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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DIRLETON CASTLE



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DIRLETON CASTLE

CONTENTS

| | | |
|----------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Summary | 2 |
| 1.1 | Introduction | 2 |
| 1.2 | Statement of significance | 2 |
| 2 | Assessment of values | 3 |
| 2.1 | Background | 3 |
| 2.2 | Evidential values | 4 |
| 2.3 | Historical values | 5 |
| 2.4 | Architectural values | 6 |
| 2.5 | Landscape and aesthetic values | 8 |
| 2.6 | Natural heritage values | 9 |
| 2.7 | Contemporary/use values | 10 |
| 3 | Major gaps in understanding | 11 |
| 4 | Associated properties | 11 |
| 5 | Keywords | 11 |
| | Bibliography | 12 |
| | APPENDICES | |
| | Appendix 1: Timeline | 12 |
| | Appendix 2: Witchcraft Trials | 14 |
| | Appendix 3: Dirleton Castle Doocot | 15 |

1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

Dirleton Castle and Gardens are set in the heart of the pretty East Lothian village of Dirleton. The castle itself dates from the 13th century and is an impressive and substantial ruin with dramatic towers and many nooks and crannies. It lies within walled gardens and is sited on a knoll.

The castle was taken into State care under a Guardianship agreement in 1924. In 1981 ownership was transferred to the National Trust for Scotland, but the site remains under the guardianship and management of Historic Environment Scotland.

In 2018 around 29,000 visits were recorded. The castle is open all year round and has an active events and education programmes.

1.2 Statement of significance

The scale and grandeur of Dirleton makes it a very impressive castle, especially when juxtaposed against the village-green setting of Dirleton. This “picturesque” element of its aesthetic was played up and enhanced as part of the designed landscape conception of the 19th and 20th centuries and is very much part of the atmosphere of the place today. Historically and architecturally the Castle displays several key aspects of importance including:

- Dirleton Castle is one of the oldest, and one of the most architecturally and aesthetically impressive, stone castles in Scotland.
- The 13th century surviving work is particularly notable as one of the most important and substantial fragments of early secular building in stone.
- The surviving fabric enables the visitor to understand how the medieval castle in Scotland evolved from its ‘golden age’ of the 13th century through to the time of its demise in the 17th century.
- The castle grounds have high archaeological potential to show how a great medieval castle stood in relation to its immediate surroundings, including the possibility of there being a castleton.
- The families associated with the castle were important figures in Scotland’s history, and the later association with “witch” trials provides an important opportunity to tell more diverse stories than those of the aristocracy.
- The surrounding gardens at Dirleton are of major importance and are distinct aesthetic entities in their own right, and of importance in terms of the development of garden fashions through the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- The dramatic towers, “drawbridge entrance” and picturesque setting of the castle make a great impression on visitors, with the quiet ambience of the garden an added bonus.

- The doocot is an important feature in its own right and is both aesthetically pleasing and historically interesting.

The above bullet points outline the key significance of Dirleton Castle and a more detailed discussion of the heritage values associated with the site are given below.



Dirleton Castle © Historic Environment Scotland.

2 Assessment of values

2.1 Background

In historical documents the castle and parish are sometimes known as 'Dirleton', 'Dirletoun', 'Dirltoun', 'Dirletun', 'Dirletone', 'Derlingtoun', 'Dirilitoune', 'Driltone', 'Dyrlton' and 'Drylton'. The modern name 'Dirleton' is used throughout this document.

Dirleton Castle, in the heart of the pretty East Lothian village of that name, is one of Scotland's oldest masonry castles. First built around the middle of the 13th century, it remained a noble residence for four centuries. It is principally associated with three families, each leaving their mark on the fabric:

- The de Vauxs (13th century – the cluster of towers at the SW corner)
- The Haliburtons (14th/15th century – the entrance gatehouse and east range)
- The Ruthvens (16th century – the Ruthven Lodging, doocot and gardens).

The first recorded siege of Dirleton Castle was in 1298, during the Wars of Independence with England. The last occurred in 1650, following Oliver Cromwell's invasion. However, Dirleton was primarily a residence of lordship, not a garrison stronghold, and the complex of buildings that we see today conveys clearly how the first castle was adapted to suit the changing needs and fancies of successive owners.

The castle is surrounded by eye-catching gardens. These were probably initially laid out by the Ruthvens, but in their present state are 19th/20th-century creations, as is the bowling green. They are a perfect complement to the ancient fabric, and as much a joy to today's visitors as the castle itself.

Appendix 1 sets out a more detailed history of the place.

2.2 Evidential values

The key evidential values of the castle lie in the above- and below-ground fabric of the place itself, and while some archaeological investigation has taken place, the site as a whole has great research potential.

There is no comprehensive documented archaeological report of the clearance work carried out by the Ministry of Works after 1924, only file notes about certain 'finds' with rough indications as to where they came from. There may well have been some antiquarian excavation prior to 1924. For example, old photographs of the section of castle ditch on the south (entrance) side look as though it had already been partially excavated by the time the castle came into State care.

There must be considerable archaeological potential remaining across the entire site – and beyond (including to the east, under the driveway and approach to Castlemains farmhouse). These areas could provide valuable information as to the origins of the castle, the nature and extent of the castle grounds – and much more besides.

In 1992, prior to the re-development of the west gardens which aimed to re-create their original Victorian layout, archaeological and documentary research were undertaken by Kirkdale Archaeology¹ and Land Use Consultants. The layout and planting scheme for the Dirleton flower garden was recorded and published in 1865². Excavation also revealed evidence of a much earlier garden, provisionally dated to the 16th century and ascribed to the Ruthven period of occupation, in the form of mineral parterres. The Kirkdale report noted a general practice of infilling such earlier gardens prior

¹ See unpublished reports: Kirkdale Archaeology *Dirleton Castle, West Garden Assessment* 1993 and Land Use Consultants *Report on Dirleton Castle Gardens* 1992.

² J. Robson *Archerfield Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener*, November 1865. Although the article is entitled Archerfield, it covers the Dirleton garden which was, at that time, part of the Archerfield estate.

to redevelopment in the 19th century. This increases the likelihood of earlier garden layouts surviving beneath the present arrangements.

2.3 Historical values

Dirleton Castle is associated with several politically important and powerful families, principally the de Vauxs, the Haliburtons and the Ruthvens. Dirleton's development mirrors the changing balance of these families' needs for status, comfort and security over five centuries. This aspect is discussed in more detail in section 2.4 Architectural Values, below. The Timeline at Appendix 1 details key events and figures relevant to the castle; a summary is given below:

The **de Vaux** family were Norman knights who acquired the barony of Dirleton in the 12th century. In common with many nobles, they held land on both sides of the border. John de Vaux is credited with building the first castle at Dirleton. He served (1236 – 7) as steward to Marie de Coucy, who married Alexander II in 1239. This suggests John was employed by Marie even before her marriage and would have a good understanding of contemporary French society and architecture. The castle of Coucy-le-Chateau near Amiens, built in the 1220s for Marie's father, may have provided a source of inspiration for 13th century Dirleton and underlines the high-level connections of this family. During the **Wars of Independence** the castle was besieged and then part dismantled under Robert I (the Bruce) c 1313, to prevent it falling into English hands. The castle passed by marriage to the **Haliburton** family by the mid-14th century and some rebuilding took place. The Haliburtons were also close to the crown, holding several prestigious posts. Walter (III) Haliburton was knighted in 1424 by James I in recognition of his being held hostage in England to secure James I's release from captivity.

The castle passed (by marriage) to the **Ruthven** family by c.1520; their power base was primarily Perthshire, and Dirleton was more a secondary residence. Several generations of the family were heavily involved in plots during the reigns of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI, for which they paid with their lives. Well known episodes included the murder of Rizzio, the Ruthven Raid and the Gowrie Conspiracy, (see Timeline).

As a result of the Gowrie Conspiracy John, third earl of Gowrie and his brother Alexander were posthumously tried and found guilty of treason. The Ruthvens' lands, including Dirleton, were forfeited irrevocably. It was later claimed that Lord Robert Logan of Restalrig, a possible co-conspirator of Gowrie, expected to gain Dirleton Castle in exchange for his part in abducting the king. Logan allegedly wrote that, '*I cair nocht for all the land I hew in this kingdome, incase I get an grip of Dirleton, for I esteem it the plesantest dwelling in Scotland*'. This may indicate the Ruthvens' laying out of Dirleton as a place for retreat and leisure, with elaborate gardens and ornamental buildings.

Dirleton is also associated with some of the notorious “trials” of the 16th and 17th century for people accused of **witchcraft**. At least five local women and one man were accused of witchcraft, held prisoner and interrogated in the castle and are believed to have all been executed. Further details are given at Appendix 2.

2.4 Architectural values

Dirleton Castle comprises significant upstanding remains spanning the period from the 13th to the 19th century. Aspects of the castle’s development can be difficult to understand (particularly the south-west corner) but with the aid of reconstruction illustrations the visitor is able to see how the original de Vaux concept, of a great curtain-walled castle with large projecting towers (13th-century), was thereafter adapted. Firstly by the Haliburtons into a substantial tower-house castle (14th/15th century), and finally by the Ruthvens into a secondary noble seat surrounded by fine formal gardens (16th century).

13th century: The de Vaux legacy

The complex of circular and rectangular towers at the south-west corner of the castle itself is one of the most important fragments of medieval secular architecture in Scotland. Although badly damaged during the Wars of Independence, and thereafter substantially radically altered, enough survives to convey how the noble life was lived in the ‘golden age’ of Alexander II and Alexander III. The masonry is mostly of ashlar construction, squared yellow sandstone blocks brought roughly to course. Long, fish-tailed arrow slits are evident on the exterior.

Unfortunately, the upper part of the donjon (or keep), where Lord de Vaux’s private apartment would have been, has gone, but the hall and ‘below stairs’ elements, with their narrow window slits and stone side benches, false-ribbed vaulted ceilings, latrine closets, fireplaces, etc., provide excellent clues. Of particular interest are: (a) the ‘dumb waiter’ and servery in the well-chamber, (b) the smoke-holes for braziers in the small chamber off the hall, and (c) the existence to the north-west of a rectangular tower housing a second apartment (slightly smaller and differently arranged), presumably for Lady de Vaux’s use.

In addition, significant stretches of the original curtain wall survive along the south and east sides of the enclosure. This has the remains of two other circular towers, at the south-east and north-east corners, and a postern (secondary entrance), later blocked up, through the east curtain wall.

14th/15th centuries: The Haliburton legacy

The Haliburtons inherited a castle sorely battered about during the Wars of Independence. They forsook, by and large, the de Vaux towers at the south-west corner for new, purpose-built accommodation along the east side of the enclosure (in much the same way as the earls of Douglas treated the de Moray accommodation at Bothwell Castle). What survives today clearly

represents more than one building campaign. The range seems to have started as a lofty tower house at the north end, with a great hall slightly detached from it to the south (the most obvious evidence for the physical separation being the south window in the chapel and the risband (straight) joint in the storage cellar vault). By 1400, the two had been united to create a fully integrated tower house and great hall.

Of particular interest are:

- the cavernous storage cellars beneath the great hall,
- the chapel and adjacent priest's chamber in the first floor of the tower house,
- the grim prison and pit at the base of the tower house,
- the stone buffet at the south end of the great hall, and
- the vast kitchen with its two enormous fireplaces, smoke-vent, serving hatches and adjacent servery.

Also a Haliburton legacy is the present impressive entrance gateway, with its array of defensive contraptions, including drawbridge provision, portcullis chamber, 'murder hole' and crosslet-arrowslit. (The present timber access across the south ditch was built in the 1930s.)

16th century: The Ruthven legacy

Dirleton was never the Ruthvens' main house (that was at Ruthven Castle – now known as **Huntingtower**, near Perth). What condition they found the castle in when they assumed responsibility is not known, but later in the century they abandoned the Haliburton range along the east side and returned to the south-west corner where they built a pleasant three-storey house, the so-called 'Ruthven Lodging'. The main family rooms were on the upper floors, with additional rooms formed from the de Vaux towers behind. The little pistol-holes below the window sills confirm the later 16th-century date.

Also dating from their time is the flight of steps leading west down from the courtyard to the gardens below. Although we have no proof, it seems likely that the present bowling green was originally a formal knot garden. To the east of the castle lay the kitchen garden and a fine 'beehive' doocot.

The Doocot

Dirleton Castle Doocot is a four-tier, domed-roofed, circular-plan, single-cell 'beehive' Doocot, presumed of late 16th-century date and so associated with the Ruthven ownership of the castle. The doocot is important as an early and well preserved example of the type – probably among the earliest and largest in East Lothian. It is also important in retaining its historic context in relation to the castle.

Beehive doocots are named after the shape of traditional bee skeps (straw baskets), and are thought to be the earliest type of Scottish doocot. The Dirleton example is built of coursed local rubble sandstone with dressed door

rybats (surrounds), three perching courses and a billet-moulded³ course below the domed stone roof. Internally the walls are lined with 25 rows of more than 1,000 flagstone nesting boxes. The flooring is now concrete, and at the centre is the socket for the potence. Most early doocots were fitted with a 'potence'; a revolving timber column with a ladder, or pair of ladders, attached on gallows (arms), allowing easy access to the upper nesting boxes. Further information on the doocot is given at Appendix 3.

18th and 19th centuries: The Nisbet legacy

The Nisbet family acquired the castle in 1663 and built a new residence nearby at Archerfield. Dirleton ceased to be a noble residence and became an ornamental adjunct to the Archerfield grounds, laid out around 1780 perhaps by Robert Robinson. Around 1858 David Thomson was appointed head gardener at Archerfield, which gave him responsibility for Dirleton.

Thomson developed the north and west gardens, installing elaborate geometric beds set into gravel and grass respectively, with central feature plants⁴. An account of 1885 noted that the gardens were 'beautifully kept' and had many fine specimen trees. Thomson's development of the west garden can still be admired today, having been recreated in 1993 using the original plans and archaeological evidence. Further nineteenth century additions included the fine stone wall surrounding the gardens, and the circular gazebo.

From the late 18th century Dirleton Castle and the doocot were regarded as objects of picturesque and historical interest, and a celebrated destination for visitors to Archerfield House. The antiquarian Thomas Dibdin recorded in 1838 that the owner and governess of the castle, Mary Hamilton Nisbet Ferguson, had insisted, in spite of Dibdin feeling ill, that he would have no peace of mind until he had explored the 'genuine relic' in all its extremities. Dibdin duly recorded his visit, noting the doocot as 'peculiar, but picturesque'⁵. Mary enhanced the picturesque experience by 'beautifying' Dirleton Village with a village green and estate cottages, and enclosing the castle gardens with a low garden wall and constructing a turreted gazebo tower.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

The present approach to the castle's front entrance involves walking around the bulk of it, through the Arts and Crafts garden along the north edge of the complex, and around one side or the other of the impressive castle rock. This emphasises how much a part of the basalt bedrock the castle is, which looms large over the visitor.

³ Billet-moulding is created from small geometric blocks set in a regular projecting and recessing pattern.

⁴ For the plan, see Robson 1865, p.447 [<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/37191-page/453/mode/1up>].

⁵ Dibdin 1838, p.982 [<https://archive.org/details/abibliographica03dibdgoog/page/n672>].

Since passing into State care, the castle walls have been cleared of ivy, revealing the honey-coloured stone walls. These provide the perfect foil for the greens and browns of the grass and yews around. The dark red/brown of the rock outcrop on which the castle stands gives it a presence scarcely rivalled anywhere else in the Scottish Lowlands.

The castle gardens are extremely attractive, though this is, naturally, seasonal. The 'Arts and Crafts' garden, in particular, is incredibly colourful and impressive. In winter, the multitude of dark yews create a moody aesthetic to complement the brooding ruin beyond, perched upon its rock.

Dirleton village itself is a quiet, pretty place, contributing much to the peaceful aesthetic of the castle. Though the trees and perimeter walls can obscure some of what is within, they also encourage anticipation of it.



View of Dirleton Castle and doocot, dated 1835 © Courtesy of HES (Alexander Archer Collection).

Dirleton Castle has some fine views from its battlements, particularly atop the principal de Vaux tower – south across the East Lothian plain towards the heather-clad Lammermuir Hills, east to the steep cone of North Berwick Law, and north to Fidra island, the pale-blue streak that is the Firth of Forth, and the coastline of Fife with its 'string of pearls'; the Fife coastal fishing ports.

2.6 Natural heritage values

The in-care area at Dirleton Castle is not covered by natural heritage designations, though the castle and grounds are important for protected species such as bats. Pipstrelle and brown long-eared bats have both been sighted, and many parts of the site are likely to offer bat habitat. The gardens themselves support insect and bird life, and swallows nest in the castle.

Most of the site is comprised of formal gardens and amenity lawns. Areas of ecological interest are mainly limited to the rocky outcrop to the north of the castle, and to the outcrop on which the castle sits.

The north rock outcrop supports species-rich unimproved neutral grassland, dominated by red fescue and smooth meadow grass, with locally uncommon: red valerian, corn marigold and hop trefoil. Around the base of the castle plants recorded include Scottish and locally uncommon plants: pellitory-on-the-wall, sand spurrey, English and white stonecrop, common mallow and bid's-foot trefoil.

A number of trees are found within the site associated with formal garden planting approximately 100 years ago, mainly pine, yew, beech, cherry and sycamore, and more recent planting, including ginko and red flowering horse chestnut.

2.7 Contemporary/use values

The castle has been at the centre of the village of Dirleton right from the outset in the early 13th century. Even though it lost its pivotal role as a noble residence around the middle of the 17th century (when it was replaced by Archerfield House, to the north-west of the village), the old castle, by dint of its very location, has retained its physical presence at the heart of the local community.

The village community have long had a close association with the castle and grounds. For example, their bowling green, probably on the site of a formal 'knot' garden, may well have been in continuous use since the later 17th century.

The castle is an undoubted tourist draw: the picturesque village, nearby beaches, and castle and gardens combine to make a great day out. Visitors particularly appreciate the lovely gardens, the tranquillity of the site, and the nooks and crannies of the castle itself which add to the experience of "exploration". The doocot, especially its geometric interior, is a noted bonus. The attractive gardens, at different stages of growth and colour, encourage repeat visitation.

Today, the castle is a popular venue for civil marriages and a most attractive backdrop for wedding photographs. It seems not to have any other spiritual meanings or associations, though historically there was a chapel within the complex.

Dirleton Castle is a valuable learning resource for the local area which can inspire learners of all ages. The site is accessible through the HES Free Education Visits scheme⁶.

⁶ For more information, see our website: www.historicenvironment.scot/learn/education-visits/free-education-visits/

3 Major gaps in understanding

- Where was the original (later 12th century) de Vaux castle located? Possibly Eldbottle or Fidra?
- What form did the upper (now missing) parts of (a) the de Vaux donjon, and (b) Haliburton tower house, take?
- What remains to be found in the rest of the great ditch surrounding the castle?
- What was the extent and layout of the castle grounds, particularly in the 16th century?
- Further research on the early Ministry of Works interventions at the site would be helpful.

4 Associated Properties

Other related sites:

Archerfield House; Castle Tarbet, Fidra island; Dirleton Kirk; **Dryburgh Abbey**; Eldbottle (site of); St. Andrew's Church, Gullane; **Huntingtower Castle**.

Other 13th-century stone curtain-walled castles in State care: **Balvenie**; **Bothwell**; **Caerlaverock**; **Dunstaffnage**; **Inverlochy**; **Kildrummy**; **Rothsay**; **Skipness**; **Sween**.

Some other castles with extensive gardens:
Aberdour; Drummond; **Edzell**.

Some other 'beehive' doocots in the area:
Garvald; Phantassie; Preston village.

5

Keywords

Dirleton Castle, East Lothian, donjon, doocot, arrow-slit, great hall, chapel, doocot, vault, kitchen, prison, garden, Vaux, Haliburton, Ruthven, witchcraft trials.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline

- c.1140 David I issues two charters from his royal manor of Eldbotle (north-west of Dirleton Castle).
- c.1160s Malcolm IV grants the lands of Dirleton and Gullane, including presumably the manor of Eldbotle, to John de Vaux (de Vallibus). The de Vauxs, from Rouen (Normandy), come to England with the Conqueror, settling at Pentney, in East Anglia. Thereafter, branches are established in Cumbria (Gilsland) and East Lothian (Dirleton and Gullane). Where John de Vaux resides is not known, though Eldbotle ('old house') and Castle Tarbet, on the nearby Fidra Island ('island of Eldbotle'), are both possibilities.
- c.1170 William de Vaux grants St. Michael's, Gullane, the parish church, to the Premonstratensian canons of Dryburgh Abbey.
- c.1200 William de Vaux founds a chapel dedicated to St Andrew at Dirleton, south-east of Eldbotle, but its whereabouts are unknown.
- c.1220 William grants Fidra island, with its church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, and other lands lying beside the 'old castle' (*vetus*

castellum) – presumably Eldbottle - to Dryburgh Abbey. He dies soon after.

- 1240s William's successor, John, builds the first castle at Dirleton. His position as steward to Marie de Coucy, Alexander II's young queen (they married in 1239), suggests that the direct influence for the curtain-walled and towered castle may well have been Coucy-le-Chateau, the residence near Amiens of Marie's father, Duke Enguerrand (III), built in the 1220s.
- 1298 Dirleton Castle is besieged and taken by an English force commanded by Bishop Antony Bek of Durham during Edward I of England's invasion that culminates in the defeat of Wallace at Falkirk. Robert de Mandlee is appointed keeper by King Edward.
- 1306 The castle, by now back in Scottish hands, is retaken, this time by Sir Aymer de Valence, Edward I's commander. By the time of Bannockburn (1314), the castle is back in Scottish hands. Robert Bruce instructs that it be rendered unusable by the enemy.
- 1340s William (II) de Vaux dies without a male heir and his estate of Dirleton and Gullane with its castle, passes by marriage to Walter Haliburton, Lord of Lamberton (Berwickshire) and sheriff of Berwick. The Haliburtons of Dirleton become loyal supporters of the house of Stewart. They also set about repairing and rebuilding the castle.
- 1392 Walter's grandson, Walter (II), succeeds as Lord of Dirleton.
- 1403 Walter marries Isabella, daughter of Robert Stewart, Duke of Albany, Robert III's brother and regent of Scotland.
- 1424 Walter's son, also Walter, is named as one of the hostages for James I, then a prisoner in England. He marries Marjorie Douglas, daughter of Archibald 'the Grim', 3rd Earl of Douglas.
- 1439 Walter is appointed Lord High Treasurer of Scotland and in 1440 is created 1st Lord Haliburton of Dirleton. He dies in 1447, and is succeeded by his son, John, the 2nd lord.
- 1505 Patrick, 5th Lord Haliburton of Dirleton, dies without a male heir, and his estate is divided between his three daughters. The castle portion passes to his eldest, Janet, who in c.1515 marries William, 2nd Lord Ruthven, scion of a noble Perthshire family. They carry out repairs and additions, including the fine Ruthven Lodging, doocot and accompanying formal gardens.
- 1581 William, 4th Lord Ruthven, is created Earl of Gowrie by James VI, but is heavily implicated in the 'Ruthven Raid' the following year, in which young James VI is held against his will at Ruthven Castle (now **Huntingtower**), the family's chief seat. Gowrie is beheaded in

1585. Lady Dorothea, his widow, and her 13 children vacate Dirleton Castle but are permitted to return.
- 1600 John, 3rd Earl, is murdered in Perth during the 'Gowrie Conspiracy' (another plot to undermine King James's authority): his mother, Lady Dorothea, is allowed to remain at Dirleton. One of Gowrie's co-conspirators, Robert Logan of Restalrig, describes Dirleton Castle as 'the pleasantest dwelling in Scotland', and is said to have made possession of the castle as the price for his participation in the Gowrie Conspiracy.
- 1612 A new parish kirk is built in Dirleton, replacing the 12th-century kirk at Gullane, abandoned because of sand encroachment.
- 1649 Several people, accused of witchcraft, are imprisoned in the castle. No evidence has been found for the outcome, but they may have been executed after trial.
- 1650 Following Cromwell's invasion and victory at Dunbar (September), General Monck, his commander, with 1600 men besiege and take 'Derlington House', then being used by Scots cavalry ('so-called 'Moss-troopers'). After a short stint as a field hospital, the badly damaged castle is abandoned.
- 1663 William Nisbet, also from Berwickshire, purchases the Dirleton estate and builds a new residence, Archerfield House, north-west of Dirleton village.
- 1780s The old castle and grounds become part of the designed landscape of Archerfield House, laid out by Robert Robinson.
- c.1860s David Thomson, head gardener at Archerfield House, lays out the castle grounds as two 'modern' flower gardens, centred on elaborate geometrical parterres.
- c.1920 Thomson's north garden is replaced by the present 'Arts and Crafts' herbaceous garden.
- 1924 The castle passes into State care. Clearance work and masonry conservation follow.
- 1993 Thomson's west garden is recreated, based on plans, planting notes and archaeological excavation.

Appendix 2: Witchcraft Trials

During 1649-50 over 600 people were accused of witchcraft across southern and eastern Scotland: many were killed as a result. Six of the accused were from the parish of Dirleton. In June 1649 the widow Agnes Clarkson

confessed to witchcraft after being held prisoner in Dirleton Castle. The devil had appeared to her 'in the liknesse of a black dun dogge' before transforming 'into the liknesse of a black man' and having 'carnall copulation with her'. She also accused Patrick Watson, his wife Manie Haliburton, and Bess Hog of dancing with the devil 'upon the green of Diriltoun'.

Manie was held in Dirleton Castle before being brought before the court. She confessed that 18 years previously she and Patrick had provided bread and ale to the devil, believing him to be a physician. The devil reappeared in his true form 'and had carnall copulation with hir', compelling her to renounce Christ. Witch hunter John Kincaid inspected Manie and Patrick for signs of the devil's mark in 'the broadhall in the Castell of Dirilton', duly finding it on their neck and back respectively. The mark was thought to be a place on the body, insensitive to pain, which the devil marked when he made his pact with witches. This evidence was sufficient for Agnes, Patrick, and Manie to be brought to trial.

Bess Hog and two other Dirleton women named Marion Miek and Margaret Goodfellow were also found guilty of witchcraft in 1649. Once a witch had confessed, a trial and execution were highly likely. In the absence of any evidence of acquittal, it is assumed that this is what happened to Agnes, Patrick, Manie, Bess, Marion, and Margaret.

Appendix 3: Dirleton Castle Doocot



Exterior view of Dirleton doocot

Visiting the doocot is an important part of the experience of visiting Dirleton Castle; its intricate and photogenic internal geometry is popular with visitors.

The following paragraphs set out the context of this building type and identify aspects of its evidential, historical, architectural and aesthetic values.

Freestanding doocots are recognised as a specific and characterful building type associated with Scottish estates from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Dirleton Castle's doocot is a four-tier, domed-roofed, circular-plan, single-cell 'beehive' doocot, apparently of late 16th-century date. This type of doocot is named after the shape of traditional bee skeps (straw baskets), and is thought to be the earliest type in use in Scotland. The doocot is 7.62m high and has a 6.4m exterior ground-level diameter and 0.77m thick walls. It is built of coursed local rubble sandstone with dressed door rybats (surrounds), three perching courses and a billet-moulded course below the domed stone roof. Billet moulding is created from small geometric blocks set in a regular projecting and recessing pattern. Where not eroded, the perching courses have a delicate 'beaked' profile. The doorway faces south-west and is secured with a modern wrought-iron yet (gate). The circular opening at the centre of the roof is now glazed. On the north-west and north-east sides there are stepped stone buttresses adjoining the earlier 19th century garden walls. Internally the walls are lined with 25 rows of more than 1000 flagstone nesting boxes set above a stone 'plinth', which ranges in height from 0.29m by the door to 0.15m opposite the door. The flooring is now concrete with the former potence stone at the centre. Most early doocots were fitted with a 'potence'; a revolving timber column with a ladder, or pair of ladders, attached on gallows (arms), allowing easy access to the upper nesting boxes. In this case, all that is left of the potence is the scooped out stone that held the base of the timber column. A modern metal-grille gate is fixed on the inner side of the doorway to prevent blown leaves.

The doocot is set on what appears to be a rocky outcrop that has been landscaped with earth in the northern boundary wall of the Dirleton Castle estate. On the north side, the grassed mound is sculpted as two ramps leading up to the doocot. On the north side, in the garden, the doocot is located within an area of undulating lawn below a higher outcrop and the northern end of the Halyburton (east) range. The earlier 19th century garden walls extend eastwards and north-westwards from the doocot.

Evidential values

A series of photographs of c.1900, 1923 and 1939 in the National Record of the Historic Environment shows that repairs and alterations were undertaken to the doocot in this period, including the removal of harling and replacement of the timber door shown in the c.1900 image, and removal of subsequent plant growth on the stonework and substitution of the timber door shown in the 1923 image with an iron yett.⁷ A hedge that adjoined the doocot just to the left of the door, marked on the 19th century Ordnance Survey maps, was grubbed out between 1923 and 1939. At the same time, the paths from the

⁷ Historic Environment Scotland, National Record of the Historic Environment, refs. SC 1495214 [c. 1900: <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1495214>] SC 1206214 [February 1923: <http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1206214>] and SC 1206602 [6 March 1939: <http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1206602>].

western garden entrance and along the inside of the northern boundary wall were extended to take in the doocot as part of a circuit, and a set of steps was constructed. A further major scheme of repairs was undertaken in 1983-4.⁸ Dirleton Castle doocot is in good general condition. The perching courses have suffered significant erosion to the extent that the full original moulded profiles are only visible in a few locations. Weathering of the billet-moulding below the roof is also evident to a lesser extent.

A 1938 account states that the 'entrances are immediately below the roof and seem to be carried all the way around'. However, this is not supported by the physical evidence of the doocot, as there are no signs of flight holes in this location.⁹ The cap of the doocot, which was probably made of timber and contained the flight holes and ledges, has long since been lost. Similarly there is no evidence of the form of the timber potence, with the exception of the stone that held the central timber column. Internally, the variation in the height of the plinth below the nesting boxes suggests that the floor levels have been altered at some stage. The ground around the doocot appears to have been built up on the south side, perhaps as part of the transformation of the castle surrounds into a picturesque garden in the 18th or 19th centuries.

The age of the doocot is a matter of conjecture. The Ruthven family probably constructed Dirleton Castle Dooocot in the late 16th century. Several other luxurious additions and alterations were undertaken in this period to improve the family's domestic conditions, including the construction of the Ruthven Lodging in the south-west corner of the castle complex and the probable creation of a formal garden to the west.¹⁰

The siting and fabric of the doocot provides interesting evidence about the historic practice of breeding pigeons for food. The doocot is located about 40m north of the castle, at enough of a distance to prevent disturbance to the birds or the occupants of the house, but sufficiently close to enable maintenance of the birds and use of their dung in the gardens. Plentiful grain and seeds would have been available for the birds in the surrounding fields. The materials of the doocot appear to be local. Similar red sandstone rubble is found in construction of the castle, and is thought to originate from Gullane Quarry.¹¹ Flagstone is particularly suited for the construction of the nesting boxes. The architect Sir William Bruce records the provision of flagstone quarried at Dirleton and lime from the limekilns at Broomhall (Fife) for his

⁸ *Fourth Statistical Account of East Lothian* [<https://el4.org.uk/parish/dirleton/economy/>]

⁹ Whitaker 1938, p.9. It is likely that Whitaker, who lived in Nottinghamshire and died before his article was complete, did not see the Dirleton Castle Dooocot in the flesh.

¹⁰ Archaeological investigation in advance of the recreation of the Victorian garden in 1992 uncovered plant and earthwork evidence of a probable late 16th-century formal garden. See G. Ewart, 1993, p.55

¹¹ British Geological Survey, Earthwise website: http://earthwise.bgs.ac.uk/index.php/OR/14/063_Site_assessment_-_ELC_10:_Dirleton_Castle.

repairs to the fortress on the Bass Rock in 1674-9.¹² It seems possible that the flagstone for the nesting boxes, and perhaps the lime too, was supplied similarly in the previous century for the construction of Dirleton Castle doocot. The nesting boxes are raised off the floor by a plinth of about a third of a metre to allow for the accumulation of dung and ease of cleaning.

No archaeological work has been carried out on, or in the vicinity of, the doocot. However, terrestrial laser scan data of the doocot was collected as part of the Rae Project, which will underpin any future conservation work, as required.

Historical Values

The earliest known mapping evidence for the doocot dates from the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps, the 6-inch edition published in 1854.¹³ Other associated features in the vicinity include the castle ruins, tower/gazebo, boundary walls, adjoining hedge, and bowling green. The doocot remains unaffected by changes until the 1945 25-inch edition of the Ordnance Survey map, when the hedge is shown as removed and the doocot is fully incorporated into the garden path network.¹⁴

There was once a popular belief that if a doocot was demolished, the wife of the laird would be dead within the year, which may explain why so many doocots survive, including Dirleton Castle doocot, when their parent castles have been demolished or lie in ruins.

¹² National Records of Scotland, ref. E36 (Sir William Bruce of Balcaskie: accounts for Holyrood, Stirling, the Bass, 19 Jan. 1674 - 17 Dec. 1675, 17 Dec. 1675 - 13 Mar. 1679, rendered 13 Mar. 1679).

¹³ National Library of Scotland, ref. OS Haddingtonshire Sheet 2 (Dirleton/North Berwick) 1854 (<https://maps.nls.uk/view/74426935>).

¹⁴ National Library of Scotland, ref. OS Haddingtonshire Sheet II.10 (Dirleton), published 1845 (revised 1938) (<https://maps.nls.uk/view/82885008>).



Interior view of Dirleton doocot

Architectural and Artistic Values

The doocot has a strong architectural value as a largely complete example of an important Scottish Renaissance building type that is now rare and redundant for its original purpose. The monumental walls and beehive form with the impressive internal arrangement of nesting boxes are characteristic of the construction technology of the 16th century. The building and daily use of freestanding doocots died out in the 19th century, leaving the surviving structures as evidence of a way of life that has now completely vanished. In view of their specialist purpose and small size, doocots are difficult to put to another purpose, certainly without destroying their essential spatial, functional and even sculptural characteristics.

From the 1780s, William Hamilton Nisbet (1747-1822) revived the castle gardens and made them a destination for visitors to Archerfield House. The design of the extended Archerfield landscape is attributed to Robert Robinson. Robert Adam, Nisbet's architect for remodelling the interior of Archerfield in 1791-2, was noted for his antiquarian and picturesque landscape interests. Although Adam is not known to have contributed to the Archerfield landscape, it is interesting that both patron and architect shared these enthusiasms.

There is some evidence that by the early 19th century an outing to the romantic and picturesque ruins of Dirleton Castle (including the doocot) had become an essential experience for visitors to Archerfield House. The antiquarian Thomas Dibdin recorded in 1838 that the owner and governess of the castle, Mary Hamilton Nisbet Ferguson, had insisted, in spite of Dibdin feeling ill, that he would have no peace of mind until he had explored the

'genuine relic' in all its extremities.¹⁵ Dibdin duly recorded the doocot as 'peculiar, but picturesque'.¹⁶ Mary enhanced the picturesque experience by 'beautifying' Dirleton village with a village green and estate cottages, and enclosing the castle gardens with a low garden wall and constructing a turreted gazebo tower.

Lady Mary Bruce inherited her mother's large landholdings, including Archerfield and Dirleton, in 1855. Her head gardener, David Thomson, laid out two magnificent formal flower gardens in the newly enclosed grounds to the north and west of the castle.¹⁷ Historic Scotland reinstated the west garden to Thomson's design in 1993. The north garden was reconfigured in an Arts and Crafts manner with lawn and large perennial borders in about 1920. It was not until after the transfer of the castle and gardens into State care in 1924 that the doocot was incorporated into the path network and lawn extension to the north garden by removal of a dividing hedge.

The doocot is recorded in several picturesque and archaeological drawings, sketches and engravings of the Dirleton Castle ruins, including a drawing by Alexander Archer of 1835 and an engraving of 1845-52 for *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland* by Robert Billings.¹⁸ There are no known 19th century photographs specifically of the doocot, but Dirleton Castle was a popular destination (the Edinburgh Photographic Society visited in 1882) and it is likely that early photographs exist.¹⁹ Numerous photographs record the doocot in the 20th century.²⁰ From the evidence of social media and websites, it is clear that the doocot is still a popular subject for photography, particularly the internal arrangement of the nesting boxes.

Landscape and Aesthetic Values

Dirleton Castle doocot has some landscape presence as a significant feature in views to the south from Main Road. The whole castle complex lies on a rock outcrop that is elevated above the surrounding plain. As a vertical structure, even at a lower level than the castle, the doocot is a landmark within the village and conservation area. The textures and colours derived from the natural resources of the area are reflected in the construction of the doocot.

¹⁵ Dibdin 1838, p.980 [<https://archive.org/details/abibliographica03dibdgoog/page/n670>].

¹⁶ Dibdin 1838, p.982 [<https://archive.org/details/abibliographica03dibdgoog/page/n672>].

¹⁷ For the plan, see Robson 1865, p.447 [<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/37191-page/453/mode/1up>]

¹⁸ National Record of the Historic Environment, ref. DP 060406 [Archer: <http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1145069>]. Wikimedia, ref. 14784193135 [Billings: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dirleton_Castle_\(1909\)_14784193135.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dirleton_Castle_(1909)_14784193135.jpg)]

¹⁹ See EdinPhoto website: http://www.edinphoto.org.uk/4_eps_h/4_eps_outings_19th_century_destinations.htm

²⁰ See the [National Record of the Historic Environment](#) and the [East Lothian Historic Environment Record](#).