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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CADZOW CASTLE



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CADZOW CASTLE

SYNOPSIS

Cadzow Castle is located on a promontory overlooking the deeply wooded gorge of the Avon Water from its southern bank. On the opposite bank stands Châtelhéault (see below). The town of Hamilton lies one mile to the north.

The property comprises the remains of a late medieval castle built by the Hamiltons, surviving as substantial stone structures, as earthworks and as buried archaeology. The only contemporary mention of the castle is in 1572. The enigmatic remains have now been established, through archaeological investigation and standing building analysis, to have been a formidable defensive stronghold built in the 1520s or 30s, most probably by Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, illegitimate eldest son of James, 1st Earl of Arran. Finnart also built **Craignethan Castles**. Both share remarkable similarities.

Cadzow Castle was catastrophically damaged in 1579, during the demilitarisation of the chief Hamilton castles, including **Craignethan**, following Queen Mary's flight into exile in 1568; the Hamiltons had been amongst her most loyal supporters. Thereafter it lay abandoned and neglected until the 1730s, when James, 5th Duke of Hamilton, built Châtelhéault, the ornate banqueting house and hunting lodge on the opposite bank of the Avon Water. The wildly picturesque ruins were thereafter incorporated into the designed landscape, providing a Gothic counterpoint to the Classical symmetry of Châtelhéault.

Châtelhéault and part of the Hamilton High Parks, including Cadzow Castle, were purchased by the State in 1978. Whilst Châtelhéault and the High Parks – now called Châtelhéault Country Park - have subsequently been transferred to local authority ownership, Cadzow Castle remains in State ownership, under the care of Historic Environment Scotland.

[Note: not all of the extensive castle remains are in State care. These include the area enclosing part of the middle ward (including at least one visible tower), and the outer defences. These are, however, all included in the Scheduled Ancient Monument.]

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- **12th century** –the lands of Cadzow parish are recorded as being royal demesne. Various kings from David I (1124-53) to Robert I (1306-29) are recorded hunting in the extensively wooded estate, and sealing charters here. Their hunting-lodge may have been the motte-castle to the north of where the later Hamilton Palace is built, near the original location of the Netherton Cross and parish church.
- **1315x29** – Walter FitzGilbert de Hambledon (Hamilton), former keeper of **Bothwell Castle** for the English Crown prior to the Battle of Bannockburn, is granted the barony of Cadzow and the lands of Eddlewood by Robert I (Bruce). His grandson, David, is the first to be styled Hamilton (**1375**).

- **1368** – the ‘toun’ of Cadzow is mentioned in the records, in connection with a property called ‘the Orchard’.
- **1445** - ‘the Orchard’ is by now in the hands of the Hamiltons, and referred to as ‘the castle of Hamilton’ serving as their ‘principal and capital messuage’. James Hamilton is created Lord Hamilton in this same year. (The location of ‘the Orchard’ is on the site of the later Hamilton Palace.) In **1451** the parish name is changed from Cadzow to Hamilton, and the burgh of Hamilton is formed by **1475**. The Hamilton dynasty is very much on the way up.
- **1479** – James, 1st Lord Hamilton, dies and is succeeded by his son, also James, by his second wife, Mary Stewart, daughter of James II and sister of James III. In **1503** he is created Earl of Arran by James IV.
- **1529** – James, 1st Earl, dies, leaving as heir his legitimate son, James, then aged only nine or ten. The Earl’s illegitimate eldest son, James Hamilton of Finnart (born c.1495), is appointed executor and granted ward of the earldom. Finnart moves swiftly to build up an independent lordship within the Hamilton estates, based on castles at **Craignethan** and Strathaven (Awendale), and almost certainly Cadzow too. The recently excavated remains have all the signs of being Finnart’s creation. In **1539** his architectural skills are formally recognised by the Crown when his cousin James V appoints him his Master of Works Principal, chiefly engaged on supervising the construction of a new palace in **Stirling Castle**.
- **1540**- Sir James Hamilton of Finnart falls spectacularly from grace. He is arrested, tried on a charge of acting against the king, found guilty and summarily executed. His ward, the 2nd Earl (known simply as ‘Arran’) and heir-presumptive to the throne, is by now acting independently. He is already building Hamilton Palace at the entrance to his town of Hamilton, now a royal burgh, and he probably completes the building of Cadzow Castle also.
- **1543** – following the sudden death of James V and the succession of the week-old Queen Mary (December **1542**), Arran is appointed regent, giving him the power and resources of the throne. In **1548** he is instrumental in negotiating Queen Mary’s marriage to the French Dauphin (in recognition of which Henri II of France later creates him Duke of Châtelhéral). In **1554** he steps down as regent.
- **1561** – Queen Mary returns from France widowed. The 2nd Earl’s eldest son, also James, is tipped as her prospective new husband, but Mary weds Henry, Lord Darnley, instead, in **1565**. In the ensuing rebellion, Arran sides with the rebels, led by Mary’s half-brother, the Earl of Moray. The rebellion’s failure results in the queen taking Hamilton Castle (and quite possibly also Cadzow) and Arran going into temporary exile.
- **1568** – following Mary’s arrest and subsequent imprisonment in Lochleven Castle, Arran throws in his lot with the deposed queen. On her escape she is escorted to Hamilton Palace, but is defeated by Regent Moray at Langside whilst trying to get to **Dumbarton Castle**. Over the next ten years, the Hamiltons’ Lanarkshire residences, including Cadzow, figure prominently in the power-struggle following Mary’s flight into exile.
- **1572** – the only oblique mention of Cadzow in the documentary record is as a secure base ‘in the wood of Hamilton’ to complement Hamilton Palace itself.
- **1575** – Arran dies and is succeeded by his eldest son, James, 3rd Earl. However, having previously been declared insane, the Hamilton cause is

carried forward by his brothers Claud and John against the new regent, the Douglas Earl of Morton.

- **1579** – Regent Morton orders concerted artillery attacks on the castles at Hamilton (including most probably Cadzow) and **Craignethan**, which result in their capture and demilitarisation. The archaeological evidence points to a wholesale destruction of Cadzow by gunpowder. It seems to be entirely abandoned as a result.
- **1690s** - William, 3rd Duke of Hamilton, and his lady, Duchess Anne, have a new palace built beside the burgh. The architect is James Smith.
- **1732-43** – James, 5th Duke of Hamilton, invites William Adam, architect, to draw up plans for a new south front to the palace, but this is not proceeded with. Instead, Adam designs for the Duke a new hunting lodge, called Châtelhérault in memory of the 2nd Earl of Arran, on the opposite bank of the Avon Water from Cadzow, in the ornate Classical fashion, it is surrounded by an elaborate designed landscape, in which the ruined, ivy-mantled ancient castle, imbued with overtones of the ancient lineage of the Hamilton family, would figure prominently. In **1754** 18 men work continuously at the castle for much of the spring and summer.
- **1801** – Walter Scott spends Christmas at Hamilton Palace and hikes to the castle ruins. His ballad ‘Cadyow Castle’, published in 1802, brings the ruins to the attention of a wider public.
- **c.1813-20** – Alexander, 10th Duke of Hamilton, known as ‘Il Magnifico’, carries out extensive landscaping works in the High Parks, including at the castle site.
- **1863** – William, 11th Duke, replaces the timber bridge over the Avon gorge with a fine, new stone bridge, the ‘Duke’s Bridge’. The resulting new road cuts right across the outer ward of the castle.
- **1887-92** – unaccountably, MacGibbon & Ross make no mention of Cadzow Castle in their masterly and comprehensive *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*.
- **1927** - Hamilton Palace is demolished, after Alfred, 13th Duke, relocates to Dungavel, near Strathaven.
- **1978** – Châtelhérault and part of the Hamilton High Parks, including the ruins of Cadzow Castle, are purchased by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Scottish Development Department (Ancient Monuments), Historic Environment Scotland’s predecessor body, undertakes major masonry conservation on the former, whilst Hamilton District Council assumes responsibility for managing the wider estate.
- **1987** – responsibility for Châtelhérault and the High Parks – now Châtelhérault Country Park - passes to Hamilton District Council (now South Lanarkshire Council). However, the ruined castle is retained by the State because of its hazardous condition. Between 2000 and 2003 archaeological excavations are carried out.

Archaeological Overview:

[Note: Not all of Cadzow Castle is in State ownership. The areas outwith Historic Scotland’s responsibility include a small part of the middle ward and all of the outer ward.]

The main elements of the castle are set below the brow of a hill to its south, below direct sightline of any besieging artillery – a situation mirrored also at **Craignethan Castle**. Although the castle complex has been badly affected by later landscaping, tracks across the site and forestry, its broad outline seems clear enough. Three courts, or wards, lie within a great outer ditch crossing the site from NW to SE. Little is known of the outer ward, including where its outer gatehouse may have been sited. Not much more is known of the middle ward, located on the west side of the complex, although upstanding buildings survive here (see [Architectural/Artistic Overview](#)). More is known of the inner ward, on the east side, overlooking the gorge, for this was the subject of trial investigation between 2001-3, first by AOC Archaeology and thereafter by Kirkdale Archaeology (see Ewart 2009). These have cast considerable new light on the history and architecture of the castle, and informed our current understanding of it.

Although architectural elements are visible, the complex is chiefly an archaeological site. Most of its interpretation is included under this heading. Specific elements of architectural interest are included in the [Architectural/Artistic Overview](#) below.

The outer ward (not in State care)

This was a large enclosure, roughly triangular in plan, and defined on its south (outer) side by a large, wide ditch over 200m long and situated some 40m south of the inner ward ditch.

The middle ward

The middle ward likewise remains much of a mystery in the absence of archaeological excavation. The surviving upstanding masonry is mentioned under [Architectural/Artistic Overview](#).

The inner ward

The inner ward comprises mainly an overgrown mound, masking substantial masonry structures beneath. The masonry features visible today relate substantially to the 'Romanticising' of the castle in the 18th and 19th centuries (most notably the battered, or sloped, masonry, and the present masonry bridge across the south ditch). The most obvious 16th-century masonry includes the projecting SW tower and adjacent stretches of walling.

Archaeological excavation has provided the first, tantalising glimpses into the interior layout of this inner ward. Although the overall plan is not known, nor its structural relationship with its enveloping curtain wall, we are a little clearer as to its general layout and status.

The principal buildings occupied the southern half, the highest part of the bedrock and facing the deer park to the south. The north part of the ward, sloping away towards the gorge, was exploited by the builder for use as service vaults, including what seems to be a well. The vaults themselves formed a platform for the ward's courtyard.

The SW quarter seems to have contained a large, almost square, building with at least two upper floors, conceivably a tower house. The finds associated with it (see [artefacts](#) below) certainly suggest a structure of high status. A possible parallel is the tower house (lodging) at **Craignethan Castle**, built in the 1530s by Sir James Hamilton of Finnart. The tower house there was extraordinarily innovative - not overly high, unlike its contemporaries where room was piled upon room, but a unique double-piled structure with the principal chamber, the great hall, occupying half of the ground floor.

Whereas Craignethan's towered structure stood independently, Cadzow's was linked to a narrower wing to its east; this was subsequently extended along the NE side of the ward. Here again the archaeological evidence we have points to a structure of remarkable sophistication, containing perhaps a long gallery on the upper floor, and incorporating at least one oriel window (cf. **Edinburgh Castle's** Palace and **Linlithgow Palace's** NW quarter, both by James IV (d.1513). Here too was evidence for high-quality rooms, including more tiled floors and evidence for paint-decorated plastered walls.

The excavations merely scratched the surface of this potentially hugely rewarding inner ward. This was chiefly on account of the inherent weakness in the entire structure. The excavation found remarkable evidence that the structures had been intentionally blown up by gunpowder, resulting in the overturning of large masses of masonry. This sort of 'demilitarisation' is often alluded to in documentation but rarely so graphically seen within a ruined structure.

The artefacts

The artefacts discovered were themselves remarkable. They included much quality carved stonework, such as the fragments of oriel window, and waterspouts (gargoyles) carved with rope decoration on their undersides (the only surface that would have been seen by the 'great and good' in the courtyard below), which are paralleled also at **Craignethan**.

Perhaps the most remarkable finds, though, were the many decorated floor tiles. These included many designed with an 'I' and 'M' stamp joined in a love knot within a shield-shaped border; an identical tile was found at **Linlithgow Palace** and believed to have come from the hall or presence chamber in the west range (built by James IV; refurbished by James V). The 'I' and 'M' could refer to a number of marital associations, including James IV and Mary Tudor, James V and Madeleine of France or Marie of Guise, or indeed James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran, and Margaret Douglas. How these tiles came to be at Cadzow is another of the site's many mysteries, but here again the hand of Finnart may be detected (he was involved with building work at **Linlithgow**).

Conclusion

None of the artefacts recovered indicates a date of construction of the castle earlier than the early 16th century, and nothing in the surviving stonework suggests anything before then either. The conclusion, on present evidence, must be that the castle was most likely begun during Finnart's time as effective controller of the Hamilton estates (the 1530s) and completed in the time of the

2nd Earl of Arran (died 1575). That the stronghold was blown up can only have been due to the demilitarisation of the Hamilton strongholds in 1579.

It is conceivable that there may have been a previous lordly residence at the site (perhaps a timber hunting lodge), and it is possible that one or more of the existing ditches predates the present masonry castle. Only further archaeological excavation will tell.

Beyond the castle

Cadzow Castle is situated within an extensive historic landscape. This dates back to well before the time of William Adam's creation of Châtelh rault, and the subsequent landscaping of the High Parks.

Physical elements of a deer park lie close to the castle. These include a ditch and important remnants of a managed oak woodland (the Cadzow oaks). The planting of the latter has been dendrochronologically dated to the mid-15th century, coinciding with the advent of the new Hamilton owners on the scene.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

Most of the architectural and artistic features of interest and importance at Cadzow have been covered above (see *Archaeological Overview*), most notably the remarkable masonry structures excavated in the inner ward, and the carved stonework and artefacts recovered from them.

The remaining architectural features of note are:

Artillery fortification

The upstanding architectural fragments include evidence for early artillery fortification in Scotland. The circular tower at the SW corner of the inner ward has wide-mouthed gunports, enabling gunners within to enfilade the flanking ditches. These are among the earliest of this type to appear in Scotland, which made its debut c.1520 in Dunbar and **Tantallon** castles, both of which probably involved Finnart.

The excavations revealed the foundations of a second projecting round tower, at the SE corner, and it seems reasonable to see the two towers serving as semi-independent artillery 'blockhouses', again innovatory. These survivals stress the potential importance of Cadzow Castle as a leading exponent of the new-fangled art of artillery fortification then sweeping through Europe.

Middle ward structure

The most obvious fragment of upstanding masonry is the long mural range hugging the northern edge. The regular arrangement of windows gives it the appearance of a barracks, but this seems highly unlikely in a 16th-century context. A more likely explanation is as a range housing members of the Hamilton household, which would have been considerable when their master was in residence. It is not beyond the bounds of reason to think that this middle ward may have housed quarters for those involved with the deer hunt. Whatever the use, the range is quite exceptional in a 16th-century context.

Conclusion

There is no doubt now that Cadzow has outstanding architectural and artistic promise. The comparatively small-scale excavations to date have demonstrated that what remains lurking beneath the surface in the way of masonry structures is likely to be exceptional and innovative.

Social Overview:

Cadzow Castle has only recently re-established itself in the public consciousness thanks to development of Châtelhéault Country Park as a major visitor attraction. Prior to its partial excavation in 2000-3, it appeared as little more than a grassy mound with bits of masonry protruding from it, all hidden behind an inhibiting metal security fence. Since the excavations, the site, although still largely inaccessible for safety reasons, is becoming an increasingly significant feature along the walking route crossing the Duke's Bridge from Châtelhéault itself, in much the same way as it did following the creation of Châtelhéault in the 18th century. The Country Park staff provide formal guided walks that take in, and explain, the site and its importance.

That apart, the castle ruins play no other social role.

Spiritual Overview:

It is almost certain that Cadzow Castle had a chapel somewhere in the complex, and most likely in the inner ward, during its short but active life as a lordly seat.

The Hamilton dynasty in the 16th century were in the forefront of the religious (and political) turmoils that bedevilled those times. Although there is little direct documentary reference to Cadzow Castle itself, we may assume, by implication, that it featured prominently in the troubles that beset the family following their adherence to the deposed Catholic Queen Mary after her escape from captivity in **Lochleven Castle** in 1567.

Today, the castle appears to play no spiritual role.

Aesthetic Overview

In their present state the ruins do not do this extraordinary castle site justice. The area in State care is still surrounded by a metal security fence, and only the exterior can be viewed by the public due to its ruined condition. The part of the castle outwith State care, and further away from the gorge edge, is accessible, but it is so thickly wooded and covered with scrub that this too is well-nigh impenetrable. Making sense of the remains is very difficult, even for the more informed visitor.

That said, the site itself remains most attractively, and stunningly, sited. It clings precariously to the top edge of a tree-lined gorge, whose slopes plunge almost vertically down to the waters of the River Avon way below. By far the best view of the castle ruins is from the Duke's Bridge.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- What, if anything, stood on the site prior to the building of the present stone castle in the 16th century? The answer to this, and so many other questions, can only be forthcoming through further archaeological investigation.
- What was the castle officially called in the 16th century, and how did it function in relation to the other Hamilton seats nearby, such as Hamilton itself and **Craignethan**? A more thorough investigation of the available documentary records will hopefully throw further light on our current frustratingly meagre understanding of the site.
- What was the detailed layout of the completed castle? Our only hope of enlightenment is through archaeological investigation, followed by standing building analysis.
- Was the castle entirely abandoned after the 1579 demilitarisation, or did part of it continue in use? The long masonry range in the middle ward has been interpreted as possibly a barracks, but this would place its construction in the 17th century. Here again archaeological investigation remains our only hope.
- What was the process of reincarnating the castle ruins as an integral part of the Romanticised designed landscape around Châtelhérault in the 18th and 19th centuries, and what use, if any, was made of it by the Hamiltons? A closer examination of the documentary record may reveal more.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- In its apparently brief life in the 16th century, Cadzow Castle was inextricably linked with the powerful Hamilton dynasty, two of whom (the 1st and 2nd Earls of Arran) were just a heartbeat away from taking the Crown of Scotland.
- The castle is intimately associated with another imposing Hamilton family member, Sir James Hamilton of Finnart. The cousin of James V, and his Master of Works Principal, Finnart may have been the 'brains' behind the building of Cadzow. He was head of the dynasty around the time of its construction, and the surviving masonry remains invite close comparison with his own 'hideaway' castle, **Craignethan**.
- The structural remains, insofar as we can tell at this early stage in the archaeological investigations, clearly indicate a building of quite exceptional ingenuity and innovation, as well as sophistication. Both as an important noble residence and as an artillery fortification, the castle retains features that show it to be superior to most other noble residences of its day, and well ahead of its time generally.
- Cadzow's role subsequent to its abandonment in 1579 is also of especial importance and significance. Following the building of the new Hamilton Palace in the 1690s, the wildly picturesque ruins of Cadzow were incorporated into the designed landscape of the Hamilton High Parks, and subsequently provided a Gothic counterpoint to the Classical symmetry of the nearby banqueting suite that was Châtelhérault.

Associated Properties

(other major Hamilton family castles) – Avendale (Strathaven); Brodick; **Craignethan; Kinneil House**

(other castles linked with Finnart) – Avendale (Strathaven); **Blackness**; Crawfordjohn (site of); Dunbar; **Linlithgow Palace**; **Stirling**; **Tantallon**

Keywords:

ward (court); ditch; gun-tower; tower house; artillery defence; vaults; gallery; decorated floor tiles; carved stones; Hamilton dynasty; Hamilton of Finnart; Châtelhéralt: Earl of Arran; William Adam; Walter Scott

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