



Case information

Case ID	300017997
File Reference	AMH 90064 2 1
Name of Site	Castlelaw, fort and souterrain

Local Authority	Midlothian
National Grid Reference	NT 22902 63865
Designation No. (if any)	SM90064
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	01/09/2014
Decision Date	16/08/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1924 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against the scheduling criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to amend the entry in the Schedule as **Castlelaw, fort and souterrain 205m NNW of**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

Castlelaw fort and souterrain is a property in the care of Scottish Ministers and is scheduled under section 1 (2) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

There have been no previous amendments to the entry in the Schedule.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this assessment.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The monument was assessed for amendment as part of the S17 East scheduling project in autumn 2014.

It was visited on 29 September 2014.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the criteria on the determination of national importance for scheduling has been carried out (see Annex A).

The monument was found to meet the criteria for national importance.

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

3.3 Other considerations

No other considerations have been identified.

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

Castlelaw, fort and souterrain 205m NNW of

1 Description

The monument is the remains of a hillfort dating probably to the Iron Age (between about 800 BC and 500 AD). The visible remains comprise a sequence of defensive ramparts and ditches enclosing an oval interior, with a souterrain cut into the ditch by the east-northeast entrance. The fort occupies a spur 300m above sea level on the southeast flank of Castlelaw Hill, in the Pentland Hills. There are extensive views east-northeast to East Lothian, southeast to the northwest slopes of the Moorfoot Hills, and south to the hills around Peebles.

The fort interior measures about 82m east-northeast / west-southwest by 35m transversely, as defined by the innermost rampart. This rampart stands only 0.5m high when viewed from the interior, but is at least 1.5m in height on the outside for most of its circuit. Beyond the inner rampart are outer defences in the form of an earth rampart with a broad quarry ditch inside it and a deep ditch and counterscarp bank outside. The outer defences are best preserved on the north, while elsewhere they have been reduced by the rig and furrow cultivation that almost completely surrounds the fort. Three entrances pierce the defences: on the west-southwest, south-southeast and east-northeast. Excavation has demonstrated the presence of buried features that provide significant additional evidence, including the remains of a single palisade apparently pre-dating the inner rampart. Excavation also revealed a well-preserved souterrain built into the ditch between the inner and outer ramparts, close to the east-northeast entrance. The souterrain was excavated by Gordon Childe in 1931-2 and is now protected by a concrete roof. The passage measures about 21m in length from north to south, gradually widening from 0.9m at the north entrance to 1.6m at the slightly rounded terminal to the south. The wall also increases in height from 1.3m at the entrance to 1.7m at the terminal. A cupmarked stone is built into the top of the east wall at the terminal. The souterrain passage curves to the south-southwest about half way along its length, where a short side passage leads off to a roughly circular chamber on the west, measuring about 3.6m in diameter and standing up to 1.95m in height. Nine 20th-century marker stones indicate points on the boundary of the guardianship boundary.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan, to include the remains described above and an area around them within which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling extends up to but excludes a fence that surrounds the fort. The scheduling also specifically excludes the modern structures at the souterrain (such as the railings, steps, jambs, gate and concrete roof), the above-ground elements of the information boards, and the gate and steps through the fence that bounds that fort. The monument was first scheduled in 1924; the present amendment provides documents to current standards.

2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.)

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

This hillfort has upstanding ramparts that are visible as grass-covered banks. The inner rampart survives to a height of at least 1.5m when viewed and measured on the external side. There is also a well-preserved souterrain that lies within the ditch outside the inner rampart. It was excavated in the early 1930s and has been consolidated by the Ministry of Works and roofed with a concrete slab. When visited in 2014 there were active rabbit burrows on the outer rampart on the south side. There have been limited excavations in 1931-2 and 1948, which saw the souterrain emptied and sections cut across the banks and ditches in the vicinity of the east entrance. Overall the monument survives in excellent condition, with the fort interior and most of the defences apparently relatively undisturbed.

The overall footprint of the monument survives well and it retains the key features of its original form. The enclosing ramparts and ditch are visible around most of the fort's circuit. There is high potential for the survival of further evidence of defences, particularly for a palisade trench located by excavation and interpreted as the earliest phase of enclosure, as well as important archaeological deposits relating to the construction and settlement of the site. Excavations near the east-northeast gate indicated that the inner rampart was reinforced internally with timber beams. The intact parts of the inner rampart should preserve evidence for the nature and extent of this timber structure. The fort was almost certainly inhabited in whole or in part and there is high potential for the presence of building remains, such as postholes and foundation trenches. Pits and middens may contain artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence, such as pottery and charred plant remains or pollen, which can inform knowledge of diet, agriculture, trade and exchange, economy, and the physical environment and land-use around the fort.

The limited excavations of 1931-2 and 1948 have led to development of a model suggesting that the site was first enclosed by a single palisade, then by the inner rampart, and finally by the outer defences – a pattern repeated at other hillforts in southern Scotland. This suggests a long development sequence, which can help to inform knowledge of the development of enclosed sites through later prehistory, and the social changes that such developments may reflect. The souterrain dates probably from the 3rd century AD, demonstrating use of the site after the inner defences had ceased to be maintained. There is high potential to enhance our understanding of the chronology of the site, including its date of origin, changing functions, development sequence and abandonment.

There is little specific evidence for the function of the fort, but it is generally believed that multivallate enclosures such as this were defended settlements, offering both security and the opportunity to display the power and resources of a family or community. Given the size of the fort, it may have housed several families or a small community and their livestock. Buried evidence has the potential to reveal whether occupation was permanent or seasonal, continuous or occasional.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

There are many hillforts recorded in the Lothians and Scottish Borders, but this is a particularly good and important example. On present knowledge, it appears to exemplify a model of extended site development, where an initial palisade was replaced by a large rampart, subsequently augmented by outer defences. The ramparts and ditches are well preserved and impressive relative to other examples, and the souterrain inserted into one of the ditches is an important and significant feature that demonstrates the continuing use of the site after the abandonment of at least part of the defences. The pairing of this fort with Castle Knowe, another enclosure only 100m to the north-northeast, adds considerably to the significance and importance of both sites (see below). This fort has significant potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of the development of enclosure and the nature of settlement patterns during later prehistory.

One of the most notable aspects of Castlelaw is its proximity to Castle Knowe (scheduled monument reference SM6447, Canmore ID 51873). Castle Knowe overlooks Castlelaw from a prominent knoll 100m to the north-northeast. It is defined by twin palisades 6m apart, replaced by a bank and ditch on the northeast, where there may have been an entrance. There is high potential to study these sites together, particularly their chronological relationship to each other, their placing in the landscape, and their functions and significance to the societies that built them. Past researchers have suggested that Castle Knowe was the earlier enclosure, and was replaced by Castlelaw, but this is unconfirmed.

The site can also be studied alongside other broadly contemporary settlement sites in the wider vicinity, to develop a better understanding of the nature and chronology of settlement patterns in this area during later prehistory. There are wide views east to Traprain Law and North Berwick Law, and southeast and south to a variety of prehistoric sites on the slopes of the Moorfoot Hills and in the hills around Peebles.

The fort occupies a knoll on the east side of the Pentland Hills. There are views south and east over the valley of the North Esk, but the site is overlooked from the north.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

The form of enclosed sites in later prehistory almost certainly reflects social and cultural influences, and a need for display, as well as more practical concern for security or defence.

The fort occupies a prominent setting in the landscape, and is a very tangible and impressive relic of the past.

Castlelaw is a property in the care of Scottish Ministers and visited by many people today. Excavations were conducted by Professor Gordon Childe in 1931-2 and by Stuart Piggott and his wife in 1948-9, all prominent archaeologists of the mid- 20th century.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The site visit showed the site is in a stable condition and very well preserved. Designation as a scheduled monument remains the most appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument, and ensure the recognition of its national importance.

4 Assessment of national importance

The monument has significant potential to enhance our understanding and appreciation of prehistoric forts, the prehistoric settlement pattern and later prehistoric society. In addition to the impressive upstanding remains, the site preserves important buried deposits and structures relating to its construction and use, as demonstrated by the excavated evidence for a palisade which may have been the earliest enclosure, and for the use of timber beams to line parts of the inner rampart. The monument has high potential to expand our understanding of the design and development of enclosed sites in eastern Scotland. The site is also of particular importance because it includes the well-preserved remains of a substantial souterrain, and because of its proximity to a second enclosure, Castle Knowe immediately to the northeast, with which it can be compared. The fort retains its field characteristics to a marked degree and its well-preserved banks and ditches can easily be appreciated. The scale and complexity of the defences suggests that this monument was an important component of the prehistoric landscape, and it is still a significant feature in the modern landscape. Our understanding of the distribution and character of later prehistoric enclosures would be significantly diminished if this monument was to be lost or damaged.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 51871 (accessed on 21/7/2016).

Midlothian Historic Environment Record
http://www.johngraycentre.org/collections/getrecord/MLHER_MEL8172/ reference MEL8172 (accessed on 21/7/2016).
