parapet has five large beautiful courses of ashlar, the roof behind – with its dormer windows – tucked back to allow a narrow passage. Of Craignethan's parapet only three beautiful courses now survive, although it was evidentially higher.

### *The east wing*

The fall in the land to the east provided the opportunity for a floor of cellars and kitchens off a service corridor below an eastern wing at the approximate floor level of the Lodging – just as Finnart was to achieve in the Palace of Stirling. (A service corridor of this kind became customary in the grander chateaux by mid-century.) There is a large cellar at the base of each of the two towers, flanking two ordinary-scaled cellars and a game-preparation room or scullery, with the thick walls normally used to support a building above. The vaulting of the corridor, however, is later than the buildings on the east range.



ILLUS 8 Ground-floor plan, and section through the chapel tower, c 1870 (*Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*)



### *The chapel tower*

The south-east tower (illus 8) may well have been the chapel, although, to judge by its uneasy placement on the basement, its current form was an afterthought.<sup>11</sup> No stair links it vertically: the sole function of its principal chamber related to the courtyard, and was entered solely from the west. It was reached from the Lodging under the shelter of a timber pentice gallery, the steep roof raggle of which remains. There is no window on the entrance (west) façade. The wall-head corbelling is truly magnificent, and conceals a much lower, stone-flagged roof to the chapel. Although there are large, symmetrically disposed gunloops below parapet level, there appears to be no convenient firing platform, no way of defenders being able to reach up to the parapet above; and – unless they entered from the now missing eastern wing – there was no way for them to reach this place at all. It appears to be disconnected from the curtain wall-walk. Appearance is all: the three-storey south façade of the tower is rigidly symmetrical in a pattern of 1–2–3: a large central cellar window, and two principal windows capped by three oval gunloops.

Its proportions are odd: as though a strict regime had been attempted and then let slip. The courtyard façade (from ground to underside of corbel table) is approximately a third higher than wide (1:1.33). The north façade is almost (but not quite) square – 10.7m high to 10.1m wide. The interior is almost the same width as height (5.95m wide to 6.1m high, with an unrelated length of 8.1m). On plan, the external dimensions, likewise, appear to have been aiming for (but missing) a square: 9.8 m by 10.3 m.

This tall and beautifully vaulted chamber is the only substantive space in this large and beautifully built tower. It has two large windows facing south, and one in the centre of the east wall (echoing the Main Chamber of the Lodging). There are very few identifying features, but manifold curiosities. There is a long vertical recess in the extraordinarily thin wall on the left hand of the doorway: and a joist-hole to the right hand of the east window. Although the first strongly resembles the chase for a drawbridge beam, there is no sign of filled masonry on the exterior. The recess is too narrow to have been a cupboard and there are no signs of shelves. (The wall is so thin as to imply a rebuilding.) The recess might, however, have formed the fixing point for an upright for a timber loft or gallery, which might also have been supported on the east wall by the other hall where there is a joist-hole, which would have provided more accommodation in a small chamber, making good use of the high vault.

On the north side is a semicircular recess with a later chimney, which led to this room being identified as the kitchen. However, the chimney is later since, to allow its construction, the stone has been cloured back on the lines of a pre-existing beautifully dressed stone arch (very similar to a recess in a similarly vaulted chamber in Kinneil). What was originally there, therefore, was a semicircular recess of the correct proportions to contain a tomb waiting for its owner's eventual demise. Moreover, if the chimney is indeed later, the room would have been neither kitchen nor living space, for there is no sign of an original fireplace; and thus no heat. The most likely explanation, therefore, is that although there are no surviving traces of aumbry, sedilia etc, this room was the chapel, the original quality of which is attested by Finnart's 'chapel-geir' so lavish that James V appropriated it for the baby prince born in May 1540.<sup>12</sup> The recess and the joist-hole might, therefore, have been fixing points for a royal loft in a specially widened chapel (hence the altered foundations below), in a wing refitted as Royal Lodging for the King's visit in 1536.

### *The eastern wing*

That there must have been a construction between the two towers is implied by the defences on the chapel roof which would have been inaccessible otherwise. If it had been a single majestic chamber, its proportions, yet again, would have approximated 1:2 (although not exactly). Although the customary place for a gallery (lining a view or ravine) it would have been too short and too tall. Given the access to the north-east tower and its kitchen below, a guest chamber – or perhaps a specially added 1536 Royal Lodging – seems not improbable.

*North-eastern tower*

It is impossible to conjecture the function of the north-eastern tower. There is a fine large kitchen in the basement, and a turnpike stair rising from it, which implies (in view of the enormous kitchen in the Lodging), guest or staff residences.

*The side towers*

The intermediate side towers are barely more than two storeys high, with a parapet – probably stone-flagged – above. That on the south façade is only big enough to carry a stairway up to the platform. That on the north façade contains an entrance chamber with double doorways and gunloops. In the context of the defences in the dry ditch, this northern entrance is puzzling. From masonry foundations in the outer enclosure, and paving in the inner enclosure, the conjecture is that there was a drawbridge across the inner moat just outside the north wall of the inner ward, leading to the north gate (already suggested as a postern). Unless the screen wall extended north to protect the drawbridge gate, however, defenders attempting to reach the stairs down to the transe in the ditch would have been completely exposed to attack once they left the north gate, which would nullify the entire point of the defence.

*Western façade*

The enigmatic west-facing screen-wall facing the inner court, now reduced to its foundation, projected far beyond the inner enclosure, and terminated in buttressed masonry cascading down the slope. Anywhere else in Scotland, a wall that thick would invariably conceal mural chambers, casemates or staircases. Incorporated into this screen, in line with the geometry of the inner court, are two flanking towers. Each is the size of a small single chamber with a mural turnpike stair. It is presumed that they were guardhouses with access to a parapet well fortified with artillery. A mural stair in the south-west corner of the screen wall gives protected passage to the caponier below.

## CRAIGNETHAN, CADZOW, AND TANTALLON

The plan of Craignethan represents the layout of a defensive country château that could accommodate orchards, beasts, stabling, guests' quarters, a strong room, and a Constable's lodgings – each of which existed in relation to one another. To appreciate the sophistication of Craignethan, it is convenient to compare it to Cadzow and Tantallon, with both of which Finnart may have been involved.

Without thorough excavation, it will be impossible to be certain about Cadzow. By the spring of 1525, the Earl of Angus had overturned the Queen Margaret/Hamilton administration and had become Chancellor with custody of the King. The Hamiltons had never stood in greater peril. The Duke of Albany's siege of the castle of Hamilton in October 1515 had revealed its vulnerability to brass guns which could command it from rising ground across the Clyde, rendering irrelevant its previous defences of river, marsh and mist. The Hamiltons desperately needed a new fastness secure against the new artillery. About as inaccessible as it could be, the site chosen was on the edge of a ravine at a curve on the River Avon in the depth of the Forest of Cadzow, reached only by a tortuous path from Barncluith, just to the south-west of Hamilton. There may have been a hunting lodge there already. (There is a problem with the name: this building was almost certainly not called Cadzow, and probably not even Hamilton Castle. It may have been called Fairholm, and later referred to as the House in the Woods.<sup>13</sup>)

Cadzow's plan resembles that of Chinon in France, in that there were three wards. The outer ward, inland, on higher ground to the right of the approach, comprised a walled service enclosure,

with at least one slightly projecting rectangular corner tower. The working assumption is that it contained stables and other offices. The well lies just to the south. The middle ward, with its square tower cantilevered out above the ravine, encompassed an earlier building. It has been so altered by additions to the south, and the almost total removal and obliteration of its inland parts, that its plan could not be accurately determined without excavation. This ward, some of whose stonework is very sophisticated, appears to have contained the living quarters.

The inner ward, protected on two sides by the ravine, and on the other two sides by a deep rock-cut ditch, may have taken the form of an enormous tower – a place of last resort, reached at first-floor level across a bridge from the middle ward. It was so badly damaged when crushed into a picturesque folly in the 18th century that full excavation is required to understand it. Its landward façade is flanked by two circular towers of which one (at least) was built, most unusually, of ashlar. This enormous structure, partially split-level, has been hung around and cantilevered from a gigantic sandstone rock that appears to have projected up from the ravine. If it was sufficient in height to command the higher ground to the south, it would have had to have been four if not five storeys. The only residential quarters yet discovered lie against the rear along the ravine, the area most protected from any attack.

Since Finnart was his father's chief adviser by 1525, the building work is likely to have been his project. The *ad hoc* nature of the cliffside site, and the pre-existing building may have been responsible for the three-ward layout. There is a gunloop of c 1525 facing down the rock-cut ditch between the middle and inner wards: there is also a hump in the ditch which implies the possible existence of a caponier or a similar defence. A tiny circular staircase in the projecting square north-west tower of the inner ward supports that, although its date is uncertain.

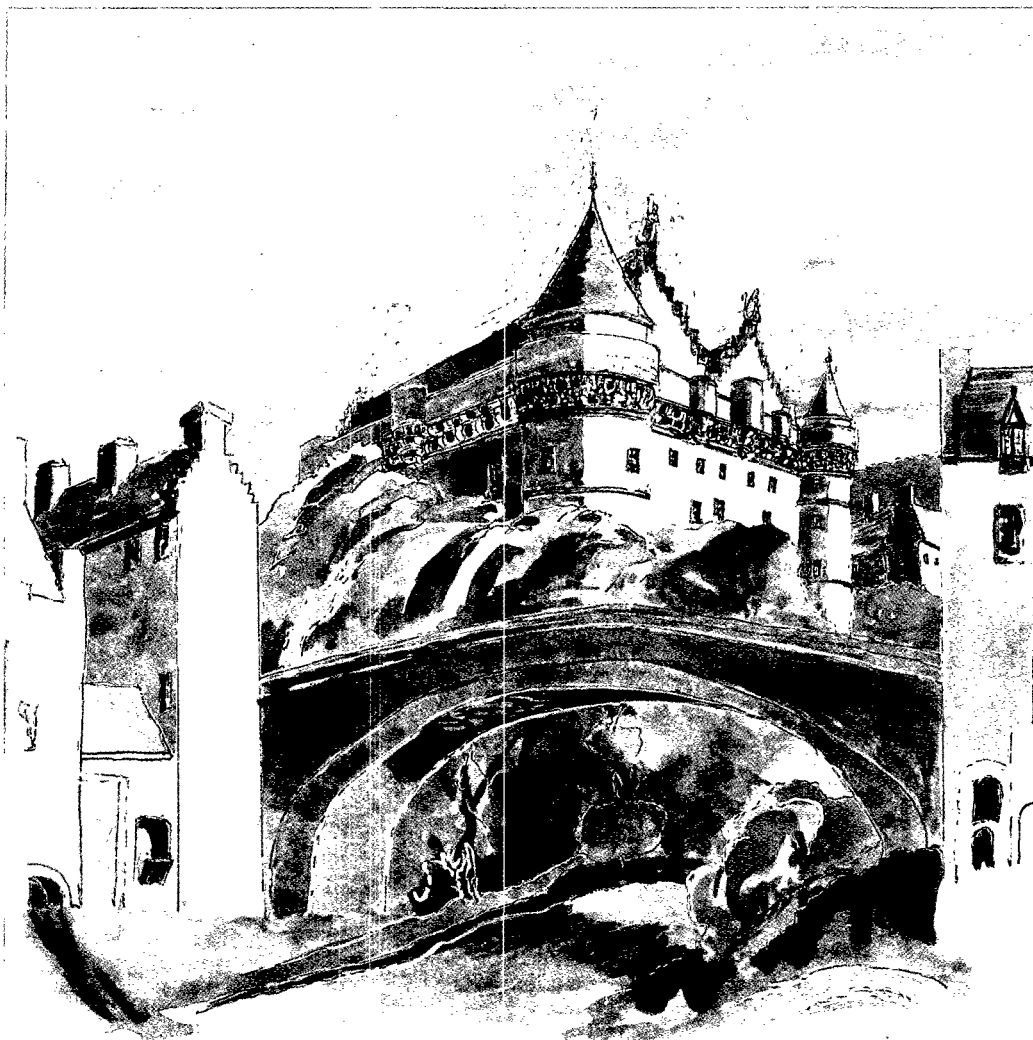
The combination of outer, middle and inner ward, with the functions of service, residential and defence, is what is resolved so masterfully at Craignethan.

Finnart's involvement in Tantallon, by contrast, may only be supposed. James V undertook new or repair works there following the siege in September 1528, and Finnart, who may have been involved in the King's escape from the Douglases, was certainly at the siege.<sup>14</sup> The Douglases, whose principal stronghold this was, believed Finnart to have been instrumental in their fall and he became a primary beneficiary of their lands.

Tantallon's defences bear comparison with Cadzow and Craignethan. The inner ward is protected by a rock-cut ditch lined by an enormous, thick V-shaped curtain wall (like St Andrews) with an entrance tower at the centre, and two enormous flanking towers. It is the outer ward that bears study: roughly circular, protected by a wall and a dry moat, terminating to the east in a gatehouse tower and a skewed entrance. Lying across the dry moat at the two key points where the wall changes direction, there are unexcavated rectangular mounds, of a proportion similar to the caponier at Craignethan.

#### PARALLELS FOR THE FAÇADE AT CRAIGNETHAN: THE CASTLES OF AVENDALE AND BLACKNESS

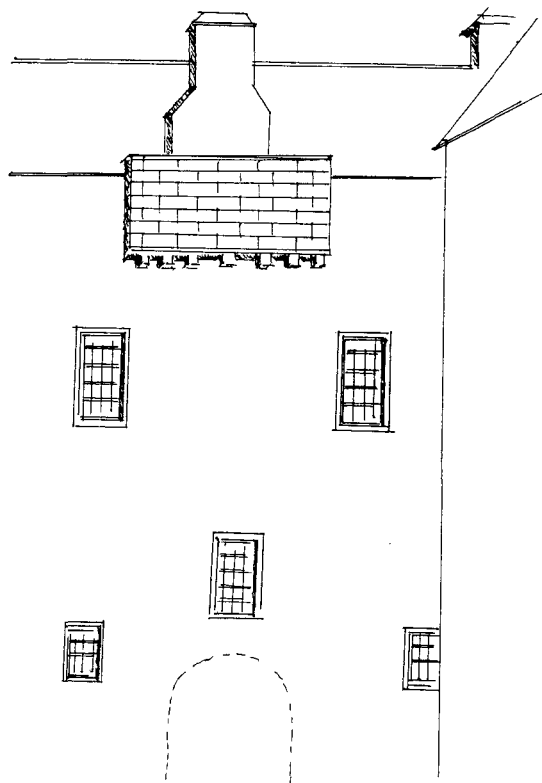
The formality of the composition of the west façade of Craignethan resembles what must once have been that of Avendale (Strathaven) into which Finnart came in 1533, and to which secondary sources attribute substantial works by him (Greenshields 1864, 54–64). The only visual records of the building in its old state are the elevation by Timothy Pont, and a view by Adam de Cardonnel. Pont's drawing (National Library of Scotland) depicts a façade three bays wide (four bays at the top) flanked by round towers, the right-hand one of which is half demolished. The height appears to be enormous – a minimum of four if not five storeys; the parapet is elaborate, the entire round tower has a conical roof, and there is some indication of an outer curtain-wall.



ILLUS 9 Conjectural reconstruction of Avendale, based upon Cardonnel and Pont

Cardonnel's drawing, published almost 200 years later, in 1788, confirms Pont to a remarkable degree<sup>15</sup>: a building of which the principal façade retains a complete round tower at one end, and a half-demolished round tower at the other; three or four bays wide, with a very elaborate corbelled parapet, the corbels in a chequer pattern arising from a heavy moulding, just like Craignethan: a parapet punctured by a corbelled projection in the centre, just like Craignethan, and two lesser corbelled projections flanking it. All this implies that the surviving wall, which MacGibbon & Ross believed to be the rear wall of Avendale Castle, was, in reality, a cross-wall – a further point of resemblance to Craignethan, since that would imply a double-pile building.





ILLUS 10 Elevation of the central section of the Governor's Lodging of the State prison of Blackness. Note the similarity in symmetry with Craignethan.

The two flanking round towers on each corner are slight in dimension: and the probable method of capping them would have been by a conical set-back tower in the centre: giving Avendale an appearance with resemblances both to the Bastille in France, and to the northern tower of Holyroodhouse (which might well have befitted the great-grandson of a King: and equally have conveyed alarming signals to the current King).

#### BLACKNESS

The symmetry of Craignethan's façade also resembles that of the Governor's Lodging at Blackness (illus 10). Finnart undertook substantial works there in 1535–7,<sup>16</sup> adding casemates and an off-centre entrance through the north-west spur protected by a caponier-like defence, with a Governor's Lodging above. Since these new defences faced inland rather than towards the sea and the enemies from England, we may infer that Blackness was the State prison.

The Governor's Lodging derives its appearance from inter-war restoration by J S Richardson, at variance with a 19th-century engraving.<sup>17</sup> What now appears to be a central window may once have been pedimented, perhaps a principal doorway reached up a flight of steps.

Having reached the top, a turn left may have taken one into the spacious turnpike stair leading directly up into the Governor's Lodging.

The similarity with Craignethan is the strong symmetry of the façade, composed about that door (or window, as it now is) which lies amidst two large windows above, and two smaller windows below – rather like the armorial panel at Craignethan. (The composition is now off-centre, by the addition of the stair-tower to the west.) At the wall-head, the composition is capped by a thinly projecting parapet on the single corbels used elsewhere at Blackness, and which line the outer wall at Craignethan. The focus of the composition is a wall-head chimney. A much more workaday building than Craignethan, the symmetry still has considerable impact.

## FINNART AS ARCHITECT

Whilst a noblemen of such degree (a great-grandson of a King to boot), might have been intrigued by making platts, to what degree was he involved in construction? Finnart proposed (successfully) John French, mason at Linlithgow, as King's master mason for life.<sup>18</sup> He is recorded overseeing expenditure and signing off building accounts on Linlithgow<sup>19</sup> and Blackness, and he paid John Kedder (or Cadder), master mason at Boghouse of Crawfordjohn.<sup>20</sup> Charters claim that he built Craignethan<sup>21</sup> and that his Mansion House of Greenock was 'new buildit' in 1541 (MacGibbon & Ross 1895, vol 2; 484). His charter of legitimization in 1539 links him indisputably to the Palace of Stirling.<sup>22</sup> So much is certain.

He was first termed 'architector' by the 11th Earl of Somerville and David Hume of Godscroft, c 1675; attributed to him were the construction of Hamilton's Lodging at Cambusnethan (Somervill 1832), and the palaces of Stirling, Linlithgow, and even Falkland.<sup>23</sup> Bishop Lesley wrote that Finnart believed himself invulnerable to the conspiracy against him 'because he had been so diligent in the King's Service, specially in reforming the palaces of Stirling and Linlithgow and making of new lodgings thereunto' (Lesley 1830, 158). It would be wrong to ignore the implication of the huge salary of £200 for Master of Works Principal, which he became in 1539, as compared to almost all the other noble posts in the Royal Household.<sup>24</sup>

His charter of 1 January 1540 would certainly have given him an overview of Falkland even if he had not earlier:

Ane letter made to James Hamilton of Finnart Knight, charging all the Captains, Constables and Keepers of our Sovereign Lord's castles, houses, places, palaces and fortalices wherever they be within the realm to suffer and let the said James, his servants and workmen, to enter in the same, as often as they please, for vying [advice], seing [inspecting], mending, and biging [building] thereof where myster [need] is, and to lay sand, lime, stones, timber, and other stuff necessary therein, to the effect foresaid, under the pain of tinsale [loss] of their offices and punishment of their persons with all rigour etc.<sup>25</sup>

'His servants and workmen' implies a building team – which seems probable since he had been paying for the design and construction of the Palace of Stirling out of his own pocket.

So who were these people? They probably included the six masons brought over by the Duke of Guise in 1539, or Andrew Mention, Frenchman, and his carving colleagues. Almost certainly they included Thomas Johnston, notary, Master of Works and overseer of works at Linlithgow, who formed part of Finnart's close circle; probably Thomas French, or Franche, initially at Linlithgow but later at Falkland; and Sir James Nicholson who worked alongside Finnart at Stirling. He lodged with Mrs Atkins at a cost of £65 'the time he remained there upon

the building of the new work at Stirling';<sup>26</sup> he ordered Estonian timber from Walter Cousland,<sup>27</sup> and iron from William Hill<sup>28</sup> and Alexander Riddoch,<sup>29</sup> and a vast quantity of building materials from Edward Little's wife.<sup>30</sup> When cash for materials had run short, Finnart had pawned two silver flagons to Mungo Tennant.<sup>31</sup> One might speculate whether the James Atkinson who bought Finnart's silverware back from the King at vast expense was the husband of Mrs Atkins, or perhaps one of Finnart's entrepreneurs. Finnart's successor in post – John Hamilton of Cragye,<sup>32</sup> the man likely responsible for the architecture of Finnart's relatives (Cardinal David Beaton at Melgund, Archbishop John Hamilton at St Andrews, and the Earl of Arran at Hamilton, Holyrood etc) – had been one of Finnart's close entourage and may have been trained by him.

It was surely a remarkable act for a King's great-grandson to lodge on site to ensure things were done as he wished and that the quality was up to the standards he desired. The accounts indicate a far deeper involvement in building than one would expect from a nobleman of Finnart's degree – particularly when he had such important State duties. Although they all bespeak the role of a main contractor rather than architect, that would have been even more contrary to Finnart's status since he was not undertaking his task for money (indeed, he was financing the entire operation in order to achieve full legitimization). He had no need of more money, land or power. What he brought to the job was an attitude of high culture: of devising buildings – or lodgings – of a plan and quality fit to match James V's European ambitions.

Too much has been made of the fact that the external decoration of Stirling appears nowhere else in Scotland, and that therefore different designers must have been involved in each of Finnart's buildings. But whilst Stirling's façade is stunning in composition and quality, it represents only one element of an architectural signature. In terms of planning, proportion and composition, the similarities between some of Finnart's buildings are far stronger than their differences. The platt for Stirling had to create a regular pavilion around substantial buildings already on site: unlike Craignethan, the task was achieving apparent regularity with the essential proportions and planning, without the freer hand available at Craignethan. The Stirling project had the highest symbolic significance: for the King with his new French wife, and for Finnart, whose dynastic ambitions depended upon its success. It demanded hands-on attention not just from the developer, but from the platt's originator.

It is the built achievement, embracing a growing consistency of design in planning, composition and proportion at Craignethan, Cadzow, Tantallon, Blackness, and Avendale, that earns Lord James Hamilton of Finnart, Knight, acceptance as an architect.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many have assisted in this study of Sir James Hamilton of Finnart. I owe much to Donald Galbraith, John Dunbar, Iain MacIvor, Denys Pringle, Dr Rosalind Marshall, Richard Fawcett, Bob Hislop, Chris Tabraham, and Lena Smith.

## NOTES

- 1 The Scottish Parliament, led by the Earl of Arran, was prevented from sitting in Edinburgh's Tolbooth by an armed insurrection by the Earl of Angus on 30 April 1520. Amongst the dead, in the skirmish later known as 'Cleanse the Causeway', was Sir Patrick Hamilton, Captain and Keeper of Blackness, Lord High Treasurer, chivalric jousting, and chief adviser to his brother Arran.
- 2 *Letters & Papers HVIII*, Part 4: CIV. Magnus to Wolsey 9.1.1525.
- 3 *Reg Sec Sig*, 3245.
- 4 The supposition is based upon the elevations of Timothy Pont, from his manuscript maps c 1588–96

held in the Map Library, the National Library of Scotland. The appearance of Hamilton Palace is confirmed in a 1672 drawing; and that – along with Drumlanrig – in paintings of c 1780 by Francis Grose in the Riddell Manuscripts, the Society of Antiquaries. Finnart's Manor at Greenock (the demolished 'Old Mansion House') appears to have been a courtyard building with at least two corner towers. Blairquhan, in 1787 and 1813 drawings reproduced by Davies (1991, 181–2), was likewise.

- 5 There is no precise description of Craignethan at any one time, leading to the possibility of double counting. Most of the information comes after the forfeiture. However, *Treasurer's Accts* (7, 481) lists the household in September 1541 as having a porter, four servants and an oxen feeder. Gawain Giffert was appointed as Captain (*Reg Sec Sig*, 4347); and David and James Orrok were appointed Keepers, possibly until Giffert's arrival (*Treasurer's Accts* 7, 393). Craignethan seems likely to have had one of Sir James Hamilton's factors to whom Alexander Hutoun was sent for accounts in February 1541 (*Treasurer's Accts* 7, 431). Two gunners went to France with the royal party in 1537 (*Treasurer's Accts* 8, 158); and John Mullions, the Gunner of Craignethan, was paid for services at the siege of Lochmaben in 1543 (*Treasurer's Accts* 8, 362). Andrew Bow, an acolyte of Finnart, later appears as 'gunner in Hamilton' in 1542 (*Treasurer's Accts* 8, 244). Its gunnery complement was, at the least, two double falcons and five smaller cast pieces (*Treasurer's Accts* 7, 397).
- 6 Collection of the escheat goods of the umquhile James Hamilton of Finnart: *Treasurer's Accts* vol 7, 383, 397. etc.
- 7 It was the Barony of Avendale which, over many Charter transactions, Finnart built into a huge landholding extending north to Bothwell, north-west to the edge of Renfrewshire, west to the boundary of Loudon, south beyond Crawfordjohn and Glengavel, east to Carnwath, and north-east toward Shotts. With this barony, for full rights of inheritance for his children, Finnart achieved full legitimization in 1539 (*Reg Mag Sig*, 2035, 2021).
- 8 These measurements were obtained from drawings made by Historic Scotland.
- 9 Some unnecessary peculiarities of walling in the Lodging imply either the presence of an earlier structure or much alteration. The kitchen wall is curved; the Main Chamber tapers marginally from one end to the other by 0.3 m; and the west façade has been thickened at the stage gunloops were introduced.
- 10 Geometric precision characterizes Craignethan. The proportion of the Lodging's south façade from base to corbel course is 1 (height): 2 (width); that of the west façade is 1:1.5; that of the entire inner ward is 1 (width): 2 (length). Such proportions happen neither organically nor by chance, implying that Craignethan was designed a priori from a 'platt' or plan. Similar proportions in other Finnart buildings provide a potential authorship link. Apartments double the width to length (1:2) can be found in Kinneil, Linlithgow, Midhope, Ochiltree, Dean Castle, Kilmarnock (the new wing), and twice in the Palace of Stirling. A greater regularity in Stirling was almost certainly inhibited by the presence of substantial existing building from which Finnart and his gang had to forge the new palace. Where he had a free hand, he opted for formally proportioned chambers.
- 11 The chapel may not always have been intended to be such. Extraordinarily, its structure straddles one and a half cellars; it is now some 0.75 m wider than its supporting cellar below. That supports the notion that after the cellar floor was built, the purpose of the floor above changed – perhaps to accommodate the wedding and its royal guest in April 1536.
- 12 The quality of the *chapel geir* is stated when conveyed to John Mossman for the removal of Finnart's arms and the substitution of the young prince's. October 1540 – *Treasurer's Accts* 7,397.
- 13 Pont's map shows a ruin at Cadzow, and the nearest name is Fairholm: a property title that came to Finnart in 1526, but was later occupied by John Hamilton of Fairholm. Dr Rosalind Marshall's researches into the Duchess Anne (Hamilton) uncovered a bolt-hole in Cadzow forest used for retreat during the Civil Wars called the 'House in the Woods' which was extended in the later 17th century. There was certainly a later, adjacent building called Woodhouse.
- 14 *Letters & Papers HVIII*, 4924: Magnus to Wolsey 14 November 1528.
- 15 Cardonnel 1788.
- 16 *Acts of Council*, 453, 17 August 1536. This is a retrospective payment, 'in complete payment of the



whole obligation for the reparation and building of his castle of Blackness'. Also *Treasurer's Accts* 7, 304.

- 17 Drawing by Hallow (Forsyth 1806, vol 3, 522).
- 18 *Master of Works Accts* 30.4.1535, vol 1, xxxiii.
- 19 *Master of Works Accts* vol 1, 228.
- 20 *Master of Works Accts* vol 1, 115.
- 21 *Reg Mag Sig*, 26, 1885, 3 January 1538.
- 22 *Reg Mag Sig*, 2021. *Treasurer's Accts* 7 – 256. *Reg Sec Sig*, 11, 3199.
- 23 John Scrymgeour was indisputably Principal Master of Works at Falkland, but we are only now gaining a clear idea of roles and relationships – partly based upon salaries. Just as French was Master Mason at Linlithgow, Johnston was overseer and Master of Works; and Sir James Nicholson remained Master of Works whilst Finnart was involved at Stirling, so it is clear that Finnart had an overriding role. That might also have been the case at Falkland, where the disparity between Scrymgeour's salary (£40) and Finnart's (£200) gives an indication of relativity. There is no evidence, yet, of Finnart involvement at Falkland, save the attributions like Somervill's. Yet in 1526, Falkland's Keeper was John Betoun of Creich, Finnart's cousin by marriage, who appealed to the Privy Council for funds to undertake substantial repairs – and sometimes coincidences can become too many. Finnart's 1540 Charter gave him an overview of all the King's buildings, including Falkland; and Thomas French undertook some work at the palace. On the other hand, the lack of resemblance between Falkland and other Finnart buildings implies that the connection remains doubtful.
- 24 For example, the following posts held by noblemen: Master of the King's Wine Cellar, £40; Master Usher, £60; Keeper of Linlithgow, £20; Master of the King's Stables, £25; and the post of Warden of the March, £100.
- 25 *Reg Sec Sig*, 3245.
- 26 *Treasurer's Accts* 7, 482.
- 27 *Treasurer's Accts* 7, 456.
- 28 *Treasurer's Accts* 7, 471.
- 29 *Treasurer's Accts* 8, 11 November 1541.
- 30 *Treasurer's Accts* 8, 19 January 1542.
- 31 *Treasurer's Accts* 7, 393.
- 32 John Hamilton of Cragye appears in Thomas Johnston's *Protocol Book* as one of Finnart's frequent witnesses, ie one of his entourage: *Reg Sec Sig*, 283: 13 May 1543 (also *Reg Mag Sig*, 2937 and 2936): 'Master John Hamilton, Vicar of Cragye, made Master of Work of all our Sovereign Lady's Palaces and places within the realm for all the days of his life'. He subsequently received munificent gifts of escheat goods of Maurice McCawys, Donald Dow McWeyr, and the forfeited bail of John Stewart of Stux (*Reg Sec Sig*, 508), those of the parson of Finavon (*Reg Sec Sig*, 1137), temporalities of all the possessions of the Abbey of Deer (*Reg Sec Sig*, 1290) and all the escheat goods of James Henderson (*Reg Sec Sig*, 1584).

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