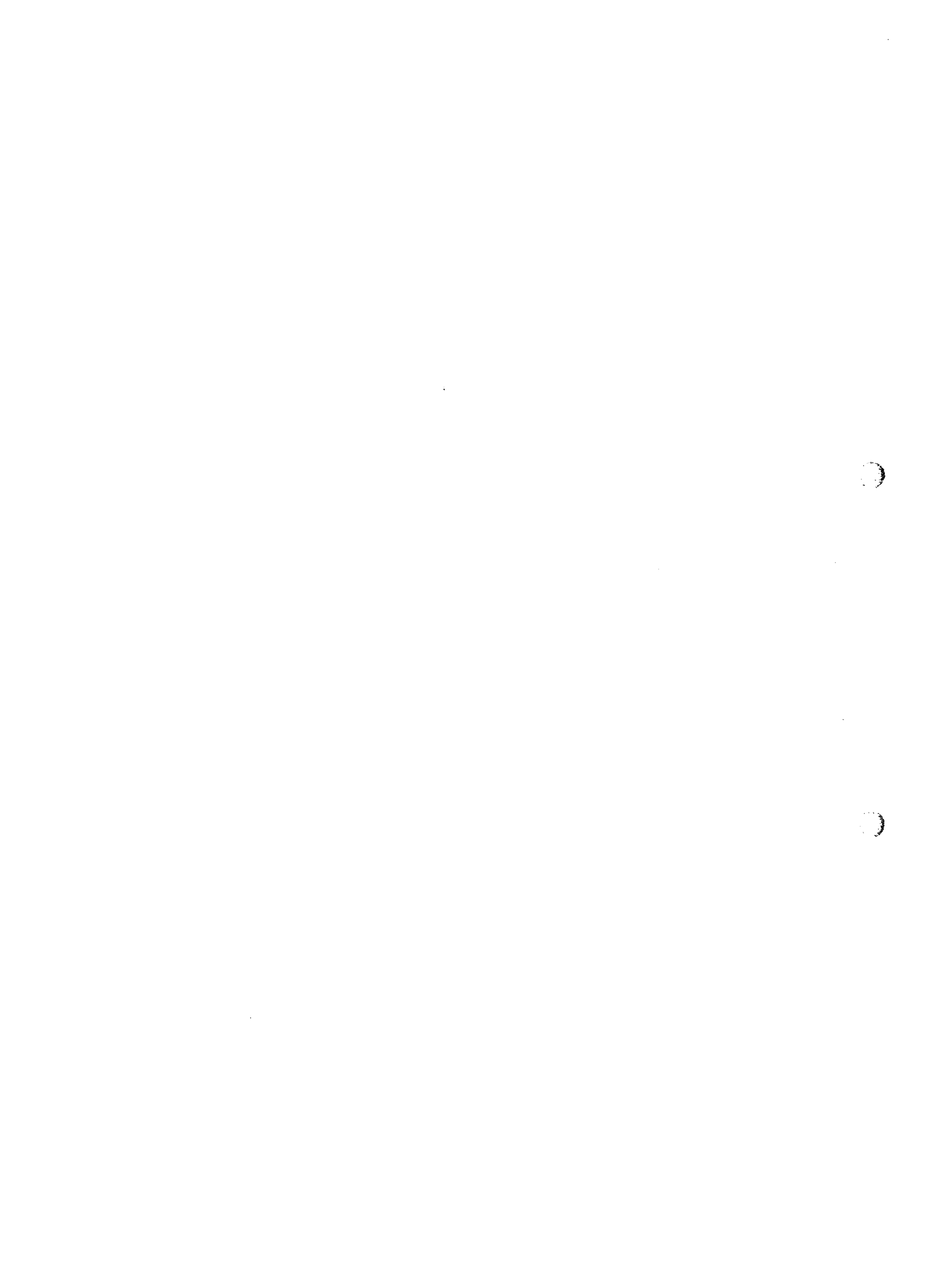


Appendix L – Summary contextualisation



ROWALLAN CASTLE: A SUMMARY CONTEXTUALISATION

ROWALLAN'S DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

The defining characteristics of Rowallan castle can probably be best defined as:

- a tightly defined courtyard plan enclosed on three sides by ranges and on the fourth by a wall; this plan was developed over an extended period, but a tower house with its associated enclosure was the probable starting point of development;
- an entrance emphasised by paired towers;
- a relatively unassuming domestic scale to the buildings, in which good proportions rather than lavish detailing are the principal contributors.

It also has a number of additional points of interest, including:

- some high quality woodwork;
- some unusual structural details, including timber internal partitions.

In attempting to establish a peer group for Rowallan, however, it should be understood that:

- a very high proportion of late medieval Scottish castles had a tower house and associated courtyard as the basis for their subsequent architectural development, and within that enclosure there would always have been ancillary buildings;
- the particular distinguishing feature of Rowallan and its peers is thus the relative regularity of the buildings that grew up around the courtyard, and the sense of enclosure this created.

Although the precise sequence and dating are not entirely certain, the principal component elements of Rowallan include:

- the footings of a tower house at the north-east corner of the courtyard that could be as early as the late thirteenth century (it is not known when this passed out of use);
- a range on the south side of the courtyard that probably initially contained a hall and chamber at courtyard level above basement vaults and a kitchen; this is said to have been built in the early 16th century (the range is built against the platform of the courtyard, and the west face of the basement is fully exposed on the outer side);
- an east range containing chambers and possibly a gallery on the upper floor, of the mid-16th century;
- the twin towers of the frontispiece on the east front of c. 1562;
- successive additions and adaptations of the 16th, 17th and possibly the 18th centuries to adapt the house for changed domestic requirements, including a 'woman house' (the quarters of the female servants), at the west end of one of the ranges, and a two-storeyed parlour and chamber block at the west end of the south range by around the 1630s.

COURTYARD PLANS

The following (in alphabetical order) are other examples of castles that show a related process of development around the starting point of a tower house and courtyard, in which the courtyard came to be largely enclosed by ranges. It should be stressed, however, that in most of these cases the scale was considerably larger and more architecturally imposing than at Rowallan, and in several cases the courtyard would have registered as a large open space defined by a series of individual ranges, rather than as the tightly defined quadrangle we see at Rowallan.

- Balgonie Castle (Fife), a 15th-century tower, with a hall and chamber range of the late 15th, and other ranges of the 16th and 17th centuries;
- Balvaird Castle (Perthshire), a tower of c. 1500, with ranges of various dates;
- Castle Campbell (Clackmannanshire), a possibly 14th-century tower, with a hall and chamber range of c.1500, and other ranges of the 16th and 17th centuries;
- Cessnock Castle (Ayrshire), a 16th-century tower with, ranges of the 16th and 17th centuries;
- Craigmillar Castle (Midlothian), an early 15th-century tower, with ranges of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries;
- Crichton Castle (Midlothian), an early 15th-century tower, with ranges of the mid-15th and late 16th-centuries;
- Duntreath Castle (Stirlingshire), a late 15th-century tower, with ranges of various dates (now largely destroyed);
- Edzell Castle (Angus), a late 15th-century tower, with ranges of the 16th and early 17th centuries;
- Inverallochy Castle (Aberdeenshire), early 16th-century;
- Roslin Castle (Midlothian), a possibly 15th-century tower, with ranges of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries;
- Rosyth Castle (Fife), a later 15th-century tower, with 16th-century ranges;
- Tolquhon Castle (Aberdeenshire), an early 15th-century tower, with courtyard ranges mainly of 1584.

TWIN-TOWERED GATEHOUSES

The initially defensive qualities of twin-towered gatehouses, as seen in late thirteenth-century examples such as Kildrummy and Caelaverock, and as planned at Bothwell, were later exploited more for their connotations of high status and of chivalric aspirations than for any increased defensibility they might provide.

In the sixteenth-century they were a favoured motif of royal residences, being used at:

- Stirling Castle forework c. 1500
- Linlithgow new entrance c. 1534
- Holyrood west range c. 1535
- Falkland gatehouse c. 1541

The scale of these differed considerably. That at Linlithgow was markedly diminutive in scale and, although the walls were pierced with gun holes that could have been used if

necessary, the towers were little more than decorative. While the towers at the others, and especially at Stirling, were larger in scale, there was little sense that they were intended to be primarily defensive, and at Holyrood the upper parts were pierced by great windows, meaning that they had much of the appearance of oriels.

At the relatively few non-royal buildings that had twin-towered frontispieces, the scale also varied considerably and, although at Boyne the combination of twin-towered gate house and angle towers to the courtyard had a superficially militaristic appearance, it was hardly intended to be defensible against a major artillery attack.

The principal examples of these gatehouses are:

Seton Palace (East Lothian; demolished) c. 1550s
Boyne Castle (Banffshire) c. 1566
Stirling, Mar's Work c. 1570
Tolquhon Castle (Aberdeenshire) 1586
Dudhope Castle (Dundee) c. 1600
Fyvie Castle (Aberdeenshire) c. 1600

Of these, the gatehouse that is probably closest in scale and spirit to Rowallan's is that at Tolquhon.

DOMESTIC SCALE OF BUILDINGS

This is the most difficult characteristic to discuss, since there are very large numbers of relatively high status buildings of domestic scale, and it is the combination of this essentially domestic scale with the other characteristics that makes Rowallan unique. As said above, apart from the twin-towered frontispiece, Rowallan owes much of its external architectural impact to good proportions, with only occasional decorative flourishes, as to the seventeenth-century doorway to the room at the north-west corner of the courtyard, and the buckle quoins of the upper walls of the stair to the chamber above the parlour.

Amongst the many buildings that might be cited as demonstrating a similar approach are:

Stobhall (Perthshire) of the late 16th, 17th and 18th centuries;
Fountainhall (East Lothian) of the late 16th and 17th centuries;
Roslin Castle, east range (Midlothian) of the late 16th and early 17th centuries (as with the west range at Rowallan, this range is built against the platform of the courtyard, with the lower storeys below the level of that platform);
Crosbie Castle (Ayrshire) largely of the 17th century;
Dunnottar Castle, courtyard buildings (Kincardineshire) of the 16th and 17th Centuries.

It should be stressed, however, that these are offered as generic rather than specific parallels.

ADDITIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

Woodwork of comparable quality to that surviving at Rowallan is to be found at a number of buildings, including:

Aberdeen, Trinity Hall, early 17th century(?)
Culross, the Study (Fife), 1633
Ayr Parish Church, 1654
Aberdeen, Provost Skene's House, c. 1680
Kelburn Castle (Ayrshire), c.1700

One of the great advantages of seeing a building in the partly stripped state of Rowallan is that it is possible to examine and develop an understanding of many of the structural techniques that were employed.

Information of this kind is relatively seldom accessible within historic structures. In roofed buildings that remain in use it is generally concealed beneath the wall finishes, while roofless buildings rarely provide the environmental conditions that would allow any less robust information to survive.

What we see of these techniques at Rowallan supplements related information to be found at a number of other properties in state care, such as:

Balvaird Castle, c. 1500, secondary timber partitions to the upper floors;
Claypotts, c. 1569-88, evidence for partial screen at the entrance to the hall;
Elcho Castle, c.1570, evidence for enclosures around doorways, of changes of floor levels, of partitions between the lodgings and chambers, and of methods of installing pre-cast plaster friezes.

CONCLUSION

All historic buildings are, to a greater or lesser extent, unique. However, this attempt to locate Rowallan within its broader architectural context has suggested that it has very few closely comparable peers when all of its salient characteristics are taken into account. There are certainly a small number of other buildings of its period that have a frontispiece in which a pair of towers flanking the entrance is the most prominent feature. There are many other buildings that developed as a series of ranges within the confines of a courtyard associated with a tower house. And there are very large numbers of 'lairdly' houses in which a domestic scale was preferred to anything more monumental in character.

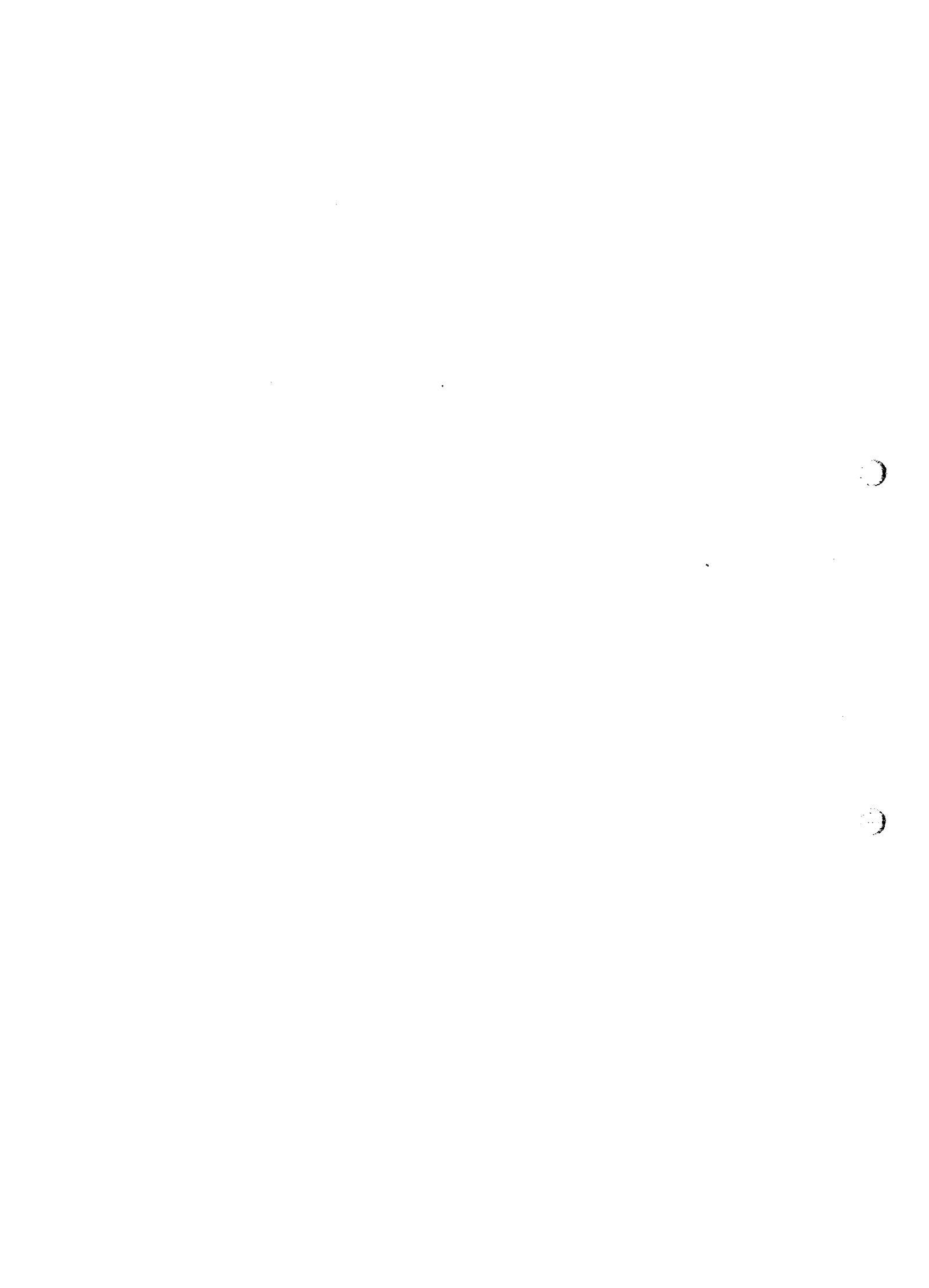
But nowhere else are all of Rowallan's salient characteristics combined together within one complex on the scale, and with the same combination of parts, that we see there. While Tolquhon Castle probably has more in common with it than any other of the buildings referred to in the foregoing discussion, even that was designed on a rather more expansive scale than Rowallan, and the image it was probably meant to present, with its square and round towers at the two ends of the entrance front, is closer to that of the very much more ambitious Edzell Castle than that of Rowallan.

But beyond such considerations, nowhere else are all of these characteristics found within a complex that, while still being largely complete and roofed – apart from the north range – allows us to appreciate the more fragile evidence for the structural

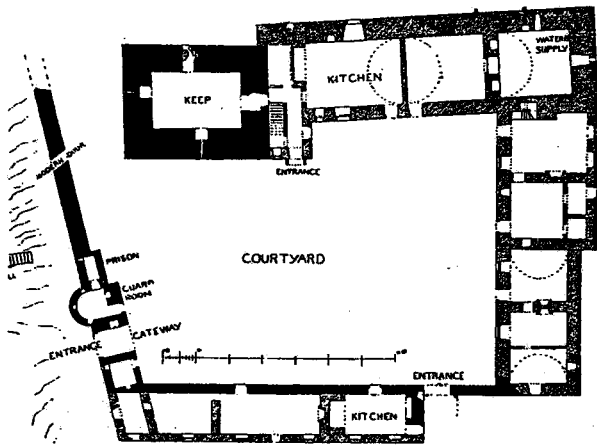
subtleties that have been become exposed within its fabric since its abandonment for occupation.

There can be no doubt that the best hope for the preservation of the majority of buildings is sympathetic continued or renewed use. But, it must also be recognised that, if our understanding of historic architecture is to continue to develop, it is important that there should be buildings that are actively preserved in a condition that allows us to investigate and revisit the structural archaeology in ways that would not be possible in buildings in use. That has always been regarded as a principal justification for maintaining some properties as 'monuments', whether in state care or other forms of care. On that basis, the loss to the pool of accessible knowledge resulting from the restoration of Rowallan would be considerable.

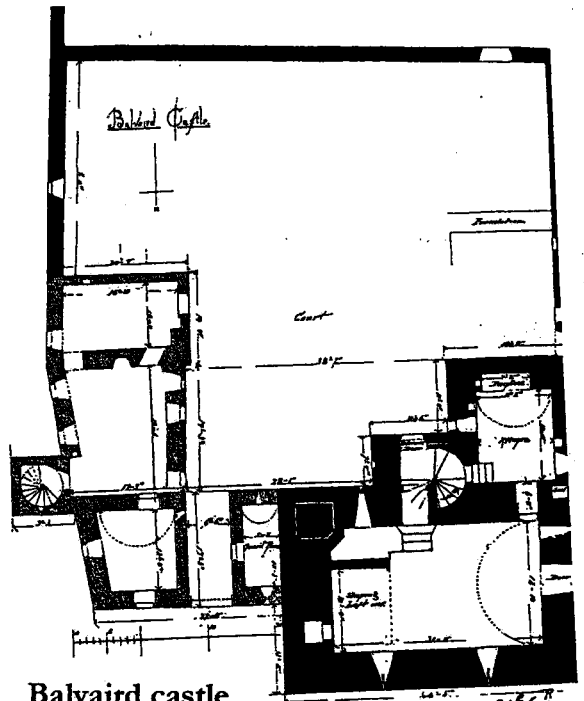
Richard Fawcett
29 March 2007



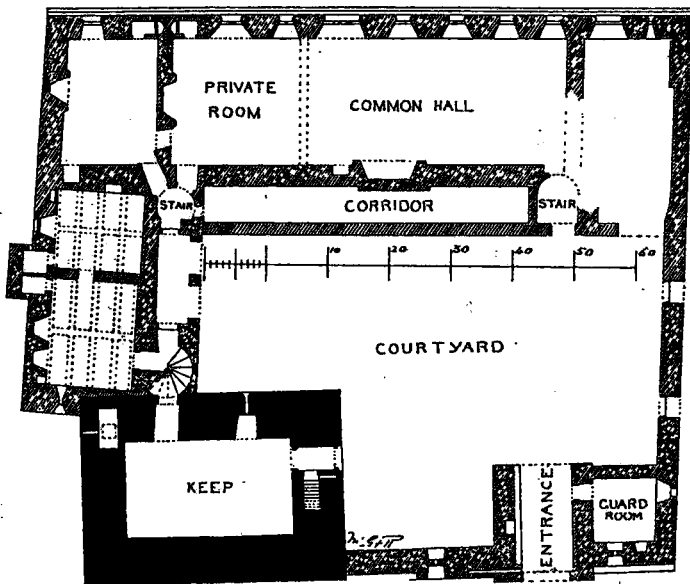
COURTYARD PLANS



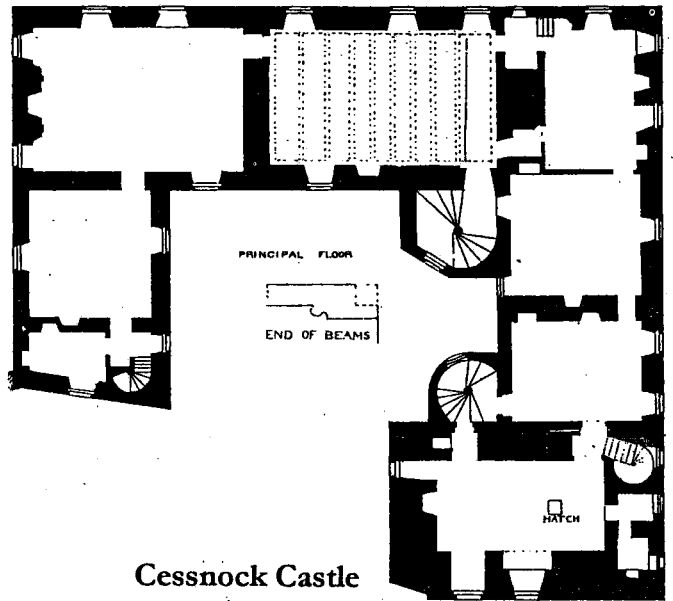
Balgonie Castle



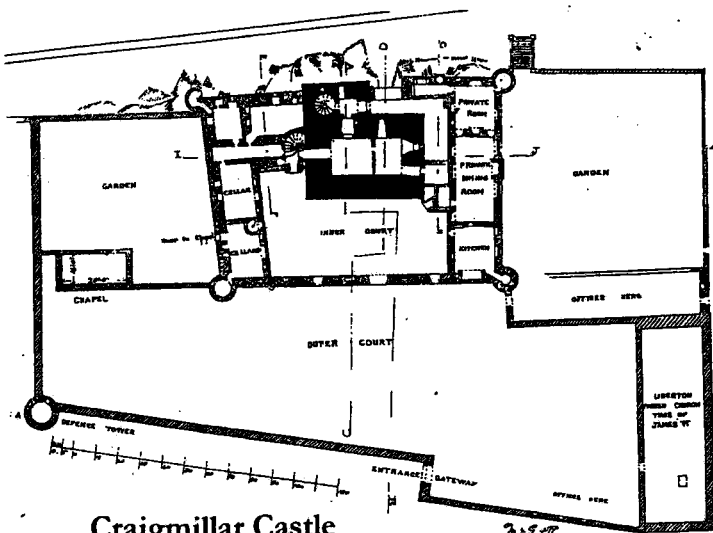
Balvaired castle



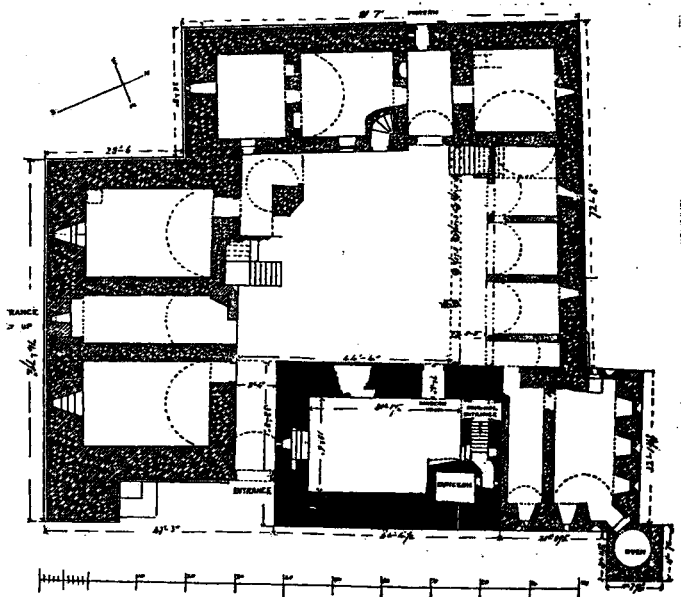
Castle Campbell



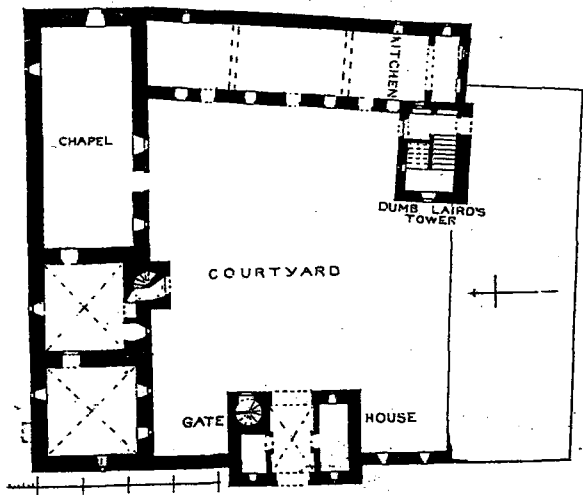
Cessnock Castle



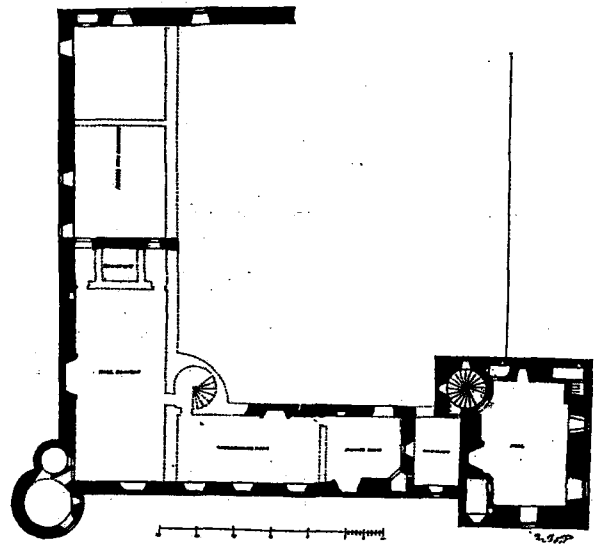
Craigmillar Castle



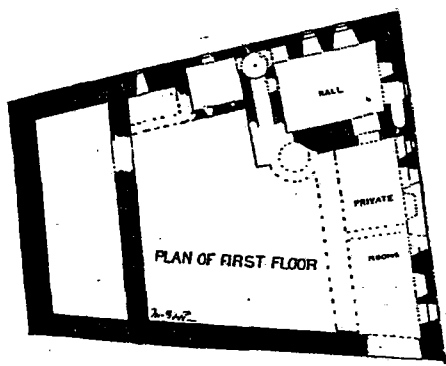
Crichton Castle



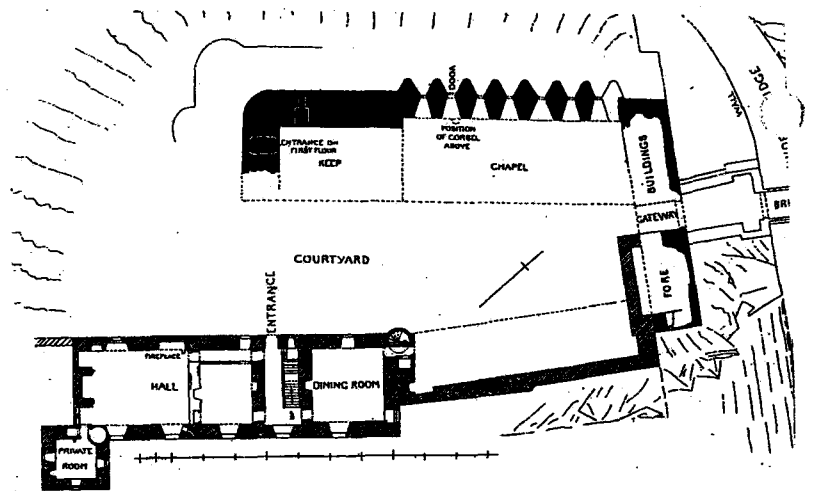
Duntreath Castle



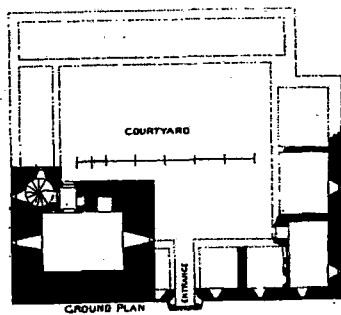
Edzell Castle



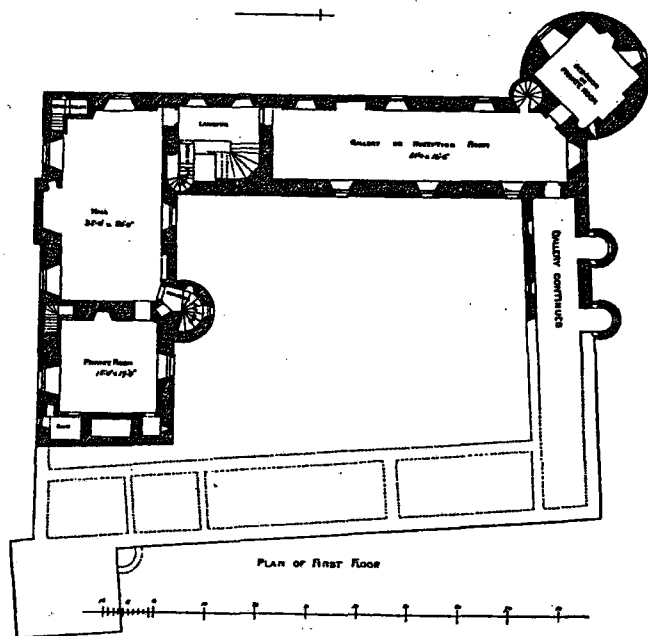
Inverallochy Castle



Roslin Castle



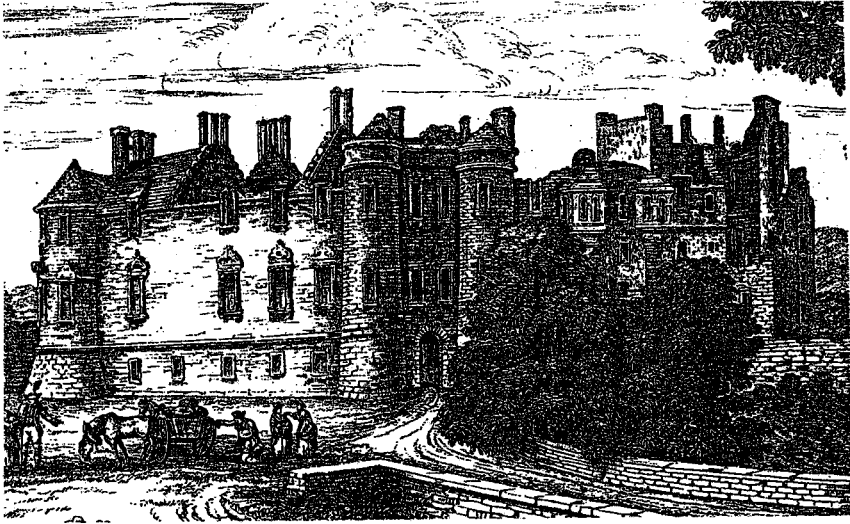
Rosyth Castle



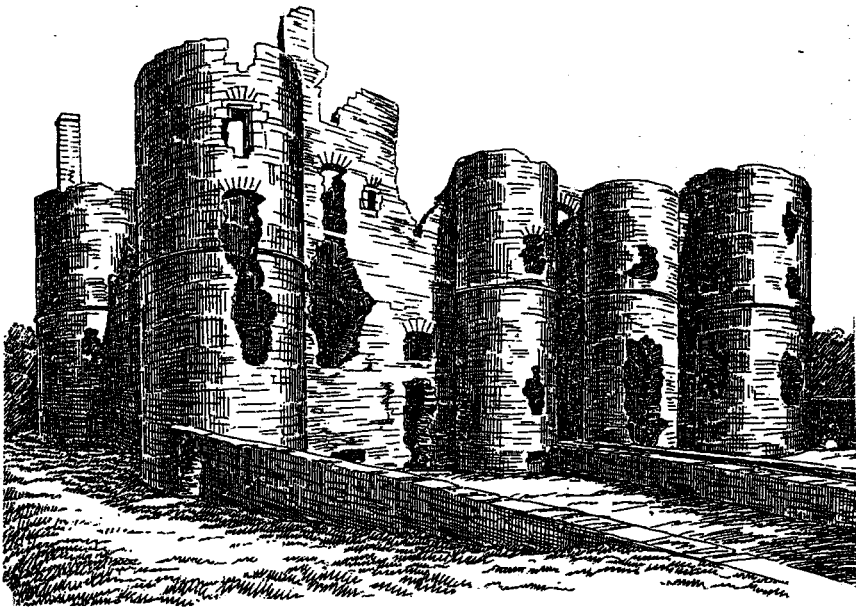
Tolquhon Castle

In the interests of uniformity, these plans have all been taken from MacGibbon and Ross, though this means there are some inaccuracies. They are not reproduced to the same scale

TWIN-TOWERED GATEHOUSES



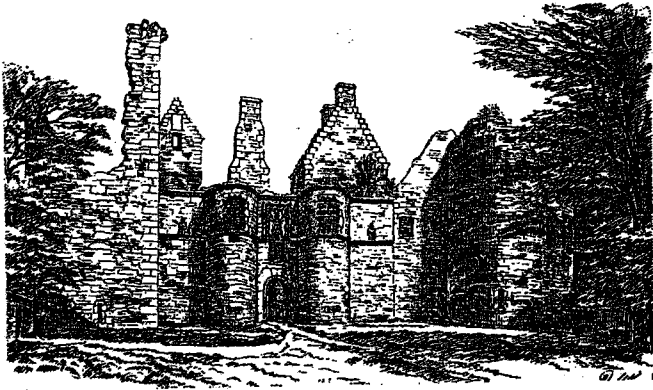
Seton Palace



Boyne castle



Stirling, Mar's Work



Tolquhon Castle

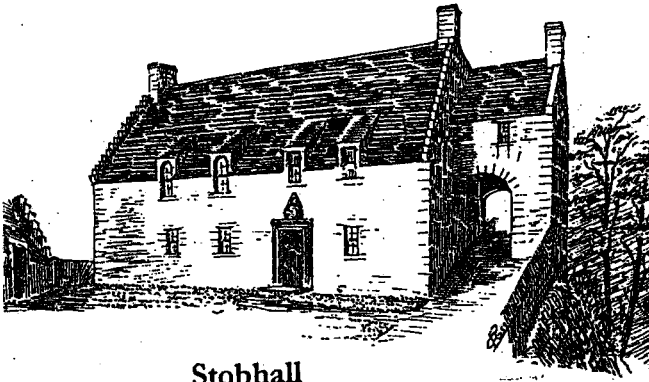


Dudhope castle

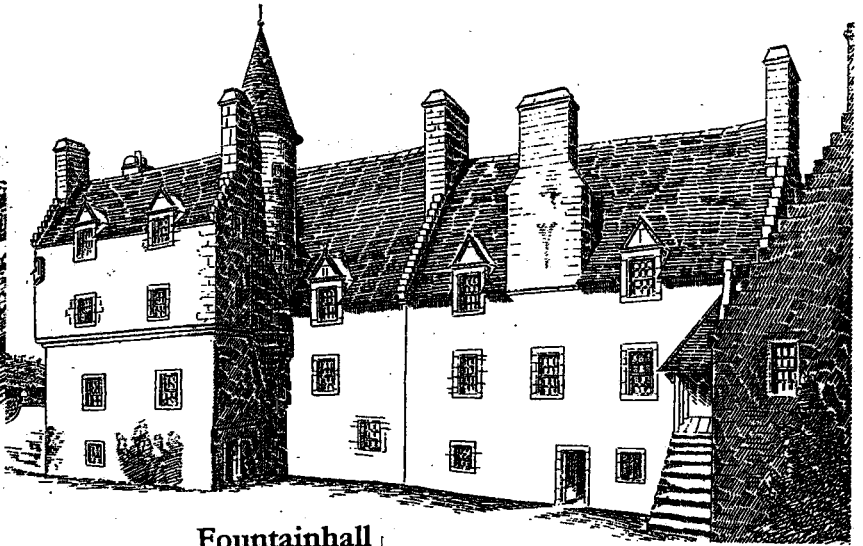


Fyvie castle

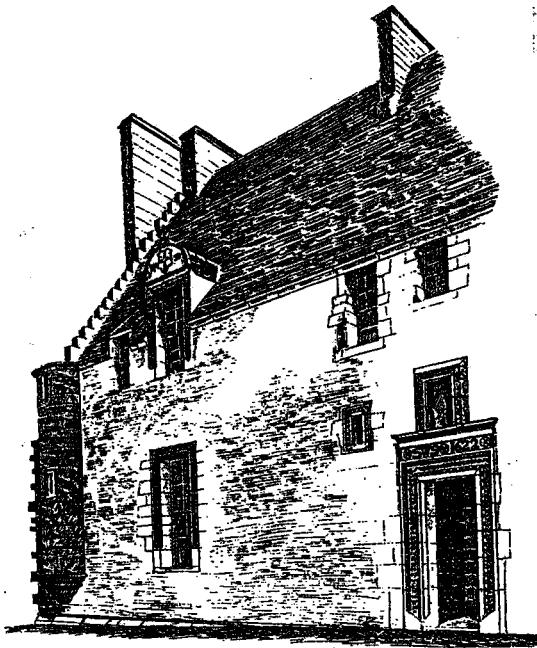
HIGH-STATUS BUILDINGS OF DOMESTIC SCALE



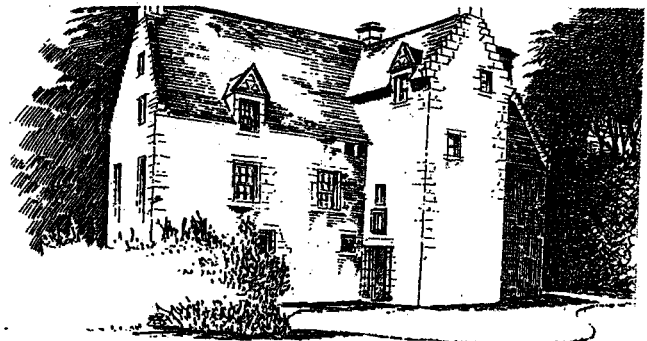
Stobhall



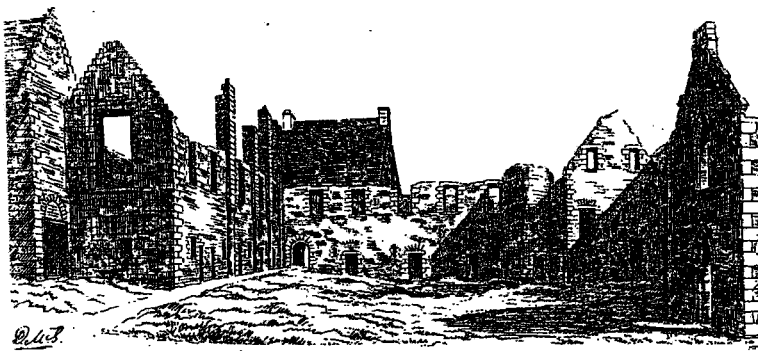
Fountainhall



Roslin Castle

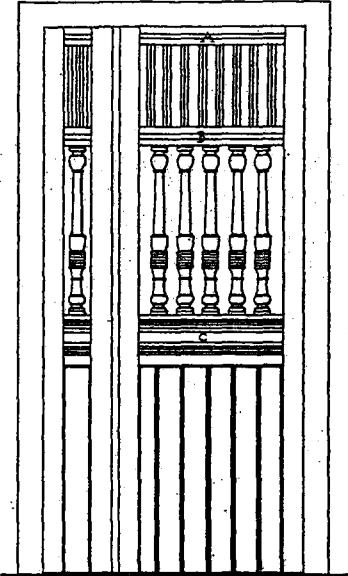


Crosbie Castle

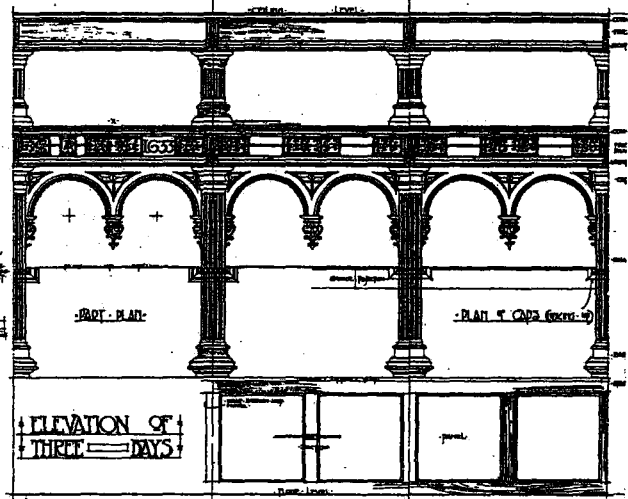


Dunnottar Castle

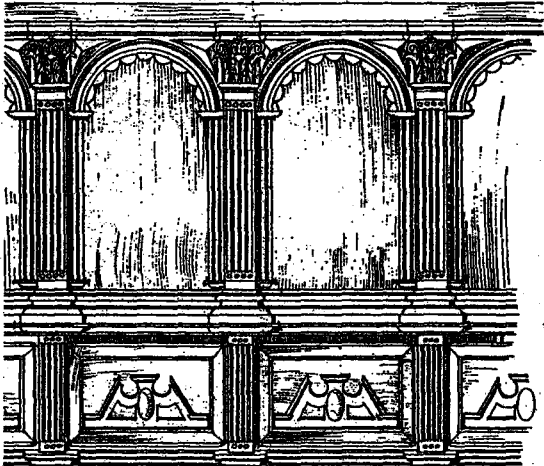
WOODWORK



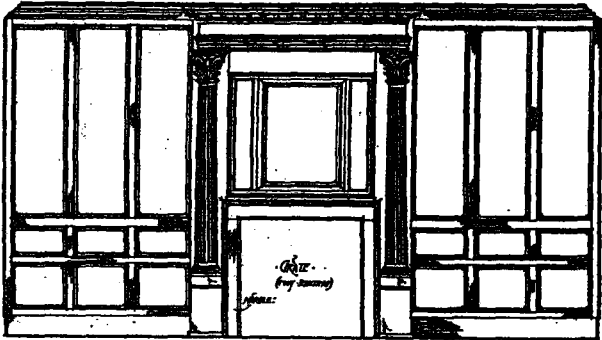
Aberdeen Trinity Hall



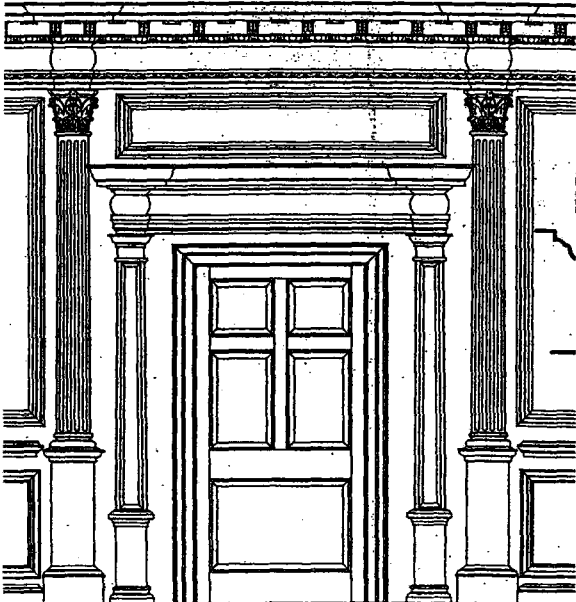
Culross, the Study



Ayr Parish Church



Aberdeen, Provost Skene's House



Kelburn Castle