

Scalloway Castle

Window Grille Alterations

Introduction

This document details what is known about the iron grilles on the ground floor of Scalloway Castle and their significance in order to allow the impact of intended modifications to be assessed. The proposal is to carefully remove the yet and the fixing bar to be modified to form a half lap termination with a matching half lap in non-ferrous metal, to be fixed into the masonry. The window grilles will be blast cleaned and decorated.

Historical Background

Scalloway Castle was built in 1600 by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, close to the shore at the end of a peninsula. It consists of four stories and a garret and is almost complete to the wall heads. It stands on a low natural coastal promontory at Scalloway, surrounded on three sides by the sea. The castle would have been surrounded by ancillary buildings and yards extending over much of the promontory. Only the towerhouse remains¹.

It comprises a main block with an almost square wing or jamb containing the entrance and the main stair. The ground floor main block is divided into two vaulted chambers, one a kitchen, the other a cellar. They are connected by a vaulted corridor running the length of the main block. The principal room was the first floor hall. Above was the earl's private accommodation, consisting of an outer and inner chamber. The third floor was divided into three chambers, each with a fireplace. The gable chambers also had access to small studies in the projecting corner turrets or rounds. The ground floor of the wing contains a small entrance lobby and a wide scale and platt staircase giving access to the upper floors of the tower. The two upper floors of the jamb served as chambers, perhaps providing guest accommodation².

By 1676 the doors and windows were destroyed and the roof timbers too rotten to be repaired. In the last decade of the century Martin Martin wrote:

'...the Castle of Scalloway ... is four stories high, it hath several Conveniences and useful Houses about it and 'tis well furnished with Water. Several Rooms have been curiously painted, tho the better part be worn off. This ancient house is almost ruinous, there being no care taken to repair it.'

In 1754 the earl of Morton permitted Sir Andrew Mitchell to remove much of the freestone dressings for reuse in his mansion house at Sand. In 1908, the Marquis of Zetland placed the castle in the guardianship of the State, the first significant medieval structure to come into care³.

All of the windows would have been grated with iron, but this had rusted away before 1786⁴. In 1733 Thomas Gifford noted that 'nothing remains but the stone walls'. By 1803 the Earl of Morton had given Andrew Mitchell permission to remove the gateway and window ornaments for his house at Sand⁵.

¹ **Interim Statement of Cultural Significance** *Scalloway Castle*. Historic Environment Scotland.

² **Interim Statement of Cultural Significance** *Scalloway Castle*. Historic Environment Scotland.

³ **Interim Statement of Cultural Significance** *Scalloway Castle*. Historic Environment Scotland.

⁴ **RCAHMS** (1946) *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Orkney and Shetland*. Edinburgh. Page 118

⁵ **Hall and Lindsay, D and W J.** (1984) *Excavations at Scalloway Castle, 1979 and 1980', with contributions by D H Caldwell, P J Davey, G W I Hodgson and C Smith', Proc Soc Antiq Scot, vol. 113, 1983. Page(s): 554-93*

Significance of the Window grilles

It is very unlikely that the window grilles are original features. Firstly, the iron is crudely fixed into the adjacent stonework and is tight in to the eroded surface. Were the stone not eroded, then the iron grille would not fit.

Pre-1900s drawings and photos do not show the windows close up or in enough detail to determine what is present, but given that the castle has suffered such extensive robbing of material in the past and the above reference to the removal of 'window ornaments' (perhaps the window grilles), it is probable that the window openings were not covered and that the interior of the castle was readily accessible.

We have no record of when the window grilles were inserted, so a date cannot be attributed with any certainty, but on balance it is likely that they post-date the castle coming into state care and as such are of low cultural significance.

Kirsty Owen

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