Myrton Castle

Monreith, by Port William, Wigtonshire

Historic Building Record and Analytical Assessment

for

Prof Mark Watson-Gandy

Junel 2013



Early photographic view of Myrton Castle, c.1860-70 (Stranraer Museum)

Addyman Archaeology
Building Historians & Archaeologists
a division of Simpson & Brown Architects
[redacted]



Frontispiece MacGibbon and Ross, engraved view of the tower and motte mound from the SW , 1892

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By *Tom Addyman and Richard Oram*

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Historic Building Record and Analytical Assessment

1. Introduction

i. General

Addyman Archaeology were commissioned by Philip Mercer, Architect, on behalf of Prof and Mrs. Watson-Gandy to undertake an analytical assessment and historic building survey at Myrton Castle within the Monreith estate policies, in the parish of Mochrum, located on the western side of the Machars of Galloway (NGR NX 36016 43275). The study was requested by Historic Scotland (contact Allan Rutherford) in advance of submission and to inform proposals for the repair and possible reoccupation of parts of the ruin.

The specific purpose was to develop a good understanding of the history and architectural evolution of the site in order to inform the design process. Particular attention was to be paid to the understanding of the phasing and relative significance of the individual elements that form features of the site.

ii. Methodology

Site works involved a general detailed visual assessment of the standing castle ruin, the motte and surrounding earthworks and their immediate landscape setting. Survey was undertaken of accessible parts of the upstanding ruin; this included a ground floor plan of both the tower and the range to the north, including the jamb (wing) that extends out from its east side, and elevation drawings of the parts of the north range, all of the jamb to the east, and the lower stages of the tower. The upper stories of the tower remained inaccessible for the purpose of hand measurement, while it proved impractical to undertake survey of parts of the main range – its exterior walls to the north and west and upper level were too obscured by ivy and other vegetation to recover much meaningful information. The survey drawing set is included in *Appendix C.*

The general site assessment was carried out by Tom Addyman and Richard Oram on 26-27 February; survey works were carried out by Kenneth Macfadyen and Ross Cameron on 6-8 March, and by Tom Addyman on 30 April - 1st May.

2. Historical

i. Myrton Motte

Until the early 1990s, discussion of mottes in Galloway and what they signified in social, political and cultural terms was founded on a narrative which grouped their construction into two distinct phases and presented them entirely as the product of an incoming, colonial aristocracy largely imposed on the region by direction of the kings of Scots. Based on chronicle accounts, this colonial settlement was said to have started in the early 1160s, been interrupted by a local rebellion between 1174 and 1185 that saw the violent expulsion of the colonists and the destruction of their castles, then resumed in a short burst of activity between 1185 and c.1190 when a new colonial settlement was imposed upon the entire region. In this analysis, all Galloway mottes were seen as being the product of an incoming,

culturally alien elite.[1] The conventional colonial narrative was further complicated by a mistaken belief in the nature of the political settlement that existed in Galloway between 1161 and 1174, which saw the Lordship of Galloway that had been constructed by Fergus in the first half of the twelfth century – which stretched from the River Urr in the East to the Rhinns peninsula in the west – divided into two neat territorial blocks for his two sons, Gillebrigte and Uhtred. While Uhtred was seen as an enthusiastic 'feudaliser' who introduced colonist-knights onto his half of Galloway (between the Urr and the Cree), Gillebrigte was presented as aggressively culturally conservative and resistant to any settlement in his domain west of the Cree. From this it was argued that no motte west of the Cree could date from the initial phase of colonisation between 1161 and 1174 and that all must post-date 1185 when Uhtred's son, Roland, took over his uncle's lands in the west. Critical revision of the evidence, however, has shown that this model is altogether too simplistic and, while several of the known builders of mottes in western Galloway do appear to be newcomers of the 1180s and 1190s, it is likely that settlement had occurred throughout the region in the decade before 1174.[2]

With the exception of a handful of sites like the Mote of Urr, Boreland of Anwoth and Sorbie, for most of the mottes in Galloway we have no evidence for the identity of the builder or the date at which they were constructed. They are certainly not all twelfth-century developments and some appear to have been products of the first half of the thirteenth century or later.[3] Nor can all be said with confidence to be the product of a foreign knight but arguments that some that deviate from a supposedly 'classic' form must be 'native' efforts to emulate a foreign tradition are too culturally deterministic.[4] In respect of Myrton, we have no evidence for either ownership or date of construction, nor do we have clear understanding of the pattern of lordly settlement into which it was set. Contrary to discussions which have applied distinct cultural labels to mottes of specific physical form, there is nothing in the character of Myrton as presently visible that permits its construction to be assigned to either an incoming 'Anglo-Norman' colonist or a culturally accommodating native lord. All that we can say with confidence is that the presence of a motte at this site points to it being a centre of considerable socio-economic importance in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, probably functioning as the principal seat of a man of substance who exercised lordship over a wide district. Nothing should be read into the ownership of Myrton by a family of 'native' Galloway background in the later Middle Ages.

How extensive was the lordship of Myrton at the centre of which stood the motte? The honest answer is that we do not and cannot know for certain as so little documentary evidence survives from Galloway – especially western Galloway – before the mid-fifteenth century. There does, however, appear to be a certain correlation between parishes and mottes, on which basis it might be argued that Myrton was caput of a lordship that encompassed the medieval parish of Kirkmaiden. How old this territory might be as a socio-economic unit is again a matter of guesswork, but the presence of Anglian sculpture at the church site and the early association of the church with the monastic centre at Whithorn implies considerable antiquity. Indeed, the existence of a substantial crannog in the White Loch of Myrton immediately west of the motte could indicate continuity of function as the centre of an important economic unit and high-status residence from at least the later Iron Age.

ii. The McCulloch Family

From the mid-fifteenth century Myrton can be identified with confidence as a possession of the McCulloch family. Their prominence in the albeit fragmentary record of western Galloway/Wigtownshire political society from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries suggests that their connection with Myrton may date back considerably further than their first clear association

[1] For discussion of the historiography of this traditional interpretation, see R D Oram, *The Lordship of Galloway* (Edinburgh, 2000), 218-220.
[2] Ibid, chapters 7 and 8.
[3] Ibid, 228-230.
[4] See, for example, C J Tabraham, 'Norman Settlement in Galloway: Recent Fieldwork in the Stewartry', in D Breeze (ed), *Studies in Scottish Antiquity Presented to Stewart Cruden* (Edinburgh, 1984), 87-124 at 119-120.

with it in a written source. Frustratingly, however, while several of the fourteenth-century sources talk about the McCullochs and their lands, none actually identify what lands they in fact possessed and it must be acknowledged that the later prominence of Myrton as a family property is not a firm basis upon which to argue that it must always have been so.

Clearly of native Gaelic ancestry, the McCullochs first emerge in the surviving historical record when the likely head of kin, Thomas, was named in documents concerning a sheriff court action on 28 April 1285 at Wigtown over 120-head of cattle due for delivery from the executors of Alan 'son of the Earl', the recently-deceased illegitimate son of Thomas of Galloway, earl of Atholl.[5] Thomas was to deliver the cattle into the hands of another local man, Roland Askeloc, a member of a group of Wigtownshire families with close associations with the Balliol and Comyn descendants of the early thirteenth-century Lord of Galloway, Alan, Thomas of Galloway's elder brother. Early fourteenth-century accounts indicate that the McCullochs maintained that association with these magnate families, an association that was to lead subsequently to their alignment with the English interest in the Scottish Wars of Independence after Robert Bruce's usurpation of the Scottish throne in 1306. The names of three members of the family – Thomas again and his brother Michael, and a third, William, who might also be a brother – were recorded in the formal submission of Scottish freeholders to Edward I of England made at Berwick in August 1296.[6] Described as 'of the county of Wigtown', one of these men is likely to be the ancestor of the family who emerge in possession of Myrton in the fifteenth century. Thomas, as his role as an executor for Alan son of the Earl in 1295 shows, and Michael were clearly men of status in the local community, being empanelled on 25-28 August 1296 as jurors in the inquest post mortem into the Wigtownshire lands of Elena de la Zouche, grand-daughter of Alan of Galloway.[7]

The late thirteenth-century evidence suggests a close connection between the McCullochs and the Balliol/Comyn power network in Scotland. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that one Gilbert McCulloch was amongst a group of prominent Scots forfeited by Edward I in 1298 for their breaking of faith with him and participation in the rebellion led by William Wallace.[8] It is unclear what Gilbert's relationship with the Thomas, Michael and William of 1296 was, but his singling out for forfeiture suggests that he was one of the leading figures of the kindred. Following this event, there is no evidence for the involvement of the family in the subsequent military campaigns, including those led into Galloway by Edward I and his son in 1300 and 1301, but it is unlikely that they were not involved in the operations which saw the participation of the other major native kindreds of the region. It is likely that they followed their Comyn superiors' lead in the conflict and probably remained opposed to Edward I until the general submission of those Scots still loyal to the exiled John Balliol in February 1304. Edward now sought a political settlement that would confirm his control over the conquered kingdom – or 'land' as it was simply termed to avoid any of the implications of independent status that 'kingdom' carried – and to do so he needed to win significant political support from within the Scottish community. The support or opposition of the McCullochs as one of the prominent native kindreds of central Galloway, with lands in the Machars and, possibly, already on the eastern shore of Wigtown Bay, became of critical importance at this time as Edward I sought to establish his authority in the region. In September 1305, as part of the scheme for the future government of the kingdom set out in Edward I's *Ordinances*, Thomas was named as sheriff of Wigtown.[9]

Frustratingly, at that point the family effectively disappears from the surviving historical record for a generation: there is no mention of their conduct in the remainder of the first phase of the Wars of Independence down to 1328, no reference to their relationship – positive or negative – with King

[5] H E A Salter, *The Oxford Deeds of Balliol College* (Oxford, 1913), no 601.
[6] J Bain (ed), *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, vol 2 (Edinburgh, 1884), pp 198, 209, 211.
[7] Ibid, no 824 (1).
[8] G W S Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 3rd edition (Edinburgh, 1988), 346 note 64.
[9] Ibid, no 1691.

Robert I, and no indication of any continuing significant role in regional political life that their possession of the sheriffdom in 1305 would have given.[10] The family only re-emerges in the second phase of the Wars (which resumed in 1332) in March 1338 when King Edward III of England ordered payment of £20 to one Sir Patrick McCulloch,[11] the first in a series of payments to him made by the English king over the next decade. On 19 March, described as 'for his good service', Edward III granted an annual pension of £20 to 'our beloved and faithful' knight, Sir Patrick.[12] From this, it can be assumed that the McCullochs had maintained an anti-Bruce stance and had been amongst the leading Galloway families who rose in support of Edward Balliol, the son of King John, when he returned to claim his throne in 1332. Following Edward III's entry into the war in support of Balliol in 1333, a large portion of southern Scotland including Galloway east of the River Cree was assigned to the English king, which would have placed at least a portion of the McCulloch lands under direct English lordship.

As the supporters of the Bruce king, David II, began to reassert their control over the kingdom in the late 1330s, Galloway became one of the main theatres of conflict and it seems that the McCulloch lands there were ravaged by Bruce loyalists. On 15 August Sir Patrick was one of a group of Scottish knights to whom Edward III ordered payments to be made, followed on 20 August by similar instructions in favour of Gilbert McCulloch.[13] By September 1341, Sir Patrick was amongst a group of pro-Balliol Scottish knights who received 'suitable sustenance' on the instructions of Edward III to ensure that they remained in his allegiance, lest they be driven by necessity to change sides. The following May, Edward extended this original award, granting Sir Patrick payment of 4/- per day in recognition of his 'losses and hardships sustained by him in the kings service in Scotland', for the support of him and his two esquires until such time as he was able to recover his lands, from which he had been turned out by the king's enemies.[14] Two days earlier another McCulloch, Gilbert, described as a valet of King Edward's, received a 12d per day allowance, having lost his lands in Scotland through allegiance to him.[15] Such promised payments encouraged Sir Patrick to maintain his loyalty and in summer 1342 he and two squires received wages for military service on the March of Scotland.[16] Gilbert McCulloch was also retained for service on the March for a period of three months from June 1342.[17] Further McCullochs appear by May 1343 in similar dire straits, with 12d each daily being granted to Michael and Thomas McCulloch until they should recover their Scottish lands.[18] From their names, they are likely to be descended from leading members of the kindred named in 1296.

Despite such awards to these landless exiles payments fell into arrears and by April 1344 Sir Patrick's position appears to have become desperate. Patrick, described as having lost his lands and with nothing upon which to live, was given another parchment mandate for payment of arrears of 100/-, whilst Thomas and Michael both received similar for back instalments of their 12d daily.[19] In the hope of receiving payment to maintain him and the possibility of profit from ransom and plunder, Sir Patrick entered the waged service of Edward III for the English king's military operations in Brittany, receiving payments between November 1343 and December 1347 totalling nearly £240 for three years

[10] For a general discussion of the impact of the Wars of Independence in Galloway and the role of the native lineages in that, see R D Oram, 'Bruce, Balliol and the Lordship of Galloway', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd series, LXVII (1992), 29-47.
[11] J Bain (ed), *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, vol 3 (Edinburgh, 1887), no 1266 [hereafter CDS 3].
[12] [12] *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londiniensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservati*, edd D Macpherson and others, 2 vols (London 1814-19), vol 1, 523a [hereafter *Rotuli Scotiae*].
[13] *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol 1, 612a, 612b.
[14] *CDS* 3, nos 1391, 1392.
[15] Ibid, no 1390.
[16] *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol 1, 627a.
[17] Ibid, 627b.
[18] *CDS* 3, no 1412.
[19] Ibid, nos 1432 (2) and (3).

and 100 days of service.[20] In early 1347, Sir Patrick's services were transferred from France to Scotland, where he participated in the military operations to follow up on the stunning English victory over the Scots at Neville's Cross the previous October. Amongst several 'knights of Scotland' retained for the planned campaign were Sir Patrick (who received wages at 2/- a day, with 12d each daily for his two squires, plus a prest of 20/- when he set out for Scotland), his son Patrick 'le filz' (who shared 40/- for his expenses with another Wigtownshire knight, John Marshall), and Gilbert McCulloch (at 12d per day).[21] On 17 March 1347, Sir Patrick and his sons Patrick and John, together with Michael McCulloch, received additional payment of their expenses on campaign by royal mandate.[22]

In Scotland, Sir Patrick and Gilbert appears to have re-attached themselves to the service of Edward Balliol, who had enjoyed a brief period of expanded power in Galloway after 1346. By the early 1350s, however, Balliol's position was in decline in the face of renewed pressure in the region from Bruce loyalists. The McCullochs, however, maintained a close connection with Balliol's inner household, Sir Patrick along with Sir William de Aldeburgh and John of Wigtown being named in letters of Edward III as Balliol's representatives in discussions with the king concerning his then current negotiations with the Bruce loyalists in Scotland.[23] Sir Patrick was evidently trusted by Balliol and was deep in his councils: on 29 November 1352 he and Gilbert McCulloch appear amongst a group of leading men from Galloway present at Balliol's ancestral stronghold at Buittle (near Dalbeattie) and witnessing charters whereby Edward Balliol made over a significant part of his landed heritage in Galloway to his chief English supporter, de Aldeburgh.[24]

McCulloch's personal position appears to have become precarious once more in the 1350s as the war in Galloway began to go against Balliol's interests. In March 1354, Sir Patrick had again petitioned Edward III for financial support and received a royal award of 100 merks annually to sustain him, the bulk of the payment to be made from the revenues of the alien priory of Lancaster which was then in the king's hands.[25] Early in 1355, a cryptic instruction for the charter of Patrick McCulloch to be enrolled was issued at the English Exchequer, perhaps referring to an attempt to safeguard his lands or pensions as negotiations with the Scots for the release of David II from his decade-long captivity in England were nearing completion.[26] A note of an undated charter of King David II by which the king granted John of Carrick the lands of Patrick McCulloch in liferent[27] seems to indicate that unlike his Galloway neighbours and strongly pro-Balliol partisans the MacDowells, Patrick had not sought to come to terms with the Bruce regime as the Edward Baliol/Edward III position in the south west collapsed in the mid-1350s. As terms for David II's release were confirmed in 1356/7 and Edward Balliol formally renounced his claims to the Scottish crown in favour of Edward III of England, the opportunity to negotiate entry into the Bruce king's peace and thereby redeem the family's position was slipping away.

No record survives of any formal submission by the heads of the McCulloch family around the time of the Treaty of Berwick in October 1357 which saw the release of David, but shortly after that date there are hints that an accommodation had been reached by at least one member of the family. Two notes of an undated award (but certainly in the period 1357-9) of the office of coroner west of the River Cree made by David II survive, one naming the recipient as Thomas McCulloch the other, wrongly, as Patrick.[28] This was a prestigious office responsible for overseeing crown rights in certain

[20] Ibid, no 1483. One of the instalments of payment was received on his behalf by his daughter Anibilla.
[21] Ibid, no 1490.
[22] *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol 1, 690b.
[23] Ibid, 739b.
[24] *CDS* 3, no 1578.
[25] *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol 1, 763b.
[26] *CDS* 3, no 1581.
[27] *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regnum Scotorum*, ed J M Thomson and others, vol 1 (Edinburgh, 1882), appendix II, no 1114 [hereafter *RMS*].
[28] *RMS*, vol 1, appendix II, no 1303 index A and B.

areas of justice, principally murder cases, but had been irregularly provided for during the upheavals in royal administration across the long years of civil war and invasion after 1332: regular provision of coroners was one of the subjects of David II's first raft of legislation following his release from captivity in England. The award of this office to a member of one of the leading Galloway kindreds is an indication of both the king's efforts to reintegrate former enemies into his political establishment but also his recognition of the key social role and local influence still held by these families in the region. A further indication that he had made his peace with David II comes on 12 March 1358, six months after the Treaty of Berwick that had established a long truce between Scotland and England, when Thomas McCulloch received a safe conduct from the English government to enable him to travel on pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury.[29] As the subject of a foreign monarch, Thomas needed to be brought within the protection of the English crown whilst travelling through the kingdom: Thomas had clearly made his peace with David II and been received back into his service by that date.

iii. The McCullochs at Myrton

The late 1350s saw the re-emergence of the McCullochs under the local leadership of Thomas as prominent figures in the social and political landscape of west-central Galloway. Along with the office of coroner, the specific naming of members of the family in safe conducts to go on pilgrimage to Canterbury provides us with evidence of social significance: these were men who could afford to deal directly with the English government. It was not just Thomas McCulloch who secured protection for the pilgrimage south, on 15 May 1358 he received a second protection for six months for the same journey, but on this occasion he was to be accompanied by Gilbert, who had last appeared in the household of Edward Balliol at Buittle in 1352.[30] On 24 November 1360 Thomas received a third six-month safe conduct for the pilgrimage to Canterbury, this time in the company of his wife and four riders, reissued on 29 April 1361 probably because he had not yet had opportunity to set out and was unlikely to do so before the expiry of his existing safe conduct.[31] Final safe conducts, for both Thomas (with three associates) and Gilbert (also with three associates), were issued for seven months from 28 November 1363 for the two men to travel to London.[32] The documents were issued at the request of Patrick McCulloch to bring his kinsmen south to talk with him upon certain expedient – but unspecified - business of his. It is likely that this Patrick is the old warrior of the 1330s to 1350s, who was certainly still alive in 1362 and receiving his annuity for life from the English crown,[33] rather than his son and namesake, but in any case it would appear from this arrangement that the leading segment of the family for the previous quarter century had not come to terms with David II at the same time as Thomas in the mid-1350s and had remained as exiles in England.

The nature of the business which Patrick McCulloch wished to discuss with his kinsmen might have been negotiations over some financial arrangement to allow him to maintain his status in exile involving the issues of the family lands in Galloway which Thomas and Gilbert had retained after 1357. Patrick clearly hoped to return to Scotland at some stage, reference in March 1361 to the payment of his annuity mentioning the loss of his Scottish lands and the hope for their future recovery.[34] The 1363 safe conduct for Thomas and Gilbert to come to speak with him, however, might be linked to diplomacy between David II and Edward III concerning a renegotiation of the 1357 treaty and ransom terms. At around the same time as Patrick requested that his kinsmen come to London to speak with him, Patrick was being named in proposals put to David for restoration of certain men to their lands who had been in the allegiance of the king of Scots before 1333.[35]

[29] *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol 1, 821a.
[30] *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol 1, 824a.
[31] Ibid, 852b, 856a
[32] Ibid, 875a.
[33] Arrangements for its payment had been confirmed in 1359, see *CDS* 4, no 33; *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, vol 5, eds G G Simpson and J D Galbraith (Edinburgh, 1985), nos 831, 835.
[34] *CDS* 4, no 58.
[35] Ibid, no 92.

Although a proposal for restoration of some of these disinherited lords – including Patrick McCulloch – was put before a general council at Perth in January 1365,[36] those negotiations brought no restoration of the exiles but they did see increased degrees of communication and commerce from which they might have benefitted. That this might have been the case for the McCullochs is suggested by a safe conduct issued on 16 April 1364 to Christopher, son of Patrick McCulloch, for him and four servants to travel to Scotland to buy horses, oxen, beasts, and unspecified goods and merchandise, and return with them to England.[37] Christopher, described as 'beloved' of Edward III, and his father Patrick, described as 'beloved and faithful', were said to have remained always in the faith of the king, the implication being that they had suffered for their loyalty accordingly. Fourteen years later, at the start of the reign of Richard II, Patrick McCulloch received a confirmation of the 100 merks annuity that he had been awarded by Edward III, the document referring to the total loss of his lands in Scotland and that the payment was to continue until such time as he recovered them.[38] A final payment of 50 merks to him was recorded in October 1379,[39] by which date he would have been very elderly given that he was already a prominent political figure by 1338. This is the last reference to Patrick in English records. After the abortive negotiations of 1363 there is no indication that he or his immediate family sought to return to Scotland on a permanent basis; perhaps the thought of accepting as his lord the man against whom he had fought for most of his adult life was too much for Patrick to bear. It is likely that he died in exile; the fate of his children is unknown.

From this point, there is a break of a little over the century in the detailed historical record for the McCulloch family in the Machars. Superior lordship over them had been held since 1341 at least nominally by Malcolm Fleming, whom David II had created Earl of Wigtown, and theoretically since 1358/9 by his grandson and successor, Thomas. What little we know of Malcolm's heir suggests that he was a somewhat feckless young man who lacked the personality to stamp his power on a territory in which leading native lineages still harboured loyalties to a rival lord. Thomas, moreover, had been one of the hostages held in England since 1358 as guarantees for David's payment of his ransom and thus had been in no position in any case to establish any personal authority over his earldom around the time of his grandfather's death. By the time that he was released from captivity in 1363, what authority that had attached to him by virtue of his title had been seriously eroded and it was clear that the king had no longer any interest in supporting and advancing the Fleming in the South West. David, however, could not prevent Thomas from inheriting his grandfather's earldom, for that had been granted in entail, but he could alter the terms by which it was held. In January 1366-7 Thomas had a re-grant of Wigtown as held by his grandfather, but shorn of its regality powers which had provided the backbone of the earl's authority locally.[40] The clawing back of such jurisdictions was a feature of royal policy in the 1360s, most notably by the Act of Revocation of September 1367, but David was prepared to grant specific exemptions, as he had in Moray, where such powers were essential for the maintenance of law and order. David can have held few illusions as to the likely consequence of the loss of these powers in Wigtown, for Thomas possessed no greater landed base in the earldom other than the scatter of estates in the northern Machars that his grandfather had held. Thomas was earl in title, but lacked the means to enforce the social and political leadership that ought to have been attendant on that rank. The loss of regality immediately and fatally undermined Thomas's ability to exercise lordship in his earldom, and he was soon facing considerable local opposition from both native families, headed by the MacDowells, and from the Carrick-based Kennedys, who were steadily expanding their influence southwards.

Further local difficulties were stirred up for Thomas by his new neighbour to the east, Archibald Douglas the Grim, David's principal henchman, who had been given the lands between the rivers Cree

[36] *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, K.M. Brown et al eds (St Andrews, 2007-2013), 1365/1/8. Date accessed: 14 March 2013.
[37] *Rotuli Scotiae*, 881b.
[38] *CDS* 4, no 259.
[39] Ibid, no 273.
[40] *RMS*, i, no.250.

and Nith, the eastern portion of the old lordship of Galloway, and the title of lord of Galloway.[41] He was certainly keen in the late 1360s and early 1370s to extend his authority over all of the ancient lordship and had Malcolm's earldom firmly in his sights. David's death in February 1371 did not lift this pressure from Thomas, for the new king, Robert Stewart, now openly pursued his aggressive dismantling of the Fleming lordship. In April 1372, he granted the whole lordship of Wigtown, with the exception of the barony of Kirkinner, which had been granted to Malcolm Fleming by a separate act, to his nephew, Sir James Lindsay, stating in the award that Thomas Fleming had yielded them up willingly in open court. Lindsay was not granted the title of earl, but received the whole lordship and power of regality over it. Robert II clearly understood the requirements for strong lordship in this notoriously turbulent zone. Lindsay, however, was unable to effect possession, for by April 1372 physical control of Wigtown had been assumed by Archibald Douglas, a man whom even the new king, with whom he had clashed politically in the latter years of David II's reign, could ill afford to challenge. Archibald, whose power rested on a formidable military following backed by the substantial landed inheritance of his wife, Joanna Murray, was in a position to offer the lordship which Thomas failed to provide, and may in fact have been encouraged by David in efforts to undermine the earl. Continuing financial embarrassment and bitter disputes with local noblemen had led Thomas in February 1371-2 – two months before his nominal surrender of the same lands to the crown - to sell the earldom to Archibald. King Robert was forced to accept the dubious legality of this transaction and confirmed Archibald in possession of Wigtown but withheld the title of earl, which was later to form a cause célèbre in the conflict between James II and the Black Douglases. Kennedy ambitions in Wigtown, too, had been checked by Douglas's coup, but at the cost of decades of simmering rivalry between the two families.

McCulloch attitudes to the intrusion of an aggressive new overlord into their territory are unknown. If, however, we accept the poetic testimony of the early fifteenth-century rhymer Richard Holland in the *Buke of the Howlat*,[42] initial relations were not friendly and Archibald imposed his lordship on Galloway and 'kelit doune thar capitanis' (cut down their captains).[43] Like the Flemings before him, however, Archibald needed the support of the leading native kindreds to consolidate his authority in the longer term and, it seems, after this initial harsh imposition of his lordship moved to accommodate families like the McCullochs and their MacDowell neighbours. By the early 1400s under his son, Archibald 4th earl of Douglas, the McCullochs were active in Douglas service. In 1408, for example, McCullochs accompanied Earl Archibald on the ill-fated campaign that ended in Scottish defeat at the battle of Humbleton or Homildon Hill in Northumberland.[44] The family head at that time was Thomas McCulloch of Myrton, who had earlier been found as part of the 4th Earl's council witnessing a charter concerning a marriage settlement at Cally on the eastern side of Wigtown Bay in the Stewartry.[45]

Myrton as a McCulloch property again emerges in April 1432 when Elias McCulloch, perhaps the son of Thomas, designated 'of Myrtoun', witnessed a charter of Archibald 5th earl of Douglas at Wigtown.[46] His presence amongst a group of witnesses headed by the Bishop of Whithorn, a Douglas cadet, and a series of leading local family heads probably confirms Elias's status as the McCulloch head-of-kin at that time and points, too, to his position as a member of the Earl's inner circle of councillors locally.

On 10 November 1478, Alexander McCulloch of Barsalloch was present at Myrton where he performed the legal ritual of breaking a precept of sasine that had been granted to him by his brother, Andrew, in respect of a 10 merkland of property. The property in question comprised the one merkland of the 'manor or mansion' of Myrton, with its close (*clausura*), the other nine merklands

[41] *RMS*, i, no
[42] *The Buke of the Howlat* (Bannatyne Club, 1823).
[43] Ibid, stanza 54.
[44] M Brown, *The Black Douglases* (East Linton, 1998), 152.
[45] A Agnew, *The Hereditary Sheriffs of Wigtown*, volume 1 (Edinburgh, 1893), 238.
[46] *Wigtownshire Charters*, no 37.

comprising the adjoining lands of Drumtroddan and Fairgirth.[47] In the breaking of the precept, symbolised by the physical breaking of a plate, Alexander declared that his brother was unwilling to have possession of the lands until a certain contract and condition contained in certain writs (unspecified) between the brothers was fulfilled.

On 4 July 1504 at Linlithgow, James IV issued a charter to 'his familiar knight' Sir Alexander McCulloch of Mertoun, permitting the erection of toun of Mertoun into a burgh of barony out of favour to Alexander and for the ease of his lieges and of foreigners travelling on pilgrimage to Whithorn.[48] The grant gave leave for the inhabitants to buy and sell goods, to be of burgess status, and, with the consent of Alexander and his heirs, to elect baillies. The charter also gave them the right to a market cross, a weekly market on Saturdays, and a public fair annually on the Feast of St Peter ad Vincula (1 August). Four days later at Stirling the king issued a second charter to Sir Alexander which confirmed him in possession of the lands of Mertoun and 'Auchquhonwane', together with their towers, fortalices, mills and tenancies, which Sir Alexander had personally resigned into his hands.[49] These lands, 'for singular favour and for services borne for him', the king united into the free barony of Mertoun, to be held by Alexander and his heirs male following the tenor of a charter of entail (now lost) that had been granted by King James II to Alexander's father.
The relationship between the king and McCulloch was apparently close, and whilst in Galloway in July 1505 for his Whithorn pilgrimage, James passed through Myrtoun where he ordered payment of 14/- to the gardener for some unspecified service.[50]

15 December 1505 Instrument of resignation by Alexander Makculloch of Myrtoun, Knight, as procurator from Ninian Makculloch of Cardyness [Cardoness] of his resignation in the hands of the King as superior of the 20 merkland of Newtoun of Cardyness in the lordship of Cardyness and sherrifdom of Kirkcudbricht, for reinfeftment in favour of the said Ninian and of Agnes Murray his spouse conjunctly. Done in a chamber of the King's palace beside the monastery of Holyrood near Edinburgh Witnesses: James, Abbot of Dunfermlyne, Treasurer to the King, David, Abbot of Cambuskynneth, Thomas Boswell, Patrick Sinclair, George Bard, James Stewart, and James Jaklyne, with others. Notary: Patrick Painter.[51]

At the end of April 1506 the king was again at Myrtoun, this time making gifts of drinksilver to the laird's workmen; 14/- to the masons and 5/- to the stone-quarriers.[52] Further gifts of 14/- drinksilver were made to the masons at Myrtoun in August 1506 and again in July 1507.[53]

Possibly the earliest surviving references to the 'tower of Mertoun' occur in 1532. On 6 August that year a Great Seal charter of King James V confirmed Simon McCulloch's sale of the whole barony together with the 'tower and fortalice' to Henry McCulloch of Kilasser and his wife, Margaret McCulloch and their males heirs, reserving his own life interest and a reasonable terce for his wife, Janet McKie.[54] Margaret appears to have been Simon and Janet's only daughter; she was certainly later referred to as holding Myrton in her own right. Formal sasine was granted to Henry and Margaret on 21 October.[55] The instrument of sasine recording the settlement on Henry and Margaret was drawn up at the tower of Mertoun. On 3 July 1546, crown ratification was granted to confirm the resignation of the lands, barony tower and fortalice of Myrton by Margaret into the hands of her son and apparent heir, Simon, with reservation of her life interest in the same.[56]

[47] *Wigtownshire Charters*, no 151.
[48] *RMS*, vol 2, no.2794.
[49] *RMS*, vol 2, no.2795.
[50] *Treasurers Accounts*, vol 3, 152.
[51] National Records of Scotland, GD1/222/1.
[52] *Treasurers Accounts*, vol 3, 192.
[53] Ibid, 331, 402.
[54] *RMS*, vol 3, no 1213.
[55] *Wigtownshire Charters*, no.255.
[56] *RMS*, vol 3, no 3268.

1 May 1587 to 14 April 1588 Receipts (2) by William Mccullocht [McCulloch] of Myrtoun [Merton] to John Levenax [Lennox] of Cailie [Cally] for sums due to George Mccullocht [McCulloch] of Killiesser [Killaser].[57]

Sometime around 1600, Sir William Maxwell of Monreith issued a discharge to Sir Godfrey McCulloch of Myrton and John Kennedy, lord Bargany, for the sum of 1000 merks Scots.[58]

In 1621, the king sent a letter to his Treasurer in Scotland, the Earl of Mar, instructing him and the other Commissioners of Rents to expedite the infeftment of John McCulloch MD in the lands and barony of Myrton.[59]

22 March 1683 Translation by Robert Hamilton merchant in Edinburgh as assignee of Mr. James Walwood of Newgrange in favour of Sir Godfrey McCulloch of Myrton Bt., of a bond by Robert McDowell of Logane for 100 merks scots to the said Mr. James Walwood.[60]

18 February 1697 Letters of Caption at the instance of Patrick McDowell elder of Logan against James McCulloch of Mule as cautioner in a bond by Sir Godfrey McCulloch of Myrton to McDowell, for £320.[61]

iv. Bibliography

a. Unpublished Papers

National Records of Scotland:

GD1 Miscellaneous small collections of family, business and other papers (GD1/222/1)

GD10 Papers of the Murray family of Broughton, Wigtownshire, and Cally, Kirkcudbrightshire, 1410-1978 (GD10/645)

GD109 Papers of the family of Dalrymple-Hamilton of Bargany, Ayrshire, 1412-1965 (GD109/2335)

GD124 Papers of the Erskine family, Earls of Mar and Kellie, 1189-1957. (GD124/10/183)

GD141 McDouall family of Logan, Wigtownshire, 1475-1788. (GD141/257, GD141/305)

b. Printed Primary

The Buke of the Howlat (Bannatyne Club, 1823).

c. Secondary Works

Agnew, A, *The Hereditary Sheriffs of Wigtown*, volume 1 (Edinburgh, 1893).
Brown, M, *The Black Douglases* (East Linton, 1998)

[57] National Records of Scotland, GD10/645.
[58] National Records of Scotland, GD109/2335.
[59] National Records of Scotland, GD124/10/183.
[60] National Records of Scotland, GD141/257.
[61] National Records of Scotland, GD141/305.

3. Early visual sources and commentary

i. Cartographic sources

A review of historic cartographic material and early visual sources was carried out as part of the assessment. Before the time of William Roy's *Great Map* of the mid-18th century most representations are nominal, though the considerable relative status of the site may be indicated the triple-towered motif delineated by Bleau, this published in 1654 but likely based on late 16th century mapping by Timothy Pont. Similarly john Adair on his manuscript map of 1685 features Myrton prominently, to the exclusion of most other settlements on the Machars.



Figure 3.1 Robert Gordon 'A map of the coast from Loch Ryan nearly to the head of Solway', c1636-52 (NLS)



Figure 3.2 Joan Bleau, 'Atlas of Scotland', 'Gallovidiae, Pars Occidentalior', 1654, probably based on a survey by Timothy Pont, c.1580-90 (NLS)



Figure 3.3 John Adair, 'A mape of the west of Scotland containing Clydsdail, Nithsdail, Ranfrew, Shyre of Ayre, & Galloway', 1685 (NLS)



Figure 3.4 Hermann Moll, 'The West Part of Galloway : Contains The Shire of Wigton', 1745 (surveyed before 1732)

Roy's map, *figure 3.5*, is the first to show reasonable topographic detail. Importantly this shows Myrton ('Martin') before the laying out in the later 18th century of the existing policies and plantings associated with Monreith House. The castle itself is shown as an L-shaped structure within a regular rectangular enclosure; a narrower enclosure on its north side contains a further group of buildings one of which must have been the chapel building. The ridge upon which the castle complex sits is wooded beyond the enclosures further north and to their south.

Taylor and A. Skinner's 1776 survey of the roads of Scotland, *figure 3.6*, shows no additional detail but confirms the policies have yet to be established by that date.

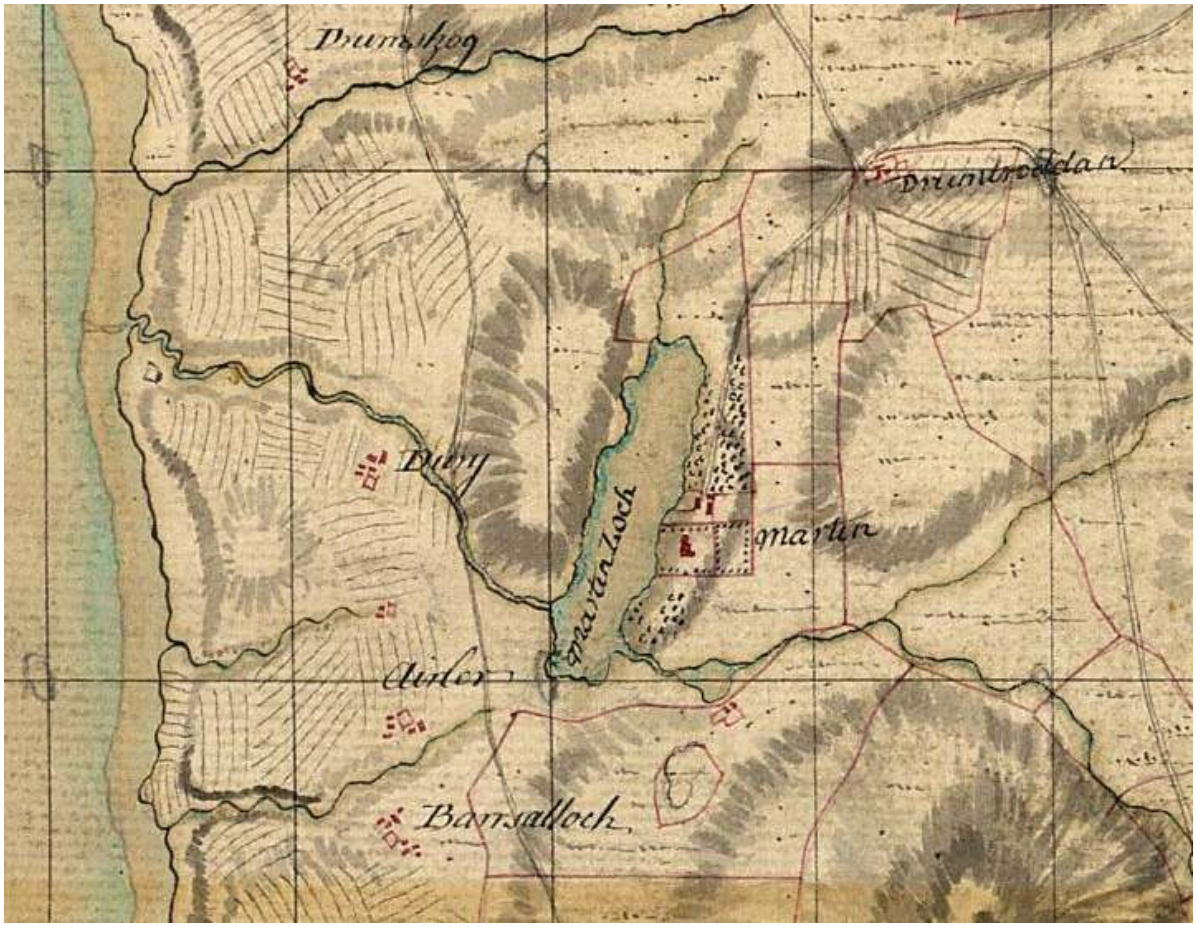


Figure 3.5 General William Roy's Great Map of Scotland, 1747-55 (National Library)



Figure 3.6 G.Taylor and A. Skinner, 'Survey and maps of the roads of North Britain or Scotland', 1776

An estate plan held at Monreith House, *figure 3.7*, is the most important early cartographic source for the site. The major part of the survey presents an improvement plan for the laying out of new policies around the White Loch of Myrton, including paths, rides and shelter belts, and showing these in relation to the new house of Monreith further south. The survey also provides helpful detail of Myrton castle and associated buildings. The castle itself is represented as a vignette showing a

stepped profile; unmistakable is the high tower and motte mound, to the right is a lower range – this either a true view showing the small jamb that extends from the east frontage of the range, or a nominal representation of the lower range. The steading court (including chapel) is more clearly delineated in plan further north, as are garden enclosures to the east and SE of the castle site, these enclosed by a shelter belt. The northern enclosure, square in plan, corresponds well to the position to the existing walled garden, which may have been indeed have established at this time There are new plantings proposed between the castle and the loch side.

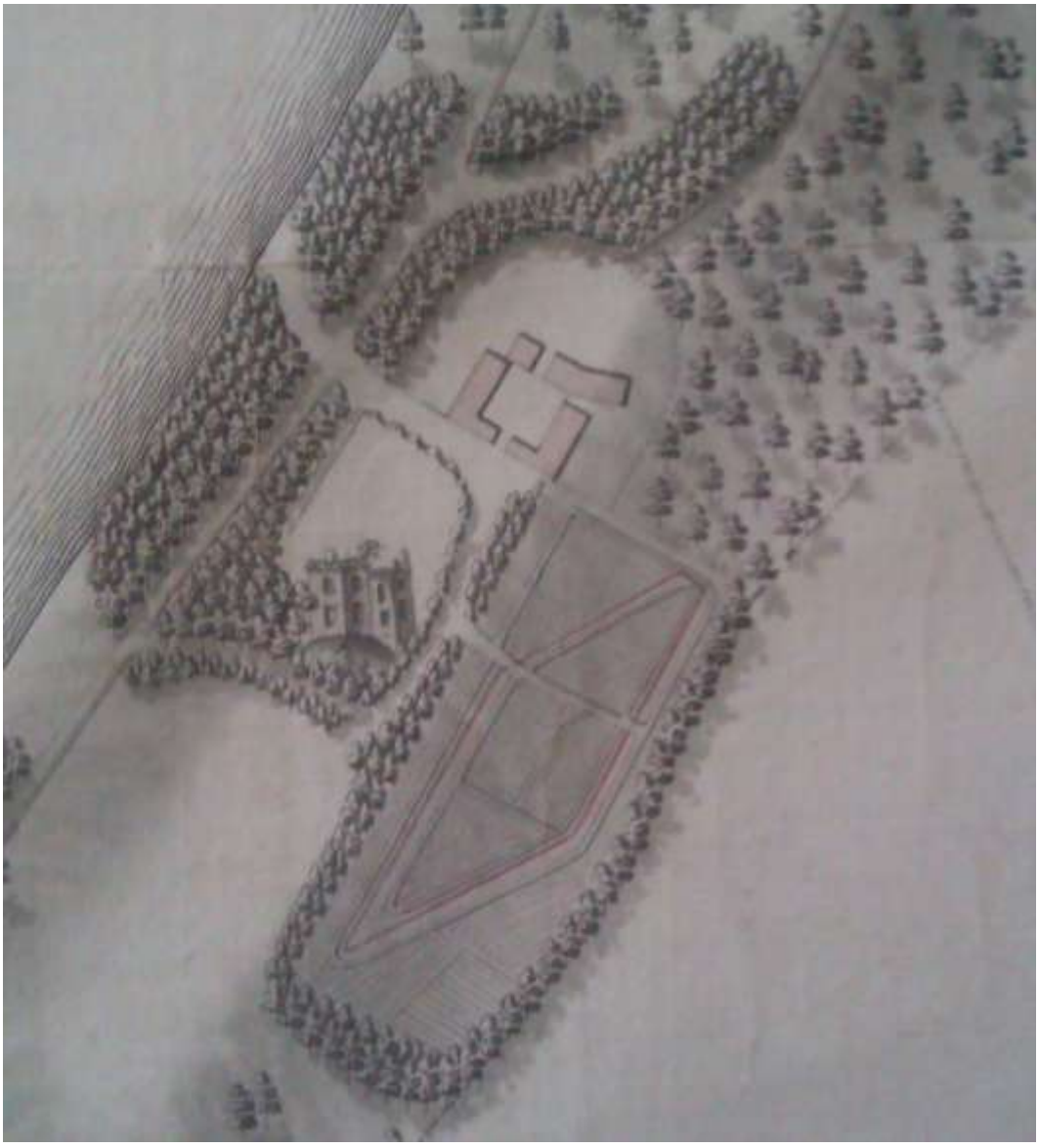


Figure 3.7 Detail from 'Plan for the Improvement of Merton' by George Robertson, 1776 (©Monreith Estate)

The 6"Mile 1st Edition Ordnance Survey of 1848-50 shows a more matured landscape with the plantings, much as proposed on the 1776 plan, now well established. The castle is shown in better detail in plan, confirming that by this stage the tower on the mound has certainly become disconnected from the range to the north. It is the first representation to show the presence of Myrton Cottage, extending westwards from the north end of the main range of the castle. The walled garden is well established, with plantings shown within, as is the annex garden area on its south side. This was enclosed within a low brick wall, curving in plan on its west side, parts of which are still visible on the ground.

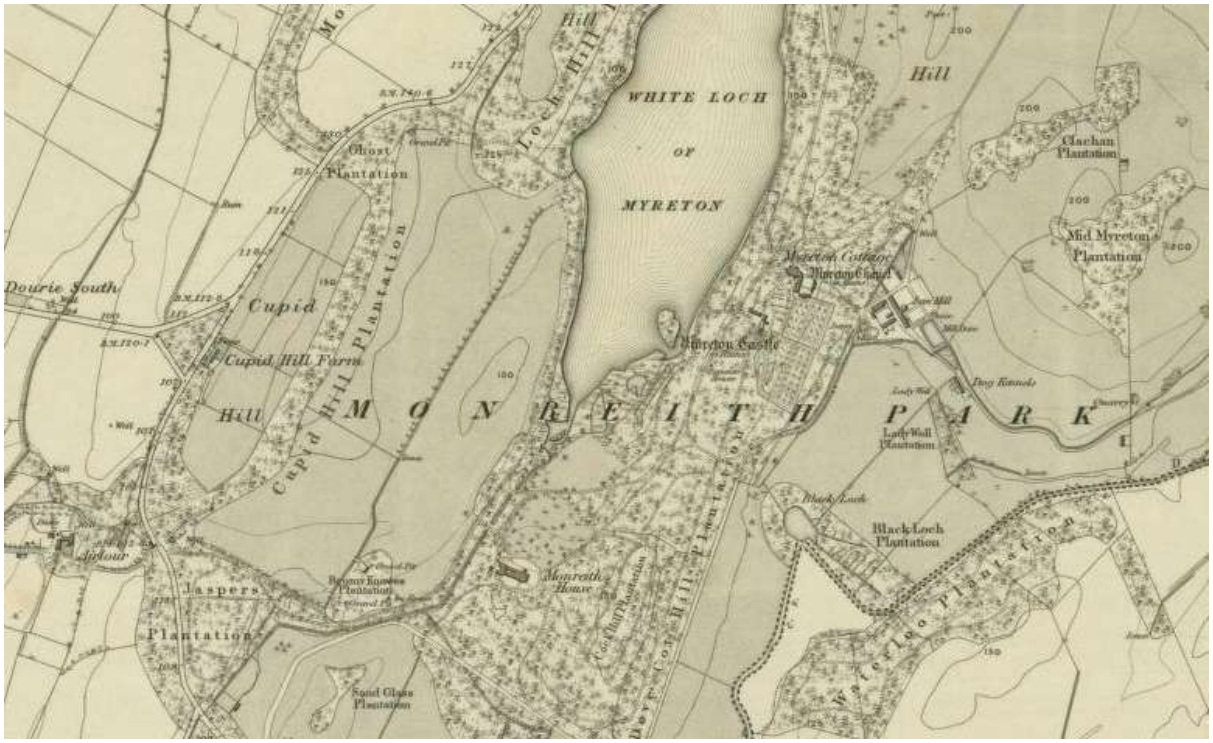


Figure 3.8 Excerpt from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (6": mile, of 1848/50), Wigtonshire, sheet 29, (NLS)



Figure 3.9 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (6": mile), detail (NLS)

ii. Antiquarian sources and earlier commentary

The *Old Statistical Account* entry for the Parish of Mochrum (1791-99 vol.17 p.559-574) the Rev. John Steven notes under 'Curiosities,' p.570,

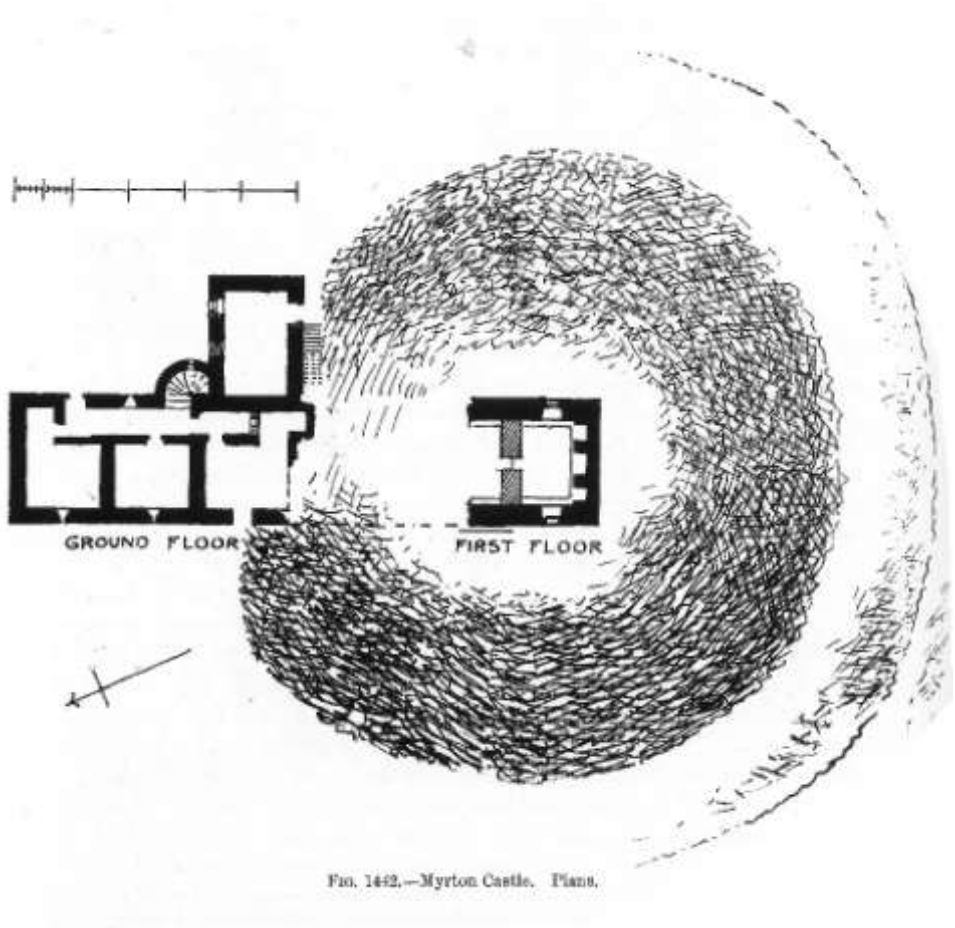
Near the church, which is situated about a mile right into the parish from Portwilliam, there is a pretty large earthern mound, quite entire, with a deep ditch of fosse round it.

and (p.572) notes,

… Sir William Maxwell's [seat] *… is a very elegant and commodious edifice, only finished about two years ago. It is situated on a gently rising ground … It has in front, at a small distance, a beautiful lake of clear water, surrounded by a belt of thriving young planting; as also the old family castle, rearing its head amidst a clump of lofty trees …*

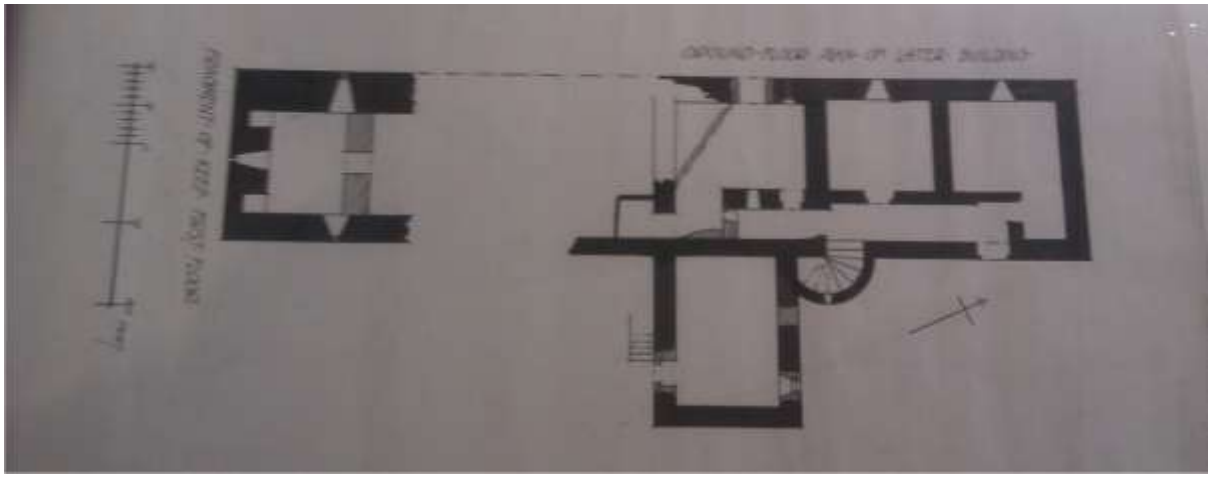
The *New Statistical Account* for the parish, written in 1839, offers no additional information.

In their *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (volume V, 1892) MacGibbon and Ross provide a good description of Myrton, based upon notes and a survey provided by W Galloway. This is reproduced in full in *Appendix B.ii*. In the absence of a new topographic survey their plan gives a good representation of the relationship of the surviving structures to the motte mound.



MacGibbon and Ross, plan of the castle site, 1892, 334

The RCAHMS, writing in 1911/12, suggest the tower to date to the early 16th century, and the north range to the later 17th century; the eastwards-extending jamb is not differentiated in date though it is described as 'much modernised'. Otherwise their account is brief and descriptive of the principal features – *Appendix B.ii*. A manuscript plan of the castle, clearly intended for inclusion in the 1912 Inventory volume, shows some analytical details in addition to those shown by MacGibbon and Ross'.



RCAHMS' survey plan (RCAHMS : NMRS – WGD 30/1)

The RCAHMS, visiting again in 1973, note for the first time that the eastwards-running jamb appears to be a later addition. By this stage the structure will have been ruinous and the evidence for the phasing revealed (*Appendix A.i*).

Early photographic imagery of the castle does little to add to its understanding, the ruin having evidently changed very little over many years. Some images, such as that on the front cover, do make it clear that the high tower retained extensive remains of its lime harled finish.

iii. Bibliography

MacGibbon and Ross, D and T (1887-92)
The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries, vol. 5, 333-7. Edinburgh

RCAHMS (1912)
The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions of Scotland. Fourth report and inventory of monuments and constructions in Galloway, 1, County of Wigtown, Edinburgh, 75-6, No.186. HMSO, Edinburgh

4. Description and structural analysis *(refer to survey drawings – Appendix C)*

i. The earthwork castle (mid-late 12th century)

The early castle was well sited upon the high point of the crest of the ridge that bounds the ESE side of the White Loch of Myrton. The ground to the east fell away to marshy ground and to the Black Loch to the SE. The approach seems always to have been from the north and an associated settlement most likely lay on this side, as also suggested by the presence of the later medieval chapel whose ruin is incorporated into the existing steading complex. Other than the motte mound itself and its associated ditch there is little visible evidence for further early remains – most of the surrounding area has been impacted by later development and improvement. It is only within the woodland and, particularly, in the field to the north of the steading complex that there are obvious earthworks – evidence for cultivation activity and the route of an earlier track or road coming in from the north; however in their present form even these features may considerably post-date the early earthwork castle.

The motte and ditch are well formed, the lines of both still sharply defined. The motte ditch which survives to the SW, south and SE is partly silted. There is no indication of a crossing point / bridge point to the motte which, as already suggested, more likely lay to the north, the area of the earthwork that is most affected by later constructions. In spite of its well preserved appearance the summit of the motte mound must have been very heavily impacted by the erection of the tower. The floor level of the lower stage of the tower lies some considerable depth below the level of the mound top as visible externally suggesting extensive landscaping took place following the tower construction.



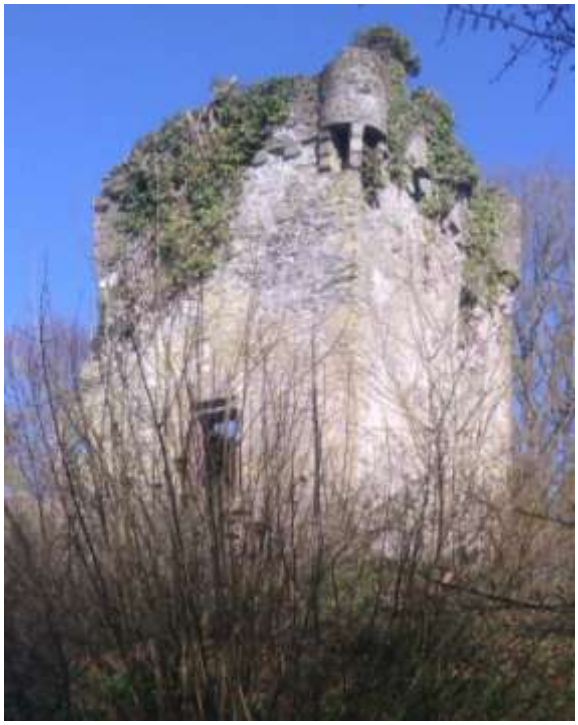
The motte mound, looking NW

ii. Later medieval – 16th century *(drawings C.1 – C.7)*

a. The early tower

The tower surmounting the motte mound is the earliest visible masonry construction at Myrton, the historical sources suggesting it was erected about 1500. This dating is consistent with the general character of the surviving fabric. The tower was comparatively simply built of local sandstone, schist and field gatherings. The tower was harled with a coarse aggregated high lime finish, areas of which still adhere (also see cover photograph) – it is not clear whether this part of an original or later finish, but the tower may well always have been harled.





The tower, looking SE and NE respectively







Well preserved areas of lime harl still adhering on the west side of the tower

There is a minimal use of finer stone for dressings, with roughly hewn blocks and slabs for quoins, and coarsely squared off slabs upon the corbels. It is only for the corbels themselves, parapet spouts, and at the few surviving parts of original window openings where dressings still remain (most of the window openings saw considerable subsequent modification, with some original stones reset). The early window detail seems to have been a broad chamfer. Most of these earlier dressings are well cut from a fine-grained cream - pale grey sandstone. The corbelling of the parapet is very shallow and the projection of the two remaining bartizans of comparatively slight, each of these supported by three tiers of corbel stones.



The surviving parapet and bartizans along the south wall head of the tower



Bartizan corbelling

The east, south and west walls of the tower are still upstanding, the north wall entirely gone. There is some suggestion of the point of return of the north wall on the inner faces of the side walls at their ruined lower ends, but this remains to be confirmed (which can only be achieved by excavation).

The lower level of the tower preserves in the south wall two aumbry-like recesses on either side of a narrow splayed loop. There are further loops of similar character within the east and west walls; each is stepped internally and all were subsequently blocked. If the loops to east and west were originally centrally placed this will give some confirmation of the position of the north wall. Projecting uncut stones above the level of the loops to east and west, crude corbels, evidently supported the floor structure above, the floor level itself marked by a prominent off-set.





Blocked loops in the south and west walls

The second stage of the tower has seen much secondary modification. However it seems that the fireplace central to the south wall is an original feature, this with a lintel of considerable length, as are the broad window recesses to east and west. While the former is now occupied by later nesting boxes, the window to the west is comparatively well preserved, with a low arched head over. At the third stage of the tower there is evidence to indicate further window of similar character in the east and west walls, these both broken, and a surviving opening in the east part of the south wall; all of these had / have arched heads.

There are sockets for principal joists between the second and third stages within the east and west walls. At the third stage there seems to have been a fireplace within the east wall, to the south of the remains of the early window; though the walling in the area of the fireplace has been substantially rebuilt its chimney still rises above from parapet level.

At the third stage of the tower large aumbry-like recesses were formed within the south and west walls towards the SW angle.

b. Earlier secondary modifications to the tower

The tower clearly saw at least one early episode of remodelling. The second stage windows to east and west, and the third stage window to the south were each evidently enlarged. New dressings were inserted, that at the lower stage to the east detailed with quirked angle rolls and crudely placed 'hood moulds' above, while that to the west employed purplish dressings detailed with a chamfer (the lintels and sill seem to be reused (original?) window details), again with a hood-mould above and relieving arch over.

Internally there were modifications to the south wall at the second stage, here two press-like recesses were formed, and the fireplace between remodelled. Plaster residues within the presses define the former position of shelving. There is much wall plaster remaining generally from this phase of works.

It seems likely that these secondary works occurred at about the time of the construction of the northern range, this in the 17th century. They appear to represent an associated upgrading of the accommodation at the upper levels of the tower.





Interior of the tower, west wall





Windows respectively in the east and west walls of the tower at the second stage



Second stage of the tower, south wall – showing the remodelled early fireplace, itself blocked and the press recesses to either side.

iii. The 17th century range to the north (drawings C.1 and C.8)

The remains of the range extending northwards from the north side of the motte mound, presently unconnected to the tower above, consists of the vaulted cellarage, stair tower, and only the most fragmentary remains of the first floor level. There is no surviving indication of how high the range had been but at the least it must have consisted of a full first floor and, likely, a dormered loft level. The walls of the range are probably too insubstantial for there to have been an additional storey.

The frontage of the range lay to the east, where it overlooked a forecourt of level ground (the existing area between the range and the walled garden, beyond which point the ground slopes down sharply to the east). In plan the range is rectangular with a semi-circular stair tower projecting from what may have been the approximate mid-point of the frontage – *drawing C.1*.



The east frontage of the northern range, looking WNW



The north range (right); the eastern jamb extending to the left of the stair tower; the tower beyond; looking SSW

The range is rubble built with sandstone dressings for the openings; again the quoining is of coarsely shaped blocks and slabs of schist. Along the foot of the east and north walls are some projecting base-course stones. The principal entrance, off-set to the north, is the finest surviving feature of the Myrton ruin. It has an elaborate surround, a quirked double roll, that dies at simple chamfer stops at the base of each jamb. The door head construction is that of a flat arch whose voussoirs interlock – an extravagant and idiosyncratic feature of individual note. The dressings are of a pale yellow fine-grained crystalline sandstone, finely jointed.



The principal entrance



Surviving window on the west elevation



Detail of the head of the principal entrance, formed of interlocking voussoirs

Elsewhere surviving dressings are few externally as much robbing has taken place. One solitary ground floor window surround still remains on the ivy-clad west elevation towards the north end; this is neatly detailed with a chamfered surround.

A notable survival is part of the first floor exterior walling on the east side, at the point where the later eastwards-running jamb abuts. This fragment of the upper level of the main range, which was retained and formed in to the gable wall of the still-roofed jamb, preserves the embedded upper parts of a single first floor window. This has the moulded detail of a sunk margin and rounded aris; the underside of the lintel displays three diamond-set sockets for vertical bars. This is important evidence for the former appearance of the upper level of the range.



Surviving upper parts of a first floor window, as visible within the interior of the later eastern jamb

The principal entrance gives access to a passage. There are vaulted cellars off this to the north and west, the entrances of each of these formed with neatly executed dressings detailed with a rounded aris. Continuing south in the east wall there is the remains of a window robbed of its dressings; beyond this the passage opens in to the turnpike stair, its steps formed of roughly hewn slabs but with a circular newel unusually formed of individual pieces of dressed sandstone. This stage of the stair seems to have been lit – the position of a robbed window suggested by an existing dip in the stair walling to the east.

At its south end the passage terminates at an entrance to the west in to a further vaulted chamber; the only feature of a recessed area at the end of the passage is a servery hatch on the south side of the entrance, a feature that demonstrates the vaulted chamber to have been the kitchen. The detailed understanding of this final vaulted chamber (i.e. the kitchen) is made difficult the extent of its

ruination and by the fill within. However there are indications that suggest the former position of a broad arch running east/west across the interior, perhaps that of the kitchen fireplace, and a second arched opening at right-angles (arch also gone) giving access to a further small vestibule-like area to the SE. The latter seems to have led to an external access in the east frontage before returning back to the west – this possibly once leading to a store or a service stair up to the next level.

The two vaulted cellars and kitchen were each lit by small windows in the west wall though, as already noted, only the northernmost of these retains its dressings. The first floor level is too overgrown to presently discern particular analytical details.

iv. 18th century wing to the east (drawings C.9 – C.15)

A two-storied extension was built against the principal east frontage and against the south side of the projecting stair tower, the latter thereby partly embedded at the resulting re-entrant. This structure is comparatively well preserved, most of its walling still standing to wall head height and the gables intact. However this structure is in itself is of more than one phase.



The east jamb, general view looking NW

When first built it seems certainly to have been erected against the frontage of the earlier range when that latter was still in use and, indeed, in order to provide additional accommodation at first floor level. Based upon its surviving details the addition seems to have occurred in the early-mid 18th century, suggested by its overall proportions, details such as its flat-copes of the gable heads and chimney detail and, especially, the arrangement of the first floor interior. Within the east gable wall at that level there is a centrally placed fireplace with symmetrically arranged recesses on either side, one a press and the other a window ingo (window subsequently blocked). The dressed surround of the fireplace is neatly detailed with a basket-arched lintel with a narrow quirked roll at the angle, a feature

that indicates this chamber was of some status – an addition to a suite of first floor rooms within the northern range. To access the new chamber an entrance was broken through from the earlier range, this in turn impacting the lower parts of an existing window. This chamber was also furnished with two windows in the north wall and one to the south. There is evidence of plaster silhouettes for a lost north/south aligned partition wall indicating a larger compartment to the east; perhaps to the west there had been a vestibule and closet(s).

The lower level had a fireplace in the east wall and entrances to the north and south, the latter towards the SE corner. Originally there were two windows at this level. The two entrances suggest the interior had been sub-divided into separate chambers. An entrance was broken through into the main range to the west, connecting into the basement level passage towards its south end – this evidently providing service access; perhaps the lower level of the east jamb provided additional servants' accommodation. The fireplace to the east was broad and still retains an iron *swey* for the suspension of cooking vessels (it is possible this is a secondary feature).



Interior of the east gable wall of the east jamb

As described by MacGibbon and Ross described it as *very much modernised, and still in use, there are two stories, which are roofed* (1892, 335), and by the RCAHMS twenty years later as *still in use for storage purposes*..

v. Reduction at the end of the 18th century

The eastern jamb was retained, roofed, at the time the upper level of the main range was reduced to first floor floor level. A new west gable wall was formed from a retained fragment of the earlier frontage and the newly formed gable head made good with new masonry. The entrances from the main range into the jamb were blocked off at both levels and the upper storey provided with a new external access by means of an outside stone stair rising to the west against the south wall; a new entrance was formed at the head of the stair, this an expansion of the existing window. The original ground floor entrance to the SE was heightened and the other entrance to the north blocked – internal partitioning may have been removed at this stage. There also seems to have been a rearrangement of the floor structure at this stage, with various interventions evident particularly on the south wall.

This work seems likely to represent conversion of the earlier jamb into a bothy, possibly a gardener's residence. It clearly occurred at the time of the abandonment and reduction of the castle as a principal residence, and probably when the existing walled garden was erected at the time of the more general reorganisation of the policies, c.1775-80.

The north range was neatly reduced down to the first floor floor level and the walls levelled off just above that point, this effectively leaving a low parapet. It is probable that the cellarage of the north range was retained as usable space, perhaps potting sheds and storage for the newly established surrounding productive gardens. The southern parts of the range and the north side of the early tower were also dismantled. The amount of material this generated must have been considerable. There is a tradition on the estate that it was employed for the construction of Monreith House though inspection of the latter failed to identify with certainty stones, diagnostic dressings in particular, that obviously derive from the castle.

vi. Later works

a. Doocot

The principal later work was the erection of a doocot within the ruin of the tower. According to MacGibbon and Ross, writing in 1892, this occurred about 1870,

> *The building on this side is completely disguised by a high plain wall, erected about twenty years ago, in order to convert the old tower into a dovecot. It runs up within a short distance of the original height, finishing with a pent roof. The accommodation for the birds is formed in brick, the entire inner face of the new wall, and also of the old east wall, being thus lined.*
>
> *… the flooring and roof are entirely gone, it being reported that they were destroyed by fire, of which some traces remain*

The extent of the former doocot is very clear as most of its masonry fabric still remains. Its construction necessitated the closing off of the open north side of the tower with a two-storied masonry wall, with central entrance below, and wholly lined with nesting boxes internally above. The latter were formed with brickwork partitions upon horizontals formed of roof slates. The masonry of the lower walling incorporates at least two recycled dressings – evidently lintels, each detailed with a chamfer.

The second stage window in the east wall was in-filled, partly colonised for nesting boxes. The three remaining loops at the lower stage were blocked off – possibly at this time as a measure to prevent rats from entering. The upper walls of the tower saw some associated remodelling. This was particularly the case to the east where a pre-existing fireplace opening was removed and much of the internal wall face in this area built up in new masonry. On this side the profile of the doocot roof line is well preserved – there are remaining mortar fillets. It seems that the roof form had been of lectern type, a mono-pitch broken by a step-up where the birds alighted.



Interior of tower – east wall, showing the secondary modifications relating to the doocot, including the profile of its lectern roof

b. Other works

Other later works at the castle are comparatively minor. A new dry stone wall section was built within the southern compartment of the north range (within the probable kitchen) to retain the slope of the ground rising to the south, presumably rubble collapse.

In even more recent times the same chamber was partly partitioned off with the erection of single-skin cemented brickwork walling up to (and supporting) the remains of the vault. Accessed through the robbed out window opening to the west, this chamber was evidently associated with the use of Myrton Cottage.

5. Conclusion

i. Discussion

The interest of the Myrton Castle site is on a number of levels. In general terms it is a fine example of continuity of a seat of lordship – from the construction of the motte through to the 18th century. The crannog close by in the White Loch may be the immediate predecessor and, if so, this direct continuity as a power centre may extend back considerably further.

The castle site incorporates a number of elements of different periods that the present study has helped to better define. The motte mound and its associated ditch appear to be good examples of their type. The motte mound may have been deliberately retained as symbolic of the continuity of lordship established defensive high point and the best vantage point for the erection of the principal tower of the later castle. The tower was deeply founded into the motte top, most likely to ensure its stability; its construction will have obliterated most evidence for an earlier timber-built superstructure or tower.

The tower itself is comparatively early and its detailing typically functional and unelaborate. Many more important details of its construction will be recoverable with vegetation removal, better access and ground investigation, perhaps enough to reasonably reliably reconstruct its original form. In its ruined and somewhat modified state it is not a particularly outstanding example of its type.

The 17th century range is also fragmentary, the lower storey being the principal survival. Reconstruction of the upper levels is partly conjectural, but within certain parameters. Its extent is known except where it runs up to the early tower to the south, and this may be recoverable by excavation. Generally the lower level is mostly in tact; enough dressings survive to be able to suggest the former appearance of most missing details, such as the robbed ground floor window openings. The first floor level must have provided the principal accommodation; clearance of the upper level will doubtless considerably help in understanding its planning and some of its details. In the latter respect it is fortunate that part of one first floor window still survives, preserving its moulding detail. The form of the upper parts of the building are probably more or less reliably reconstructable, although one point that is more a matter of conjecture is the nature of the junction of this range with the tower (however further details may be recoverable through excavation).

The eastern jamb is an interesting individual survival and is comparatively complete. Its former appearance is more or less fully understandable (at both principal phases), with further details certainly recoverable by internal clearance.

It would seem that while the castle ruin was reduced and much robbed, evidently to recycle the available building materials, parts were deliberately retained. The east jamb continued to function as a bothy, the vaulted cellarage of the north wing, was evidently useful functional space likely for a gardens-related function, and the remains of the tower. The latter was in probability retained both as a landscape feature visible from the main house and at points around the policies, and as an overt

reference to the ancient origins of the Maxwell family, symbolic of the antiquity of their lordship and their feudal rights of ownership.

The tower also saw later gainful employment as a doocot – an appropriate place for the *doos* – slightly set apart from the main steading complex to the north. The doocot construction within the tower is notable, its structure relatively well preserved and its missing elements, notably the roof form, is recoverable from the physical evidence.

ii. Recovery of further information

A key piece of information that would most greatly enhance the understanding of the ruinous structures at Myrton is the nature of the junction between the high tower and the 17th century range. Definition at this point may have a significant bearing upon what might be considered possible in terms of an architectural scheme.

Investigation in this area would hopefully determine the extent of the footprint of the tower and, likely, its foundation details; it would also determine whether there was a gap between the tower and the 17th century range or, if not (as seems more likely), the nature of the junction between the two and some information as to how they may have intercommunicated.

iii. Recommendations

If it is accepted that further investigation of Myrton Castle is needed to inform architectural proposals then the most critical area to understand is the gap between the tower surmounting the motte to the south and the 17th century range to the north. Evaluation trenches may well rapidly answer the key questions here:

- confirmation of the position of the north wall of the tower and its footing details
- definition of the nature of the junction of the 17th century range to the tower
- understanding the southern chamber within the 17th century range (presumed kitchen), and the nature of the smaller chamber(s) to its E and SE.

Much depends on how much information is required at this stage to inform the architectural process and Historic Scotland's own requirements for better knowledge of the site.

The upper parts of the tower were both inaccessible and overgrown, and much of the 17th century range was similarly overgrown and mostly inaccessible (upper level and exterior walls to the north and west). In general terms it is desirable to complete the analytical record in those areas.

Clearly the Myrton Castle site and its setting has considerable archaeological interest and research potential in a number of respects, however these fall out-with the specific brief of this study.

Appendix A

i. CANMORE

Archaeological Notes
NX34SE 5 36016 43275.

(NX 3601 4327) Myrton Castle (NR) (Remains of)
OS 6" map (1957)

Myrton Castle is in two distinct, disconnected parts. The original, early 16th century keep, which was probably c.40' high, occupies the summit of a mound, 20' high and 56' in diameter, surrounded by a well-defined ditch 6' deep, though much filled-up - evidently an earlier motte. All that remains of the keep is a fragment, c.22' square, open to the N, it was converted into a dovecot c.1860. At the base of the motte to the N, there is a large area of level ground before it again rises. This has been used to add an extension to the old structure, possibly in the late 17th century, at a level a storey below its base. There is now no structural connection between the two buildings, though one may have existed. What remains of the later building is L-shaped in plan, with a wide stair in the re-entrant angle. It is also fragmentary, except for the E wing which has been used as a dwelling, and was used for storage in 1911.
The lands of Myrton belonged to the M'Cullochs, and it was visited by James IV, c.1511, the property passed to the Maxwells in 1682.

D MacGibbon and T Ross 1892; RCAHMS 1912, visited 1911.

Myrton Castle is as described. The E wing of the castle appears to be of a later date. Revised at 1/2500 (earthworks only).
Visited by OS (IA) 31 January 1973

ii. Historic Scotland – listed building report

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">HISTORIC SCOTLAND

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY COUNCIL

Information Supplementary to the Statutory List
(This information has no legal significance)</td><td>MOCHRUM PARISH

STATUTORY LIST</td></tr>
<tr><td>HB Number 19564</td><td>Item Number: 51 -</td><td rowspan="6">MONREITH, MYRTON CASTLE</td></tr>
<tr><td>Group with Items:</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Map sheet:</td><td>Category: B</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Group Category:</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Date of Listing 20-JUL-1972</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Description:
Early 16th century tower house; later to late 17th century L-plan range. Ruins of square-plan tower house, situated on knoll. Rubble. Converted to dovecot circa 1870, by addition of cross-wall to N, with central doorway; brick and slate nesting boxes to N and E walls. Several aumbries at ground floor. Blocked doorway, with roll-moulded
jambs, to E. Window, with chamfered jambs, to W at 1st floor. Corbelled parapet. Several corbelled angle bartizans. Fragmentary remains of L-plan range to N.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">References:
P H M'Kerlie HISTORY OF THE LANDS AND THEIR OWNERS IN GALLOWAY Vol I (1870) pp 235-253, Vol II (1877) pp 264-267. D MacGibbon and T Ross THE CASTELLATED AND DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF SCOTLAND Vol V (1892) pp 333-337. H Maxwell SCOTTISH GARDENS (1908) pp 44-45. RCAHMS INVENTORY Wigtown (1912) pp 75-76. C H Dick HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN GALLOWAY AND CARRICK (1916) pp 244, 246, 257. SCRAPBOOK (1936) relating to Mochrum Parish, in possession of Minister. AN INVENTORY OF GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES IN SCOTLAND (1987) Vol 2, p 97. NMRS: Plan WGD/30/1 (1911).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Notes:
Scheduled Monument. Myrton Castle has been retained on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest on account of its remaining architectural features. Myrton Castle was built by the M'Cullochs; the property passed into the possession of the Maxwells at the end of the 17th century. Myrton Castle was occupied until the end of the 18th century, when it was partly demolished to provide material for the building of Monreith House (see separate listing). See separate listings for Monreith: Monreith House; Ice House; Myrton Cottage (Monreith Estate Office); Myrton Chapel; West Gateway.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix B Analytical accounts of the castle

i. MacGibbon and Ross, Volume V, 333-7 (1892)

The castle was occupied by the Maxwells as their family seat till the close of last century, when the nucleus of the present house was erected to a large extent out of the ruins of the old one.

As it now stands, Myrton Castle is in two quite distinct and disconnected portions. The original keep, which was probably about 40 feet in height, stands on a knoll about 20 feet high, cut off on the south by a fosse from the ridge. All that remains is the southern part of the

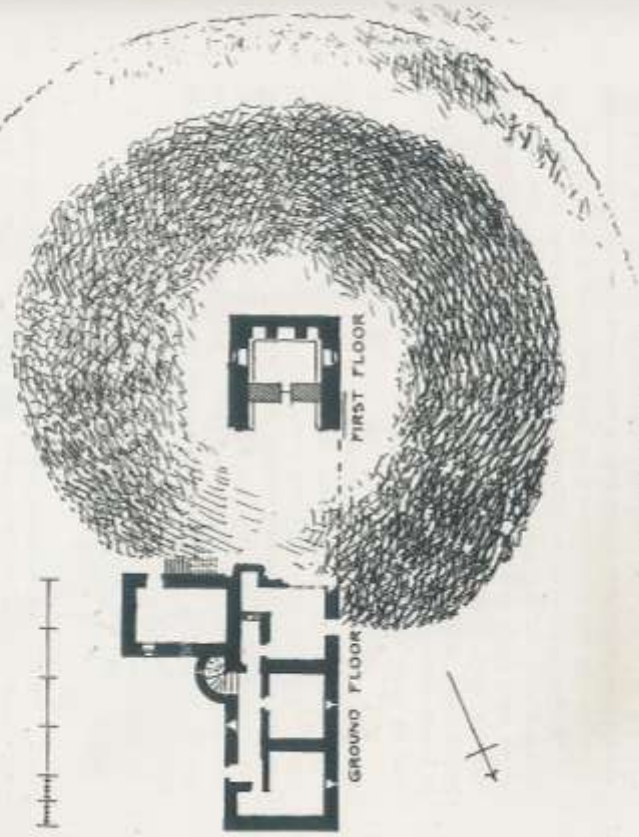


Fig. 1442.—Myrton Castle. Plan.

castle (Fig. 1442), a fragment about 22 feet square, tolerably complete in itself, but quite open to the north or north-east. The building on this side is completely disguised by a high plain wall, erected about twenty years ago, in order to convert the old tower into a dovecot. It runs up to within a short distance of the original height, finishing with a pent roof. The accommodation for the birds is formed in brick, the entire

MYRTON CASTLE,† Wigtownshire.

This castle is situated to the north-east of the present mansion-house of Monreith, and within the policies attached to it. It is placed on the summit of a broad ridge of considerable length, running north-east from the house, and formerly separating the White and the Black Lochs. The White Loch lying to the west still remains, Monreith House being built at its southern extremity. The Black Loch has been drained for a considerable time, and in the course of the operations extensive remains of a crannog were found, of which the oaken piles and dryestone erections may still be seen.

The knoll on which the castle stands is by many averred to be artificial, but the erection of so massive a building on its summit seems to negative that idea, the probability being that it is merely a little higher outcrop of the strata which form the mass of the ridge. What tends to give it an artificial character is the fact of there being a dry fosse on its southern side; but this has doubtless been cut across the neck between the ridge and the knoll in order to isolate the castle more effectually.

The lands of Myrton came into the possession of the M'Cullochs in the fourteenth century, and it was by this family that the square keep on the knoll was erected. They retained the lands and castle till the close of the seventeenth century, when they passed by purchase to the Maxwells of Monreith. James iv., during his pilgrimages to the shrine of St. Ninian at Whithorn, frequently stayed at Myrton Castle, and part of the old tower is still pointed out as the "king's chalmer."

* *Liudores Abbey*, p. 454.

† For the plan and description of this castle we are indebted to Mr. W. Galloway, and for a photograph, from which the sketch was made, to Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart. of Monreith.

inner face of the new wall, and also of the old east wall, being thus lined. This wall externally is densely covered with ivy, so that it is masked in every way.

There has been no vaulting, and the flooring and roof are entirely gone, it being reported that they were destroyed by fire, of which some traces remain.

On the ground floor there are no windows, only one or two ambries, the walls here being about 4 feet 9 inches thick, diminishing to 3 feet 6 inches above.

On the first floor the large window (5 feet high and 2 feet 6 inches wide) is peculiar from having a very deep ingoing. The fireplace is in the centre of the south side, but built up, and, either by scorching or damage, no features like jambs, &c., are distinguishable. At the sides are large plain recesses; on the top floor these become quite little "chalmers."

The parapet, so far as now visible (Fig. 1443), has very little projection, with flat plain corbels, and at the angles circular turrets of corresponding character.

Weakened by the internal arrangements and vents, the south wall is much rent; the others seem to be strong and plumb. The building does not impress one as being of any very great age, and no doubt would be in its prime, if not new, when James IV. favoured it with his presence. How far it extended northwards it is at present impossible to say; perhaps excavation might show something. It has never been more than 22 feet over the walls, and had no lateral extensions.

At the base of the knoll northwards there is a considerable breadth of level ground before it again rises. Advantage has been taken of this to add an extension to the old structure at a level a story or more below its base. There is no structural connection now between the two buildings, but such may possibly have existed at one time. What remains is L shaped in plan, with a good, wide, and very easy stair at the re-entering angle formed of rough flagging. The long limb is vaulted throughout, the short one floored. Of the former the ground floor only remains; of the latter, which is very much modernised, and still in use, there are two stories, which are roofed.

The only ornament is on the entrance door, which is 6 feet 10 inches high by 3 feet 1 inch wide, with a rybat head moulded with a double roll of rather late character. The window in the north-west vault has a double sill; the mid vault has in one corner a large three-feet square slab built into the wall—a rough flag, now much broken, probably for the milk-dish.

Where this wing abuts on the knoll the masonry is very much broken and destroyed, and no connection between the old work and the new is now traceable. At the back of the short wing over the "closet" there still exists a four or five feet broad piece of arching, which gives access to the top of the vaults.

The L house or extension is probably at least a century later than



Fig. 1443.—Myrton Castle. View from South West.

the keep. The Maxwells acquired the property in 1682, and it may be a question whether they or the M'Cullochs erected the new house. The peculiarity of this structure is that of site rather than of buildings.

Bounding the level space to the north are still extensive remains of a pretty high wall, and near the castle stood Myrton Chapel, the site of which seems to be now unknown.

ii. RCAHMS (1911/12)

PARISH OF MOCHRUM.

186. *Myrton Castle.*—The ruins of Myrton Castle lie within the grounds of Monreith House, by the side of the White Loch, 1½ m. E from Port William. They consist of two portions, the older a keep of the early 16th century, erected on a mound some 56′ in diameter, evidently a mote of an earlier period, surrounded by a well-defined fosse, still 6′ feet deep, though much filled up. The later portion, L-shaped on plan, and possibly erected during the latter half of the 17th century, occupies the lower ground at the N. base of the mound, thus causing the lowest storey of the keep to line approximately with the first floor of the N. wing. Both portions of the castle are fragmentary, with the exception of the E. wing of the later building, which has been occupied as a dwelling within recent years, and is still in use for storage purposes. The extent of the keep from N. to S. cannot be ascertained without excavation, as no portion of the N. wall now exists above ground. From E. to W. the keep measures 22′ over all. Within recent years it has been converted into a dove-cot by the erection of a cross-wall forming an internal space of 9′ from N. to S. The interior has been lined on all sides with bricks, forming pigeon holes. There are no windows on the ground floor. In the S. wall is a recess for a cupboard, and in the centre of the same wall a fireplace, now built up. The walls of the keep vary from 3′ 6″ to 5′ 6″ in thickness, and terminate in a parapet and walk with angle bartizans supported on corbels. The staircase was probably at the N. end, communicating with the two upper floors, attics, and parapet walk. The floors and roof have been of wood, of which there are now no traces save the beam holes. Between the two portions of the building lies a space of some 30′. There is now no evidence of what occupied this space, or of any means of communication. The entrance to the 17th-century building is in the E. wall of the N. wing. The door jamb has a bold double bead-and-quirk moulding carried also across the lintel. This entrance opens into a vaulted passage running N. and S., from which access is obtained to three vaulted cellars on the ground floor, each lighted by a narrow window in the W. wall. In the southmost of these cellars the narrow window has been enlarged and converted into a doorway for the sake of modern convenience. The NW. window has a rough shelf of stone, now much destroyed. The E. wing, which is two storeys in height, has been entirely modernised, and is still in use. The ground floor is entered on the N. side, and the upper floor from the S. side by a doorway at the top of a flight of steps. The wide and easy wheel-stair in the re-entering angle is entered from the passage adjoining the E. wall of the N. wing. The keep is thickly covered with ivy, which partially conceals the parapet and corner turrets.

The lands of Myrton belonged to the M'Cullochs, who possessed them down till about the end of the 17th century, when they were acquired by Sir William Maxwell of Monreith, whose descendant, Sir Herbert Maxwell, is the present proprietor. From certain items in the Treasurer's Accounts for 1511–12 it appears that Sir Alexander M'Culloch of Myrton was Master Falconer to James IV. That monarch stayed at Myrton on his pilgrimages to Whithorn, and he erected it into a burgh of barony.

See *Cast. and Dom. Arch.* v. p. 333 (plan and illus.); *Lands and their Owners in Galloway*, i. pp. 31 and 235; *Hereditary Sheriffs of Galloway*, i. p. 303: Symson, p. 52.

O.S.M., WIGTOWN, xxx. SE. Visited 18th July 1911.

Appendix C Phased survey drawings

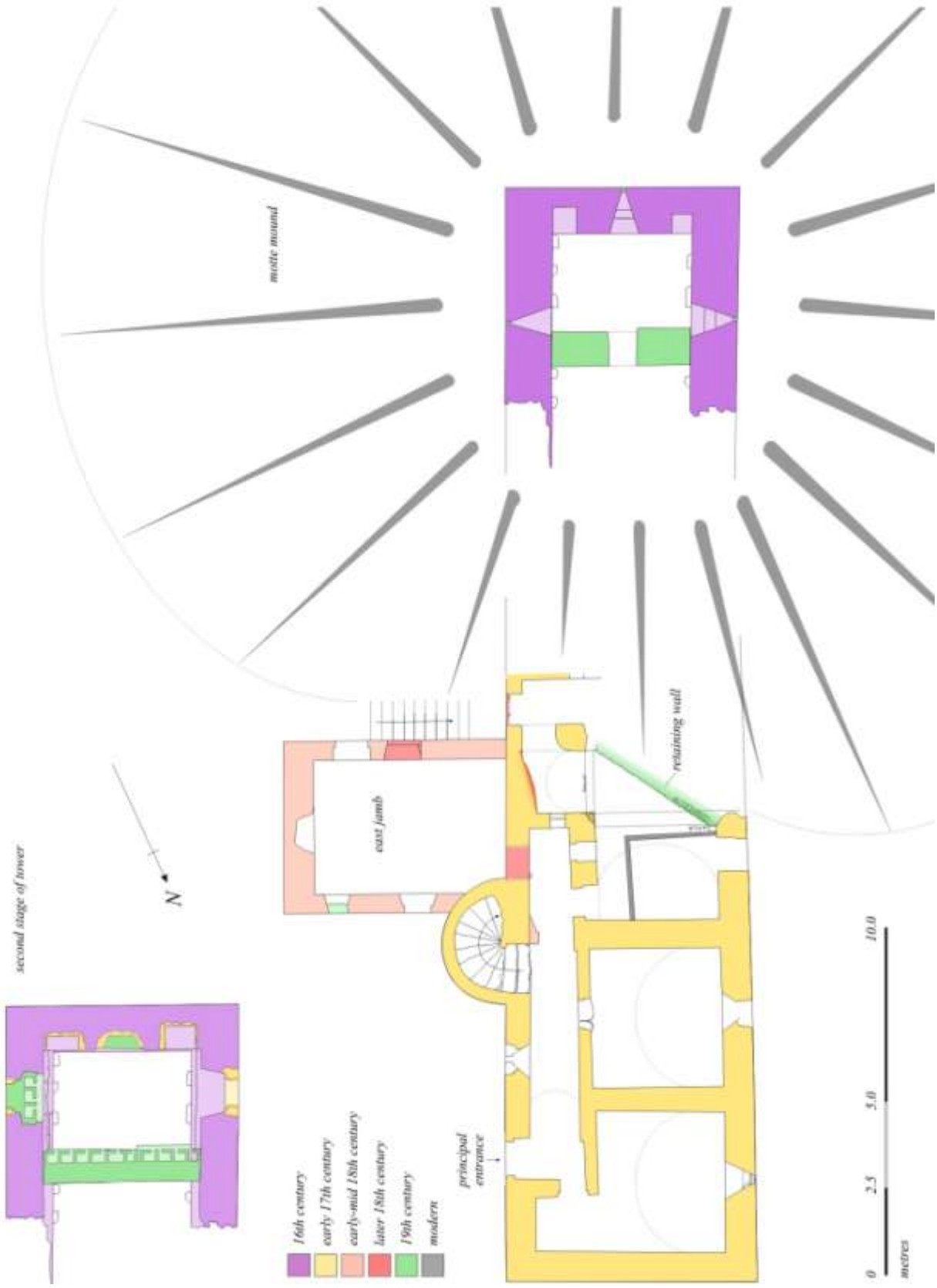


Figure C.1 General plan showing phasing

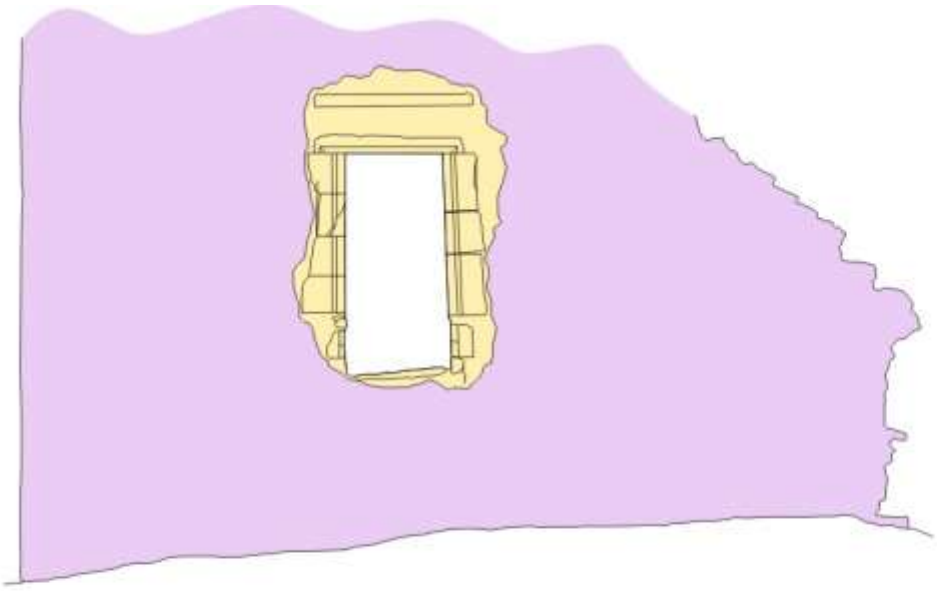
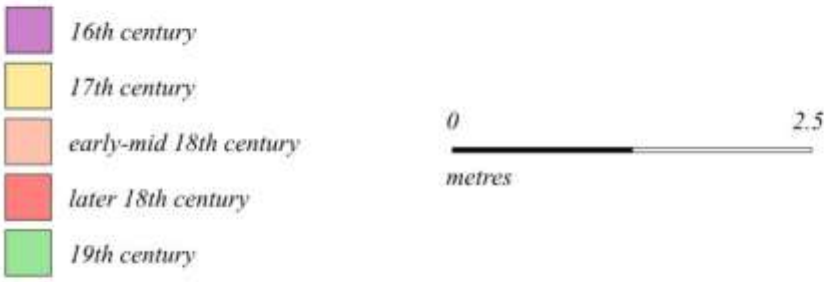




Figure C.2 Tower - lower parts of east elevation



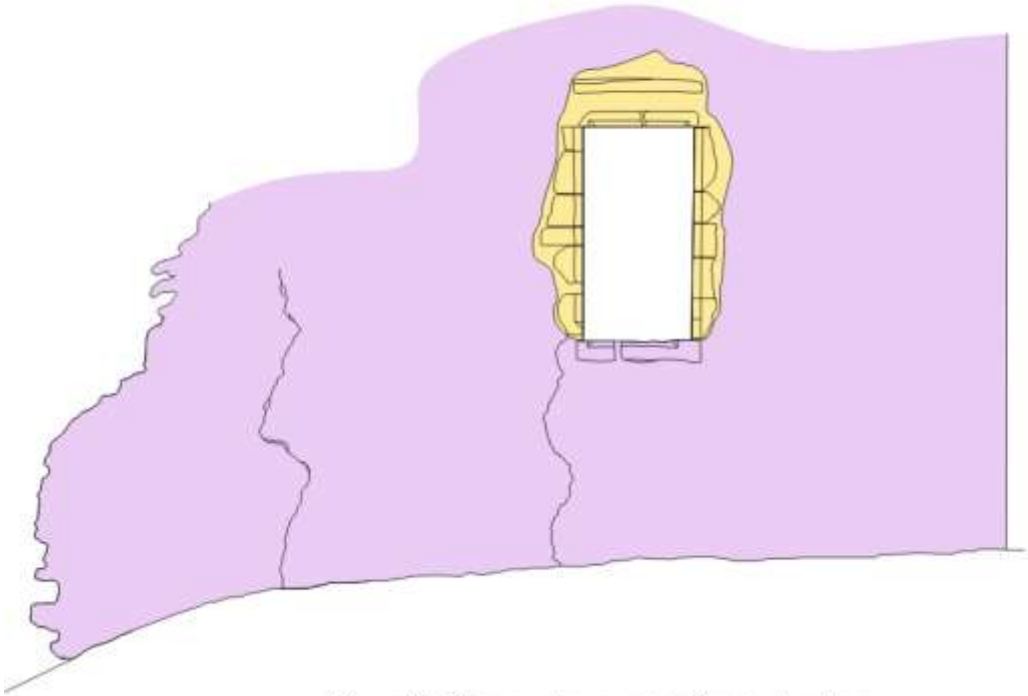




Figure C.3 Tower - lower parts of west elevation

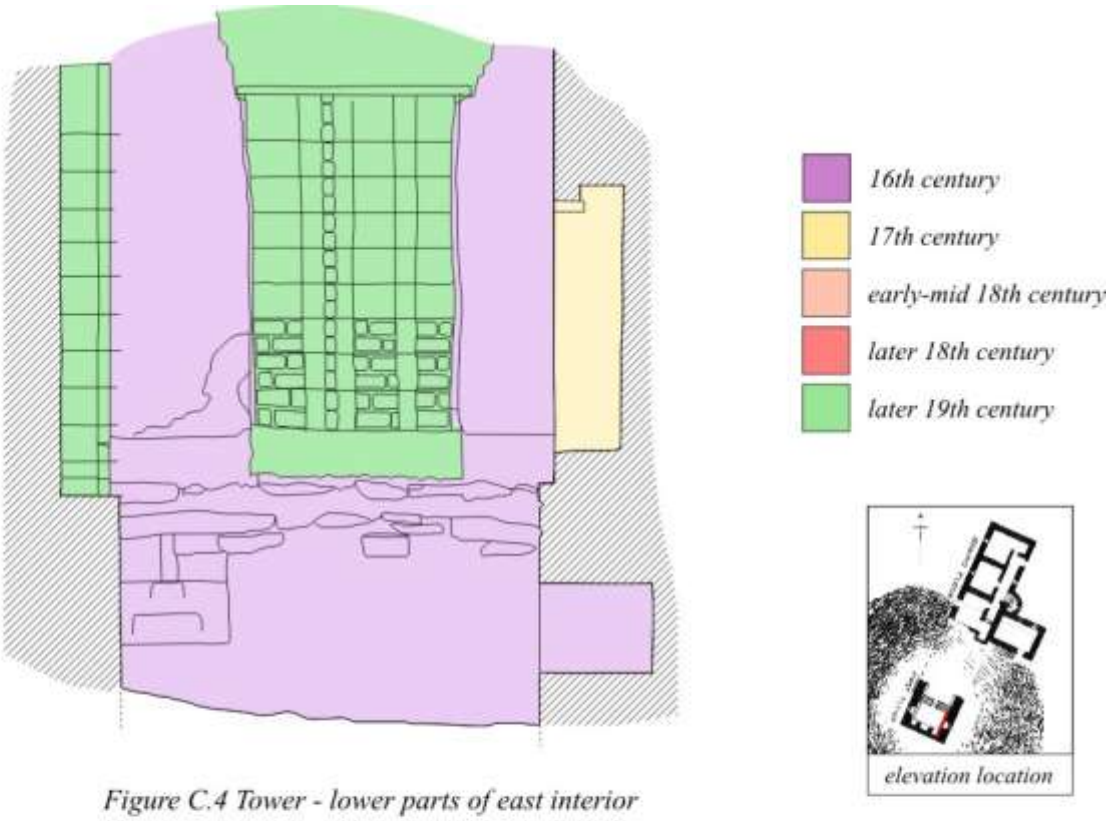


Figure C.4 Tower - lower parts of east interior

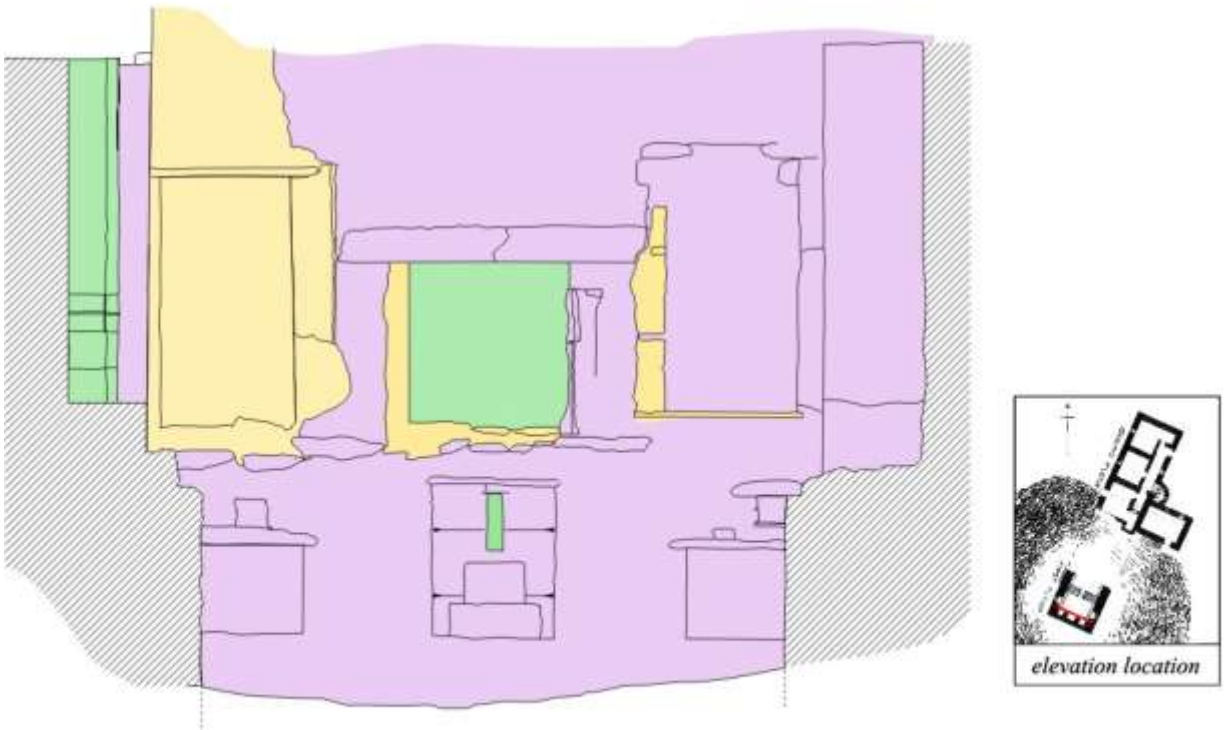


Figure C.5 Tower - lower parts of south interior

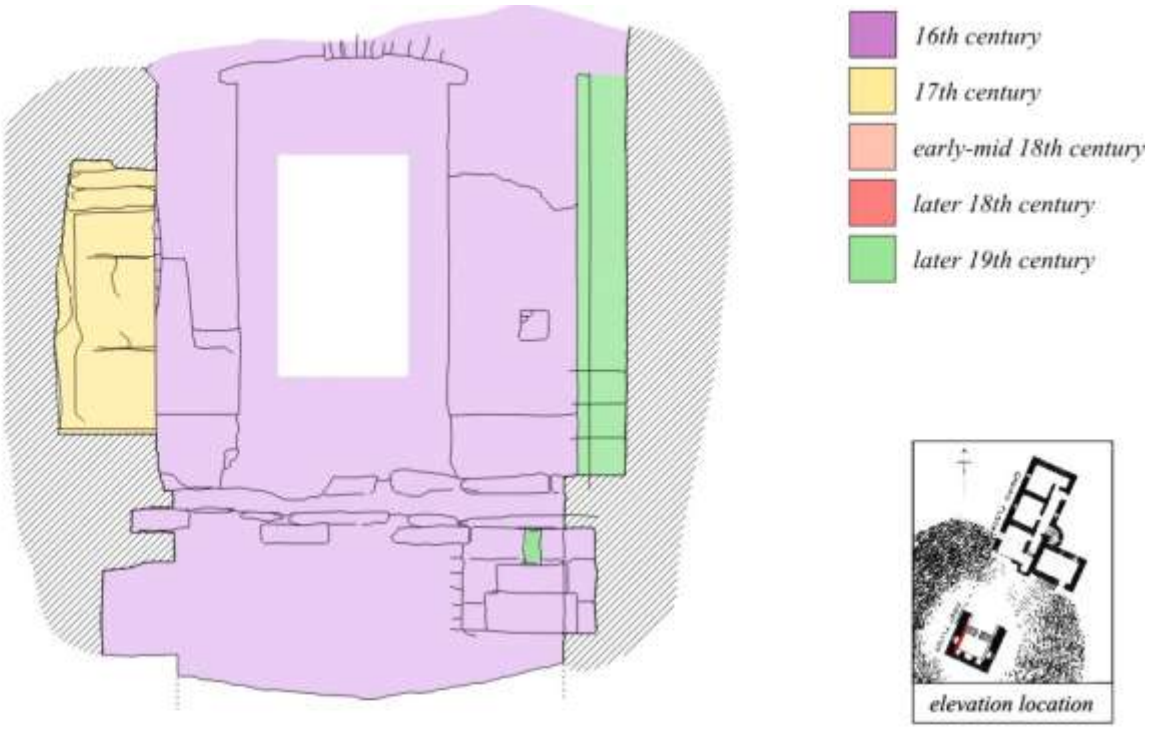


Figure C.6 Tower - lower parts of west interior

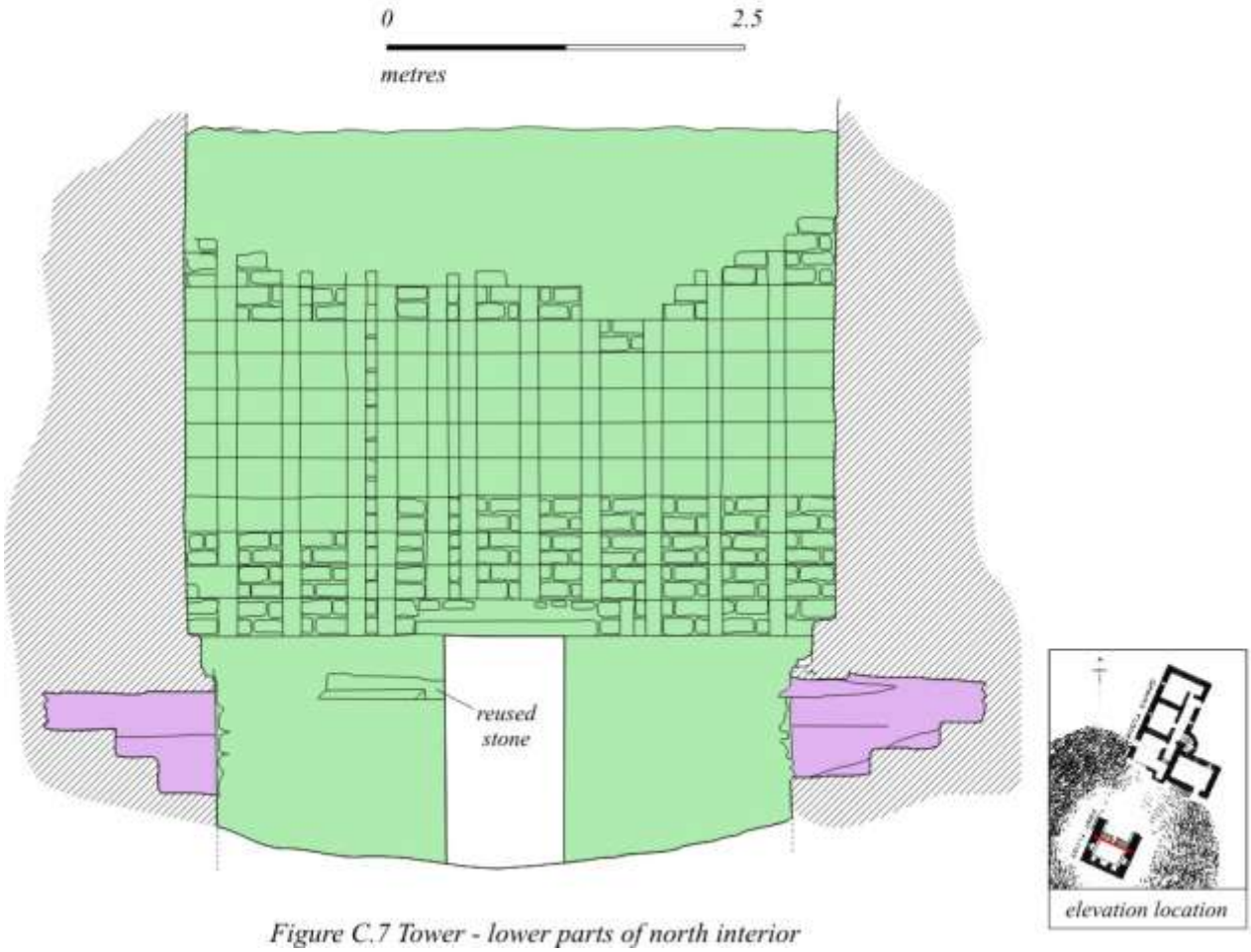


Figure C.7 Tower - lower parts of north interior

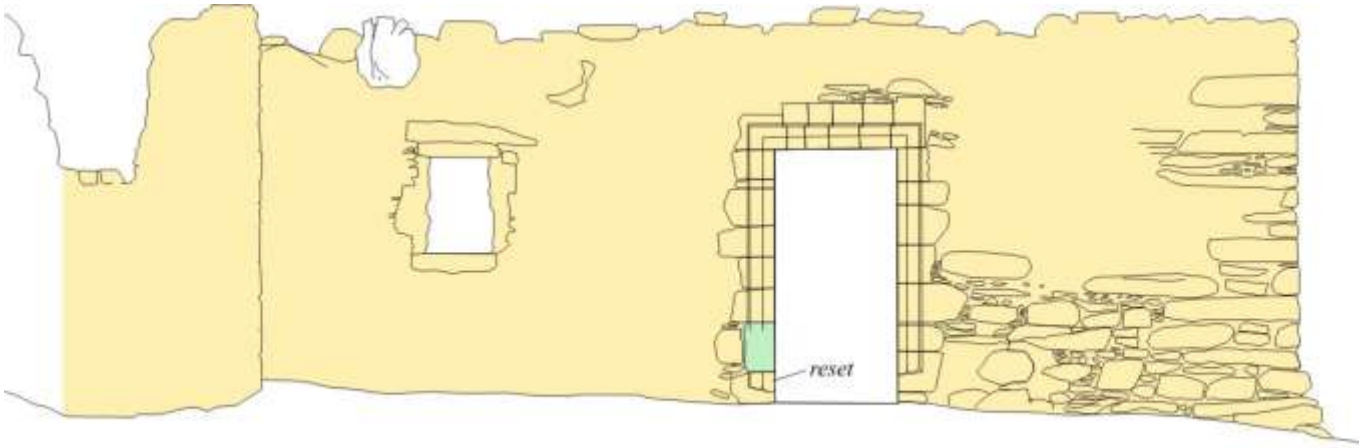




Figure C.8 North range - east elevation

0 2.5

metres

16th century
17th century
early-mid 18th century
later 18th century
19th century

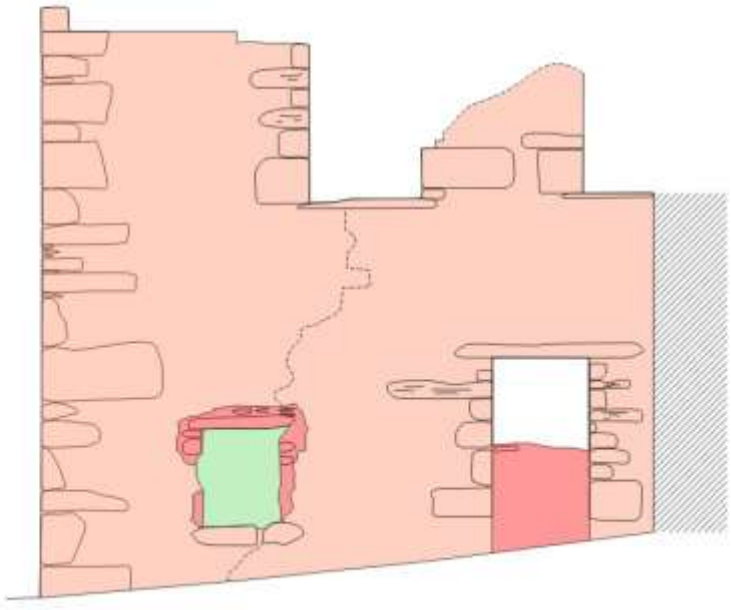




Figure C.9 Eastern jamb - north elevation

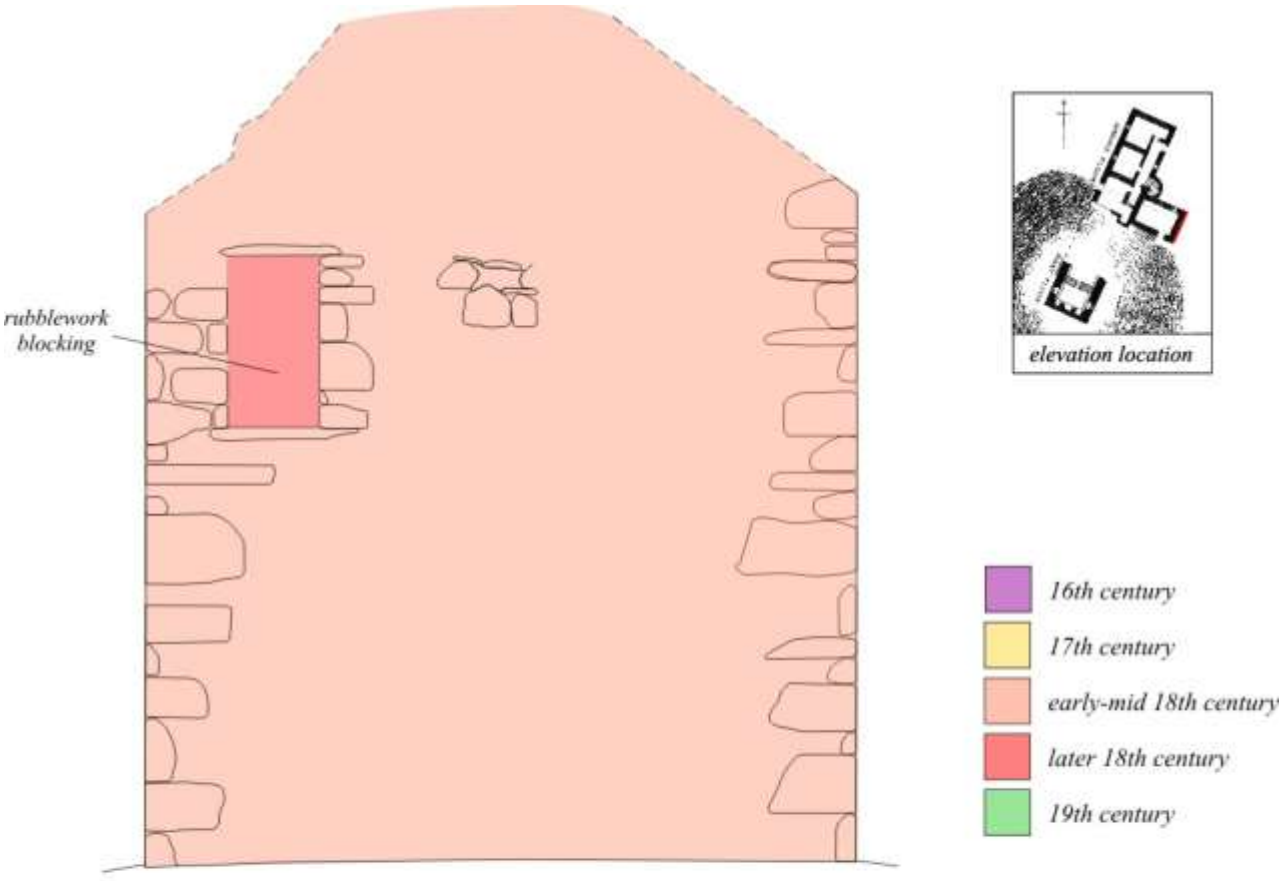


Figure C.10 Eastern jamb - east gable elevation

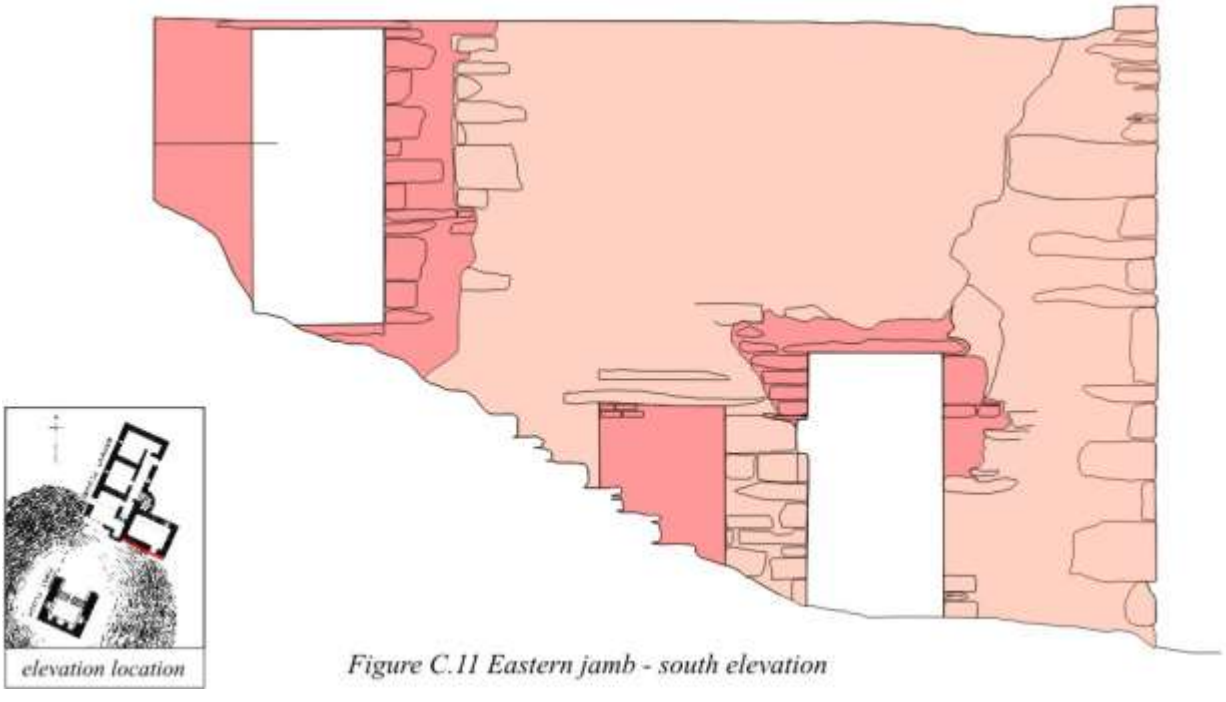


Figure C.11 Eastern jamb - south elevation

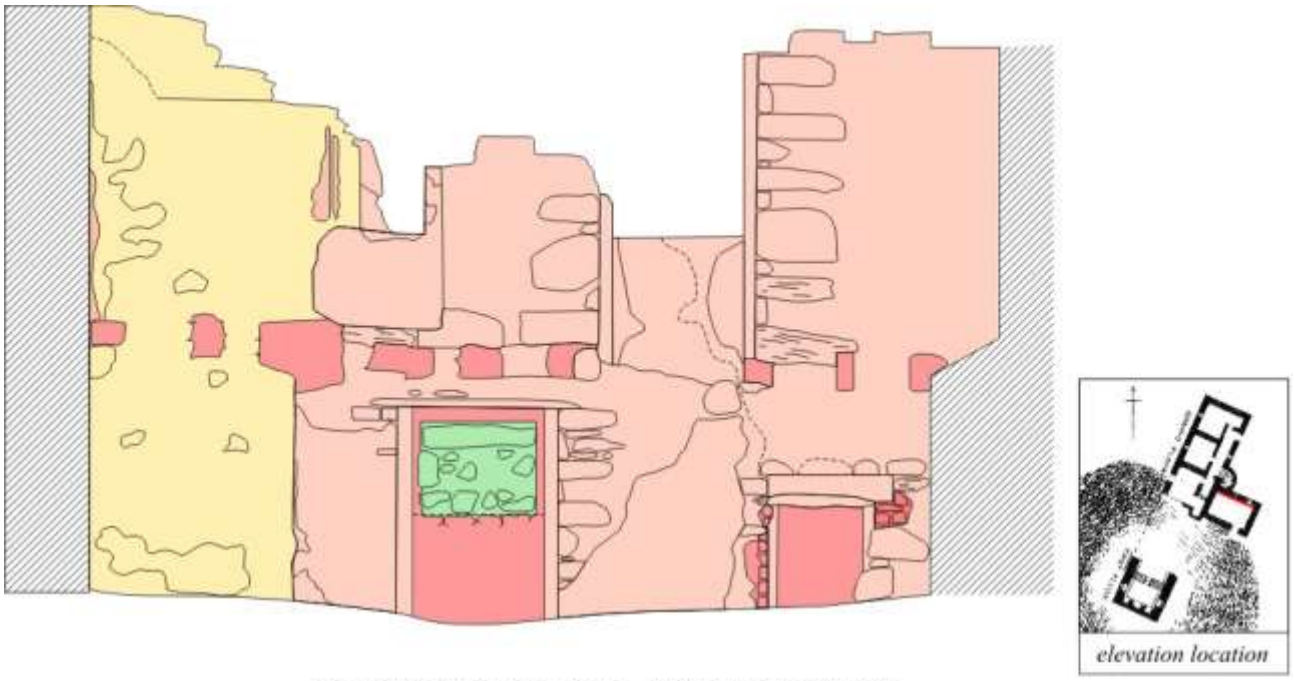


Figure C.12 Eastern jamb - interior of north wall

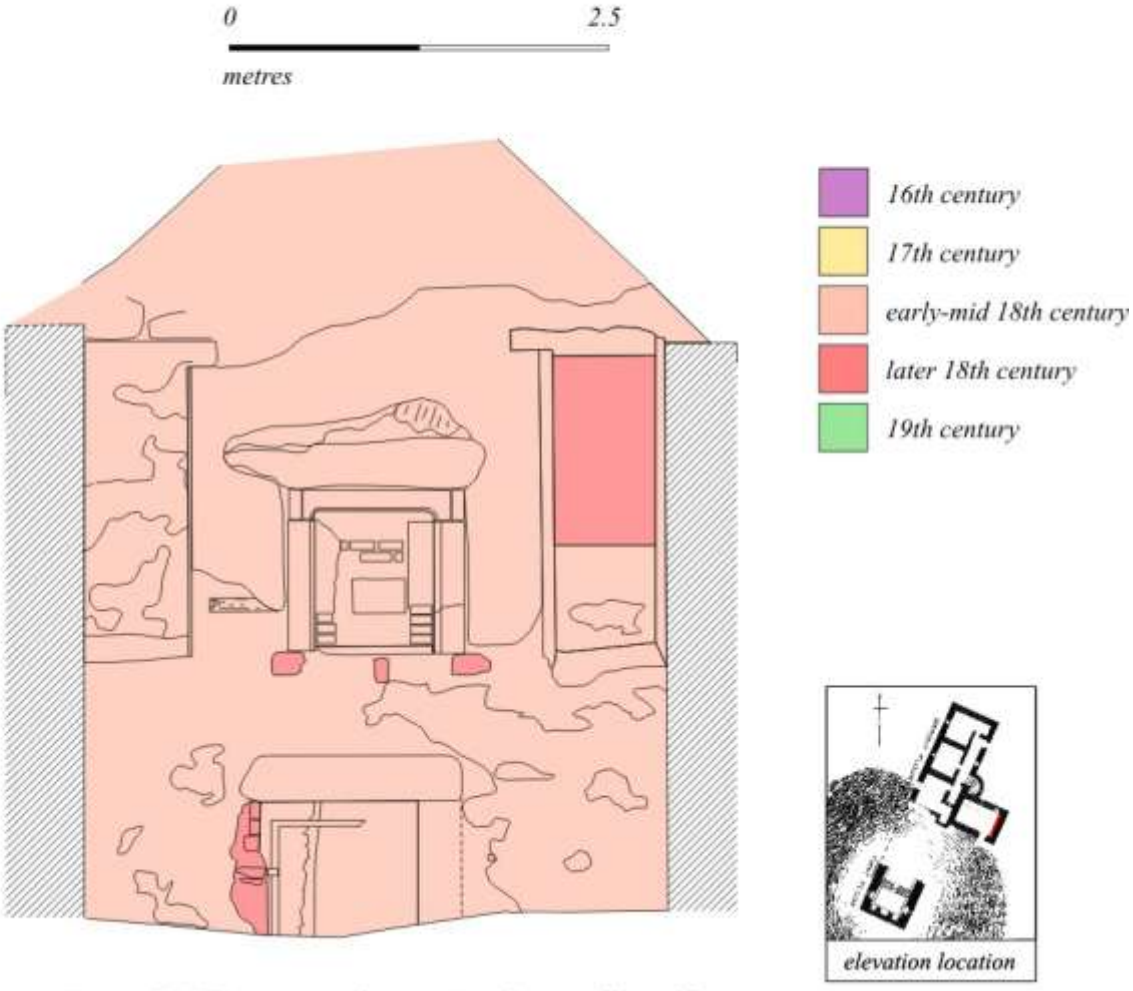


Figure C.13 Eastern jamb - interior of east gable wall

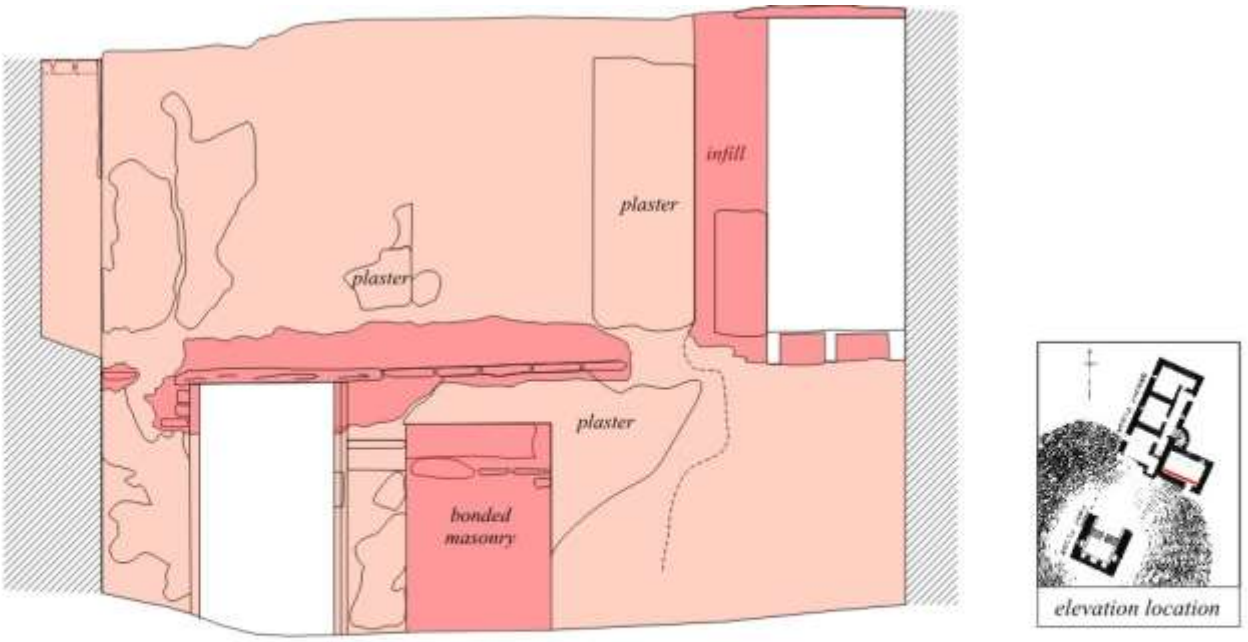


Figure C.14 Eastern jamb - interior of south wall



Figure C.15 Eastern jamb - interior of west wall