EDINBURGH CASTLE RESEARCH

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EDINBURGH CASTLE UNDER SIEGE

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This document attempts to list all known occasions when Edinburgh Castle was besieged and attempts were made, successful or not, to take possession of her by stealth or force. In 1093, we may be dealing with the siege of a fortified residence or palace that we would recognise as a castle, and we can be confident, as with the later events enumerated below, that the place really was besieged by Donald Ban. For the supposed sieges before 1093, we are not sure that they actually took place, or even that Edinburgh Castle Rock is the site of the events described. Also, if these early events are largely true, we must remember that we are not dealing with a castle with stone walls, towers, battlements, arrow slits and the like, but a more basic fort, perhaps with ramparts largely of timber.

Edinburgh Castle has always been a royal castle, one of the chief fortresses of the kingdom, and one generally considered impregnable, or at least very difficult to capture except by attrition. A weakness, however, that more than one keeper had to deal with was the proximity of the town of Edinburgh, not because it and its residents were a threat to the castle defences but because the keepers felt constraint not to fire their guns and threaten the lives and well-being of the townsfolk.

Two of the greatest sieges were in 1573 and 1689, when the castle suffered considerable damage from bombardment by large guns and mortars. In the former case, the garrison only surrendered when it was clear it was at risk of being overwhelmed by assault. On the latter occasion, it is less clear that the need to surrender was so urgent, but the garrison had been besieged for 13 weeks, had suffered as all the castle buildings were wrecked, and was running dangerously low in supplies and powder.

The defender of the castle in 1573, Kirkcaldy of Grange, was executed for his troubles, and the Duke of Gordon feared the same outcome for himself in 1689 if he surrendered. He was, in fact, treated properly, but was not held in high regard by either his own side or the other for his conduct. This included forbearance in needlessly causing death and destruction to the town and people of Edinburgh. Such unwillingness to do harm to his compatriots was used as an excuse by the commander, Walter Dundas, during the siege of 1650 to put up practically no resistance to Cromwell and his English forces, for which he was widely condemned and accused of cowardice. On the other hand, Patrick Ruthven, an experienced professional soldier with the full backing of King Charles I, had no compunction about doing his utmost to defend the castle in 1640, even though that resulted in more than a thousand deaths. The equally professional besieging forces, including many of his old comrades in arms, clearly respected him for it.

There are three successful assaults, rather than sieges, that stand out. All three involved careful planning and daring, and were executed by great leaders. The first in 1314 was the climbing of the Castle Rock by Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, King Robert Bruce's most able general. The second in 1341 involved a clever ruse by William Douglas, the Knight of Liddesdale, to make the castle gatekeeper think

it was safe to open up his gate. The last, and least well known of the three, in 1639, saw that great soldier, Alexander Leslie, blast his way in through the front gate under the eye of the castle's commander, but with no loss of life.

Throughout its history, Edinburgh Castle suffered attack by foreign (English) forces and in internecine struggles. It was exposed to the attention of whatever was the best military technology and military inventiveness of the time, and, although not the subject of this paper, was constantly having its defences updated to deal with each new threat. The story of Edinburgh Castle and the assaults upon it is a major part of our national heritage.

Constraints of time meant that the author could not check thoroughly on some sources that may throw more light on the sieges in the 16th and 17th centuries, in particular unpublished treasury papers in NRS and newsletter accounts (especially Mercurius Politicus) for the sieges from 1650 onwards. It is worth, however, drawing attention to a printed source for this last siege that has mostly been missed by those who have written on Edinburgh Castle, and that is a manual of gunnery by Captain Thomas Binning (1677), who served as master gunner in the castle on that occasion. Apart from interesting observations on the siege, there is much of relevance on guns and their use, as well as an illustration (placed opposite p 119 in the edition in NLS) that shows a mortar being fired at the castle from Castlehill.

SIEGE ONE: C.640

According to Irish sources, the Annals of Ulster and the Annals of Tigernach, Eten, apparently in Scotland, was besieged. Kenneth Jackson (1959) concluded that Eten was Edinburgh and that this event marked the occupation of the lands, Lothian, to the north of the Lammermuirs by the English of Bernicia (under their king Oswald), penetrating northwards from Northumberland. At this date, Edinburgh would have consisted of a stronghold on the site of the medieval castle, and its defenders would have been Gododdin. Driscoll and Yeoman (1997: 226) have suggested that the form of the Iron Age settlement on the Castlehill was a Lowland broch like Edin's Hall in Berwickshire. Such a structure could still be in use in the 7th century.

Jackson's analysis, while still followed in print by recent scholars (e.g. Koch 1997: lii; Fraser 2009: 171), is likely to be reinterpreted. His identification of Eten as Edinburgh may be contested.

934
Æðelstan, King of the English, is said by the Annals of Clonmacnoise (Anderson 1990, 1: 426) to have spoiled the kingdom of Scotland to Edinburgh, which might suggest that a well-defended stronghold there resisted him. It is probable, however, that Edinburgh is a 17th-century mistranslation of Dunfoither (Dunottar) (Woolf 2007: 164).

954 x 962
A passage in the Chronicle of the Kings of Alba (Anderson 1990, 1: 468, 544) notes the evacuation of the oppidum of Eden, which was left to the Scots. A recent interpretation identifies this as a record of the Albanian takeover of

Edinburgh from the Northumbrians. This passage itself is seen as an interpolation to an entry that may originally have been intended to record the death or the killing of King Ildulb of Alba (Woolf 2007: 191–5). If the Scots held Edinburgh from this time, it helps explain why the victory by the Scots at Carham in 1018 was recognised as fixing the Border rather than as an advance by the northerners that could be overturned.

SIEGE TWO: 1093

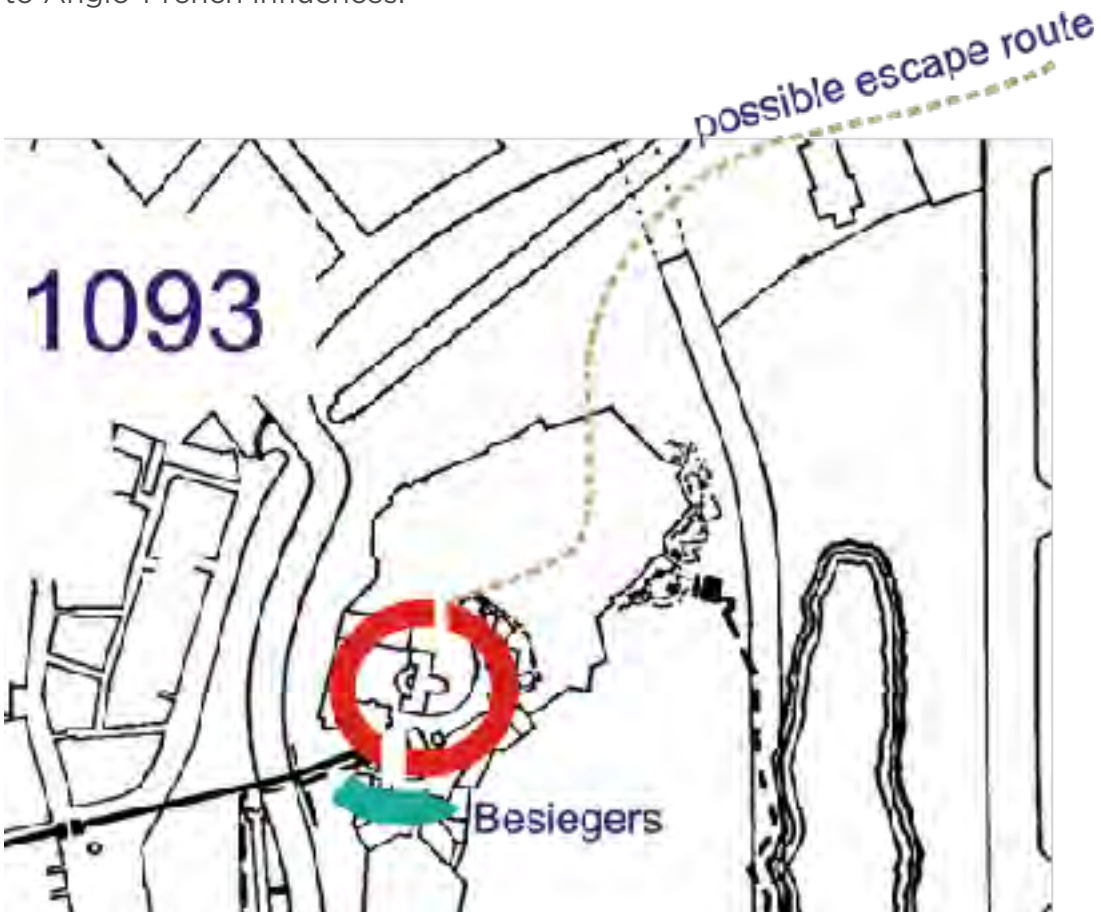
St Margaret, the wife of King Malcolm III, was lying at the point of death in Edinburgh Castle in November 1093 when her son Edgar brought news of the death of the king and her eldest son Edward while campaigning in England. She died shortly afterwards and the castle was besieged by the king's half-brother, Donald Ban. He had heard of Malcolm's death and invaded the kingdom with the support of the King of Norway and a sizeable army. He knew that the king's rightful and lawful heirs were in the castle – Edgar and his younger brothers – and he clearly intended to take the kingship for himself. That he did. The queen's body is said to have been removed from the castle during the siege, via an unwatched postern gate on the west side, and the rest of her family fled. Donald Ban had concentrated his efforts on the main gates, believing that entry or exit was practically impossible anywhere else owing to the nature of the site (Anderson 1990, 2: 83–6; Scotichronicon 3: 77, 79).

This is the first reliable information on a siege of the castle. The information is derived from a later source, the Scotichronicon, dating in its present form to the early 15th century, but recognised to be a compilation from earlier material (Broun 1999). Was the residence that was there in 1093 what castellologists now would recognise as a castle, in the sense of a new-style earth and wood or stone fortification, or really just a traditional fortified site? Are we using the term 'castle' anachronistically? It translates the Latin word castro (ablative case) in the Scotichronicon, which is normally used in medieval Latin for a castle. Castles had been springing up all over England in the second half of the 11th century, and it would not be at all surprising if Malcolm had been influenced by these developments to have a castle of his own at Edinburgh.

The extent of the 11th-century castle is not known. If it were limited to the highest point of the Castle Rock, approximately the area occupied now by the palace, the Scottish National War Memorial and St Margaret's Chapel, then the postern gate that features in the escape would have been positioned about where Foog's Gate is now. From there, a viable route away to safety would have included a climb down the rock in the vicinity of the Old West Sallyport. The excavators of a causeway uncovered in the vicinity of Mills Mount, running approximately east–west, tentatively suggested that it might be the path taken by the party fleeing with St Margaret's remains (Driscoll and Yeoman 1997: 49).

The siege of 1093 brought to a head a major split in the Kingdom of the Scots. Malcolm III, married to an English wife, was greatly influenced by her and the ways of her people. Edinburgh was not in the old Scottish heartlands, but no doubt made sense as one of the key residences for his family, especially when he was set on a policy that involved him raiding deep into English territories. Donald Ban is represented as the leader of the forces of conservatism, the old Gaelic-speaking

aristocracy, elected by them as king. King Malcolm had designated his son Edward as his heir, but now with his death, by the understandings and customs of the time, Donald had a good claim to succeed. His kingship, however, was not destined to last. In 1093, it was temporarily brought to an end by an English-backed coup by Duncan, one of Malcolm III's sons. He only survived for six months, but then Donald Ban was finally defeated in 1097 by another nephew, Edgar, supported by an English army. It was these sons of Malcolm, as well as two others, Alexander and David, who reigned afterwards, who ensured the full opening up of Scotland to Anglo-French influences.



SIEGE THREE: 1255

According to Matthew Paris (Anderson 1908: 372–3), Richard, Earl of Gloucester, and John Mansel, King Henry III's special clerk and counsellor, entered Edinburgh Castle without arousing any suspicion. Their companions followed a few at a time until altogether they made up a force strong enough to defend themselves against those in the castle. Their purpose was to listen to the complaints of the young Queen Margaret, Henry III's daughter, recently married to Alexander III in 1251. Amongst her woes was the fact that the young couple had not been allowed to cohabit, an arrangement immediately overturned by Gloucester and Mansel. Some of the Scottish nobles were furious at what had happened and invested the castle with their own forces. They soon realised how foolish they had been to besiege their own king and queen and retired.

This is a partial account of an incident during complex political manoeuvring in the minority of Alexander III, not only involving Scottish factions but the English king, Henry III, ever ready to meddle in Scottish affairs. The more reliable Scottish source, the Chronicle of Melrose (Anderson 1990, 2: 580–2), has the castle seized by the English king's Scottish ally, Patrick, Earl of Dunbar, and garrisoned by his men, prior to the arrival of Gloucester and Mansel. The king and queen were then taken off to Roxburgh to keep them out of the hands of the faction led by the Comyns (cf. Brown 2009: 49).

From the point of view of a study of the taking and holding of the castle, the interesting thing about these events in 1256 is the apparent ease with which the castle could be entered and taken over, even though it housed the king and queen at the time. Matthew Paris says there was a door keeper to the castle along with warders who were duped into supposing the intruders were humble knights of the household of Robert de Ros, one of those accused by the queen of mistreating her (Anderson 1908: 372).

SIEGE FOUR: 1296

In June, Edward I besieged Edinburgh Castle. The castle was held by a Scottish garrison under a constable. The fullest account is given in The Chronicle of Lanercost, where there is interwoven an amusing (but not for the man in question) story of the defection of one of King Edward's Welshmen.

King Edward had brought up large stone throwing engines that were positioned all around the castle. The bulk of the army with which he had invaded Scotland that April was apparently still with him. The castle was subjected to a heavy bombardment by three engines for three days and nights, starting about 8 June, during which 158 stones were fired. The king had selected a Welshman, Lewyn, as a messenger to take letters to London. Lewyn, however, spent the money he had been given as travelling expenses in a tavern, and the next day sought admission to the castle, offering to hand over the letters with which he had been entrusted, and boasting of his prowess with a ballista (giant crossbow). He was pulled into the castle, over the wall on a rope, but when the constable heard about this, out of a sense of honour, he would have nothing to do with Lewyn and his treachery, and notified the besiegers of how they had been approached by this deserter. Lewyn was immediately ejected and was duly tried and hung by the English.

The constable's honourable behaviour apparently influenced the king to call off the bombardment and give the Scots the opportunity to send messengers to King John at Forfar explaining their situation and looking for help. While a response was awaited, King Edward marched on to Stirling. King John could offer no prospect of relieving the siege, and advised the garrison to look to their own safety. Thus on the 15th day of the siege the castle was surrendered to the English commander, Sir John Le Despenser. The Lanercost chronicler noted that there was no record of the castle ever having been captured before owing to its height and strength (Voyage of Kynge Edwarde: 4; Chron. Lanercost: 142–5; cf. Flores Historiarum 3: 98, 288; Chron. Guisborough: 279).

Stone-throwing machines were to be used in many sieges by both the English and the Scots in the ensuing Wars of Independence. No detail is provided by any of

our sources of the type used against Edinburgh Castle in 1296, but it is probably not unreasonable to assume that they were trebuchets. Trebuchets had a beam pivoting on a fulcrum, just like a child's see-saw. In their simplest form, at one end of the beam was a heavy weight or counter-balance and at the other a sling for a stone projectile. The machine was made ready by holding the end of the beam with the sling down, and loading it with a stone. When the beam was released, the weight of the counter-balance caused the sling to fly up, releasing its stone with great force. Recent experiments with a reproduction medieval trebuchet at Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness suggest that they could be formidable in knocking down walls (Caldwell 2007: 62–4; Fisher and Fisher 2000: 22–53).

There is no mention of stone-throwing machines earlier in the campaign of 1296 when King Edward captured Berwick-upon-Tweed, Dunbar Castle and Roxburgh Castle. Indeed, in the case of Dunbar, the English strategy for taking it seems to have depended on the digging of mines. The garrison, however, capitulated without putting up much resistance (Chron. Lanercost: 140). Roxburgh did not provide any resistance either when Edward turned his attention to it after Dunbar (Chron. Guisborough: 279). It is doubtful if Edward would really have seen Roxburgh as a major threat to his lines of communication when he already held Berwick and Dunbar. It is possible he only turned his attention to it to kill time while waiting either for the arrival of his war machines at Edinburgh, or their construction locally.

What we cannot judge with any certainty is whether the garrison in Edinburgh could have held out much longer. Three days' bombardment against the major fortress in the country was not necessarily enough to render it in danger of capture by assault. Edward was content to allow the garrison the opportunity to take advice from their king on what they should do, surely not a course of action that he would happily have taken if he were confident of the immediate reduction of the castle by battery and assault. The Scots may understandably have been unenthusiastic about holding out to the bitter end since it would have been clear, after the treatment Edward had meted out to the inhabitants of Berwick, that that would have meant death for all of them.

The surrender of Edinburgh Castle in 1296 was a major turning point for several reasons. It was probably the first time that any Scottish fortification had been seriously threatened with stone-throwing machines. As Scotland's premier castle and with a reputation for being impregnable, its capture now was a hammer blow for those who would continue to resist the English. It also contained the country's archives, Crown Jewels and other treasures, which were carted off the England. By not making any attempt to defend or relieve Edinburgh Castle, King John demonstrated his powerlessness to friend and foe alike.

SIEGE FIVE: 1314

The capture of the castle by escalade in 1314 is one of the most famous stories of Robert Bruce and his band of patriots. In this case the hero is Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, who was already besieging the English garrison in the castle when news came of how Sir James Douglas had won Roxburgh Castle by the use of ladders in the dark. This spurred Moray, helped and advised by William Francis, the son of a previous keeper of the castle, into adopting a daring plan. Francis had

told how for the love of a woman he had nightly scaled the castle wall with a rope ladder and made his way down a narrow path in the rock. The story is told in considerable detail in John Barbour's epic poem, The Bruce, and also in The Chronicle of Lanercost.

The actual date of the assault is said to have been 14 March 1313/14. The castle is known to have had been defended, on the basis of an official return of 1311–12, by a force of about 200 – 83 men-at-arms, 40 crossbowmen, 40 archers, 29 hobelars (light horsemen) (Duncan 1999: notes on pp 386, 390).

While a diversionary attack was made on the south gate of the castle, a smaller force of 30, including the earl himself and William Francis, climbed in the dark up the north face of the castle rock. Also named in the party by Barbour was Sir Andrew Gray. While they rested half-way up the rock face some castle sentries assembled above them, and one, showing off to his colleagues, threw a stone down at imaginary enemies. When the sentries had dispersed the final climb was made, the wall, 12ft (3.66m) high, being climbed with a rope ladder. William Francis was first over, followed by Sir Andrew Gray and Moray. Before the whole party could get into the castle the alarm was raised, and the English constable and others had rushed to oppose the Scots. Despite the odds being against them in terms of numbers, Moray and his compatriots soon won the upper hand. The English were disheartened by the death of their constable and turned and fled (Duncan 1999: 386–98; Chron. Lanercost: 204).

The information on the diversionary assault on the south gate comes from The Chronicle of Lanercost, and 'south' has been assumed to be an error for 'east' – but perhaps not so. There is evidence for an entrance in the south face of King David's Tower which may perpetuate an earlier approach route to the castle from outside the town, up where the castle rock gives out to a steep but grassy slope (Oldrieve 1914: 267, fig. 41). Although the Scots held the town itself at the time of the siege, mounting an attack away from the obvious approach may have been deemed to have merit in terms of unsettling the garrison even more.

Barbour's account tells how the Scots' climbers rested together on a narrow ledge half-way up the rock face. This might be identified with the ledge that supports the later crane seat above the well-house tower. Recent excavations by Driscoll and Yeoman (1997: 70–5), their area T west of Mills Mount, provided no evidence for a stone defensive wall of earlier date than 1314, overlooking the site of the crane seat. The most likely siting of such a wall, however, would surely have been on the line followed by the present-day western defences.

With the taking of Edinburgh Castle, which King Robert then had destroyed to prevent it ever being easily used against him, the English hold on Scotland was reduced to a handful of garrisons, most notably that in Stirling Castle. Probably few at the time expected that the English would give up on Scotland without a fight, as was indeed the case. The final struggle was approaching when King Robert had to contemplate fielding an army against the English king. With the taking of Edinburgh and other castles, he had every reason to feel confidence in the martial skill and hardiness of his men, particularly those like Douglas and Moray who were his most trusted commanders.

SIEGE SIX: 1335

Scottish and English sources describe how Guy, Count of Namur, attempted to defend himself in Edinburgh Castle from the Scots. The castle was still in ruins from when it was dismantled by King Robert Bruce in 1314 but, in desperation, Namur and his party killed their horses and made a rampart with their bodies.

Count Guy was a kinsman of the Queen of England and offered himself for service in the war in Scotland. He was too late to join Edward III and the main English army before it entered Scotland, and set out from Berwick on 30 July with his force of seven or eight knights and 100 men-at-arms, along with some English guides (Chron. Lanercost: 292; Scalacronica: 121). They were intercepted by supporters of the Bruce cause – John Randolph, Earl of Moray and Guardian of the Kingdom, along with William Douglas, the Earl of March, Alexander Ramsay and others. They engaged in battle outside Edinburgh on the Burgh Muir. The count and his men were forced to flee, fighting all the way, first into the town itself, and then on to the Castle Rock where they defended themselves all night behind a wall made from the bodies of their horses. They capitulated the next morning on terms (Scotichronicon 7: 111–15; Chron. Wyntoun 2: 419–20).

Both Scottish and English sources agree on the generosity with which Moray and the Scots treated the count and his party once they realised who he was. This was out of regard for their ally, the French king, whose subject the count was. The goods of the count and his followers were restored to them and their ransoms cancelled. Moray personally accompanied them back to England.

What appears at first sight a chivalrous tale of derring-do was almost the undoing of the supporters of the Bruce cause against Edward Balliol, backed by King Edward III of England. The Bruce supporters were already at loggerheads with each other and too weak to offer any real resistance to the armies under the two Edwards that had invaded Scotland that July. Moray's generosity to Namur ironically resulted in his own capture by the English and the death in a skirmish of Douglas's brother.

SIEGE SEVEN: 1337

Sir Andrew Murray of Bothwell, the Guardian of Scotland on behalf of the young, exiled King David II, besieged the English garrison in Edinburgh Castle in October, but was forced to lift the siege by the arrival of a relieving army consisting of forces from Berwick under King Edward Balliol and Sir Anthony de Lucy, combined with the men of Westmorland and Cumberland under the Bishop of Carlisle and Sir Rauf Dacre. Wyntoun suggests that Murray was also already failing in health. He died during Lent in the following year (Chron. Lanercost: 308; Scalacronica: 125; Scotichronicon 7: 131; Chron. Wyntoun 2: 438; Duncan 2004).

King Edward III had taken steps to have several Scottish castles rebuilt in 1335, including Edinburgh, entrusting that work to a Scotsman in his service, John Stirling (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: no. 1186; Scotichronicon 7: 123). Stirling commanded a garrison of 60 men-at-arms (including eight knights) and 60 archers (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: no. 1186). He is said to have been absent from the castle during the siege (Chron. Lanercost: 308). Bower describes how the English garrison in the castle took revenge for the siege on the poor common people around about. The castle marshal (apparently not Stirling) is described as an arrogant man who was murdered shortly afterwards on the High Street of Edinburgh by Robert Prenderguest, a disaffected Scotsman, who made good his escape, successfully seeking sanctuary in Holyrood Abbey (Scotichronicon 7: 133–5). According to other sources (Chron. Pluscarden 2: 217; Extracta: 172), Prenderguest was responsible after his escape for bringing back Sir William Douglas to Edinburgh secretly in the night. Much of the garrison of the castle was lodged in the town and Douglas slew 80 or more of them.

Murray is known to have used siege engines successfully at the sieges of other castles, including one called Buster against the castles of St Andrews and Bothwell earlier in the year (Caldwell 2007: 63; Duncan 2004). It would be surprising if that were not part of his strategy for retaking Edinburgh.

Late in the year, Sir William Douglas (the same who had helped the Earl of Moray against the Count of Namur in 1335), attacked a raiding party from Edinburgh Castle, led by its commander, John Stirling. Stirling was captured along with two or three knights and about 20 men-at-arms. Douglas summoned the castle to surrender in return for preserving the life of his captives. The remaining garrison refused to do a deal, but Douglas did not carry out his threat (Chron. Lanercost: 312).

The 1337 siege of Edinburgh Castle by Andrew Murray, followed by the attempt by William Douglas to take it by negotiation, were both relatively minor events in the struggles of the time by the supporters of the exiled king David II to rid themselves of the English and Edward Balliol. Already, however, the tide has turned against the English–Balliol cause, with forces of Bruce supporters able to traverse the Lothians and an English garrison hemmed in in Edinburgh, at risk when it dared to make sorties. The town of Edinburgh itself may have been cowed by the castle garrison, but was not totally commanded by it. It did not have a secure circuit of strong defences. This situation must have been unsatisfactory for the English in terms of having their garrison lodging in the town. Presumably one of the purposes of the building works recorded in English exchequer accounts for 1339–40 (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: 241) was to provide enough accommodation and facilities for the garrison in the castle itself.

SIEGE EIGHT: 1341

William Douglas (of Liddesdale) eventually captured Edinburgh Castle, four years after his attempt in 1337. The story of how he took it by subterfuge is an inspiring tale of cunning and daring that goes some way to explaining how the Scots maintained their independence from would-be English overlordship. Douglas had a strong force, including William Fraser and Joachim Kinbuck, and was particularly reliant on the advice and foresight of a priest, Sir William Bullock, and also the skill and support of a ship-owning Edinburgh burgess, Walter Curry. Curry's ship, then at Dundee, was loaded with a force of 200 chosen men and was sailed to Inchkeith. Curry pretended to be an English merchant, come from England with a cargo of wine, grain and beer, and went to the captain of Edinburgh Castle, offering him a bribe of wine, beer and biscuits in return for a sale of the rest of the cargo. This the captain agreed to, and arrangements were made for access into the castle in the morning.

Curry went to the castle with two horses loaded with baskets and casks, and 12 men, their armour concealed by cloaks. Meanwhile, Douglas concealed his main force nearby at 'the Turnpike'. The great gate was duly opened by the gatekeeper for Curry's party who, as soon as they entered, slit the throats of the janitor and his two assistants and sounded a horn as the signal for Douglas's party to rush the castle. Curry contrived to jam a stake under the portcullis to stop it being dropped, and threw his baskets and casks towards the entrance of the tower as a hindrance to reinforcements from the garrison.

A violent fight ensued in which the garrison was totally defeated and the castle taken by Douglas. He installed his elder illegitimate brother, also called William, as keeper, and the burgesses of Edinburgh were glad to return to the allegiance of King David (Scotichronicon 7: 145, 147, 239–40; Chron. Pluscarden 2: 220–1; Chron. Wyntoun 2: 457–60).

This story of the taking of Edinburgh Castle in 1341 also features largely in the work of the Flemish chronicler, Jean le Bel. There we learn that the keeper of the castle was 'Watier de Lymosin' (of whom there is no trace in English records – cf. Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: p xlix) and Alexander Ramsay is also named as a key player on

the Scottish side. Le Bel has the small group of 15 or 18 pretend merchants led by Douglas and Ramsay, and the castle porter, who had no advance knowledge of their coming, is only prepared to give them admittance through an outer gate, 'le premier porte des Barriers', until he has consulted with his masters. He, however, has the keys for the main gate of the castle on him, is easily overpowered, and that gate is prevented from being closed by having the merchandise dumped within it. The main party is said to have sheltered at an abbey, clearly Holyrood, overnight and was ready nearby with its horses to come riding to the attack when they got the signal (Chron. le Bel 1: 277–80).

Scottish sources give the date of the castle's capture as 17 April, but English exchequer accounts indicate 16 April. At that time, the garrison consisted of 49 men-at-arms, 6 watchmen and 60 mounted archers. Nobody of superior rank is mentioned, although the wardenship of the castle was in the hands of Sir Thomas Rokeby, who was also warden of Stirling Castle and was probably normally based there. It seems, therefore, that the garrison of Edinburgh at the time of its capture was severely depleted, certainly down from the 140 to 150 known to have been there in the period from 1336 to 1340 (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: nos. 1323, 1383 and pp 362–3).

The trick of a small group, above suspicion, blocking the castle entrance until a larger force can arrive, recalls the capture in 1313, as recounted by John Barbour, of the peel of Linlithgow by the Scottish patriot, William Bunnock. Bunnock manoeuvred his hay wain, in which were hidden armed men, into the entrance of the peel to hold it until a larger force could rush in from hiding nearby (Duncan 1999: 368–73). Indeed, Duncan (ibid.: 368n) even suggests that the 1313 story of Bunnock was derived by Barbour from the 1341 exploit of Sir William Douglas and his companions, pointing to the similarity in name between William Bunnock in 1313 and William Bullock in the 1341 adventure.

'The turnpike' where the main force of patriots waited for the signal to attack is probably not to be understood to be a stair, but, as suggested by the editors of Bower, a spiked outer barrier [of wood] (Scotichronicon 7: 240) – enclosing an area known as the barras, accessed from the outside by the gate (le premier porte des barriers) mentioned in le Bel's account. This is possibly to be identified with the gate under 'le hurdys' (perhaps here meaning a palisade) mentioned in a 1335 building account (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: 215–16). The erection of the wall of the barras is listed in an English building account of 1336–7 (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: 359). So presumably this force was hidden out of sight of the castle watchmen, just outside the barras.

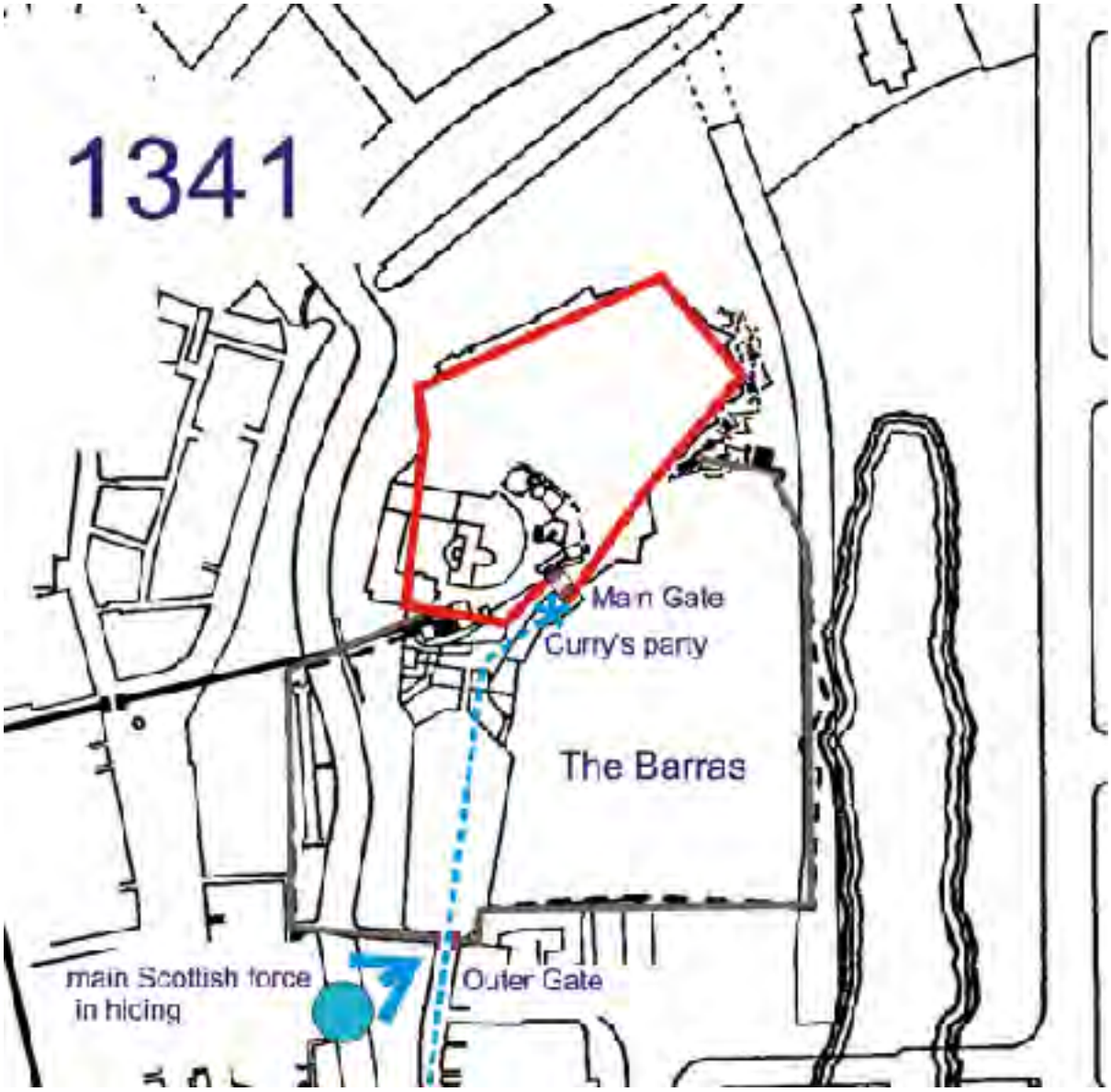
The barras is mentioned in a document of 1571 as a piece of land to the west of the West Port of Edinburgh, below the south-west side of the castle rock (Wilson 1891, 1: 178), but this seems an improbable place for the events of 1341. It is much more likely that the location was the placea Warda, as distinct from the mota castri, recorded in an English rental of 1335/6 while the castle was still in ruins and ungarrisoned (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: 327 – cf. RCAMS 1951: 12 which gives the wrong date). The mota castri or motte must be the Castle Rock, while the placea Warda or ward has been identified with an area to the north-east of the castle, extending eastwards from the well-house tower and bounded by the North Loch (now Princes Street Gardens), to the edge of the present-day Ramsay Garden, and

extending southwards to take in the present day Esplanade and Johnstone Terrace (see interpretive map, RCAMS 1951: fig. 35). The outer gate the patriots were allowed through might then have been positioned at the head of the High Street.

Another possibility is that the pair of massive ditches found in excavation of the coal yard to the east of the entrance flanker of the castle marked the limit of the ward in 1341, adding strength to the turnpike (Driscoll and Yeoman 1997: 108–10; Ewart and Gallagher 2014: 117). Their extent is not known, but they could have enclosed a substantial area to the north-east of the Castle Rock.

The main gate of the castle that the patriots had to gain was probably the great gate already being constructed in 1335–6, said to have had stone arches when four masons and others were working on it in 1339–40 (Cal. Doc. Scot. 3: 215–16, 241). It was possibly located about where the Regent Morton erected the Portcullis Gate in 1574. Bower's account of 1341 suggests a tower adjacent to the main gate, from which it was expected the castle garrison would come to try and repulse the attackers (Scotichronicon 7: 147). Might this be an early reference to the Constable's Tower, or a predecessor of it?

Apart from catching the imagination as a striking military exploit, the capture of Edinburgh Castle in 1341 was a significant turning point in the war with the English. Although the English still retained some garrisons, it is likely that none were a significant threat to the surrounding countryside. There appeared to remain little support in Scotland for King Edward Balliol, and King Edward III's attention in terms of foreign policy was now firmly focused on the Continent. It was now deemed safe enough for King David II to return from exile.



1385
In August of this year King Richard II of England mounted a devastating raid into Scotland in retaliation for the joint Scoto-French expedition into England in July. The English burnt Edinburgh, including St Giles. Holyrood Abbey was spared because of the hospitality provided there previously to John of Gaunt, the king's uncle. Presumably, Edinburgh Castle was deemed too strong to attack.

The fullest Scottish account of this is Chron. Wyntoun 3: 28–9.

SIEGE NINE: 1400

A major military expedition, supplied by a fleet, was mounted into Scotland in August by King Henry IV of England, coming via Haddington to Leith. According to Bower and the derivative Chronicle of Pluscarden, Edinburgh Castle was

assaulted from 15 to 17 August Scotichronicon 8: 35; Chron. Pluscarden 2: 256–7). This siege is not specifically mentioned, however, in two other authoritative Scottish sources for this period (Chron. Wyntoun 3: 77; Extracta: 207–8).

King Henry had been encouraged to meddle directly in Scottish affairs by the disaffected Earl of March, and unexpectedly revived the English claim to overlordship of Scotland, requiring King Robert II and his nobles to meet him in Edinburgh on 23 August to do homage. No Scots, however, were found to comply with his demand, and the heir to the throne, David, Duke of Rothesay, had offered instead a force of 100, 200 or 300 Scottish nobles to do battle with a like number of English so that differences could be resolved with only a limited loss of blood. The offer was declined.

Edinburgh Castle was under the command of Archibald, Earl of Douglas, and he had been joined there by his close ally, the Duke of Rothesay, and several other magnates and nobles from the south of the Forth. Meanwhile, the governor, Rothesay's uncle, the Duke of Albany, was in the field with a large army less than a day's march away at Calder Moor (Scotichronicon 8: 35).

Whether one believes that Henry was serious in his claims that he had no desire to wreak heavy destruction on the Scots, or that the latter – sensibly – had no intention of engaging with the English, it was the English who blinked first. Suffering from a lack of supplies and low morale, they slunk away with nothing achieved, crossing back into England on 29 August (Wylie 1884, 1: 131–40; Boardman 1996: 226–32).

SIEGE TEN: 1416

While James I was in captivity, the Earl of Douglas besieged Sir William Crawford in the castle after two office-bearers fell out over expected spoils from the Duke of Albany's rule. Crawford, who had been given custody of the castle by Douglas, handed it back in 1418, after making an agreeable settlement (Scotichronicon 8: 87 and note on p 190).

SIEGE 11: 1445

According to the Auchinleck Chronicle, the Parliament held at Perth on 5 June was shifted by King James II to Edinburgh three days later because Edinburgh Castle was then under siege on his behalf. Sir William Crichton held out in the castle for nine weeks before rendering it to the king 'through treaty' (McGladdery 1990: 162).

In 1445, James II was still in his minority and government was carried out in his name by factions of the nobility. Sir William Crichton then held the powerful position of chancellor, and was besides sheriff of Edinburgh and captain of Edinburgh Castle. It appears that he had fallen foul of the real power behind the throne, the 7th Earl of Douglas (McGladdery 1990: 33; Borthwick 2004). The fact that Crichton came to terms and does not appear to have suffered loss of all of his offices and status suggests that the king and Douglas's allies lacked the power to

dislodge him from the castle. It was only in the following decade that the king, then fully in control, was to demonstrate the efficacy of guns in reducing fortifications – ironically those of the Douglases.

SIEGE 12: 1460 X 76

In March 1482, in the presence of the Three Estates, James III declared that the actions of his uncles John, Earl of Atholl, and James, Earl of Buchan, during his minority in taking and interfering with Edinburgh Castle was done at the king's command. They also immediately handed over the castle to him when he commanded them to do so. They, and those who acted with them, were, therefore, not guilty of any crime.

This declaration of 1482 relates to a power struggle that pitted King James against other members of his family. Atholl and Buchan were clearly trying to protect themselves against possible charges of treason for events in their nephew's minority (see Macdougall 1982: 151–2).

SIEGE 13: 1482

On 16 November 1482, King James III issued a charter under the Great Seal granting the office of sheriffship to the provost, bailies, clerk, councillors and community of the burgh of Edinburgh. The document records that this was in appreciation of the part played by the people of Edinburgh, along with the king's younger brother, Alexander, Duke of Albany, in besieging Edinburgh Castle and releasing the king from his imprisonment there (Edinburgh Charters no. LIV [pp 157–65, at p 158]).

One of the main sources for this incident is the late-16th-century history of Scotland by Bishop Lesley. He describes how that year Scotland had been invaded by an English army led by the Duke of Gloucester, bringing with it from exile King James's younger brother, the Duke of Albany, who appeared to many an attractive alternative as King of Scots. When James had called out the host to oppose the invasion, the leading nobles mounted a coup against him and had him imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle under the care of the Earl of Atholl while they negotiated the withdrawal of the English army and the return of Albany to his heritage and his appointment as lieutenant general of the kingdom. Albany, however, shortly after taking over the reins of government, with advice from the queen who was at Stirling, returned secretly to Edinburgh and besieged the castle in order to release the king. The castle surrendered through lack of victuals. The resulting amity between the two royal brothers did not last long, with Albany accusing James of trying to poison him (Lesley's History: 49–50; cf. Macdougall 1982: 170–4).

SIEGE 14: 1525

Edinburgh Castle, then occupied by the Queen Mother, Margaret Tudor with her young son, King James V, and supporters, appeared to be threatened by a force of 600 or 700 men led by the Earls of Angus and Lennox in early February 1524/5. They were joined by a further force of 2,000 confederates who took up quarters in the town and around about, out of reach of the castle's guns. The castle guns were indeed 'bent upon' the town where a parliament was being held, but agreement between the two parties was reached without any bloodshed (Diurnal: 9–10; Henry VIII Letters & Papers 4: nos. 1088, 1110, 1113).

These events in the minority of James V relate to control of his person and therefore of government. An equitable agreement was brokered by which the king would be looked after by the earls of Angus, Lennox and Errol in turn, while Queen Margaret was guaranteed access to her son. Angus, actually Margaret's estranged husband, however, refused to hand his ward over at the end of his turn, thus precipitating much trouble and bloodshed.

SIEGE 15: 1544

1544

In the spring of 1544 King Henry VIII of England ordered an army, under the leadership of the Earl of Hertford north into Scotland, with very specific instructions about its objectives, including the destruction of Edinburgh and the taking of the castle. For more information on this and a recent authoritative analysis, see Merriman (2000: 143–9) . Remarkably, the bulk of the force came by sea, landing at Granton Craig on 4 May. The expedition has generally been considered a devastating blow against Scotland, and the apparent lack of effective opposition to the invaders has been seen as a major failure of Scottish government and arms. This view has developed because of an uncritical reliance on reports back to London from Hertford and his fellow commanders, and also an assumption that, because the Scots avoided a pitched battle, this demonstrated their weakness. Although the expedition was hardly good news for the Scots, here we question the totally negative way in which it has been seen from a Scottish perspective.

The Scots failed to oppose the English landing, but successfully blocked an initial move by the invaders on Edinburgh. After some sharp fighting the Scots withdrew to Edinburgh and the English took Leith. The English marched on Edinburgh two days later and had little difficulty in battering down the Netherbowgate with a large piece of ordnance (a culverin) despite the opposition of the town's guns mounted there and fire from the castle. The English gunners established a gun battery to launch a battery of the castle, but the Gunners in the castle successfully dismounted the English culverin which then had to be blown up to prevent it falling into Scottish hands. There was some street fighting in which the Scots are said to have come off worst, but the English withdrew in disorder, having attempted to fire some of the town. Two days later they again forced their way in through the newly refortified Netherbowgate, this time reinforced by 4,000 of

their own border horse which had come overland. Again efforts were made to burn the town down, which were probably not as effective as has often been supposed, and no further attempt was made against the castle before the army withdrew and returned to England through East Lothian and Berwickshire, shadowed all the way by Scottish forces (Henry VIII Letters & Papers 19/1: nos. 472, 483, 518, 533, 534; 'The Late Expedicion In Scotlande … 1544', in Dalyell 1798: 1–16).

It should be noted how Hertford, in his reports back to London, distanced himself from his failure against the castle. He had not authorised his gunners to attack the castle; that resulted solely from their own misjudged enthusiasm. He was then advised by his artillery/fortification experts, Sir Richard Lee and John Rogers, that the castle was in fact impregnable. All this helped obfuscate the fact that he had failed in one of his main objectives and lost a major piece of equipment. Indeed, the lack of specific detail in his reports suggests that the ability of his forces to cause extensive damage may have been rather limited – which surely ought to be credited to the Scots as some sort of success.

Perhaps, too, it is time to recognise the professionalism and ability of the gunners in Edinburgh Castle. If the castle had fallen in 1544 how different the course of history might have been.

The English culverin that had to be abandoned is shown at the head of the High Street, pointing at the castle, in the English drawing in the British Library illustrating the capture of Edinburgh in 1544 (MSS Cotton Augustus 1, vol. 2, ant. 56. See Ewart and Gallagher 2014: illus. 2.2).

The 1544 invasion marked the opening of the Wars of the Rough Wooing, an ill-judged attempt by the English to persuade the Scots to allow the marriage of their infant Queen Mary to the English Prince, later King Edward VI. Although the castle was not seriously threatened, this was a wake-up call to improve its defences. Work was well underway by the summer of 1546 when mention is made in the Treasurer's Accounts of 60 pieces of stone for the 'goun holl' (TA 8: 463). This is most likely to be the gunloop, which now points through the Half Moon Battery directly down the High Street. It was only rediscovered and its outer face exposed in 1912. Built up against the north wall of David's Tower is a massive vaulted casemate containing this loop, which has a single splayed opening sloping downwards slightly and formed of good quality ashlar. Its throat is about 50mm in diameter and the wall it pierces is a good 4m thick. There would have been an open battlement above, and by February 1546/7 ditches were being cut, possibly just in front of this forewall (ibid. 9: 56).

Thus far, the work is very much in the tradition of other royal or Hamilton fortifications, but later in 1547 we first hear of something rather different, representing an entirely new phase in the building or perhaps a change of plan. It is normally called the blockhouse, fort or spur, and work was already started on it in April, continuing apace after the Battle of Pinkie in September. The expenses of its Italian designer are recorded (Cal. Scot. Papers 1: no. 10, p 71; TA 9: 163) – possibly Captain Ubaldini who was sent to Scotland by Henri II of France (Cal. State Papers Spanish 9: 246) – and payments were still being made as late as September 1552 (ADCP: 61).

1547

In September 1547, Hertford – now Duke of Somerset and Protector of England for the young Edward VI – invaded Scotland in force, intent on creating pales from which he could influence and control much of the country. On Saturday, 10 September, he won a major victory over the Scottish host at Pinkie, a few miles to the east of Edinburgh. It might seem remarkable that Somerset failed to take greater advantage of his victory, but the truth of the matter is that he probably lacked the time – before his supplies of food ran out – and the men to do so. No attempt was made on Edinburgh itself, and it is hard to believe that this was altogether 'for consideracious moovying hym to pitee', as claimed by a contemporary English witness, William Patten (Dalyell 1798: 80). Edinburgh was defended by walls and may have harboured much of the defeated Scottish army. It was also overshadowed by the castle that Somerset did not think was worth attempting, just as he had ignored Dunbar and Tantallon. Even the holding of Leith seemed to be beyond his abilities, and he settled for the remoter and securer Inchcolm instead. Two consequences of Somerset's victory in hindsight now seem to have been inevitable – firstly, the removal of Queen Mary to France and her ultimate marriage to the Dauphin, and, secondly, the arrival of help from the French.

SIEGE 16: 1559

In 1559, Edinburgh Castle was held by John Lord Erskine (later Earl of Mar) who, despite his Protestant sympathies, refused to give access to castle to the Lords of the Congregation during their stay in Edinburgh. He argued that he had been appointed by Parliament and only that body could cause him to relinquish his control. On their departure in November, the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise, and her French supporters fared no better in trying to win over Erskine, and instead took some steps to win it by force. Faggots (gabions) were erected by the French, and Erskine called on support from his friends who brought an ensign (presumably an experienced soldier) and a gunner. When they were attempting to gain entry via the 'low postern' (? The gate adjacent to the well-house tower), they were spotted by the French who took the gunner prisoner. A party issued from the castle and in the ensuing melee, fought from the blockhouse (spur) as far as the Butter Tron (the Weigh House at the top of the Lawnmarket), they managed to free their man (Knox's History 2: 2; Sadler Papers 2: 157).

1560

Despite giving shelter to Mary of Guise from 1 April 1560 to her death a few weeks later on 11 June, the keeper of the castle, Lord Erskine, attempted to maintain his neutrality. There is no evidence of defections from the castle to one side or the other. The fees of all 14 of the royal gunners based in the castle continued to be paid and they received an 'extraordinary' payment – what we would nowadays recognise as 'subsistence' – for staying within the castle (TA 10: 332; 11: 6, 27–35, 55, 67, etc.).

In April, Lord Grey of Wilton, the English commander then supervising the siege of Leith, was of the opinion that Edinburgh Castle was winnable, but was expressly forbidden to attempt it, presumably not just because such a course would be a distraction from the job at Leith, which was proving difficult enough, but also because of the political embarrassment of having to deal with the queen dowager should the enterprise be successful (Cal. Scot. Papers 1: 388, 391). Meanwhile, on 29 April, Mary of Guise wrote to her confederates that she had victualled the castle as best as she could and had caused improvements to be made to the defences of the gate in the spur. It is clear that the English had free access to the town of Edinburgh at this time (Cal. Scot. Papers 1: 389, 398).

SIEGE 17: 1571–3

Despite their decisive victory at Langside on 13 May 1568, and the flight of Queen Mary to England, the cause of the Protestant lords and the young King James VI was by no means secure. The lords who had fled into England after defeat at Langside soon returned and Huntly was active in support of the queen in the north-east. In 1570, however, the supporters of James VI connived at the English harrying the lands and destroying the houses of many of the Borderers who had been the cause of much trouble in England and were also supporters of Queen Mary (Buchanan 1827–9, 2: 585; Cal. Scot. Papers 3: nos. 186, 188, 197). An English army under Sir William Drury, marshal and deputy governor of Berwick, and accompanied by the Earl of Lennox and other Protestant lords, went on to ravage the lands of the Hamiltons, the main supporters of the queen, destroying Hamilton Castle (Cadzow) and Palace, and Kinneil House near Linlithgow, all belonging to the head of the family, the Duke of Chatelherault, and several other Hamilton houses as well (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: 264).

The English help at this time was undoubtedly crucial in establishing the supporters of James VI and Protestantism in Scotland. They were led by a succession of regents:

- James Stewart, Earl of Moray (the queen's half-brother) – murdered by the Hamiltons 23 January 1570/1
- Mathew Stewart, Earl of Lennox, killed by Kirkcaldy's men from Edinburgh Castle, 4 September 1571
- John Erskine, Earl of Mar, died 28 October 1572
- James Douglas, Earl of Morton

Lennox had taken cannons from Stirling Castle in 1570 to add strength to the English artillery. He even got equipment and powder from Edinburgh Castle for them (ibid.), but already Sir William Kirkcaldy of Grange, the captain of the castle, was inclined to favour the cause of Queen Mary, and, in future, James VI's supporters were to receive no artillery or support from that quarter. Kirkcaldy was a staunch Protestant, had earlier sided against Queen Mary, receiving her surrender at Carberry on 15 June 1567, and had been appointed captain of

Edinburgh Castle in September of that year by the Regent Moray. He was now to turn himself into the main supporter of the exiled queen and the focus of opposition to the new regime that ruled in the name of James VI with English support. He was totally opposed to the appointment of the Earl of Lennox in 1571 as regent (after the murder of Moray) and resented English intervention in Scotland. He also had a considerable reputation as a soldier, which appears to have been well deserved (Bonner 2004).

The long siege of 1571–3 is at the heart of a complicated period in Scottish history when civil war raged and the country's future, under James VI rather than his mother Mary, as a Protestant ally of England, was finally thrashed out. As with any internecine struggle, the changing allegiances and friendships of the main players are often difficult to fathom, or even to keep track of, and can sometimes be seen to cut across more political and religious considerations. Kirkcaldy of Grange, either the main villain or hero of the siege, depending on one's viewpoint, was certainly at enmity with two of the regents, Lennox and Morton, but John Knox, Minister of St Giles and the main spiritual and moral force behind the supporters of King James, yet seems to have retained a liking for Kirkcaldy and a hope that he would see the errors of his ways.

There are a plethora of sources and descriptions of this siege, including a recent book by Potter (2003). The main contemporary sources include journals kept by Scots, principally those referenced here as the Diurnal (author unknown) and Bannatyne's Memorials, kept by Richard Bannatyne, secretary to John Knox. Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547–1603 volumes 3 and 4 contain a great wealth of contemporary English and Scottish reports and correspondence on the subject.

A good deal is known about the castle Kirkcaldy had to defend in the years from 1570 to 1573, not least through the illustration of the siege in Holinshed's Chronicles (Ewart and Gallagher 2014: illus. 2.5) and the description made in January 1572/3 by two Englishmen, Rowland Johnson and John Fleming, sent to assess how it might be captured (paraphrased and modernised):

The castle stands upon a high rock outcrop 600 feet [152m] long and 400 feet [112m] broad. On the fore part to the east, next to the town, is the hall [actually the palace], 80 feet [20m] long, and next to it Davy's Tower. From it a curtain wall with six cannons [the forewall battery], or similar pieces placed in gun loops, overlook the main street. Behind them, 16 feet [4m] higher up, is another tier of ordnance, and at the north end stands the Constable's Tower. In the bottom of it is the way into the castle with 40 steps.

On the east side there is a spur or bulwark, positioned in front of the rock that is crowned by the curtain wall. The spur is flanked on both sides, and on the south side is the gate to the castle. The spur is 20 feet [5m] high, vamured [faced] with turf and baskets [of earth], and furnished with ordnance.

The curtain wall on this side is at least 24 feet [6m] high, and the rock on which it stands at least 30 feet [7.5m] high. Davy's Tower is over 60 feet [15m] high, the Constable's Tower is about 50 feet [13m]. (Bannatyne Misc. 2: 70–1)

Part of this ruined spur or blockhouse, originally built in 1547–8 to protect the castle from attack from the east, has recently been located in excavations under the castle esplanade, showing that, at least by the time of its final destruction in 1649, it was defined by a 2m-thick stone wall. Its exterior, raked surface was faced with ashlar work (C. Tabraham and T. Neighbour, in Ewart and Gallagher 2014: 99–108).

Along with Holinshed's view of the 1573 siege, some impression of the spur or blockhouse's original appearance can be acquired from an English bird's-eye view of the siege of Leith in 1560 (Ewart and Gallagher 2014: illus. 2.3). Both illustrations show the work in question within the outer enclosure (described above under the siege of 1341 as the barras). The blockhouse is depicted in the earlier view as a masonry structure with windows or loopholes higher up, and connected by a lower wall with the rest of the castle. The 1573 drawing shows a great solid triangular forework or bastion with battered – stone-faced(?) – sides. That it was also considerably higher than the ground before it is suggested by a statement in a contemporary account that a workman who fell over it in April 1571 while filling gabions with earth died as a result of the fall (Bannatyne's Memorials: 112). Mary of Guise had a 'flank' made beside the entrance in 1560 (Cal. Scot. Papers 1: no. 762) and Kirkcaldy of Grange did further work in the early 1570s to prepare it for the great siege, including the digging of a 'sewche' (ditch) and 'pairing awain the greine grasse, and making all thingis smwthe and sliddrie from clymming of the wallis' (Bannatyne's Memorials: 112). It seems that the ground between the spur and the Lawnmarket, that is, the area now occupied by the esplanade, was turned into a glacis to give no cover to an attacker. Great quantities of earth and turf were taken into the castle to deaden the blows of enemy artillery and, early in 1573, the Englishman Nicholas Errington reported to his government that the garrison had cut off the fore-part of the spur, which was formerly of timber and boards, and had now replaced it by a high wall of stone and lime (Cal. Scot. Papers 4: no. 598). This may refer to a parapet round its top.

The spur was not just a walled enclosure. It is important to grasp that it was rather a great earthwork, the stone walls being merely to retain the great bulk of earth within and give greater stability. Its solid, platform-like nature is made clear by Holinshed's view. It was meant to give bulk and depth to the castle defences and to be a platform on which to position guns. It pointed aggressively down towards the town, providing but one of three or four platforms at different levels on which guns could be mounted. Here, it should be noted that it is difficult to square the description by Johnson and Fleming, given above, with the architectural and archaeological evidence. The latter shows that behind the spur was a casemate with a large gunloop pointing down the High Street, the mouth of which has been exposed since 1912 in the face of the later Half Moon Battery. This is probably the 'goun holl' mentioned in building accounts of 1546 (TA 7: 463). Above the casemate was the forewall battery, as identified in the Englishmen's account, but a further tier of guns can only be identified with artillery mounted on the roof of the 14th-century David's Tower, modified for that purpose (Ewart and Gallagher 2014: 44–5).

An inventory of artillery and munitions in the castle in March 1566/7 gives some idea of how the castle was defended then, and probably with little difference a few years later during the siege (Wardrobe Inventories: 165–77). On the forewall

there were four new French cannons and two grose culverins, all mounted on carriages. On top of David's Tower there was a carriage-mounted moyen. On the hill at the back of the munition house (Hawk Hill) were two bastards, and, below the hill, two cannons. At either end of the chapel (St Mary's Church) were two cannons and two moyens, and at the postern, at the western end of the rock, there was a saker and a falcon. Between the butts (later known as the butts battery?) was a double cannon, a culverin, a saker, two moyens and a double falcon, and, finally, at the gunhouse gable (near present site of Argyle Battery?) there was a grose culverin and a moyen. There is no mention of guns in the blockhouse, possibly because they were only positioned there when the castle was under threat.

The following table, using information extrapolated from various early Scottish sources, gives the possible specifications of the types of guns just listed.

Gun type	Calibre, inches (mm)	Range, yards (metres)
Double cannon	8 (203)	1500 (1371.6)
Cannon	6.25 (159)	1700 (1554.48)
Grose culverin	4.67 (118)	2000 (1828.8)
Culverin	4.5 (114)	1800 (1645.92)
Saker	3.5 (89)	1500 (1371.6)
Moyen	2.75 (70)	1300 (1188.72)
Double falcon	3.1 (79)	
Falcon	2.33 (59)	1100 (1005.84)

These guns were looked after by a gunnery establishment led by the comptroller of the artillery, John Chisholm, and including several specialists – gunners, wrights, smiths and a founder. The gunners and other craftsmen were civil servants and, as could be expected, until this time there is no evidence that they were ever disloyal to the government. In the early 1570s, however, a period is reached in which there was open conflict between the rival political parties supporting either a succession of regents for the young King James or else his mother, Queen Mary. Since Edinburgh Castle was held by William Kirkcaldy of Grange for the Marians, the latter party not only had access to most of the royal artillery, but also control of the gunnery establishment itself. Also, in April 1571, Kirkcaldy confiscated the town of Edinburgh's artillery and took it to the castle to prevent it being used against him (Diurnal: 209).

In March 1572/3, the Regent Mar had attracted six gunners from the royal establishment to his cause, the rest having 'maid defectioun fra oure sovereigne lord, his obedience and service, and forsworne their faith and allegeance aucht to his hienes and adjoinit thameselfis with the tratouris and rebellis of Edinburgh Castell and toun' (RSS 6: no. 1530). The case of two of the most senior gunners, Harry Balfour and James Hector, is instructive. They were engaged in a feud with each other that had gone all the way to the Privy Council for a settlement in

February 1567/8. It was decided in favour of Balfour, though Hector claimed he had worked deceitfully on the Regent Moray to get his pay rise (RSS 3: no. 2640; 5: 829, 930, 1363, 2231, 2357; RPC 1: 395–6). It ostensibly related to money and promotions, but we might suppose that politics were also involved. In any case, Hector left the castle to become adviser to the burgh of Edinburgh on the ordering of their guns and munitions (Edinburgh Burgesses: 243) while Balfour was given the additional privilege of making his residence within the castle. He died there on 11 September 1572, as the result of a wound in the head received a number of days beforehand, hit by a flying splinter from the portcullis when it accidentally crashed to the ground (RSS 6: nos. 159, 173; Bannatyne's Memorials: 264).

Chisholm, the comptroller of the artillery, had also taken the part of the Marians, and was sent by them to France in the winter of 1570/1 to get money and munitions. But when he returned that June or at the beginning of July to Queensferry, he was captured by Lord Lindsay and taken off to the regent's camp at Leith. On him he had about 6,000 francs and in the ship he returned in were 12 barrels of serpentine powder (for priming guns), 100 bullets for cannon, 300 for smaller pieces, 300 calivers (firearms), 300 morions (helmets) and 200 pikes (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: nos. 627, 638, 695, 828, 831; Misc. Papers: 59, 65).

1571

Mary's supporters were also holding the royal castle of Dumbarton and had several not-inconsiderable strongholds of their own, including the Hamiltons' castle of Hamilton (Cadzow – despite its 'destruction' in the preceding year) and Draffen (Craignethan). Dumbarton Castle was captured by government forces at the beginning of April 1571 as the result of a daring escalade of the Castle Rock in the early hours of the morning by Thomas Crawfurd of Jordanhill with a small band of wageours (mercenaries) (Diurnal: 202–3). That left Edinburgh, castle and town, as the major centre of opposition to the regent, and all attention could now be focused on trying to capture both.

Kirkcaldy of Grange was far too vigilant to allow himself to be caught in the same way as Dumbarton, though Crawfurd does, in fact, seem to have been involved in an attempt to force a way into the town in August 1571 – by then firmly in control of the Marians – by means of a stratagem that recalls the deeds of the Knight of Liddesdale in 1341. Some of Crawfurd's men attempted to have the Netherbow Gate opened by pretending to be mealmen, while others waited in hiding to make a rush on it (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: no. 892).

It was observed in August 1570 that Kirkcaldy was already preparing the castle for troubles to come. He was encouraging others to come and join him, and at one stage he bought up all the butter and cheese in the market and had the bakers baking him biscuit night and day (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: no. 422). He was also refortifying the castle, improving the town defences with earthwork fortifications, blocking up the gates and installing a garrison in the steeple of St Giles. At the beginning of May 1571, it was reported that he was making a 'barrace' (fortification) above the Butter Tron, and another 'at the strade of the Wester boll' (an earthwork defence outside the West Port) (Bannatyne Memorials:

114, 117). It was reported in October 1571, after a long period of fighting, that there was a trench within the town walls and all the vennels connecting with the High Street had been cut (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: 8 [no. 13]). These were measures to stop the whole town being immediately overrun should the enemy manage to make a breach in the walls.

Kirkcaldy had got money and supplies from France (Bannatyne's Memorials: 112–20: Diurnal: 202ff., 212; Cal. Scot. Papers 4: no. 68). There was also a large body of nobles in Edinburgh who supported him, including Huntly, Herries and Ferniehurst. In total, to defend the town and castle he had 600 men divided into six companies (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: 9 [no. 13]).

In May, only a few weeks after the taking of Dumbarton Castle, the Regent Lennox came to Edinburgh with three guns that he planted in an earthwork fortification on Calton Hill with the intention of battering the north-east quarter of the town. This fortification is shown (by then in ruins) as a rectangular structure with a round bastion at each corner on Gordon of Rothiemay's 1647 view of the town (RCAMS 1951: 37, fig. 150). From here, Lennox's men shot into the lower part of the town, especially at 'dirtie blokhouses' (earthwork defences erected by Kirkcaldy to defend the Netherbow Port?), and Leith Wynd outside the walls. They also occupied a house there. In response, Kirkcaldy blocked up the Netherbow Port with turf and stone and had a double cannon brought down from the castle to Blackfriars Yard to dislodge the regent's men from their positions. An attempt was made to surprise the fort on Calton Hill without any success (Diurnal: 213–14; Bannatyne's Memorials: 123–4). The regent's initiatives, however, had withered by the end of the month when he wrote to Queen Elizabeth of England that he was not able to sustain wageours on the money available to him, and there were no battery pieces except those in the castle. He asked for eight cannons, four culverins and two bastards with sufficient powder, bullets, instruments of war and pioneers, with 1,000 footmen, 300 horsemen and money, over and above, to pay the wages of Scottish foot and horse (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: no. 767).

Substantial English help did not materialise, and a new attempt was made in the autumn by the Regent Mar. He gathered together ten battering pieces, including two from Dumbarton, two from Stirling, one from Dundee, two from Broughty Craig and the rest from Dunbar and other places (Cal. Scot. Papers 3: nos. 911, 914, 956). Two guns were placed on Salisbury Crags on 10 October, but one of them broke that day. Others were positioned in an entrenchment before the West Port, but with no more result than before. These guns were removed to the east side of the Pleasance to fire at the wall on the south side of the town on 17 and 18 October, but as fast as the wall was knocked down it was rebuilt by those within and no assault was attempted. The guns positioned by Kirkcaldy at St Giles and on the Kirk of Field (on the site of Old College, Edinburgh University) 'contempnet' the regent's guns and his pavilion was even rent by a shot (Bannatyne's Memorials: 192, 194–5; Diurnal: 251–2). After 12 days' effort, Mar withdrew his men and guns to Canongate and Leith. The old demolished fortifications of Leith were now re-dug to serve as a secure base for the regent and his supporters (Diurnal: 229).

1572

No serious bid was made on Edinburgh for more than a year. Greater efforts were made by the regent to stop provisions getting through to the town and castle (Diurnal: 291), and the war was taken out into the country with the supporters of each party destroying each other's lands. In March 1572, the garrison of the royal castle of Blackness, further up the Forth, decided to join forces with Kirkcaldy (Cal. Scot. Papers 4: 195), and in the following June 1572 he was even bold enough to send a cannon and a double moyen to batter Merchiston Castle (at the time home to the father of Sir John Napier, the inventor of logarithms, and now incorporated in Napier College, Edinburgh). The guns pierced the walls of the castle before the Marians had to return in haste to Edinburgh with the arrival of some of the regent's men from their siege of Niddry Castle in West Lothian (Diurnal: 300). Eventually, in July 1572, a truce was patched up, largely thanks to French and English diplomacy behind the scenes. Kirkcaldy held on to Edinburgh Castle, but the town itself was made free to all (Bannatyne's Memorials: 237–46).

It was clear to the supporters of the young James VI that they would only finally daunt their opponents if they rooted Kirkcaldy out of Edinburgh Castle. It was equally clear that they lacked the power to do so. The only solution appeared to be once more to call in English help – after all, it was also in Elizabeth's interest to see that they succeeded in suppressing the supporters of a woman who was widely regarded as the rightful queen, not only of Scotland but of England as well.

1573

As noted above, in January 1572/3, Elizabeth had a survey made of the castle by Rowland Johnson and John Fleming, and they concluded that (paraphrased and modernised):

No mining can prevail in this rock, but only battery with ordnance, to beat down the walls and prepare the way for an assault. The reason for this is the nature of the rock itself, solid and hard, so that it cannot be hewn by any means that man can devise, in reasonable time; and even if it is successfully mined and powder put in place, it will be impossible to stop a lot of the explosive power of the charge dissipating through fissures in the rock and so preventing a successful outcome.

A battery of 12 pieces of great ordnance – cannons, demy cannons and culverings – will be required, placed on either side of the street by the spur; six battering pieces to beat Davy's Tower, the curtain wall with their ordnance, and the Constable's Tower, and so to make a breech; and on the south side where the hall is, the lodging, and the store houses for their munitions and victuals, it will be necessary to place six battering pieces, not only to beat down these buildings, but also to provide cross fire with the 12 guns placed to the east.

Eight demy culverings and sakers are also required to beat the back part of the castle and to dismount the guns mounted there. They can also be moved from place to place to fire at gun loops and such other places as need requires.

The castle may thus be at Her Majesty's commandment within 20 days after the gun batteries are in position. (Bannatyne Misc. 2: 70–1)

The English expeditionary force, consisting of 1,000 soldiers and 300 pioneers under the command of Sir William Drury, arrived at the end of April, along with six double cannons, 14 whole culverins, two sakers, two mortars and two bombards. A few other guns were supplied by the Scots, including the Earl of Argyll's cannon, and also four bands of soldiers, amounting to 500 men (Bannatyne Misc. 2: 80; Diurnal: 331).

For the course of the siege we are fortunate in not only having detailed, contemporary Scottish and English accounts, but also Holinshed's bird's-eye view (reproduced in Ewart and Gallagher 2014: illus. 2.5). It is not drawn to scale, exaggerates some features and merely sketches in others. Nor can it be used as a reliable guide, for instance, to the number and positioning of the gun batteries. Nevertheless, it can be regarded as a verisimilitude of the siege – at the point that the spur was stormed.

The regent, to try and prevent damage from the castle guns firing down the High Street, had piled up three 'traverses' of sod, turf and midden, one near the tollbooth, the other two higher up the street nearer the castle (Calderwood 1848: 281). Two of these appear to be represented on Holinshed's view. Some entrenchments had also been dug around the castle by the Scots. These were considered a sufficient threat by Kirkcaldy in the preceding March that he had fired his guns at a new one being dug to the north-west and made a sally from the spur to clear trenches at the top of the town (Cal. Scot. Papers 4: 536–7). These entrenchments were taken over by the English on 25 April, and extended and improved to completely blockade the castle (Diurnal: 324). We are reliant on English sources for the information that, incorporated in this circumvallation, were at least four mounts or gun batteries, three of which were commanded by Sir George Carey (son of Lord Hunsdon, the Warden of the East Marches), Sir Henry Lee (a favourite of the queen) and Sir Thomas Sutton (master of the ordnance in the north). The fourth was called the King's Mount, and was manned by a force of Scots with Scottish guns, under the command of the Regent Morton. Five hundred Scots are said to have joined with the English in the siege operations (Cal. Scot. Papers 4: 572). A fifth mount, the main battery, commanded by Sir William Drury, was protected by gabions on the north side of the Castlehill where it could batter the spur.

All of these mounts are represented on Holinshed's view. The King's Mount is identified, as is Drury's, though the latter is actually shown as two gun batteries, one on either side of the main street, labelled as 'The GENERALS two monts'. The first four mounts appear to be spread from near the Bristo Port on the south side of town, round in an arc westwards and then northwards to about the position of St Cuthbert's (not shown). A church is shown near the King's Mount that may represent the chapel of St Roque that stood on the south-west part of the Burgh Muir, south of Grange Loan (RCAMS 1951: 249 [no. 213]).

One of the contemporary Scottish sources (Diurnal: 332) provides a different and probably more accurate picture:

1. [Drury's Mount] on the Castlehill on the north side of Mr John Thornton's lodging

2. On Lawson's croft – one of the crofts of the Greyfriars

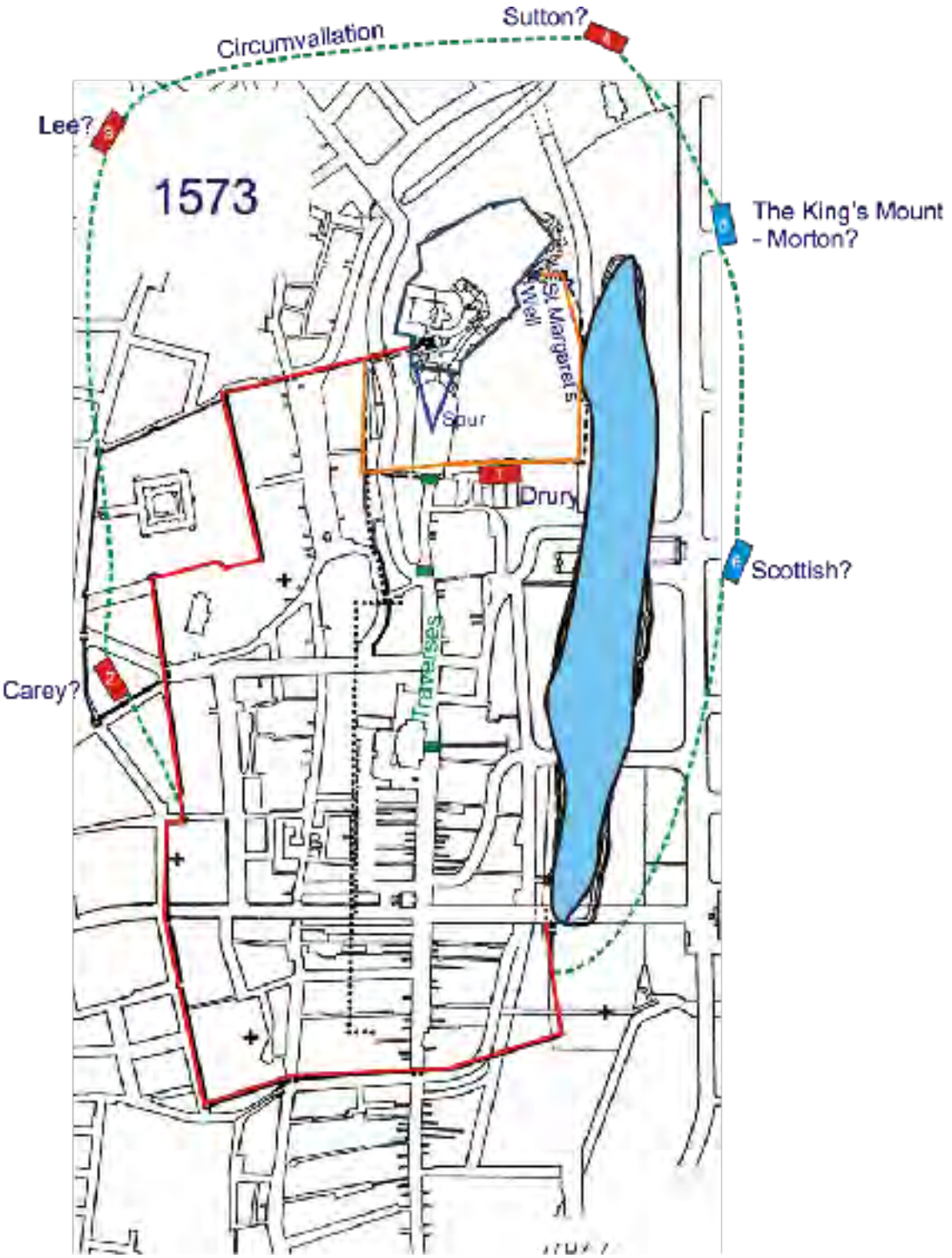
3. At the town, and on ‘Scottis’ crofts

4. Above the west side of St Cuthbert’s

5. At the north side

6. At the ‘lang gait’ (a predecessor of Princes Street), east from no. 5, on Buccleugh’s [land]

So the Diurnal seems to be indicating a total of six batteries. More research is necessary to identify all these locations, but it is likely they were positioned right around the castle, not just to the east, south and west, as shown on Holinshed’s view. It is probable that number two was not too distant from Greyfriars. Much of the land to the south and south-west of the castle in 1573, adjacent to the Burgh Loch (now the Meadows), was sparsely populated, with gardens or crofts providing food for the town, and there, somewhere, would have been number three. The approximate position of number four is clear enough, and numbers five and six could have been positioned along the edge of the higher ground represented now by Princes Street. The Diurnal describes number five as having Scottish guns and number six as only mounting three small guns. English sources might therefore have taken less interest in these positions.



Meanwhile, the other side had not neglected to improve the castle's defences, building a rampart across the castle from north to south to defend the built-up area (Crown Square) from battery from the west and improving the spur facing the town. More earthwork was added to it and the timber and boards of its fore-part were replaced with a wall of stone and lime. Owing, however, to major defections from the nobles supporting the queen – principally the Hamiltons, Huntly and Seton – Kirkcaldy could no longer hope to control or have any influence in the town. Only Maitland of Lethington, Lord Home and John Wishart, the Laird of Pittarrow, remained with him to the end (Bannatyne Misc. 2: 72ff. [=

Holinshed's Chronicle]; Diurnal: 322, 330–3; Cal. Scot. Papers 4: no. 598). His whole force was probably by now not much more than 200, many of whom were not soldiers (Cal. Scot. Papers 4: 572).

Soon after the arrival of the English, their commander, Sir William Drury, set Hubbard the miner to try and undermine the spur, but this venture apparently came to naught. The battery of the castle began on Sunday, 17 May, attention being directed firstly on David's Tower, no doubt since the guns positioned on top of it could command so many of the English positions. On 21 May, all the besiegers' guns from all sides opened fire. The south quarter of David's Tower fell, together with some of the forewall next to it, on 22 May, and the east part, and some of the portcullis, two days later. By this time, all the great artillery of the castle had been put out of action or dismounted. At 7am on 26 May, two assaults were made simultaneously. A force of Scots and English caused a diversion at St Katherine's Gate (i.e. the later west sally-port) at the west end of the castle while the main English attack was launched upon the spur. The former force was repulsed with the loss of 28 to 30 men killed or wounded, but the assault with ladders on the spur was successful and Drury managed to lodge a force on it. That night, Kirkcaldy asked for a parley and the castle was surrendered on 28 May into the hands of the English (Bannatyne Misc. 2: 72ff.; Diurnal: 330–3; Cal. Scot. Papers 4: no. 649). The garrison by then consisted of 164 men, 84 women and 10 boys (Calderwood 1848: 283).

Drury left for England straight after the siege. By prior agreement, although the castle had surrendered to him, he left it intact, though substantially damaged, with all its guns. Morton set about a major rebuild, including the Portcullis Gate and Half Moon Battery, which survive to this day. The spur survived, even if with a considerable amount of remodelling, and the main castle entrance was positioned in its flank. From here, a roadway led to the right round the bottom of the Half Moon Battery through an inner barrier gateway to the Portcullis Gate – a replacement for the Constable's Tower. The capture of Edinburgh Castle marked the end of effective support for Mary in Scotland. Kirkcaldy was tried for treason and executed. Despite one or two scares, no real threat of French or Spanish invasion ever materialised, and successive Scottish governments saw fit to maintain and develop good relations with England.

The Scottish regents, successively Lennox, Mar and Morton, had made much of their inability to take the castle and their need of English guns and manpower. Putting to one side the issue of whether with more skilled diplomacy it might have been surrendered by Kirkcaldy, it is not clear that he could have held it much longer than May 1573. His supplies and manpower were by then limited, and his ability to make sorties to gather in more was probably very constrained. By March 1573, the water supply in the wells within the castle had failed and he was forced to rely on water from outside, particularly the well (St Margaret's) to the north, below the Castle Rock. To access it, men had to be let down from above on ropes, but it was then poisoned by his enemies, resulting in the death and illness of several in the garrison (Cal. Scot. Papers 4: 536 [no. 603]; Melville's Memoirs: 99; Calderwood 1848: 282).

Although Queen Elizabeth was reluctant to finance yet another major military enterprise in Scotland, it did make sense that she should shore up a sympathetic

Protestant regime, and there was the risk, probably actually remote by 1573, that if she did not act the French would rescue the castle.

SIEGE 18: 1639

As the Covenanting party in Scotland moved to open conflict with their king, their cause was enormously helped by the return to his native land of Alexander Leslie, a distinguished soldier who had served as a field marshal in the Swedish army. By March, he was well on his way, aided by other Scottish officers who had served abroad, to creating the militia armies that were to play such an important part in the upcoming civil wars. The capture of Edinburgh Castle on 21 March marked the beginning of the First Bishops' War. There are two main accounts of this enterprise, in Baillie 1841–2, 1: 195; and Balfour 1824: 321.

The castle was held by its constable, Archibald Haldane. Leslie, with a party of noblemen, along with Sir Alexander Hamilton, general of the artillery, General Major Robert Monro, both of whom had also been in Swedish service, and the companies of men raised by Edinburgh (1,000 musketeers), went up to the castle between four and five in the afternoon to parley with Haldane, apparently with the expectation that he could be persuaded to relinquish his charge or support the Covenanting cause. This turned out not to be the case, but before Leslie and his party withdrew a petard was attached to the outer gate, and, once it had exploded, a full-scale assault was mounted on the inner two gates with axes, hammers and 'ramming-leddirs' while the walls were scaled. So unprepared and unnerved were the castle garrison that they attempted no resistance, and the castle was taken within half an hour 'without a stroke'.

This has to be one of the most remarkable and easy captures of a major fortress in the history of warfare. Presumably the constable, Haldane, was inexperienced, perhaps even overawed by the distinguished officers who had come to speak to him. There had as yet been no open hostilities between king and Covenanters, and he seems not to have anticipated that this might be the occasion for that state of affairs to change. It may be supposed that the conference took place with Leslie and his party outside the spur, near to its entrance, and Haldane on the wall top looking down on them.

It is possible that the petard, an explosive device designed to blow open a gate, was affixed to the entrance of the spur without Haldane being aware that it was happening. One had been made available several years earlier in 1614 for the siege of Dunyvaig Castle in Islay (RPC 10: 726–7), but apart from that there was probably little awareness of this technology in Scotland and no occasion for its use. Leslie's assault on the castle may well have been opportunistic, but he had obviously prepared well. Having won entrance to the spur, his men were well briefed and equipped to take the rest of the castle. The inner gates that also had to be won were the inner barrier and the Portcullis Gate. Everything we know about Leslie's career (for which see Terry 1899) would indicate that he would only have embarked on such a bold plan if he were reasonably sure that he could force all three gates without serious opposition.

Leslie was one of the greatest generals ever produced by Scotland, undeservedly largely forgotten. His capture of the castle in 1639, so swiftly and with no loss of

life, ranks with other great moments in the fortress's history like its capture in 1314 and 1341.

SIEGE 19: 1640

The castle was restored to Charles I after the conclusion of the First Bishops' War, and the new commander, Patrick Ruthven, Lord Ettrick, was a very experienced soldier. With war again inevitable between the king and the Covenanters, Ettrick had managed to effect repairs and increase its garrison and food supplies to hold out for at least six months – or more optimistically a year – if necessary, despite a lack of cooperation from the Edinburgh townsfolk. There is a considerable amount of detail about the siege, primarily from two sources. Firstly, there are letters to and from Ettrick (Ruthven Correspondence) detailing preparations for the siege, and secondly, there is the biography of one of the key players amongst the besiegers, Major Hugh Somerville, written by his son, who actually, as a child, witnessed much about which he wrote (Somerville 1815, 2: 223–61). Somerville may be guilty of 'talking up' his father's role and importance and of a certain amount of exaggeration. There is also the difficulty that he has General Alexander Leslie directing the siege, and taking part in specific events relating to it, even though it is clear that Leslie was off with the Covenanting army on its expedition into England. Possibly he was active in setting plans in motion, but he was in the Borders by 1 July (Terry 1899: 99).

Nevertheless, Somerville's account is of great importance, and not only gives insights and opinions that are most probably derived from his father, but includes some fascinating human interest stories, of which we give two examples here. Firstly, when his father invited a number of fellow officers to dine at his quarters on the Castlehill, a piece of shot fired from the castle burst into the kitchen and passed between the legs of a serving wench. As it turned out, she was not badly hurt, though she also had to suffer ribald comments from the officers and their displeasure at having to serve themselves as a result of her injury (Somerville 1815, 2: 234–6). Secondly, after Ettrick had surrendered, he invited the officers from the besieging forces and some noblemen to dine with him in the castle. Somerville, actually on duty, placed himself at the other end of the table from him. When the toasts were being made, Ettrick took off his sword and propelled it down the table to Somerville with words to the effect that he recognised from his actions during the siege that he was most worthy of it (Somerville 1815, 2: 265).

King Charles was determined that Edinburgh Castle should be held for his cause. He had appointed and ennobled Ettrick, as the best man for the job, and went to some lengths to establish what he needed and to supply it for him, including men, money, munitions and food. He took a personal interest in Ettrick's efforts to completely dig a second well in the castle to improve his water supply and made suggestions about gathering rainwater. He required an inventory of the supplies, munitions and so on in the castle, and Ettrick's assessment of how long he could hold out. He also made it clear to Ettrick that he had authority to use his cannon against the town of Edinburgh should it deny him anything he needed (Ruthven Correspondence: 13–16, 47–52). The mood in Edinburgh in the autumn and winter of 1639 was very much against the king, and the provost and town council had to be bullied into facilitating the entrance into the castle of a force of 100 English

soldiers to reinforce the garrison and also supplies. Ettrick, however, could not get any substantial amount of timber for use in scaffolding and repairs to the spur or other outworks, the walling of which was falling down. He nevertheless managed to effect repairs before the start of the siege (Ruthven Correspondence: 30–1, 43, 47, 58).

Apart from substantial supplies of food and drink, a garrison of above 300 men with a few women and children, Ettrick had the following mounted guns:

‘brass’ guns

1 French cannon

4 demy cannon drakes

1 demy cannon ‘cut of 6 foot’

2 whole culverins

6 demy culverins

1 saker

2 minions

3 falcons

7 bastard pieces (betwixt minions and falcons)

3 falconets

Iron pieces

6 demy culverins

3 sakers

2 falcons

1 falconet

2 mortars

2 petards

This appears to be a formidable collection of guns, many of large size. We might reasonably suppose that the 20 larger guns, the various cannons and culverins, fired shot of 12½ pounds (5.68kg) weight and over, perhaps up to 33 pounds (15kg). The iron pieces would have been modern, muzzle-loading guns of cast iron. His master gunner, James Goudall, was joined by three other gunners sent by order of the king, and supplies of equipment included well over 3,000 pieces of shot of different sizes and ‘cases’ filled with cut iron and bullets for repelling assaults at close quarters. It is likely, however, that these quantities of powder and

shot meant that Ettrick always had to be aware of the need to conserve his resources (Ruthven Correspondence: 37, 40, 48–52).

The siege was precipitated in early June by Ettrick firing some of his cannon into the town. The inhabitants had been bringing dirt into some yards near the castle, and Ettrick saw this as the first stages in the erection of batteries to fire against him. Possibly they meant at this stage to do no more than provide protection for the meeting of Parliament which was then taking place. Whatever the case, there was no way back. The Estates summoned Ettrick to surrender on 4 June, and on his refusal passed sentence of forfeiture against him on 11 June (Ruthven Correspondence: 62; RPS: 1640/6/15 and 1640/6/63, accessed 17 February 2014).

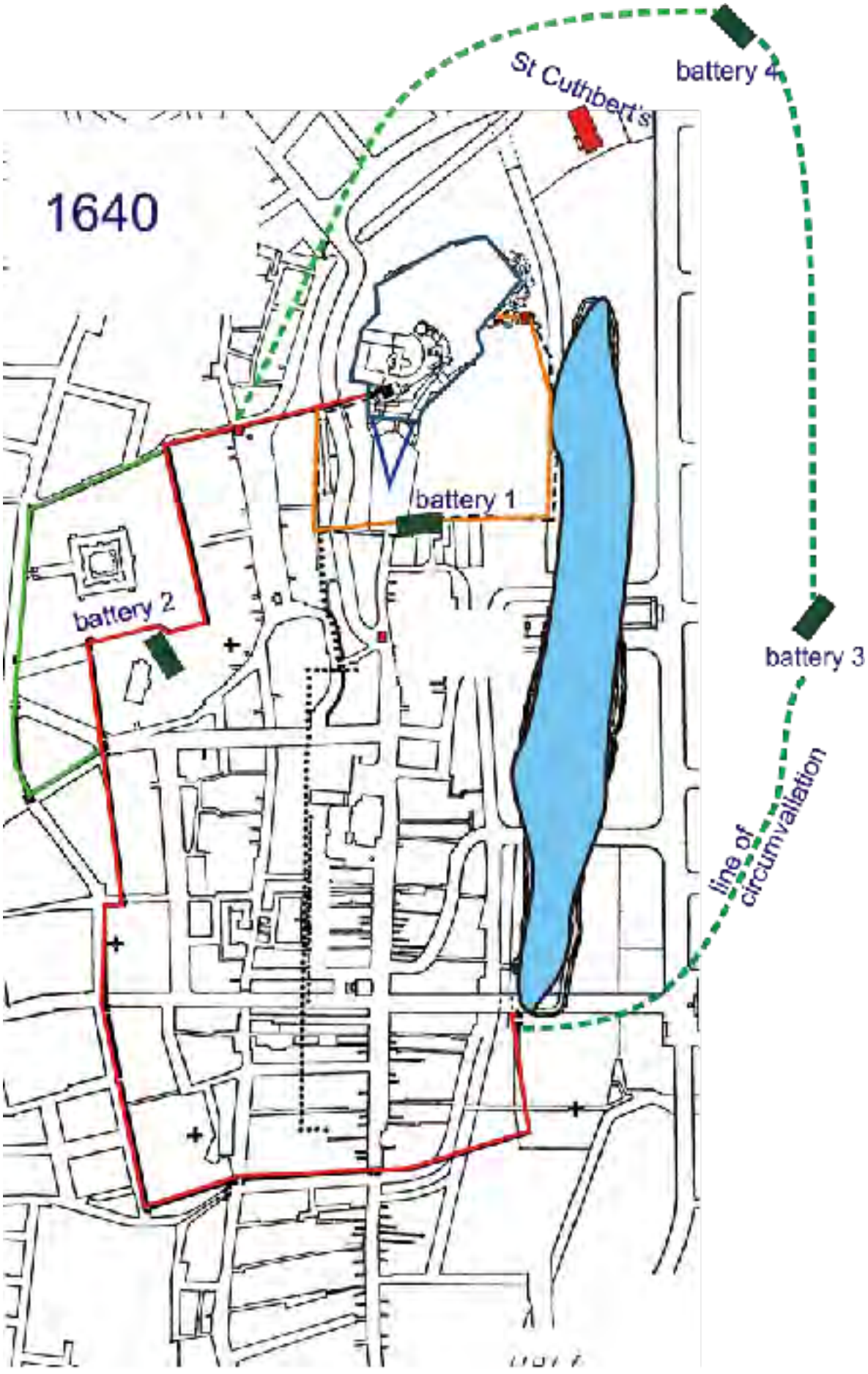
The Covenanters had two regiments of foot, one of which was commanded by Colonel Lindsay with, as major, Hugh Somerville, the other by Colonel Blair. They also had siege guns, 36-pounders and 24-pounders brought from Holland, according to Balfour (1824: 379) and set about establishing four batteries as follows:

1. On the Castlehill, beyond the last house (Robert Davidson's) on the north side of the street, only about 60 paces away from the spur. Because of the underlying rock it had to be constructed of 'horse litter', clad with dales (planks), with ports for the guns to fire through. Here, the besiegers had mounted eight demy cannon each firing shot of 40 to 36 pounds (c.18 to 16kg) weight.
2. At the north-west end of Greyfriar's Church, with six guns firing 24 pound (10.88kg) weight shot.
3. On the 'long gaitt' (the road leading north from the north side of the North Loch, the present-day Hanover Street). Here, there were seven (i.e. long-barrelled?) guns of no great size.
4. Near the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's), actually on the present-day Queensferry Street) – six guns of smaller size.

These all had to be put in place despite gunfire from the castle. Somerville (1815, 2: 201), no doubt reflecting the views of his father, believed that the second and third of these batteries were of little or no use, and criticised Leslie for not making more of an effort to breach the castle's western defences. Assuming that this plan really was down to Leslie, we might suppose that he had so positioned his batteries in order to deal with the guns opposing him from the castle. As for battering a hole in the castle defences, with limited resources in large guns, there was a choice either of going for the spur, already showing signs of weakness, or attempting a bombardment of the walling about the west sally-port – a strategy that failed for the besiegers in 1689 (see below).

Once the Covenanters had their guns in position, there was a lively exchange of fire with the castle as each side attempted to dismount their opponent's guns. There is no record of this duel producing notable results for either side. It was noted, however, that two of the iron guns in the castle were broken when they were inventoried at the end of the siege (Ruthven Correspondence: 67), and

Somerville (1815, 2: 234) gives a graphic account of a shot from the castle, at a later stage in the siege, entering through a gun port in the Castlehill Battery and killing two gunners as they were sighting along the barrel of their gun. The course of the siege quietened down considerably after the initial artillery duel, with neither side anxious to waste powder and shot.


1640
St Cuthbert's
battery 4
battery 1
battery 2
battery 3
line of circumvallation

By July, the Covenanters had also created a line of circumvallation around the castle to make their blockade effective (Balfour 1824: 379). Nevertheless, sorties by the garrison are said to have taken place, including one in which a party issued early in a morning to round up a group of escaped sheep that fled to the north side of the Castlehill. They were almost immediately challenged by a party of the besiegers, and in the fighting about 40 were left dead. The soldiers from the garrison did, however, manage to get nearly 30 sheep (Somerville 1815, 2: 230–2).

The main strategy of the besiegers for winning the castle was to explode a mine under the spur and create a breach through which they could send a sizeable force of men. If they managed to retain a complete element of surprise, they could hope to have their men upon the enemy forces in the spur while they were still in a state of confusion and before they had a chance to withdraw into the main part of the castle and close the inner barrier and Portcullis Gate. Major Somerville was chosen to lead the assault with a party of 250 drawn from the two regiments and 40 pioneers provided with shovels and mattocks. Immediately after the mine was exploded in the early morning, all the guns in the Castlehill Battery were to fire a salvo into the breach and Somerville with half the force were to storm their way into the spur. Once they were in it they were to be followed by the second detachment under a Captain Waddel. What they did not know is that Ruthven had already been warned by his guards of unusual noise coming from the enemy entrenchments and rightly judged it might relate to the springing of a mine followed by an assault. He had, therefore, removed his six cannon from the spur as well as his men, placing them within the inner barrier – just in time.

The opening phases of the assault went according to plan, though the breach opened up by the mine was not as generous as could be hoped for. Somerville and his men were supplied with 12 ladders and they had to be used. Once inside, they found that they were like ‘sillie myce in a trapt’, exposed to the gunfire of a garrison that had been waiting for them. Many were killed outright, Somerville himself wounded, and reduced to trying to seek shelter behind a thin stone wall that crossed the interior of the spur – visible on the plan of the spur dating to about 1650 (Ewart and Gallagher 2014: illus. 6.3). Meanwhile, Waddel was shot as he attempted to enter the breach at the head of his men and they all sought shelter beneath the exterior of the spur walls.

The whole enterprise had turned out to be a disaster, and Somerville and his men had to be called off. Somerville’s son claims that Ettrick offered to allow the major and his men to withdraw without being fired upon. Of the 125 plus officers and pioneers he led into the spur, he returned with only 33 (Somerville 1815, 2: 243–52).

After this, the castle was merely blockaded. Ettrick finally indicated his desire to surrender in September, after a siege of more than three months, pretending that it was not through lack of resources but the desire of his king that he should serve him elsewhere. The actual date of surrender was 15 September. Ettrick was allowed the full honours of war and on 18 September marched his remaining 137 men out with their arms and baggage, colours flying, to be shipped off for England in ships awaiting them at Leith. In fact, Ettrick’s men were badly afflicted with scurvy, himself included (his legs had swollen and he had lost many of his teeth), and other illness. Their supply of fresh water had given out as early as 6 June and he had lost about 200 killed (Balfour 1824: 403–4). He had used up more

than half his powder (Ruthven Correspondence: 67). It was estimated by Somerville (1815, 2: 260) that more than 1,000 men, women and children, had been killed by fire from the castle – an exaggeration? – and more than 1,000 cannon shot fired by the besiegers.

A soldier of Ettrick's standing and experience with a large professional garrison in Edinburgh Castle was a definite threat to the Covenanting movement. The capture of the castle was of more than symbolic value to them. Meanwhile, Charles I had nothing to celebrate in his dealings with the Scots who, in August, under the command of Alexander Leslie, had won a victory with their army at Newburn and captured Newcastle upon Tyne. Ettrick's defence of the castle for so long could at least be seen as an achievement of sorts. He remained in high favour, being created Earl of Forth in 1642 (Reid 2004).

SIEGE 20: 1650

'When a Sheep is General of An Army of Lions they may be beat' – a note written later by Thomas Binning, the castle's master gunner, referring to Walter Dundas, the keeper of the castle (Binning 1677: 118).

Late in the year, after his victory at Dunbar on 3 September, Oliver Cromwell undertook the siege of Edinburgh Castle, which surrendered after three months, although still unbreached and well supplied. Useful information on the siege comes from Nicoll's Diary, Cromwell's Letters and a manual on gunnery written by the castle's master gunner, Thomas Binning (1677). There is a useful interpretation of all this by Corser (1949).

Cromwell was in control of the town of Edinburgh. The castle was under the command of Colonel Walter Dundas, younger, of that ilk, who may have had the post primarily because he was Alexander Leslie's son-in-law. It was reported to Cromwell that the castle was well provisioned, for at least 15 months (Cromwell's Letters 1: 167). The resources in men and guns that Cromwell was prepared to apply to taking the castle were clearly limited. He considered the possibility of bombarding it from the Calton Hill, but opted for mining his way in, using Scottish colliers and miners from Derbyshire. They had made a start by the end of September, apparently approaching from the present-day Johnstone Terrace to the south (Cromwell's Letters 1: 168, 184; Nicoll's Diary: 34; Corser 1949: 44).

It would have been difficult for artillery in the castle to fire at this mining operation, no doubt one of the main reasons why this location had been selected. It was notoriously difficult for gunners at that time to get their guns to fire downhill. The master gunner, however, describes how during the siege he cut out the 'breast-bands' of gun carriages and elevated the breeches of his guns to achieve such a result. He claims to have dug traverses to counter the mining activity. A volley fired by six cannon together caused part of the mine to collapse, and a powder barrel filled with noxious and combustible materials was dropped into it to clear out the enemy. The men from the castle were later able to recover the miners' tools (Binning 1677: introduction (unpaginated), and 117–18).

Meanwhile, Cromwell had established a fort or gun battery on the north side of the Castlehill, to the west of the Castlehill Kirk (in the process of being built but never completed – see Stevenson 1973: map 4), apparently further back from the spur than the battery erected for the siege ten years earlier, about the present-day Ramsay Gardens. It had large siege guns and mortars, which were fully operational by 12 December and duly put into action to try and dismount the castle guns. Binning (1677: 119) informs us that it took some time for the besiegers to get their range, many of their shot flying harmlessly over the top of the castle. Cromwell now thought it worthwhile to summon the castle to surrender (Cromwell's Letters 1: 184).

Dundas had not responded to this threat. Remarkably, he had forbidden his guns to be fired, giving to his master gunner as his reason for this that he had already shed too much blood. The latter insisted on having this instruction given to him in front of all his men so he could be held blameless for the consequences (Binning 1677: 117–18). Dundas's qualms of conscious must have related to the prospect of firing into the town, especially with the likelihood of hitting one of the burgh churches. Despite having just had his force increased by a German mercenary, Captain Augustine, with 36 men, who managed to get through the English lines on 14 December, Dundas negotiated a surrender. The terms of his capitulation were agreed by night on 19 December. On Christmas Eve he walked away from a castle that had suffered little damage and that was still estimated to have provisions for two or three months and water in abundance (Corser 1949: 49–51).

According to The Faithfull Scout no. 25, 27 December 1650–3 January 1651, page 163:

> the castle had in it when it surrendered 3 iron guns beside 'the great Mag', 5 cannons of 7.9.24 Livers, a culvering, a demiculvering, 2 minions, 2 falcons 3 Livers Brasse, 28 shott brasse Monkeys alias Dogs, 10 iron Munkeys, 2 Pittars. In all 67. Ten Thousand arms with other provisions and victuals a great quantity.

Page five lists five French cannons or cannon of seven, nine Dutch cannon, two culverin, two demi-culverins, two minions, two falcons, 28 brass drakes called monkeys, two petards, about 700 or 800 arms, near 80 barrels of powder, cannon shot great store.

Dundas has been regarded as a villain, a traitor, a coward even, for giving up his charge so lightly. The problem for any present-day historian examining this event and others like it with inadequate knowledge is why was his behaviour and performance regarded as so much worse than, for instance, Ettrick's in 1640? From the available documentation we cannot say that Edinburgh Castle was more able to resist its besiegers for any length of time on 19 December 1650 than on 15 September 1640. It does, however, seem clear that Dundas was less reckless than Ettrick in preserving the lives of his fellows and the townsfolk of Edinburgh. Corser (1949) makes an interesting case that Dundas was easily swayed in deciding to give up through clandestine contact with a more senior Scottish officer, Colonel Archibald Strachan, who had joined with Cromwell.

SIEGE 21: 1689

In 1688, when William of Orange arrived in England to dislodge his uncle and father-in-law, King James II/VII as king of England, Edinburgh Castle was commanded by George Gordon, 1st Duke of Gordon. For many months it was not at all clear how this revolution would affect Scotland. As in England, there was considerable opposition to King James's desire to introduce toleration for Catholics, but the struggle was about much more, and did not result in clear-cut battle lines pitching Protestants against Catholics. Gordon (himself a Catholic, as was only about one in ten of those in the castle before the siege; Siege: 19–20) received no instructions from King James either before or after his flight abroad in December 1688, and after May 1689, when William had accepted the offer of the Crown of Scotland from the Convention of Estates sitting in Edinburgh, he had to make his own decisions as to what was the most honourable course of action. It is possible that he was lukewarm in support of the ousted monarch, and it is said he only undertook to hold the castle until the Convention of Estates decided for James or William as King of Scots (Siege: 99, 114–15).

The main sources of information on this siege are two anonymous accounts, one written by a member of the garrison (cited here as Siege), another not dissimilar account published in French (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg), and reports in contemporary newsletters (extracted by Terry 1905). There is also much useful material in the records of the Privy Council of Scotland (RPC), especially information on the location of the siege batteries and damage inflicted by the castle guns, contained in claims for compensation by those who had been affected. More can be learnt from the proceedings of the Estates of Scotland (Proceedings of the Estates – much of the more useful material having been extracted for publication in Siege).

The castle had a garrison that consisted of up to 200 officers and men, divided into three squadrons. It was also the base for the gunners and others, 25 in all, who looked after the royal artillery (NRS E28/286/1), although it was noted in September 1688, when there was a proposal to restore their lodgings, that none of them were actually resident in the castle (RPC 3rd ser. 13: l). There were, besides, wives and children, and also a few prisoners. Many of the garrison, however, were unhappy at the prospect of defending the castle for the exiled King James against King William, and the Duke of Gordon took the pragmatic step of allowing all that would not support him unreservedly to leave – seven officers and 41 men did so (RPC 3rd ser. 13: lvi). That left him at the start of the siege proper with only six officers and about 120 sentinels (privates), and, crucially, no cannoneers, surgeon or other specialists.

Most of the gunners had headed south to England with the Scottish standing forces in October 1688, taking guns, powder and other equipment with them. To a limited extent the deficiency in men was made good by the arrival in the castle of several volunteers. Particularly welcome amongst them was Robert Dunbar, a ship captain who was an expert on artillery. At first the Williamite forces did not maintain a tight blockade on the castle and it was possible for Gordon to maintain lines of communication with supporters in the town and elsewhere, but he also suffered from further defections and sickness amongst his men. By the time the

castle capitulated there may have been considerably fewer men fit for duty (Siege: 29, 35–6, 61–2, 70; Terry 1905: 169; Proceedings of the Estates 1: 22).

During the siege, the duke deployed his men in two squadrons, one commanded by the ensign, Mr Winchester, the other nominally by himself but ordinarily under a gentleman volunteer, Francis Gardin of Midstrath. The squadrons took it in turn to be on duty each night. During the day, a total of eight sentinels, and at night 17, did guard duty at the high guard house (formerly positioned between the present Scottish National War Memorial and St Margaret's Chapel), the low guard (later called the port guard, inside the outer or principle entrance) and the sally-port. By 18 May the guard was concentrated in the low guard and at the sally-port. From the beginning of June, as a result of more desertions and the activities of the besiegers, the main guard was kept at the sally-port and six sentinels under a gentleman were posted a little eastward. Split between the low guard, the Half Moon Battery and Crichton's Yard (location not known, but possibly the later coal yard), there was a force consisting of two gentlemen, a sergeant, a corporal, a gunner and nine soldiers; and there were a further five sentinels commanded by a gentleman at the Portcullis Gate. It is also evident that the garrison could still access the well-house tower at this stage in the siege and might place men there to help protect members of the garrison, coming and going, to maintain contact with the outside world (Siege: 36, 53, 65).

The duke only had limited supplies in the castle of gunpowder for his guns, which are listed as:

'brass' guns

one 42 pounder

one 36 pounder

four 24 pounders

one 18 pounder

two 12 pounders

iron guns

several 24, 16 and 12 pounders, not worth much

other pieces

some small field pieces and a mortar firing 14 inch (356mm) shells.

(Siege: 52; Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 11–12)

The brass 42-pounder was probably the gun nicknamed the 'Plus Vestra' (? from an inscription on it) and the four brass 24-pounders seem to have been called the Four Sisters (NRS E28/330/14). Perhaps they were amongst the cannon that John Slezer, Master General of the Artillery, got in Holland in 1683, at least one by Johan Onderogge of Rotterdam (NRS E28/286/3). The iron guns 'not worth much' would have included at least some of the '97 pair of cannon from Burntisland Castle', transferred to Edinburgh Castle in 1685 (NRS E28/330/4) – presumably small 'leather cannon' that fired stone or grape-shot (see Stevenson and Caldwell 1977).

His supplies of food and drink were also limited. The latter were unexpectedly augmented by an unseasonal heavy fall of snow on the night of 19/20 May (Siege: 54–5, 70, 79).

One of the most famous events of the time, now commemorated by a plaque on a path below the west sally-port, was a meeting there between the duke and Viscount Dundee, commander for King James of the military forces in Scotland, on 18 March 1689. Dundee had decided to flee from what he regarded as the futility of taking part in the Convention of Estates. Through his telescope, the duke had spied Dundee with his party of horsemen riding round the north of the castle, and after an exchange over the wall came out through the sally-port to speak directly with him. That was the last communication between the two. The duke had been on the verge of capitulating the previous week and had only held off through the intervention of Dundee and another leading supporter of King James, the Earl of Balcarres (Terry 1905: 164). No doubt Dundee was determined at this interview to ensure he did not waiver again (Siege: 38, 70, 100–1, 104). At that time, Edinburgh Castle was the only strongpoint or garrison of any significance in Britain still holding out for King James.

The Estates placed guards around the castle on 10 March to stop supplies getting in and to hinder communications with the outside world (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 9). The siege officially commenced 18 March with the order by the Convention of Estates that the castle should be blockaded. At first, the men responsible for carrying this out were the Covenanters from the south and west, perhaps the largest and politically most significant group to swamp Edinburgh while the Convention was sitting. They were then of unknown worth and politically embarrassing to many of the Williamites in the Convention. On 30 May, they were mustered as a regiment, soon to be known as the Cameronians, and in August, in hard fighting at Dunkeld, defeated the Jacobite forces.

With the arrival by sea at Leith of the Dutch Brigade under General Hugh Mackay of Scourie, some of his men under Brigadier Balfour, and then General Sir John Lanier, experienced professionals, mostly of Scottish extraction, took over the prosecution of the siege on 25 March. Mackay came with some cannon and ammunition and had sent from England at least two mortars that fired shells weighing more than 100 hundredweight (50.8kg) and other cannons (Siege: 45, 52–3; Terry 1905: 167; Mackay 1842: 22). Other guns and a mortar were got from Stirling Castle (RPC 3rd ser. 15: 265).

The Covenanters' blockade of the castle involved the establishment of posts at the Weigh House at the head of the Castlehill, at the West Port and at St Cuthbert's Church. They also started digging a small entrenchment in Widow Livingston's yard below the castle to the west, and then another a bit further south, intending to create an entrenchment stretching from the West Port to St Cuthbert's Church. These obviously threatened the west sally-port of the castle and the castle garrison erected an earthwork outside it for protection from small arms fire (Siege: 42–5). A contemporary report, however, noted that the Covenanters showed so little skill in the way they laid out their work that it was only thanks to the duke's desire to avoid unnecessary bloodshed that most of them were not killed (Terry 1905: 166). A sortie was made from the castle against these works and bundles of

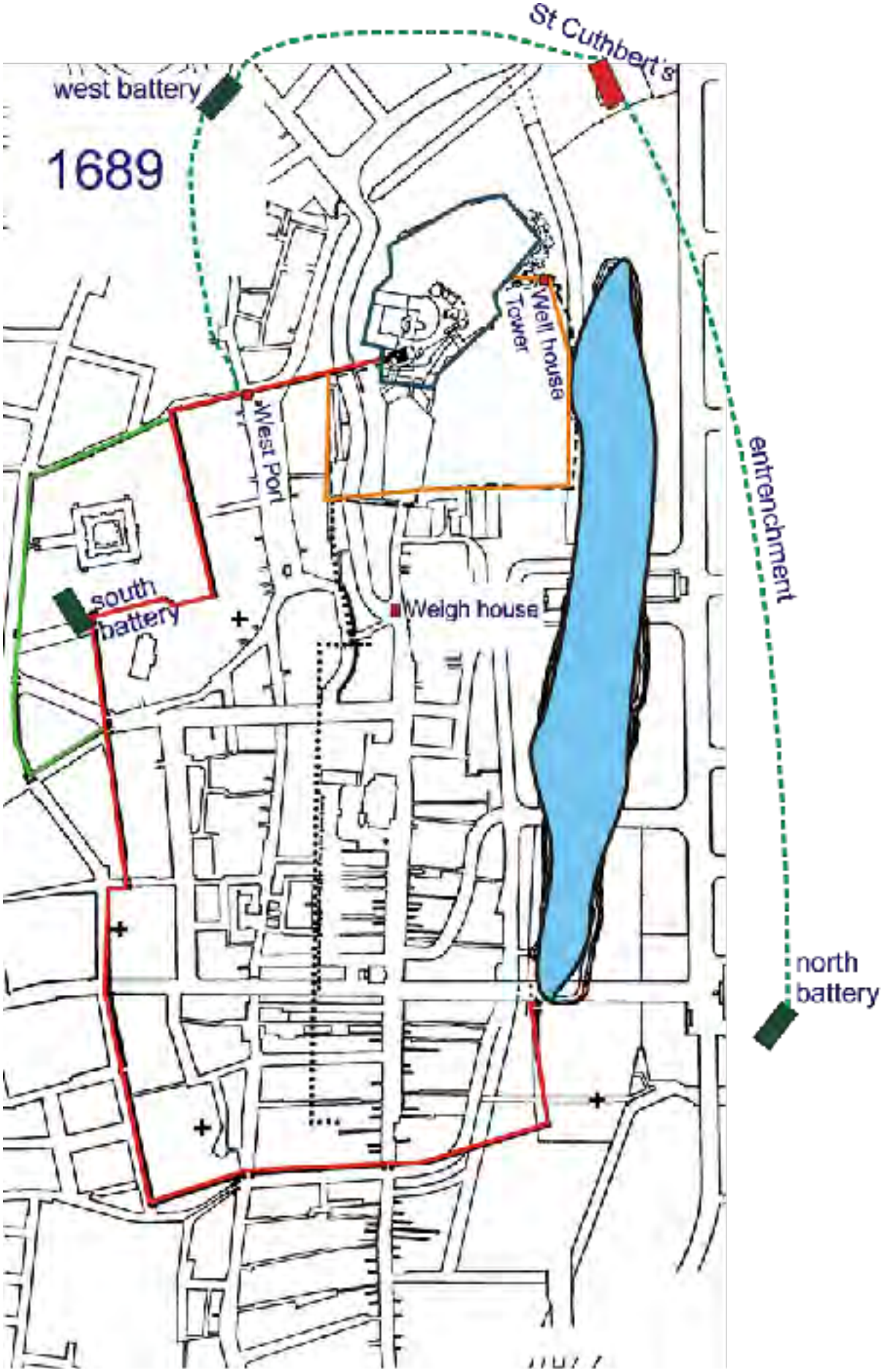
straw, presumably being used as a temporary defence, were taken back into the castle (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 11).

When Balfour's men took over the siege work on 25 March, they continued digging earthworks to the west of the castle (the west battery), which were battered by the castle's guns on 30 March while the besiegers fired mortar shells, with little effect. Balfour had some of his men shelter in the old tower of Coates (a predecessor of Easter Coates House, Palmerston Place), which the castle guns then duly hit, knocking some of it down (Siege: 46).

More information on these siege works to the west of the castle can be got from claims for compensation by residents after the siege was over. There were three trenches, probably part of a line of circumvallation round the castle. Helen Wilson, the widow of William Livingston, claimed in respect of the use of her house, below the west side of the castle, by a detachment of guards. Guards were also placed in the house of John Barclay, a little beyond the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's) and William Byres at the church itself (RPC 3rd ser. 14: 342–7).

The west battery appears to have been an earthwork of some size, judging by the claims for compensation in respect of it. It was at Lauriston – 'behind Heriot's work' (viz George Heriot's School) according to a newsletter report (Terry 1905: 166) – outside the West Port. This battery fired mortars, and was manned by a Captain Brown, who requisitioned the houses of Alex Tweedie and William Neilson for his men. The fire from the castle guns against this battery affected a number of properties in the area, as far as Tollcross (RPC 3rd ser. 14: 339–41, 343–4, 557–60). It is probable that this was where the main damage was inflicted by the castle guns, for two main reasons. Firstly, since it was an open area of gardens and yards the duke probably felt it was fair game to strike at it, unlike the built-up area of the town itself. Secondly, the battery was obviously a major threat and could readily be targeted from guns positioned on the butts battery.

Damage was done to the castle defences by the guns positioned in the west battery in the early days of the siege, creating a breach near the sally-port, although the steepness of the hill made an assault seem impractical. Nevertheless, it was reported that one was being prepared for sometime about the second week in April and the entrenchments were heightened and strengthened. Nothing came of all this, and an attempt by the besiegers to create a lodgement on the Castlehill near the Blew Stone (a large boulder on the Castlehill?), using wool packs for shelter, was a failure. The work was too exposed to fire from the castle's guns (Terry 1905: 166–7).


St Cuthbert's
west battery
1689
Well house
Tower
West Port
entrenchment
south battery
Weigh house
north battery

By 16 April, the besiegers had finished digging another battery to the south of the castle (the south battery) at an old ruined tower called ‘Collops’ (? the corner tower of the Flodden Wall to the south-west of Greyfriar’s Church) in which they mounted two 18-pounder guns. They were dismounted after a few hours bombardment from the castle. Meanwhile, the duke had part of the bridge (presumably across the dry ditch at the upper end of the esplanade) at the castle entrance removed. He also had the west sally-port shut and filled up with earth (Siege: 47–50).

On 29 April it was noted that the besiegers had drained the North Loch, thereby hoping to divert the spring water that replenished the castle wells; and on 9 May the castle fired some of its great guns at a house beside one of the besiegers’ batteries, and in the days that followed they beat down the earth parapets of some of the siege works. The besiegers began digging another battery (the north battery) at Moutrie’s Hill (St James Square/Centre) to the north-east (Siege: 51–2).

By Sunday 19 May, Balfour had all his guns in place and began bombarding the castle at 10 o’clock that night. The greatest danger from the point of view of the castle garrison was two large mortars positioned in the south battery. They were bedded very low and did not require embrasures so that the castle guns had failed to hit them. The garrison now took up residence in the castle vaults for safety. A sentinel was positioned on Hawk Hill in the castle to give warning of incoming mortar shells. The duke gave orders for the shards of the shells to be gathered up to be re-used as grape-shot in the event of an assault on the castle (Siege: 53–6). As many as 40 mortar shells were being fired in a night (Siege du Chateau d’Edimbourg: 13).

The duke had also ordered the garrison not to fire into the town (with their small arms) and specifically not at anyone who was not directly involved in the blockade of the castle. His instructions had not strictly been adhered to, and seven townsfolk, including a woman, had been killed by a mortar shell. So when the besieging forces put up an earthwork at the head of the Castlehill near the Weigh House on the night of 22 May, they were able to pretend that it was done by the townspeople to protect themselves. After some threats from the duke to fire at it (with his large guns) it was taken down the next day (Siege: 56–7; Terry 1905: 168).

From 24 May, the besiegers fired their mortars during the day, which was more dangerous for the garrison since the daylight made it harder to see incoming shells in time. More and more damage was being done to the castle, though there was no loss of life. From early on Sunday 26 May, the three cannon, including two 24-pounders, in the newly completed north battery, kept up a barrage against the castle, joined by other cannon in the south battery on 27 May (Siege: 58–9).

During the night of 31 May/1 June, the guard posted in the low guard could hear digging nearby that, it was soon clear, was to do with the erection of another battery by the besiegers on the south side of Castlehill, only a short distance from the Half Moon Battery. This must have been positioned at the east end of the present-day Esplanade, adjacent to Cannon Ball House. A party of 14 detailed to disrupt this work had to be called off by the duke since there was no agreement as to whom should be included in it (Siege: 61).

In the early hours of 1 June, there was a break out from the castle by 15 men and two women, most of whom were captured. They were able to reveal that the garrison were running short of powder, and while there was enough provisions for one or two months they were likely to run out of drink in three weeks' time. They painted a picture of a force suffering from constant bombardment and low morale, and suggested the possibility of a mutiny (Terry 1905: 169).

Late on the evening of Sunday of 2 June, those on watch in the castle sounded the alarm in the belief that the besiegers were mustering an assault force in the corn fields to the north of the castle (present-day Princes Street). All in the castle turned out to man the walls and guard the sally-port, including women, but it was soon evident that they had over-reacted. The next morning there were signs of digging there and many scattered faggots. On 3 June, the castle guns dismounted the two cannon in the besiegers' south battery and more were dismounted the following day, including one in the north battery. On 5 June, the castle guns dislodged more of the besiegers who were trying to create a more protected position for themselves at the back of the West Church (St Cuthbert's) (Siege: 66).

By 9 June, with communications with the outside world finally cut off, a much-diminished garrison, many of them sick from drinking dirty water, and supplies of food, drink and ammunition almost spent, it seemed to the duke that the time had come to consider capitulation. Mindful of the fate of his predecessor, Kirkcaldy of Grange, he even considered a break out and escape to the north of Scotland (Proceedings of the Estates 1: 160–1).

On 12 June, the duke entered into negotiations to surrender. These broke down when a man made a run for the castle and was taken in by the garrison. The besiegers claimed he should be handed back to them since it happened in time of truce, but the duke refused to surrender someone who had sought his protection (Terry 1905: 171). That evening, the besiegers attempted, using packs of wool rolled before them as protection, to lodge themselves between the town and castle (on the site of the Esplanade) despite vigorous firing from the castle. They managed to maintain their position the next day, apparently supported by gunfire from two nearby lodgings (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 15).

The duke reopened negotiations to capitulate on 13 June. Terms were finally agreed, the castle handed over and the Jacobite garrison allowed to depart on 14 June (Siege: 70–81). Ironically, King William's Secretary of State for Scotland, Lord Melville, had written to Balfour on 13 June of the king's wish that he should not fire any more mortar shells at the castle as they had clearly had little effect and it would be difficult to supply him with more. He was to await the return of General Mackay for a decision on what more to do in this respect (Melville Papers: 57).

By the time of the surrender, the fabric of the castle had suffered quite badly. It is said that several mortar shells had crashed through all the storeys of the buildings, from top to bottom, and there was scarce a room that was undamaged (Terry 1905: 169).

It is apparent from contemporary documentation that both sides were, for much of the time, tentative in the prosecution of this siege, with opposing soldiers and commanders unsure of their position in the changing politics of the time and sometimes doubtful of the allegiances of their comrades. Both sides also had

issues with supplies. Although the holding of Edinburgh Castle seemed at first to have a fair amount of symbolic value for the Jacobite cause, it seems to have done little to foster support for King James, and, as events turned out, was of no strategic significance.

The Duke of Gordon has never received much credit for his role in the events of 1689 from one side or the other, either then or later (Horn 2004). He had served in the French army, and from his actions during the siege seems to have had a sufficient amount of military experience and knowledge to prosecute the defence of the castle. It is possible, however, that he lacked the necessary ruthlessness to make a success of the job, and there are reports (some already mentioned) of his men not always carrying out his orders, including Francis Gardin leading out a party of six men on the night of 10 June to attempt to clear the enemy from the Castlehill (Siege: 69). He is not given credit for the fact that he refused to subject the town of Edinburgh to bombardment, even though that would probably at times have greatly strengthened his position.

Perhaps the criticism by contemporaries that he did not take sufficient steps to make sure the castle was adequately supplied in advance is unfair. Treasury accounts reproduced along with the printed records of the Scottish Privy Council demonstrate that during 1688 considerable supplies were taken into the castle and the wells were cleaned out (RPC 3rd ser. 13: xliv, l, li). The duke was still attempting to get supplies into the castle on 16 March 1689, but they were impounded (Terry 1905: 165). At about the same time he was not prepared to run the risk of getting a party of his own men from the north into the castle to supplement his forces for fear of causing rioting in the town (Siege: 21).

A crucial point to understand, however, in reviewing the duke's effectiveness is that he was not in charge of the military stores and artillery in the castle, and that those who were – the master of the artillery of Scotland and his officers – had already abandoned their charge prior to the commencement of the siege. He is said to have raised this difficulty of management responsibility with his superiors on more than one occasion without getting any resolution. On 10 March, when it was clear that a siege was inevitable, the duke broke down the doors to the castle's magazines so he could find out for himself the state of supplies. He was clearly disappointed only to find 160 barrels of powder, badly stored and not all full (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 9).

Despite the manifest difficulties of his position, the duke still managed to hold out in the castle for a remarkable period of time, and although he lacked professional gunners still managed to keep the enemy from mounting an assault. One of the contemporary accounts points out that not only did he lack an adequate number of men to make sorties, but he was reluctant to do so because he could not trust many of the men not too desert once they were outside the castle walls (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 12). Perhaps his skill and resolution need to be reassessed more favourably.

The French account of the siege gives a list of reasons why the duke was obliged to capitulate, basically because:

- There was no hope of help or rescue

- His soldiers were deserting
- Almost half of his men were ill
- The water was unfit for drinking
- He only had eight days' food remaining (apart from basic supplies)
- Almost all his munitions had been used up. (Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg: 17–18)

It is generally agreed that the initial work against the castle by the Covenanters lacked competence, but what of the efforts of the professional forces of General Mackay? From a position in early April where it was reported that they were near to launching an assault on the castle, there was then a period of several months in which it appears they were making little or no progress apart from wrecking the internal structures of the castle with their mortar shells. When the castle surrendered on 13 June, they were still well away from any hope of launching a successful attack and were clearly lacking the resources to maintain an effective bombardment. The surrender of the castle was more to do with the lack of supplies remaining to the garrison and the diminishing hope they retained of being relieved, rather than any present expectation that they would be overwhelmed. Surely, underlying King William's instructions passed on to Brigadier Balfour on 13 June is a lack of confidence that he was managing the siege effectively.

SIEGE 22: 1715

Even before the Earl of Mar raised his banner at Braemar on 6 September 1715, thus signalling the start of the Jacobite uprising in Scotland, there had been discussions on the taking of Edinburgh Castle. Mar encouraged the enterprise, which was taken in hand by Lord Drummond (later Earl, and Duke in the Jacobite Peerage, of Perth). He used 'a little broken merchant', Charles Forbes, to manage affairs for him (Sinclair 1858: 29). The plan involved bribing some of the men in the castle garrison, and using a force partially drawn from apprentices and servants in the town. This was a mistake, since it proved impossible to keep the plans a secret and they came to the attention of the provost of Edinburgh and the lord justice clerk, Sir Adam Cockburn of Ormiston. There are three main accounts of what happened, all in remarkable agreement. One is contained in a letter of the provost reporting on the activities of the Edinburgh town guard (Warrender Letters: no. 99). The other two are in histories of the uprising by Peter Rae (1718: 198–200) and the master of Sinclair (1858: 29–31).

Amongst the conspirators was one Thomas Arthur, formerly an officer in the castle, and through him a serving sergeant, William Ainslie, and two privates, James Thomson and John Holland, who were prepared to turn traitor. The time chosen for the enterprise was late on the evening of 8 August when Ainslie would be on duty in the western defences and could aid the assailants over the walls, helping them secure the grappling irons on their rope ladders. Their force consisted of about 80 to 90 men, some of them from the town, 40 of them

Highlanders supplied by Lord Drummond. He had arranged for them to go to Edinburgh in small groups by different routes to avoid suspicion. They were under the command of Drummond of Bouhadie.

The rendezvous was set for the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's) at 9pm, but there was then a delay waiting for all the ladders to arrive. They were being made by a workman over in the Calton and, it was alleged, Charles Forbes was too interested in drinking to hurry things along.

The assailants were aware that they had to act before the changing of the guard at midnight and decided to carry on without Forbes and the remaining ladders, but when they got beneath the castle wall, and made contact with Ainslie inside, discovered that their ladders were too short by more than a fathom (6ft = 1.83m). There was yet further delay.

Meanwhile, details of the plan had leaked to the lord justice clerk who sent an express letter to the deputy governor of the castle, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart. It arrived about 11 o'clock at night, while the attempt on his defences was actually being made, but he merely gave orders for the doubling of the guards before going off to bed – for which he was later deprived of his post. Fortunately, from the Government's point of view, the provost of Edinburgh had also been warned. The city guard was doubled and detachments, the lead one under Major James Aikman, marched to the west sally-port between 11 o'clock and midnight, catching the assailants red-handed. They offered no resistance, dropping their weapons and fleeing. Four of them were captured.

Sergeant Ainslie was later hung on a gallows over the castle wall.

This attack on the castle might well have been successful if the assailants had been better led, but it is doubtful how much difference the holding of Edinburgh Castle would have made to the Jacobite cause. Their forces made no serious effort to take Edinburgh town and were easily chased away from Leith. Although the Battle of Sheriffmuir on 12 November that year was not reckoned a defeat for the Jacobite army, the uprising lost all impetus in its aftermath.

1727
In an experiment to test the effectiveness of the western defences of the castle, General George Wade, commander of the forces in North Britain, tasked four soldiers with muskets to scale the wall from the road below, which they did in under five minutes (Ewart and Gallagher 2014: 124).

SIEGE 23: 1745

Prince Charles Edward Stewart took the town of Edinburgh with his Highland army, almost unopposed, on 17 September and remained in control until he marched off for England on 1 November. The mixed views of the inhabitants, their preparations to resist the Jacobites and the way they were let down by the Government forces that should have made more effort to protect Scotland's capital city, are all detailed in contemporary documents, especially eye-witness accounts (Home 1822; Woodhouselee MS).

Edinburgh Castle was not seriously threatened, being well supplied and the Jacobites lacking time and siege guns. The deputy governor of the castle (the post of governor was an honorary one) was George Preston, a veteran Scotsman then 86 years old. He was joined in the castle by the 85-year-old General Joshua Guest, former commander-in-chief in Scotland, a position that was briefly thrust upon him again in the aftermath of the defeat of the current post-holder, Sir John Cope, at the Battle of Prestonpans on 21 September (Blaikie 1910: 12n). Preston fired three cannon at the Jacobite army as it approached Edinburgh on 16 September from the south, and on the night of 18 September fired more shot into the army's camp, positioned to the east of the town beneath Salisbury Craigs (Woodhouselee MS: 24, 32). The location was presumably chosen as much to provide shelter from such fire as to be near the prince in Holyrood Palace. Even the camp for the army at Duddingston in the aftermath of its victory at Prestonpans was not totally out of reach of gunfire from the castle (Woodhouselee MS: 39).

At first, the Jacobites made no attempt to restrict communications between the town and castle, and, indeed, it is said that General Guest was of old a friend of the prince's secretary, John Murray of Broughton, who was happy to allow milk and butter to be taken into the castle specifically for Guest's use. When, however, on 29 September, it was discovered that a letter had been hidden in the butter the Jacobites stopped free access. Guards drawn from the regiment of Cameron of Lochiel had been posted in the Grassmarket, in the Weigh House at the head of the Lawnmarket and other old buildings nearer the castle from 22 September, and there was another detachment lodged in Livingston's Yards to the south-west where it could watch out for comings and goings via the west sally-port (Home 1822: 90; Woodhouselee MS: 51; Blaikie 1910: 40, 46–7).

On the evening of the 29th, General Guest, disdaining to deal directly with the Jacobite regime, sent a letter to the provost of Edinburgh threatening that unless communications with the castle were restored the castle's guns would be used to dislodge the Highland guards and consequently there would be much damage caused to the town itself. As was no doubt intended, the provost consulted with the prince and negotiations were commenced that resulted in a suspension of the threatened action while Guest got advice from his superiors in London. On 1 October, however, some people carrying food to the castle were shot upon by the Jacobites, and in retaliation the next day the castle fired cannon and firearms at the houses sheltering the Highland guards. The house of Allan Ramsay, the poet, of known Jacobite sympathies, was also demolished with some eight to ten cannon shot. Another shot hit the reservoir (Wilson 1891, 1: 186). Possibly the cannon ball lodged in the wall of 'Cannon-ball House' on the Castlehill was shot at this time (despite the scepticism of RCAMS 1951: 71). All this resulted in an increase of the blockade and a proclamation by the prince forbidding all contact with the castle on pain of death (Home 1822: 90–1; Woodhouselee MS: 51–4).

The stand-off now escalated further. On 3 October, the house at Livingston's Yards occupied by one of the detachments of guards was demolished by gunfire from the castle. This detachment was led by one Robert Taylor, an Edinburgh shoemaker. When it was known that neither he nor his men were greatly feared, real Highlanders, a sortie was made against them from the castle, some of them being killed and Taylor taken prisoner (Blaikie 1910: 40).

The castle's guns were fired again all day on 4 October. When it grew dark, the garrison sallied out and set fire to some of the houses the guard had been sheltering in on Castlehill, including, apparently, the house of Allan Ramsay, and dug a trench between the castle and the upper end of the town where they positioned field-pieces that they then used to fire canister shot down the High Street. The next day, the cannonade again continued, killing and wounding several of the Jacobites and townsfolk, until in the evening the prince published a new proclamation restoring communications between the town and castle. It was claimed that Guest intended by this bombardment, amounting to more than 60 cannon shot a day, not to mention musket fire, that the Jacobites should think that the castle was in desperate need of supplies and might be tempted to stay and try and force its surrender rather than move on to England (Home 1822: 91–2; Woodhouselee MS: 56–9).

From 6 October to the departure of the Jacobites on 1 November, relative calm returned to town and castle.

A curious event that took place in the background of the 1745 siege was the release of money from the castle to fund the Jacobites' expedition into England. The story is told in the diary of John Campbell, cashier of the Royal Bank of Scotland (Gibson 1995). The royal bank had been founded in 1727 as competition to the Bank of Scotland, which was perceived to have Jacobite sympathies. With the approach of the Jacobite Army to Edinburgh in September 1745, the royal bank took steps to have its assets, including bank notes and gold coins, lodged in Edinburgh Castle. It was not, however, quick enough or very efficient in having its own bank notes removed from circulation. When Prince Charles Edward put pressure on the directors and staff of the royal bank to honour its notes with gold, they put up remarkably little resistance. On 3 October, the royal bank's cashier, John Campbell, negotiated permission from both sides to enter the castle with some colleagues to sort out some bank business. They removed gold coins for the Jacobite war effort, eventually paying up the large sum of £6,676 (Gibson 1995: 18–19). Ironically, the money and assets of the alleged Jacobite Bank of Scotland remained safe in the castle.

Abbreviations

HMSO Her Majesty's Stationery Office

NLS National Library of Scotland

NRS National Records of Scotland

RCAHMS Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland

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