



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

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ALBA

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# MUNESS CASTLE



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# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## MUNESS CASTLE

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# I. SUMMARY

## 1.1 Introduction

Muness Castle is situated on a promontory at the south-east corner of the island of Unst, Shetland, 2 miles east of the settlement at Uyeasound and 4 miles north-east of the ferry pier at Belmont.

The castle was built by Laurence Bruce of Cultmalindie, and his wife, Elizabeth Gray and bears the date 1598 on the dedication stone above its doorway. Bruce was half-brother of Robert Stewart, Earl of Orkney, who made him *foud* or his sheriff in Shetland. The building is a diminutive fortified house, with circular towers at diagonally opposed corners giving the characteristic Z-plan shape. To the south of the building are earthworks relating to former gardens.

The castle was abandoned and roofless by the later 18th century. It is a Scheduled Monument (SM90224)<sup>1</sup>, and passed into State care in 1956.

It is surrounded by a drystone wall and is generally accessible at all times at no charge. There is a small, neighbouring carpark for visitor use, with information provided on site via interpretation board. There are some narrow and dark spaces inside the castle<sup>2</sup>, where the use of a torch is recommended.

## 1.2 Statement of Significance

Muness Castle is of outstanding significance on several counts:

- It has the distinction of being the most northerly castle in the British Isles. The scale and grandeur of the castle in this remote location still impresses today. The lost gardens to the south-west would have added to the original impressiveness of the place.
- It has historic significance as a monument to the changing nature of Shetland society under the two Stewart earls, introducing mainland feudal law and practice, and displacing Scandinavian customs.

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<sup>1</sup> Designation details can be accessed at:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90224>

<sup>2</sup> For more access information, please see: [www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/)

- It is the earliest example of mainland Scots Renaissance architecture in Shetland, marking a break with previous Scandinavian practice.
- It displays sophisticated knowledge of contemporary Lowland architectural fashions, and possibly the influence of du Cerceau's pattern books.
- Because it appears to have been built on a 'greenfield' site and had a relatively short period of occupation with little alteration, Muness provides excellent potential for studying the social aspirations expressed in architectural form of middle ranking gentry families around the turn of the 17th century.
- Some features, notably the corbelling, gunloops and shotholes, resemble those at **Scalloway Castle**<sup>3</sup>, built shortly after Muness for Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, by Andrew Crawford his Master of Works and John Ross, his master mason. This links Muness not only with Scalloway but also with the **Earl's Palace** at Kirkwall, and **Noltland Castle** on Westray, which together make a group of outstanding national architectural significance.
- One feature overlooked until now, are the minor, narrow windows, with lintels incised with two arcs meeting at the highest point (see Figure 6), a detail unparalleled anywhere in Scotland. The closest known parallel, while not identical in detail, is found in Germany, perhaps suggesting a foreign mason's hand.

The above paragraphs outline the key significance of Muness Castle. The following sections offer more detailed descriptions and analyses of the site.

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout the text, site names in **bold** are managed by Historic Environment Scotland and are publicly accessible. Access information can be found at: [www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/)



Figure 1: Munness Castle Scheduled area and Property in Care (PIC) boundary. For illustrative purposes only.



Figure 2: View of Munness Castle from the south. © Crown Copyright HES.

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

### 2.1 Background

The earliest known documentary mention of Muness comes in the fifteenth century when it was part of the property of Munkeliv Abbey, Bergen. At the Reformation in Denmark/Norway the bishop of Bergen took over the monastic church as his cathedral and the conventual buildings as his residence, but it is not clear if this included all landholdings, including Muness. Little is known about the use of the land at Muness, or the presence of any earlier structures, prior to the present castle.

Laurence Bruce is known to have been in Shetland by 1571 but the first evidence of his residing at Muness is a document signed there in July 1589, concerning properties elsewhere on Unst. In October 1589 another document values the property at five marks, but whether the castle was already being built is not clear. There is no evidence of an earlier structure on the site of the castle but equally no physical investigation or excavation has taken place. The 1598 date on the inscription over the entrance doorway has been taken to be the starting date of the building, but could just as easily mark its completion.

#### 2.1.1 Description

The castle appears to have been built in one phase in the 1590s, with no evidence of subsequent major alterations. It is built on a north-west/south-east axis, the main rectangular block being 22.3m long and 7.9m wide externally, with round towers at the north and south corners; that to the south about 5.48m wide, that to the north about 5.2m, both with thinner walls than those of the main block. The walls are mainly built of local rubble, schists, gabbro and serpentine, with imported red sandstone for dressings, probably from Eday in Orkney. The rubble was harled, with large remnants surviving especially to the north-east.

The ground and first floors survive almost intact but the attic storey above is now only partial. This probably originally incorporated dormer windows, but little now survives except for the north-west and south-east gable chimneys and lower courses of the circular turrets at the east and west corners. It is thought that the drystone wall, tightly enclosing the castle, was built with stone from the upper parts in the later 19th century.

## 2.1.2 Exterior

Externally, the very fine lugged architrave doorway at the entrance was only inserted here in 1959. Along with the cornice above, it had been brought from the abandoned eighteenth-century Old House of Lund on the west side of Unst in the belief that it originally came from Munes. The cornice is in fact of a different stone and does not appear to belong with the doorway.



Figure 3: Detail of carved panels above entrance. © Crown Copyright HES.

At first sight, the doorway seems too stylistically advanced to be that early. However, if compared to the doorways removed from **Scalloway Castle** to the Haa of Sand, it is not inconceivable that it dates from 1598 as the inscription panel above states. The panel is surmounted by another surrounding the quartered arms of Laurence Bruce and his wife Elisabeth Gray, both panels in moulded frames. The inscription, carved with raised rather than incised lettering, reads:

LIST ZE TO KNAW YIS BUILDING QUHA BEGAN  
LAURENCE THE BRUCE HE WAS THAT WORTHY MAN  
QUHA ERNESTLY HIS AIRIS AND OFSPRING PRAYIS  
TO HELP AND NOT TO HURT THIS VARK ALUAYIS  
THE ZEIR OF GOD 1598.



Curiously, the upper four lines are in a script more Gothic in character, while the bottom line has letters unequivocally Roman and smaller than those above, suggesting it was added, one assumes, in the year of completion.

The most prominent external decorative features are the corbelled turrets (see Figure 5), which have four continuous bands of still crisply-carved mouldings, below while above are two rows of chequer-set moulded corbels, alternating with mock shotholes. Most windows have chamfered arrises but those to the hall on the first floor are rounded. A curious detail overlooked in the literature so far, is the incised detail on the lintels of the narrow windows lighting stairs, etc. The detail consists of two arcs, making an upside-down V-shape. They are believed to be unparalleled elsewhere in Scotland.



*Figure 4: View of lugged architrave doorway, with carved panels above. © Crown Copyright HES.*



*Figure 5 (left): Detail of corbelled turret. Figure 6 (right): Detail of narrow window with incised arc detail on its lintel, and gunloop below. Both images © Crown Copyright HES.*

### 2.1.3 Interior

Inside, the ground floor is divided into four vaulted rooms connected by a vaulted corridor running the length of the building. Each of the two corner towers contained a small room, which would have had a timber ceiling. . The north-west chamber was the kitchen, with a large fireplace, oven and slop-drain. There appears to be a blocked doorway in the north-east wall, which may have originally been a window. The south-east chamber was probably the buttery, given the narrow service stair that links it to the hall above. The principal stair, immediately to the right of the entrance is a scale-and-platt rising to the first and second floors.

The centre of the first floor is occupied by the hall, lit by two windows on the south-west side and one on the north-east, with a buffet to its right, and other smaller cupboards set into the wall. An impressively wide fireplace fills most of the north-east wall, with a door to its right giving access to the approximately square withdrawing chamber. It has a fireplace in the end wall and one window on the south-west wall. The closet, with three small windows, occupied the north tower. At the other end of the hall

is an L-plan chamber, with a fireplace in the end wall, leading through to a more spacious round chamber in the south tower which has a fireplace and three small windows. Together these two rooms may have served as a guest apartment, although a nineteenth-century plan by James Irvine designates it a library, without providing any evidence.<sup>4</sup>

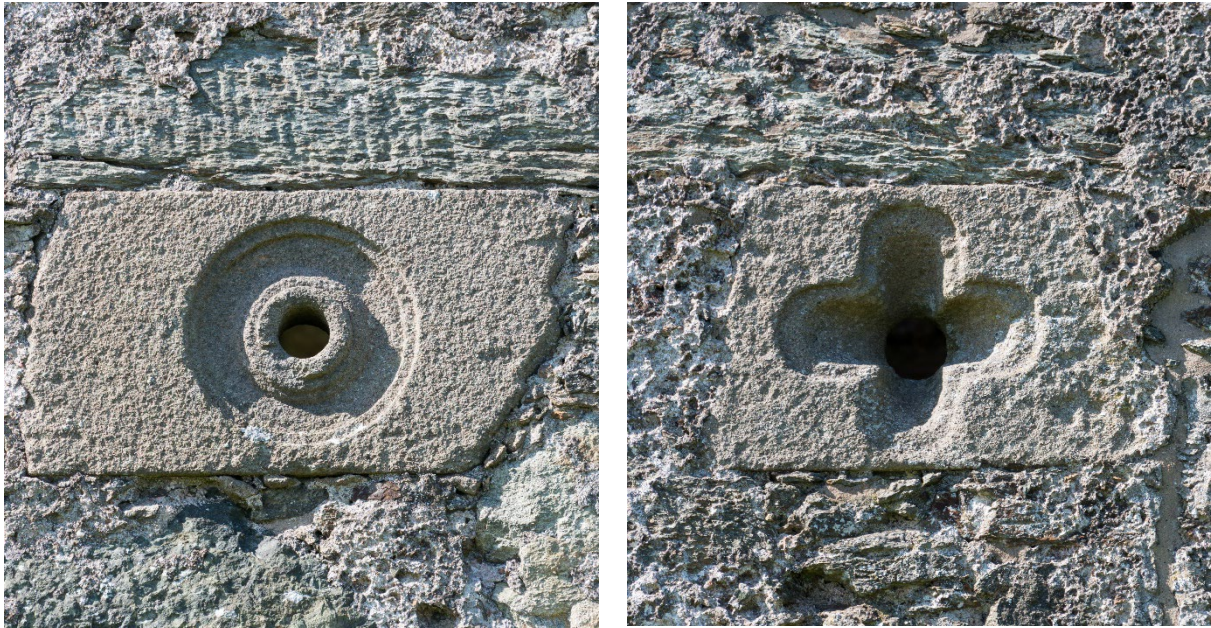


*Figure 7: View of the hall fireplace, with doorway providing access to withdrawing room beyond. © Crown Copyright HES*

All the first floor windows have shot holes and gunloops below their sills, and a variety of different forms can be noted throughout the castle, from quatrefoil to relatively plain (see Figure 8). A collection of carved stones from the site is housed in the ground floor vaults. These are mostly ex situ architectural fragments, which allows visitors to see close-up the quality of the carving and details which might be more difficult to see when still in situ.

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<sup>4</sup> James Thomas Irvine, 'Plan of Muness Castle Unst Shetland/ Date 1598' in 'Irvine manuscripts', photocopied vol. 3 pt 1, p. 61



*Figure 8: Different forms of decorative gunloops and shot holes can be seen at Muness Castle. © Crown Copyright HES*

The second floor has an almost identical distribution of spaces, set in the attic space of the roof. However, the north-west apartment is only accessible from a turnpike stair set in the north-east wall of the withdrawing chamber below. From the rectangular chamber, which has windows in the south-west and the north-west walls, both the large circular closet in the north tower and the smaller one in the west bartisan can be reached. The space equivalent to the hall may have been divided by a timber partition. The only fireplace is a small one in the south-east wall between the main stair and the doorway to the south-east apartment. The L-plan chamber has again a fireplace in the end wall, but the circular closet in the south tower does not. There is also the small circular closet in the east turret.



*Figure 9: Detailed aerial view of Munes Castle, focussed on north tower. © Crown Copyright HES*

#### 2.1.4 Environs/gardens

Although there is little trace of it visible today, it is likely that originally the castle had extensive terraced gardens to the south-west<sup>5</sup>. Traces of three terraces extending some 50m from the south front are just discernible. A raised mound to the south-east (Figure 10) may be related to a tower base noted by MacGibbon and Ross<sup>6</sup>, or perhaps to some belvedere or garden house feature. They also noted remnants of original or early gatepiers, again now lost.

The wall which presently surrounds the castle is likely of 19th century date and the layout of any original ancillary buildings or farm steadings is not known. It is possible that these later structures re-use material from the earlier layouts.

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<sup>5</sup> Brown 2012, p. 127

<sup>6</sup> MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 2, p. 258



*Figure 10: View of raised mound to south of castle. © Crown Copyright: HES.*

## 2.2 Evidential values

The main evidential values relating to Munness Castle lie in the physical fabric of the castle itself and in the below ground traces which may allow a greater understanding of the original and early environs of the castle, particularly its gardens and any ancillary structures. There is high potential that further study could increase understanding of this aspect of the castle's history.

So far as is known the castle had a relatively short period of occupation: built c.1598, abandoned by about 1750, and roofless in 1794. It therefore did not undergo major alteration or additions, and so provides good evidence of the domestic layout of a middle-ranking gentry house of the time. The inclusion of features such as the scale-and-platt stair indicate a certain ambition and understanding of contemporary architectural fashion on the part of the patron or 'architect/builder'. The believed extent of the garden grounds underlines this ambition and striving towards fashion and gentility.

The short period of occupation and lack of alteration means that there is high potential for in-depth analysis of the upstanding fabric. This has potential to lead to better understanding of the symbiotic relationship between architecture, culture and society around the turn of the 17th century. A wealth of architectural and cultural information could be discerned from in-depth investigation and analysis of such a well-preserved castle.

Some indication of the interiors and details comes from an elaborate carved oak panel in the collections of the National Museums of Scotland<sup>7</sup> and a brass door-knocker recorded in 1881. The known inventories relate to the later stages of the castle's life when it had ceased to be a lordly house, and so do not advance our understanding of this aspect of Muness.

The histories of the Bruce family and their relations with the earls of Orkney are relatively well documented. However, many family papers and documents are believed to have been burned in 1627 (see [Timeline](#)).

## 2.3 Historical values

The main historical associations of Muness Castle are with its builders, the Bruce family (particularly with Laurence Bruce of Cultmalundie), and their relationship with the Stewart earls of Orkney. Their initially warm relationship became increasingly acrimonious and the rivalry affected many local landowners and ordinary Shetlanders. Indeed, both families were held up as corrupt and exploitative landlords against whom many petitions were presented to the Scottish court.

In 1564, Lord Robert Stewart, the illegitimate half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots, was appointed 'feuar' or temporary feudal proprietor of Orkney and Shetland. He based himself in the Northern Isles from 1567 being created earl of Orkney in 1581. At some point before 1570 he was joined by his half-brother, Laurence Bruce of Cultmalundie. Robert Stewart and Laurence Bruce were both sons of Eupheme Elphinstone. Their fathers were, respectively, James V and John Bruce of Cultmalundie, whom Eupheme married in 1535.

Little is known of Bruce's story before his move from Perthshire to Unst. Local tradition in the eighteenth century asserted Bruce was forced to leave Perthshire after the murder of a neighbour: this is recorded in the Old Statistical Account<sup>8</sup> and repeated by MacGibbon and Ross<sup>9</sup>, who note he "had to flee from Perthshire for a murder committed in some affray, and probably his half-brother's influence led to his taking up residence in Shetland". He married twice; first to Helen Kennedy of Girvan Mains and second to Elizabeth Gray. Elizabeth Gray was the daughter of the 5th Lord Gray, with family seats at Fowlis Castle, Broughty Castle and Castle Huntly

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<sup>7</sup> Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland, Item H.KL 76;  
<https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/collection-search-results/panel/15117>

<sup>8</sup> The Statistical Account of Scotland Vol v p 200, 1793  
[https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/osa-vol5-Parish record for Unst in the county of Shetland in volume 5 of account 1/o-sa-vol5-p185-parish-shetland-unst?search=muness](https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/osa-vol5-Parish%20record%20for%20Unst%20in%20the%20county%20of%20Shetland%20in%20volume%205%20of%20account%201/o-sa-vol5-p185-parish-shetland-unst?search=muness)

<sup>9</sup> MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 2, p. 260

and this second marriage seems to indicate flourishing fortunes and social connections. Perhaps also an expectation of more lavish living quarters and gardens which may have influenced the final design for Muness.

Bruce was effectively the earl's deputy in Shetland and was appointed to most of the important administrative offices - *foud* (sheriff), admiral-depute, chamberlain of the Lordship lands and given control of the former bishopric lands. He quickly ran into local opposition for his strong-arm tactics: in 1576 a petition, complaining about his actions, was presented to the Privy Council on behalf of the people of Shetland (see Appendix 1 [Timeline](#), 1576/77 for details). Despite many testimonies against him, Bruce was not seriously censured, returning to Shetland with the additional lucrative post of Admiral Depute upon condition of better behaviour.

The twists and turns of the Stewart/Bruce relationship (see [Timeline](#)) and indeed their joint imposition of foreign (mainland) customs on an area with as distinctive a character and tradition as the Northern Isles is a good part of the significance of the site. From an initial position of being the earl's right-hand man, from the 1590s the Bruce family were at loggerheads with the Stewart earls, particularly with Earl Patrick, after the death of Earl Robert in 1593.

The [Timeline](#) recounts some of the key episodes including Earl Patrick's conscription of some of Bruce's tenants as labourers in building work at **Scalloway Castle**, various seizures of goods, and kidnap of Bruce's retainers. The disputes were ongoing through the 1590s and into the 1600s despite Laurence Bruce being granted (in 1602) a permanent exemption from the administrative jurisdiction of the earldom. This was effectively a back-door mechanism giving the Bruces' viceregal control of their own Shetland property, directly subordinate to the distant crown administration on the Scottish mainland.

In this context, and with Earl Patrick entirely willing to use armed force, the provision of so many gunloops at Muness Castle makes perfect sense. In 1609 however, Earl Patrick was arrested by the royal authorities on charges of treason and was finally executed in 1615.

From 1608 Laurence Bruce handed control of his Shetland estates to his second son Andrew; Alexander, his eldest son, took over the Perthshire estates. Laurence was to remain in residence on Unst; dying at the age of seventy in 1617 at Muness.

The earlier history of the site, when under Norse control, is obscure. It seems that there was not a substantial stronghold or place of lordship at Muness until Bruce began work on the castle. There is a tradition that in 1567 Mary Queen of Scots's husband, the Earl of Bothwell (whom she had created Duke of Orkney), took dinner at Muness (or a predecessor house) with the *foud* (sheriff). However, this is thought to be false, and the dinner most likely occurred near Sumburgh (see [Timeline](#) entry for August 1567).



## 2.4 Architectural and artistic values

Muness is a small but perfectly formed example of a Z-plan<sup>10</sup> fortified house, with circular towers at diagonally opposed corners. Along with its scale-and-platt main stair, it displays knowledge of contemporary architectural fashions in Lowland Scotland. The largest and most prestigious example of the plan type is the unfinished Drochil Castle, Peebleshire,<sup>11</sup> built for Regent Morton around 1580, which Douglas Simpson argued was inspired by Chenonceaux, the plan of which had been published by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau's *Les plus excellents bastiments*, published 1576-9.<sup>12</sup> Ian Campbell has pointed out that an even closer plan is found in du Cerceau's *Petites Habitations* (1547-50), and argued that du Cerceau's works were known and used in Scotland from the late-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> It is also worth noting that the corbelling of the turrets at Muness, almost identical to that of **Earl's Palace in Kirkwall**, is very similar to that of the south-west tower at Drochil. Drochil spawned many smaller imitations similar in scale to Muness, including Edinample Castle<sup>14</sup> in Stirlingshire, dated 1584; albeit a storey taller. Other smaller-scale examples can be found at **Claypotts Castle**, Dundee, dating between 1569 and 1588,<sup>15</sup> and Colliston in Angus, north of St Vigean, dated 1583.<sup>16</sup>

All these smaller examples may have been known to Laurence Bruce (1547-1617) and/or his wife Elizabeth Gray. Bruce was from Cultmalindie (now Cultmalundie) a few miles north-west of Perth, and Gray's family had seats at Fowlis Castle, Angus and what is now Castle Huntly, in Perth and Kinross. It is also possible Bruce knew Drochil, since he was made royal Admiral Depute for Orkney and Shetland by Regent Morton.

For the scale-and-platt stair, perhaps the earliest example in Scotland is that at **Crichton Castle**, Midlothian, in the Italianate north range built by

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<sup>10</sup> Z refers to the shape of the ground plan. Many Scottish castellated houses of this type were built from the later 16th century. The plan offered good defensive features: the projecting towers and plentiful gunloops allowing firing along all sides of the castle. It also promoted increasingly sophisticated internal planning, allowing suites of rooms to be connected both horizontally on the same floor or vertically by private and public staircases. Other examples include **Claypotts Castle**, Angus and Castle Menzies, Perthshire.

<sup>11</sup> Canmore ID 50035: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/50035/drochil-castle>

<sup>12</sup> Simpson 1951-2

<sup>13</sup> Campbell 2015

<sup>14</sup> Canmore ID 24444: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/24444/edinample-castle>; MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 4, p. 34; Gifford and Walker 2002, pp. 459-60

<sup>15</sup> Canmore ID 33397: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/33397/dundee-claypotts-castle>; MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 2, pp. 208-213

<sup>16</sup> Canmore ID 35474: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/35474/colliston-castle>; MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 4, pp. 51-55; Gifford 2012, pp. 423-424

Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell in the 1580s.<sup>17</sup> Scale-and-platt stairs also feature in du Cerceau's publications;<sup>18</sup> Careston Castle, Angus, was built during the 1590s and likely derived many of its details from this publication.

Besides the desires of the patrons, the design must have depended on the knowledge of Andrew Crawford and John Ross; Earl Patrick Stewart's Master of Works and master mason, respectively. Nothing is known of either before their first appearance working for Earl Patrick at **Scalloway Castle** in c.1600. Given that the Old House of Sumburgh (now **Jarlshof**) built in 1591, displays none of the features of Muness and Scalloway, we can assume they only arrived in the late 1590s. It is worth remarking that Crawford is a surname stemming from north Ayrshire and Renfrewshire, and Kelburn Castle<sup>19</sup> is a Z-plan with circular towers and turrets, of similar scale, slightly smaller in plan but a storey taller, built for John Boyle and Marian Craufurd in the 1580s.<sup>20</sup> Its main stair is a turnpike in one of the towers, but a scale-and-platt can be found nearby at the very finely-detailed **Newark Castle**, Port Glasgow, dated 1597.<sup>21</sup>

The provision of suites of private apartments at either end of the hall is unusual but also occurs at Newark Castle, Port Glasgow; Auchans Castle, Dundonald in Ayrshire (late sixteenth century)<sup>22</sup>; and at the **Earl's Palace**, Kirkwall as is the arrangement of a mural stair from the main first floor apartment to a similar suite on the floor above.<sup>23</sup> If, as is usually thought, Muness precedes the Earl's Palace, was it a dry run for the latter, or do we adjust the dating so that Muness imitates it? We do not know if the separate suites were for husband and wife or served as guest apartments. At Muness, the provision of two further sets of apartments in the attic could possibly allow husband and wife's suites to be stacked. Muness appears to be the only example where the suites are disposed almost symmetrically (the intrusion of the main stair made it impossible to make the chamber south-east of the hall rectangular). Such symmetry is found in some of du Cerceau's designs, including one with a scale-and-platt stair in an analogous position to that at Muness.<sup>24</sup>

No physical evidence survives in situ of the interior decoration, but it is almost certain that the ceiling of the first floor apartments were all painted and possibly the walls were panelled. A single oak panel<sup>25</sup> from Muness is

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<sup>17</sup> McWilliam 1978, pp. 147-148

<sup>18</sup> Campbell 2015, p. 65

<sup>19</sup> Canmore ID 41169: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/41169/kelburn-castle>

<sup>20</sup> MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 4, pp. 24-31; Close and Riches 2012, pp. 392-398

MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 2, pp. 425-431; Close, Gifford and Walker 2016, pp. 758-760

<sup>22</sup> Canmore ID 41959: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/41959/dundonald-kilnford-drive-auchans-house>; Close and Riches 2012, pp. 307-310

<sup>23</sup> MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 2, pp. 337-347

<sup>24</sup> Du Cerceau 1582, pl. II

<sup>25</sup> Simpson 1959, p. 8

preserved in the collections of the National Museum of Scotland<sup>26</sup>, and currently held in the Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick. The panel is not complete but is elaborately carved with the Bruce arms, and part of the motto *Amor Vincat Omnia* (love conquers all) is visible. The most likely location for the panel would have been above the fireplace in the main hall, though this is not certain. The panel closely relates to a brass door-knocker from the front door which is also known to have survived<sup>27</sup>, 32 cm long, with the same arms as the panel with the name 'Andro Brus' and the motto *Amor Vincat Omnia* (love conquers all). Andrew was Laurence Bruce's second son and inherited Muness. Alexander, Laurence's firstborn son inherited the Perthshire estates.

There remains the strange detail of the incised arcs of the lintels of the smaller windows (see Figure 6). The only remotely comparable windows in Scotland are two in the cellar of the tower house at **Craignethan**, Lanarkshire, dated to the 1530s by David Caldwell.<sup>28</sup> But something more similar can be found in Germany where the Johann-Friedrichs Bau of the Schloss Hartenfels in Torgau, dating from 1533-6 has paired windows, larger than those at Muness but whose lintels have a similar profile, dubbed 'curtain top' although the mouldings are more elaborate.<sup>29</sup>

Whatever the exact sources, it is clear that there is nothing provincial in Muness and that it ranks in the first division of Scottish Renaissance houses.

## 2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

The castle once sat above a freshwater loch to the south (now filled with peat) and overlooked an anchorage in the Ham of Muness. To the south-west of the castle the remains of a garden are visible, including a mound which looks artificial. MacGibbon and Ross suggest that the original wall stood 16m to the south-west of the castle and that 9.5 m to the south-east were the remains of a square tower, possibly a garden pavilion<sup>30</sup>. Bruce seems to have developed a large area of arable land around the castle, (see Appendix 1 entries for 1589, 1599 and 1610) which would have been unusual for Shetland at this time.

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<sup>26</sup> The National Museums of Scotland Catalogue can be searched via <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/search-our-collections/> The panel is currently (2020) located at The Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick.

<sup>27</sup> Armstrong 1881; Simpson 1959, p. 8. Recorded at Sand Lodge, Sumburgh in 1881. Note, there is some uncertainty about the identification of the Bruce arms on the carved panel, but these appear to be those of Andrew Bruce, rather than those of his father Laurence.

<sup>28</sup> Caldwell ??, p. 13

<sup>29</sup> Hitchcock 1959, p. 72, pl. 78

<sup>30</sup> MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, vol. 2, p. 258

Today the castle sits in an open, grazed landscape with 19th-century and later farm buildings to the north. The south view remains open and the castle itself is a dominant feature in the landscape. The size of the structure remains impressive, even in its roofless state, and the intricacies of its internal layout, with several staircases and interesting room shapes are intriguing to visitors.



*Figure 11: Muness Castle within wider landscape. [Castle at centre of image]. © Crown copyright: HES.*

## 2.6 Natural heritage values

To date, no notable natural heritage features have been recorded for this site. There is always a possibility of migratory bats being present, but no evidence was seen in 2019.

The bedrock geology of the site belongs to the Muness Phyllites Formation, with Till and Moranic superficial deposits<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> British Geological Survey GeolIndex, accessible at: <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geoindex-onshore/> [accessed 24/09/2020]

## 2.7 Contemporary/use values

The value of Muness Castle to contemporary communities – both local communities and communities of interest – has not been formally assessed for this Statement.

The castle is one of the main visitor attraction sites on Unst and is free to enter, year-round. Most TripAdvisor reviews are positive, mentioning the experience of being able to take time to explore the castle in an unhurried way, and the added excitement of the dark ground floor with the need for torches (provided by HES) and the potential for hide-and-seek.

## 3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

- Exact form of upper storey.
- Presence of ancillary buildings. How old are the farm buildings just to the north-west?
- Extent and design of garden.
- What can we learn about the interior decoration and fittings? What was the original location of the oak panel?
- Exact sequence of development and occupation, especially occupation after 1627.
- Original entrance doorway.
- What folk tales are associated with the castle?

## 4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

Scalloway Castle; Shetland; Earl's Palace; Kirkwall, Noltland Castle; Westray

## 5. KEYWORDS

Muness, Castle, Shetland, Unst, Renaissance, Baronial, gun-loops, gardens, Z-plan, scale-and-platt

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: TIMELINE

**15th century** – The first known documentary reference to Muness records the place as the property of Munkeliv Abbey in Bergen (for the medieval political connection of Shetland with Norway, see below, **1469**); the monastery had apparently been granted the property by a certain 'Lord Henry Thorvaldsson', who had obtained ownership as a result of a lawsuit; historians have speculated, on very slight evidence, that he was an important Shetland landowner. Assessed at a value of six and a quarter marks, with a yearly rent of four shillings, Muness was a relatively valuable individual property by Shetland standards. The other large and identifiable units in Munkeliv's Shetland property were Hamar in Northmavine (donated in 1402 by the female owner), Brough on the island of Whalsay, granted around the end of the century by the *fould* Thorvald Henderson (an important Shetland landowner, who is thought to be Hendrik Thorvaldsson's son), and half of the island of Hascosay, one of two properties donated by individual nuns.<sup>32</sup> At this stage, however, Muness was a large individual property rather than a significant centre of lordship. The rent was probably paid in cloth or butter, and the size is placed in context by the fact that the largest individual lordship in medieval Shetland had contained something approaching 200 separate properties with a value reaching towards 1,500 merks. The Norwegian government equated their usual local lordship unit, the 'whole farm' with a valuation of over a dozen marks by Shetland valuation. Further comparisons are provided by later documents: in 1599, the earldom lands include over fifty properties on the island of Unst alone, with a combined value of 282 marks, while in 1610, the Muness Castle estate includes nearly forty other tenancies on the island, with a combined valuation above 100 marks.<sup>33</sup>

**1469** - King James III of Scotland gains control of Shetland. Until 1448, Shetland, along with Orkney, the Faroe Islands and Iceland, had been combined with Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland in a single federal

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<sup>32</sup> *Shetland Documents, 1195-1579*, ed. John H. Ballantine and Brian Smith (*The Shetland Times: Lerwick*, 1999), No. 16, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> ii. No 56, pp. 65-69, No. 503, pp. 246-7



Scandinavian kingdom known as the Kalmar Union. But a dispute over the succession saw King Christian I left only with Denmark, Norway and the islands, and when his daughter married James III, he opted to surrender control of Orkney and Shetland to the Scots. Close connections between Shetland and Bergen continue, however, and the abbey in Bergen probably remains in control of the property at Munes.

**1531** – Munkeliv Abbey briefly becomes the cathedral of Bergen, but in 1536, the Abbey church and cloister are destroyed. Exactly who exercises control over the former Munkeliv property at Munes after this point is unclear. As a result of the Reformation, we would expect the property to pass under the control of the Scottish royal government during the sixteenth century, but some of the Norwegian clergy's property rights in Shetland continue to be recognized long after this date.<sup>34</sup>

**1567 (August)** – Mary Queen of Scots is defeated in a civil war by another of her half-brothers, the Earl of Moray, and is forced to abdicate, ceding power to Moray as regent in the name her young son James VI. Her husband, generally known as the Earl of Bothwell, but recently promoted to Duke of Orkney, flees by ship to the Northern Isles. Some secondary sources wrongly give the impression that he lands on Unst and shares a meal with the *foud* (sheriff) of Shetland in a house that sounds like a precursor of Munes Castle, but the truth seems to be that he only briefly puts into the harbour there during a running sea-fight with a pursuing squadron of ships loyal to the new regime. Bothwell had originally anchored in Bressay Sound, where he recruited two foreign ships to strengthen his force, and went ashore with his soldiers, perhaps planning to take control of the island as a base. His local ally, the *foud*, Olaf Sinclair, invited him to dinner in his house at Sumburgh near the southern end of Shetland. But on the appearance of the pursuing squadron, commanded by Sir William Kirkcaldy of Grange, Bothwell's skippers fled the anchorage and sailed north towards Unst, pursued by their opponents. In the process, the flagship of the pursuing squadron ran aground, an event traditionally said to have occurred in Bressay Sound. Bothwell and some retainers hurried north to rendezvous with his ships in a more northerly anchorage at Unst, presumably in Uyeasound just to the south of Munes Castle. Here he hoped to be able to remain for long enough to pick up the rest of his marooned soldiers, but he had barely come on board when he was forced to flee again by the arrival of his pursuers. After a three-hour chase, he managed to escape and sailed for Scandinavia.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> G. Goudie, *The Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities of Shetland* (Wm. Blackwood: Edinburgh 1904), pp. 97-104

<sup>35</sup> Humphrey Drummond, *The Queen's Man: James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell and Duke of Orkney, 1536-1578* (Leslie Frewin: London, 1975), pp. 183-4, *A Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents that have passed within the country of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson (Maitland Club, Edinburgh 1833) pp. 122-123; for Olaf Sinclair as an ally of Bothwell, cf. Goudie, *Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities*, p. 93

**1567 (October)** - Lord Robert Stewart, the illegitimate half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots, arrives in the Northern Isles to take direct charge of the lordship in Orkney and Shetland which was conferred on him in 1564. Through his mother, Euphemia Elphinstone, he also has a half-brother, Laurence Bruce, the laird of Cultmalindie in Perthshire (called Cultmalundie on modern maps, a few miles west of the city of Perth). Laurence Bruce of Cultmalindie joins his half-brother in the Northern Isles - the exact date is not clear, but he is known to have been there by **1571**.<sup>36</sup>

**1571** - Lord Robert Stewart appoints his half-brother, Laurence Bruce of Cultmalindie, to simultaneously hold most of the various administrative offices in Shetland: foud (sheriff), admiral-depute, chamberlain of the Lordship lands, and bailie, justiciary and chamberlain of the lands of the bishopric. He soon runs into local opposition for the way he wields his new powers. In 1576 a petition complaining about his actions is presented to the Privy Council on behalf of the people of Shetland. This alleges a litany of abuses, including: i) that he was replacing elected parish lawrightmen by bailiffs of his own choosing, ii) that he was using various forms of creative reinterpretation and outright extortion in assessing tax payments and judicial fines (skat), iii) most famously by changing the weights and measures, that he was packing juries in the local courts with his henchmen from the mainland, and travelling round the Shetland Isles with a retinue of at least a dozen armed men, quartering themselves in the houses of the local inhabitants and demanding punitive quantities of food and drink. In 1577 two government commissioners, the Orkney lawyer-laird Master William Moody of Breckness and the royal herald Dingwall Pursuivant, arrive in Shetland to investigate the complaints. In an impressive series of local meetings, several hundred local men attest to the truth of the allegations, with various additional individual complaints being added to the charge<sup>37</sup>. The initial date of Bruce's arrival in Shetland is provided only in the accusations against him. The earliest date he is securely documented in the Northern Isles is apparently in 1574, when he witnessed a document at Kirkwall<sup>38</sup>; the initial petition, presented in Edinburgh by the Shetland laird Arthur Sinclair of Aith, was probably delivered shortly before the Privy Council hearing on 1st November 1576, when the commissioners were appointed to investigate the matter<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> see *The Scots Peerage*, ed. Sir J. Balfour Paul (9 vols., David Douglas: Edinburgh, 1900-1904), i. 24, iii. 531, vi. 572-3, and Peter D. Anderson, "Stewart, Robert, first earl of Orkney (1533-1593)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP: Oxford 2004) [online at <https://doi-org.nls.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26504>, accessed 10 March 2020].

<sup>37</sup> *Oppressions of the Sixteenth Century in the Islands of Orkney and Zetland*, ed. D. Balfour of Balfour and Trenabie (Maitland and Abbotsford Clubs: Edinburgh 1859), pp.15-89

<sup>38</sup> *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland [RPCS], 1st series*, ed. J. Hill Burton and D. Masson (14 vols., General Register House: Edinburgh, 1877-1898) vol. ii, p. 415

<sup>39</sup> *Shetland Documents*, vol. i. Nos. 230-231, p. 177, cf. *RPCS* 1st Ser. ii., p. 563

The only obvious result of the complaints was that the Regent Morton appointed Laurence Bruce as the royal Admiral Depute in Orkney and Shetland, putting him in charge of all maritime matters in the Northern Isles. This included the regulation and taxation of commercial fishing, much of the interaction with visiting merchants, and the suppression of pirates, with a direct commission from the crown. On 23rd February 1577, just two days after the royal commissioners had finished collecting their evidence in Shetland, Bruce was at Holyrood with the Privy Council, when he signed a pledge to perform his new duties properly.<sup>40</sup>

The real target of the complaints appears to have been Lord Robert Stewart, on whose behalf his half-brother was acting, and who was simultaneously faced with similar and even more serious charges in Orkney. He was arrested, imprisoned, and compelled to part with large sums of cash, though he too was allowed to return to the Northern Isles in 1578<sup>41</sup>. Sinclair of Aith continues to bring additional charges against Laurence Bruce, but these appear to be much less serious than before.<sup>42</sup>

**1581** - Lord Robert Stewart gains the favour of his nephew, King James VI, and is appointed as Earl of Orkney and Lord of Shetland<sup>43</sup>. The newly appointed Earl of Orkney removes his half-brother from his offices, and sells the position of foud (sheriff) for £1000 Scots to a consortium of local notables led by Arthur Sinclair of Aith<sup>44</sup>. However, Laurence Bruce has already been establishing himself as a substantial landowner in Shetland.<sup>45</sup>

**1589** - The first reference to Laurence Bruce residing at Munes dates from July 1589, when 'Mownis' is noted as the location at which he concludes a property transaction relating to other lands on Unst<sup>46</sup>. In October of the same year, 'Munes' is listed (along with very many other properties) in a document by which Earl Robert transfers the entire Lordship of Shetland to his new agent Michael Balfour. This appears to be simply security on a loan, which is promptly paid back, and probably does not directly challenge

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<sup>40</sup> *RPCS* 1st ser. vol. ii., p. 563; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 630, 712, and *Shetland Documents, 1580-1611*, ed. John H. Ballantine and Brian Smith (The Shetland Times: Lerwick, 1994), No. 18, p. 5, for documents relating to his subsequent actions as Admiral Depute, largely concerned with the capture of suspected pirate ships, and also *Registrum Magni Sigillii Regnum Scottorum. The Register of the Great Seal*, ed. T. Thomson, J. Maitland Thomson, J. Balfour Paul, J. H. Stevenson and W. K. Dickson (11 vols., Edinburgh, 1814-1984), vol. iv., No. 2672, which shows him attending to Shetland business in Edinburgh in March, in conjunction with both local notables and the Lord Advocate, strongly indicating that he retained government support.

<sup>41</sup> *RPCS* 1st ser. vol. ii., p. 669

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 648-9, 712

<sup>43</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 23, pp. 9-10

<sup>44</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 34, p.16

<sup>45</sup> cf. *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, Nos. 3, 4, 8, 14, 19, 27-28, 30-32, pp. 1-6, 12-15) and he regains his position as foud in 1589, with a five-year contract from Earl Robert (*Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 131, p. 55

<sup>46</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 145, p. 61

Bruce's presence, but reveals that the property is now valued at 5 marks, at a notional rent of 4 pennies per mark.<sup>47</sup> In 1599, we hear of a property in Muness, valued at 3 marks, and not under Bruce's direct control<sup>48</sup>; this is presumably a rent-paying tenancy coexisting with another property valued at 2 marks. By 1610, however, the area around the castle has been reorganized to create a very large demesne property in Bruce's own hands. A reference as early as 1602 to Bruce employing 'hinds' (professional plough-captains of a type not normally found in Shetland)<sup>49</sup> suggests that the process was already underway at that date.

**1591** - Earl Robert's son, Patrick, known as the Master of Orkney, is appointed Lord of Shetland by his father. Following Earl Robert's death in 1593, in the **Bishop's Palace**, Kirkwall, Patrick becomes the new earl. Already in 1591, Laurence Bruce and the Master of Orkney had been locked in a violent dispute, with Bruce now allied with the locals against his nephew, which removes any real possibility of him retaining his former positions as the earl's representative on Shetland.<sup>50</sup> In 1592 (according to later court proceedings), the Master of Orkney leads an army of six hundred armed men to attack Bruce, pursuing him from Laxfirth on mainland Shetland to the Out Skerries, and compels him to hand over £1000, and surrender his position as tacksman of the wadmell (collector of the cloth paid in rent in the Northern Isles, paying on an arranged fee to the overlord and keeping the rest for personal profit). Bruce claims the post was worth £2,000 Scots yearly; a considerable sum.<sup>51</sup> By now, however, Bruce has made himself proprietor of a substantial Shetland lairdship, and remains on the island as a prominent local figure in his own right.

**1598** - Laurence Bruce erects a dedication stone above the doorway of his new castle at Muness. In the same year, he hands over his property at Cultmalindie to his eldest son, indicating that he now intends Shetland to be his main residence. Given similarities with **Scalloway Castle**, being built around the same time for his nephew Earl Patrick, it is thought likely that Patrick's own Master of Works, Andrew Crawford, and master mason, John Ross, are involved in the construction of Muness. If this reflects a reconciliation, however, the concord does not last: Laurence Bruce and Earl Patrick are soon in dispute with each other, with the earl accused of unwarranted and increasingly extreme intrusions into the affairs of the Bruce lairdship.

**1599** - According to an accusation which Bruce and his son, Andrew Bruce of Scatsta, subsequently present in the Court of Session, early in the summer of 1599, Earl Patrick begins conscripting the inhabitants of Muness

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<sup>47</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No 56, p. 69

<sup>48</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 283, pp. 127-8

<sup>49</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 353 p. 159

<sup>50</sup> Goudie, *Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities*, pp. 201-202 cf. *RPCS 1st Ser. vol. iv.*, pp. 605, 718

<sup>51</sup> *Shetland Docs. 1580-1611*, No. 353 pp. 157-8

and the rest of the Bruce lairdship to assist with the building work at **Scalloway Castle**. He was accused of making them serve in successive eight-day shifts at their own expense, during which they were forced to carry stone and timber, to make and carry mortar, and to perform various other sorts of construction work. The process is said to be still ongoing when the court case is brought in Edinburgh in 1602.<sup>52</sup> It is notable that Muness is one of five named places where the inhabitants are characterised as ‘tenants, servants and labourers’ rather than just ‘tenants’. This hints at the existence of some sort of demesne village in which the Bruce lands are worked by crofters or more specialist labourers (such as ploughmen), rather than the usual Northern Isles pattern of individual farm units. Though the reference could also cover people employed specifically in building work. Bruce complains that as a result of their conscription by the earl, many of the former inhabitants have left his lands. As a result, in December 1602, the Bruce lairdship is granted a permanent exemption from the administrative jurisdiction of the earldom.<sup>53</sup> This is effectively a back-door mechanism giving the Bruces viceregal control of their own Shetland property, directly subordinate to the distant crown administration on the Scottish mainland.

**1604** - Laurence Bruce has been residing at Muness for some time, when he decides to sail to Scotland, in order to get away from the ‘ manifold oppressions’ of Earl Patrick and attend to his business in the south. In preparation for this, on 10th July, he has some of his luggage and a small cargo of butter and fish put in a large boat to bring round to the anchorage at Uyeasound. They are promptly attacked and boarded by the *Dunkirker*, a piratical frigate in the earl’s service, commanded by Captain Allan Lentron, who seizes the boat and abducts and imprisons the two members of Bruce’s retinue crewing it.<sup>54</sup> Captain Lentron was a native of St Andrews, who had previously been commander of a Scottish anti-piracy patrol and a captain in the Danish Navy<sup>55</sup>; he later leads an abortive siege of Muness Castle in **1608**.

**1608** (February) - Laurence Bruce is at Muness, where he is engaged in administrative business relating to his properties on Shetland, accompanied by his sons and other family members and household retainers.<sup>56</sup> The documents drawn up as part of the process are fairly

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<sup>52</sup> *Shetland Docs.* vol. ii. No. 353 p. 158

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p. 359

<sup>54</sup> *Shetland Docs.* vol. ii. No. 472, p. 226; one of the attached witness statements confirms that had been residing “in his awin hous of Moynes” throughout this stay in Shetland, *ibid.*, p. 227

<sup>55</sup> *Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland*, ed. J.D. Marwick (7 vols., William Paterson/Turnbull & Spears: Edinburgh 1866-1890), vol. i., pp. 242-43, 262, 288, 300, 306-7, 317-8. Thomas Riis, *Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot... Scottish-Danish Relations c. 1450-1707* (2 vols., Odense UP: Odense 1988), vol. ii, p. 90

<sup>56</sup> *Shetland Docs.* ii. 442-443, pp. 209-210

conventional, but show the sort of day-to-day activities and gatherings that occurred in the castle.

**1608 (July)** - Earl Patrick sends a crew of around forty armed men in pursuit of Thomas Black of Whalsay; another landowner he is in dispute with. Moving between the islands in a 'ship or great war bark' equipped with a battery of brass and iron cannon, they eventually come to Muness, where they find he has taken refuge. They prepare to land guns from the ship to besiege the castle, but unaccountably withdraw before being able to attack, supposedly due to some sort of warning being sent coincidentally to the Earl from mainland Scotland<sup>57</sup>. The ship is presumably the earl's pirate frigate, the *Dunkirker* (see above, **1604**), as Captain Allan Lenton, documented as her commanding officer two years earlier, is once again recorded as the leader of the expedition. The earl's gunner, trumpeter and fiddler who accompany him may be performing their roles in his crew.

**1609** - Earl Patrick is arrested by the royal authorities. The overthrow of his nephew leaves Laurence Bruce in essentially unchallenged control of Muness Castle and the property he has built up in Shetland. After some forty years on Orkney, and now approaching the age of seventy, he can now enjoy a retirement of sorts.

**1610** - Laurence Bruce bequeaths Muness and the rest of his Shetland property to his second son, Andrew.<sup>58</sup> The charter also gives a glimpse of changes to the landscape around the castle, as the lands of Muness, Scollaytoft and Netherhoull are said to lie 'within the dykes of Mowanes', and to be 'occupied' by the laird personally. These phrases imply the creation of a substantial area of arable demesne. These lands are valued at 72 marks - a tremendous figure for a single farm on Shetland in this period - and although the income is only said to be six pennies per mark, this is evidently an abstract valuation, implying a considerable revenue. The castle and the surrounding demesne stood at the centre of a much larger complex of territory, comprising thirty-six named properties in Unst with a combined valuation of a little over a hundred marks, and much more elsewhere in Shetland.

**1617** - Laurence Bruce dies and his second son, Andrew, inherits Muness. Andrew seems to carry out repairs or alterations, for his initials were once visible below the south-west turret and appear on a brass door-knocker, which was noted having been removed to Sand Lodge, Sumburgh.

**1627** - During a war against Spain and France, Shetland is raided by a squadron of enemy ships, identified as either Spanish navy vessels or

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<sup>57</sup> *Shetland Docs.* vol. ii. No. 475, p. 233, also printed in abbreviated form in *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, Register of the Privy Council of Scotland 1607-1610*, 1st ser. vol. vii, ed. D. Masson (Edinburgh 1885), p. 255.

<sup>58</sup> *Shetland Docs.* vol. ii, No. 503, p. 246

privateers from Dunkirk. The castle is attacked and apparently burnt by them, destroying all of Andrew Bruce's writs and documents in the process.<sup>59</sup> The archaeological evidence indicates that the castle continues to be inhabited in some form, for timber floors are laid over the hall's stone paving.

**1713** – The Bruces lease the property to the Dutch East India Company for four months to store the cargo salvaged from the wreck of their ship *Rynenburgh*. Five years later (1718) the family sell the castle. An inventory taken at the time makes for sorry reading, for it lists a parcel of old pewter, one old small brewing kettle, a parcel of old leather, and timber chairs. The use of the castle thereafter is unknown, but archaeological evidence suggests it was abandoned by 1750. It was certainly roofless in 1774.

**1792** - Muness is visited by Lieutenant Edward Columbine of the Royal Navy, a leading naval cartographer who is notable for making many illustrations and naval charts in the course of his career. Available sources do not, however, make clear whether this visit was an official surveying expedition, or simply a holiday after his separation from his adulterous wife the previous year. His illustration shows the castle's masonry intact to the wallhead, and is an important source for the arrangement of the upper storey, though the roof has collapsed. Columbine notes the contrast between the dereliction of the building and the hopes expressed in the inscription above the door; he also records a local tradition that Bruce 'had been obliged to fly from Scotland'. Columbine is appointed as commanding officer of the cutter HMS *Resolution* in October 1792, and returns to Unst in January 1795, where he produces an official coastal chart, triangulates the location of the castle to assist with navigation, and produces an exact survey of the outer headland of Muness Point (though 'the inclemency of the weather' prevents him precisely charting many other landmarks or the rest of the Unst coastline south of Balta Sound). In 1802 he presents his sketches and notes from Muness and Scalloway to the Scottish soldier-antiquary Henry Hutton. He later rises to the rank of Commodore, plays a

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<sup>59</sup> *Shetland Documents*, vol. ii., p. xix. Steve Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas? Scottish Maritime Warfare 1513-1713* (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2010), p. 170, citing respectively NRS CS.7/480, ff.277-9 (the Court of Session Register of Acts and Decrees), and Orkney Archives, Bruce Charter, D38/1655, 1627; cf. *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 2nd Series*, ed. D. Masson and P. Hume Brown (8 vols., General Register House: Edinburgh 1899-1908), vol. ii., pp. 44, 47, 65, 605; the reference in *Shetland Docs.* also cites p. 184 of this volume, which does not appear to contain anything of relevance; probably a few weeks later, a Dutch ship, the *White Falcon* of Enkhuizen, was driven ashore on Unst, where the owners claimed the ship had been plundered by local people, hampering their salvage efforts, but the locals complained of robberies by the "merchants of Amsterdam", cf. *ibid.*, pp. 122, 124, 139

leading role in the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade, and becomes Governor of Sierra Leone, where he dies in 1811.<sup>60</sup>

**1793** - The entry for the parish of Unst in the *Old Statistical Account* devotes an extended antiquarian footnote to the island's brochs and the 'ruinous feudal castle' at Muness, containing a brief description of the building, and repeating the tradition that Laurence Bruce fled to the island, 'having slain a neighbour in an affray'.<sup>61</sup>

**1806** - Charles Fothergill visits Muness as part of a tour of the Northern Isles, which he intends to use as the basis for a lavish travel book:

'the walls of this edifice are yet in very tolerable repair - injur'd more by the people than time, and apartments might be rendered habitable at no great expense. The roof is however entirely gone. Kitchen convenient and in a very perfect state. The masonry is so good that it is probable artists were brought from Scotland. Inhabited within these 60 years.'

Fothergill was a profligate Quaker polymath, whose series of failed careers included novelist, actor, horse-breeder, journalist and, briefly, a leading Canadian politician in the 1820s. His chief ability is agreed to have been as a naturalist and illustrator; a talent which he evidently inherited from his uncle William Forbes, a notable traveller in India.<sup>62</sup>

**1855** - A watercolour shows the ruin still with its uppermost storey largely intact. Sometime after this it was removed, apparently to create the present enclosing wall<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> The annotated drawing is in Edinburgh, Advocates Library 30.5.23, vol. 2 No. 186 [online at <https://digital.nls.uk/hutton-drawings/archive/74601594>, accessed 10 Mar 2020]; a short biography of Columbine is provided by C.Terrell, "Columbine, Edward Henry (1763-1811)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP: Oxford 2004, rev. 2015) [online at <https://doi-org.nls.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64853>, accessed 10 Mar 2020]; for further details of his separation from his first wife, see *The London Chronicle*, vol. 87 No. 6411, (April 1-3 1800), p. 318; the Unst survey was published as E.H. Columbine *A Part of the N.E. Coast of the Shetland Isles, Surveyed in Jan'y 1795* (Aaron Arrowsmith: London, 1795), and is also referred to by A.H.W. Robinson, *Marine Cartography in Britain: A History of the Sea Chart to 1855* (Leicester UP: Leicester 1962), p. 186

<sup>61</sup> *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, ed. Sir J. Sinclair, Bt., (21 vols., Wm. Creech: Edinburgh, 1791-1799), vol. v., p. 200

<sup>62</sup> James L. Baillie, Jr., "Charles Fothergill", *Canadian History Review* 25 (1944), pp 376-96, Paul Romney, "Fothergill, Charles", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography. Volume VII. 1836 to 1850* (University of Toronto/Université Laval: Toronto, 1988), pp. 317-321); his manuscript "A voyage to the Northern Isles of Great Britain; comprehending the Orkneys, Shetland, Fula and Fair Isle. 1806", is University of Toronto, MS Coll. 140, Vols. 13-14, with additional notes and drawings in Vol. 30 and Box 49

<sup>63</sup> The watercolour is noted in unpublished Historic Scotland ISCS, 2006; there are no further details given.



1956 - The castle is entrusted into State care and masonry consolidation follows.



*Figure 12: Muness Castle in c.1930, prior to the consolidation works which followed the site entering State care in 1956. The mound to the south of the castle is visible behind the haystack, in the bottom left-hand corner of the image © Crown copyright: HES.*

1959 - the Ministry of Works install the present entrance doorway, the original having been removed well before the castle came into State care. The present doorway was rescued from an abandoned house at Old Lund. This doorway has generally been considered to be of later date (c. 1700) than the Muness original would have been. However, if compared to the original doorways removed from **Scalloway Castle** to the Haa of Sand, it is not inconceivable that it does in fact date from c. 1598.