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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

BOTHWELL CASTLE



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BOTHWELL CASTLE

SYNOPSIS

Bothwell Castle overlooks the River Clyde, midway between the towns of Bothwell (south) and Uddingston (north), and 9 miles SSE of Glasgow.

The castle is one of the outstanding monuments of the medieval period in Scotland. Its oldest part is also the most remarkable - the great donjon built by the Murrays (Morays), lords of Bothwell, in the later 13th century; their mightily impressive circular keep dominates the complex to this day. Archaeological excavation in the 1930s suggested that much of the vast outer curtain wall, with its formidable twin-towered gatehouse, was unfinished at the outbreak of the Wars of Independence in 1296.

The castle endured numerous sieges during those Wars, and the great donjon in particular suffered as a consequence. In 1362 Joanna, heiress of the Murray fortune, married Archibald Douglas, the future 3rd Earl of Black Douglas, and together rebuilt and extended the castle; their son, Archibald, 4th Earl and Duke of Touraine, continued the reconstruction. When the castle was finally abandoned as a noble residence c.1700, some of the stonework was re-used to build 'new' Bothwell Castle (this later mansion was demolished in 1926), including most regrettably the 3rd Earl's lofty rectangular tower house at the NE corner of the complex. However, considerable, and significant, elements remain, including most notably the 4th Earl's great hall, and substantial stretches of the great curtain wall topped by impressive and innovative crenellations.

Bothwell Castle was entrusted into State care in 1935.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- **1141** – David I invites his godson, David Olifard, a tenant on his English Honour of Huntingdon, to settle in Scotland, granting him the lordship of **Smailholm**. During Malcolm IV's reign (1153-65) David Olifard is given the much more wealthy lordship of Bothwell (comprising the land between the North and South Calder Water, on the east bank of the River Clyde). He is also made Justiciar (chief law officer) of Lothian. His residence is presumed to be beside the ancient parish church in Bothwell itself.
- **1242** – David Olifard's son, Walter, dies and Bothwell passes to his son-in-law, Walter of Moray, whose main seat is at Petty, east of Inverness. He too becomes Justiciar of Lothian. (Around this time an Augustinian priory is founded at Blantyre, on the south bank of the Clyde directly opposite Bothwell, by Earl Patrick of Dunbar. It is not clear what the relationship was between the two, if any, but a tunnel (not in State care), formed of fine red sandstone, appears to run under the Clyde linking the two.)
- **1278** – Walter dies. Either he or his son, William, known as 'le Riche' because of his great wealth, builds the new castle. The structure takes the form of a great stone curtain-walled enclosure, with a twin-towered gatehouse at the main (north-facing) entrance and a mighty stone donjon, or keep, at the SW corner, overlooking the Clyde.

- **1296** – Edward I of England invades Scotland and defeats the Scottish Host at the Battle of Dunbar, capturing Sir William Murray and his nephew and heir, Andrew, in the process. Bothwell Castle falls into English hands.
- **1297** – Andrew Murray escapes from Carlisle Castle and, with William Wallace, leads the Scots to victory at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Two years later, after a 14-month siege, Bothwell is recaptured.
- **1301** – Bothwell is retaken by the English in less than a month. Edward I, commanding in person, entrusts the castle to Sir Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke. (The name 'Valence Tower' has long been applied to the great donjon.)
- **1314** – On the eve of the Battle of Bannockburn the castle is still in English hands, manned by a 60-strong garrison commanded by Sir Walter FitzGilbert de Homeldone (Hamilton). Following the English defeat, the rump of the English cavalry, headed by Edward II's joint-commander, Sir Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, make for Bothwell, but are soon surrounded by Edward Bruce, King Robert's brother, and his men. The English knights surrender and are ransomed. Hereford alone is exchanged for King Robert's queen, Elizabeth, his sister, Mary, daughter, Marjorie, and Robert Wishart, Bishop of **Glasgow**. King Robert orders that the castle be rendered militarily useless, and the parlous state of the stone curtain wall and gatehouse may be the result.
- **1336** – soon after the start of the second War of Independence, Bothwell again falls into English hands. Major repairs are carried out, under the supervision of Master John of Kelburne. (The fireplace in the cellar under the later-14th-century great hall could well be his workmanship.) Edward III stays here later in the year but withdraws to Newcastle before Christmas.
- **1337 (March)** – Sir Andrew Murray of Bothwell, son of the victor of Stirling Bridge, retakes the castle. He too carries out demolition works, and the loss of half of the great donjon – 'that stalwart toure' - is probably down to him.
- **1362** – Lady Joanna, widow of Sir Thomas Murray of Bothwell, marries Archibald Douglas, known as 'the Grim', illegitimate son of 'the Good Sir James of Douglas', the late King Robert's great friend. He becomes Lord of Galloway (1369) and 3rd Earl of Douglas (1388). During this time he embarks on rebuilding the shattered castle, which becomes his principal seat. (**Threave Castle** is his Galloway residence.) The large rectangular tower house (now foundations only) is most probably his.
- **1398** – Earl Archibald and Countess Joanna receive papal permission to elevate Bothwell parish church into a collegiate church, dedicated to St Bride's. They attend the marriage therein of their daughter Elizabeth to Robert III's eldest son, the Duke of Rothesay. In **1400** Earl Archibald dies at **Threave**, and is laid to rest not in **St Bride's Church, Douglas**, where his father was interred, but in Bothwell Collegiate Church.
- **early 15th century** – Archibald, 4th Earl, continues his father's rebuilding of Bothwell Castle, even though he makes his main residence **Edinburgh Castle**. The works include a new great hall and a new towered curtain wall topped with innovative crenellations. It is possible that John Morow, the French master-mason, working in Scotland at the time (certainly at **Melrose Abbey** but also most probably also at **Lincluden Collegiate Church** for the 4th Earl and his Countess), is involved in the reconstruction work.

- **1455** – The 9th, and last, Earl of Douglas flees to England after a bitter struggle with James II. Bothwell Castle seems not to have played a leading role in the ‘showdown’ but is annexed to the Crown along with all the other forfeited Black Douglas residences, including **Threave**. A succession of royal keepers is tasked to manage the property.
- **1492** – Archibald Douglas, 5th Earl of Angus, is granted Bothwell Castle in exchange for relinquishing **Hermitage Castle**. James IV visits on several occasions. Repairs are periodically carried out. The row of windows along the courtyard wall of the great hall may date from this time.
- **1669** – Archibald Douglas, 1st Earl of Forfar, acquires Bothwell. Around **1700** he builds a new Palladian mansion, also called Bothwell Castle, a short distance to the north. The workmen re-use stonework taken from the old castle in constructing it, and the virtual disappearance of Archibald the Grim’s great tower house may be due to this. Baronial life at old Bothwell Castle ends.
- **1712** – Archibald Douglas dies in his new mansion. His widow also dies there in **1740**.
- **c.1750** – Paul Sandby, the English-born water-colourist, working with William Roy on producing the Military Survey of Scotland, visits and paints the castle with the Clyde in the foreground. It helps inspire others to visit the attractive ruins, among them the Wordsworths and Coleridge in **1803**.
- **1870s** – Bothwell Castle and Bothwell Park Collieries are opened by William Baird & Co., of Coatbridge.
- **1926** – The ‘new’ Bothwell Castle is demolished, the victim of subsidence from coal-mining. The original Bothwell Castle proves more robust and in **1935** its owner, the 13th Earl of Home, entrusts it into State care. (Bothwell Castle coal mine closes in **1950**.)
- **2005** – a new long-distance waling route, the Clyde Walkway linking Glasgow with New Lanark, and passing right by Bothwell Castle, is opened.

Archaeological Overview:

At the castle itself

Since the late 1800s there have been piecemeal excavations at this extensive site.

In 1888 remains of the north part of the 13th-century curtain wall were uncovered. Photographs taken c.1900 show the castle mantled in ivy and the courtyard full of debris. However, photos from the 1920s show the present courtyard relatively clear, and it is possible that the then owner, the 11th Earl of Home, had clearance work carried out in the interim.

Following its transfer into State care in 1935, clearance work was carried out in tandem with the major masonry consolidation works. This included archaeological examination of the main gatehouse and adjacent stretches of curtain wall. It was thought that the gatehouse and curtain wall had never been completed, but the evidence was never published and requires verification. By far the most significant discovery was a fine assemblage of pottery and other artefacts, mostly found in the cess-pit serving the latrine tower on the south side. These provide a valuable insight into the products in use in this part of Scotland; the majority of vessels were copies of 13th- and 14th-century English types, and were probably made in the

vicinity of Bothwell. [Note: all the artefacts are now in the collections of National Museums Scotland.]

In 1975 Chris Tabraham carried out a small-scale excavation in the NE corner of the courtyard, in advance of the construction of a timber stair giving access into the great hall. Other than some meaningless timber sill trenches, little of note was discovered, though the lack of stratified deposits seemed to confirm that the courtyard had largely been cleared in the early 1900s.

In 1981 John Lewis directed excavations at the then gap in the north curtain wall, in advance of the construction of a new stone wall to house a more secure entrance. This work revealed the rectangular gatehouse built for the 3rd Earl of Douglas in the later-14th century (demolished c.1700). (The gatehouse is now laid out in surface stone strips.)

In 1987/8 excavations by John Lewis in the courtyard, adjacent to the postern, revealed some evidence for the long-demolished east-west range there.

In 1991 excavations by John Lewis, in advance of construction of the present ticket office/shop behind the new stone wall, revealed part of a probable east/west range inside the 14th-century gatehouse.

In 1993 excavations in advance of constructing the new car-park 100 metres NE of the castle revealed nothing of interest.

The lack of record of the 1930s excavations, coupled with the limited extent of recent investigations, provide an unclear understanding of the archaeological potential of the complex as a whole. However, given the importance of the site it should be assumed that the whole complex still has much to reveal.

Beyond the property

Beyond the property in State care are undoubtedly other features of considerable archaeological and architectural importance. Of most interest is what lies to the south side of the castle, between it and the Clyde - and indeed under the river and on its far side.

In the drought year of 1976 Chris Tabraham observed two features: (1) the considerable remains of a timber jetty sticking up out of the water SE of the castle, and (2) what appeared to be the entrance to a tunnel, constructed in fine red sandstone ashlar, heading towards the far (south) bank. The discovery was discussed with RCAHMS, but it is unclear as to what record, if any, was made.

These features seem to relate to the postern (service entrance) in the south curtain wall, and have considerable potential to tell us about the provisioning of the great castle. The likely survival of organic material (eg. leather and wood) will add considerably to our knowledge, as well as provide accurate dating evidence (as was found to be the case with the harbour at **Threave Castle**).

The likely existence of a tunnel beneath the Clyde adds a fascinating aspect to castle life at Bothwell, and begs the question why and when it was built. A possible link to Blantyre Priory cannot be ruled out.

Finally, although the excavation of the car-park site in 1993 discovered nothing of interest, this does not mean to say that the entire area north of the castle is without interest. The chances of siege works and camps surviving is undoubtedly high.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

Bothwell Castle is undoubtedly one of Scotland's most impressive medieval castles. An 18th-century visitor even hailed it as 'the most magnificent ruin in Scotland.'

Bothwell is really two castles in one – the original castle built by the Murrays in the later 13th century, and the major reconstruction carried out by the Black Douglases in the later-14th century, after the Wars of Independence (1296-1356) had taken their toll of the original.

The 13th-century castle (Murray)

The original castle was planned as a great curtain-walled castle covering over 75 hectares (1.8 acres). Just how much was actually built before the Wars of Independence intervened is unclear. Today the greater part of the stone curtain wall, including its twin-towered gatehouse and intermediate towers, survives only as low footings. The gatehouse invites comparison with the great gatehouses built at Edward I of England's Welsh castles (eg. Harlech), and is mirrored elsewhere in Scotland at **Caerlaverock** and **Kildrummy**; a similar gatehouse was discovered at **Dundonald** during excavation.

By contrast, what does remain upstanding is monumentally impressive – a great circular donjon, or keep, with wing walls to either side, one of which terminates in a much smaller round tower housing a prison and pit in its base.

The donjon is awesome, even in its partially ruined state - almost 20m in diameter with walls over 4.5m thick and still standing over 27m high. Douglas Simpson, the eminent castellologist, justly hailed it 'the grandest piece of secular architecture that the Middle Ages have bequeathed to us in Scotland.' Intended to house the Murrays' private lodging, it was fitted with 'state of the art' defensive features and designed to be capable of being independently defended. Innovative features included (a) a stone-lined moat fitted with a sluice mechanism for filling/emptying, (b) an angled 'beak' that turned the entrance away from the courtyard, thus making it harder for battering-rams to smash down, (c) crosslet arrow-slits, giving archers a better field of fire as well as greater protection, and (d) a box-machicolation at the wall-head from which defenders could protect the entrance in relative safety. If that wasn't enough, the donjon had an escape route, leading from the topmost chamber via the parapet walk atop the south wing wall to the prison tower.

The donjon's interior, containing four storeys, still impresses, despite its partial demolition in the 1330s. The rooms were all octagonal-shaped, and surviving features of note include the room housing the equipment for operating the

drawbridge and portcullis, and fine traceried window in the topmost chamber. The quality of the stonework throughout – fine red sandstone ashlar – is superb. In short, nothing like this donjon survives anywhere else in Scotland.

The 14th/15th century castle (Black Douglas)

The damage inflicted on the castle during the Wars of Independence forced Archibald, 3rd Earl, to rebuild anew. He downgraded the donjon to ancillary residential use, and built a new lodging on the other (east) side of the complex. The rebuilding was completed by his son, Archibald, 4th Earl.

Unfortunately some of what they built was recycled c.1700 for use in the Earl of Forfar's new mansion close by. The chief casualties were the new entrance gatehouse at the centre of the new north curtain wall and, the biggest loss, the 3rd Earl's imposing rectangular tower house at the NE corner. Some upstanding remains of the latter survive, including a unique 'coat hanger' drawbridge protecting its first-floor entrance. To gain some impression of how the tower house must have looked we need only look to his great tower surviving at **Threave** (and to a lesser degree his or his son's tower at Newark (Selkirks); indeed John Slezer's illustration of it, made shortly before it was demolished, shows it to have been even more impressive. It was also one of the first tower houses built in Scotland, and was clearly more influential than other contemporaries, such as David's Tower in **Edinburgh Castle** and **Dundonald**, that exhibit features not followed subsequently.

It is clear from the standing building evidence that the 4th Earl not only completed what his father had started but radically altered it also.

Evidence for the former is evidenced by the attractive machicolated (slotted) parapet atop the SE tower, for this can date no earlier than the early 1400s. It is evidence of the influence that the 4th Earl's extensive travels on the Continent, particularly France, had on his castle-building. More intriguing perhaps is the possibility that the 4th Earl employed the services of the French master mason, John Morow, here. (Morow's work is most evident at **Melrose Abbey**, where the first two Douglas Earls were buried, and his hand is also suspected at **Lincluden Collegiate Church**, rebuilt by the 4th Earl and his lady, Princess Margaret.) The Bothwell machicolations, for example, were real trend-setters, and imitations were soon appearing across Scotland (eg **Craigmillar**).

The great hall block is evidence of the 4th Earl's departure from his father's vision, for it is built hard against the great tower house, in a position where it prevented the 'coat hanger' drawbridge from operating. This hall block is important as being one of only a handful surviving from medieval Scotland (others exist at Darnaway, **Doone** and **Tantallon**, whilst those at **Edinburgh** and **Stirling** have been much altered). Free-standing hall blocks were much more common but being of less substantial construction have mostly disappeared, and are only encountered now through archaeological excavation (eg Sauchie Tower, **Smailholm Tower** and **Threave**). Bothwell's great hall, on the upper of the two-storey block, has a fine dais window and evidence for a minstrels' gallery, but no fireplace (heat must have been provided by free-standing braziers). (Incidentally, in the vaulted cellars beneath is a blocked fireplace that could well be another, and rare, example of

English-built work dating from the Wars of Independence, such as can only now be seen at **Kildrummy, Lochmaben** and Roxburgh).

The fact that the formal entrance into the great hall is at the diametrically opposite end from the great tower house is evidence that the 4th Earl built a new private lodging for himself along the south curtain wall. Most of that building has gone, although the fine windows through the south wall, giving fine views south over the Clyde, survive. Much more of the Earl's chapel remains – another rare survival (only **Dirleton** has something similar, but far smaller) – and its surviving furnishings, including a sacrament house, piscina and holy-water stoup, are exceedingly rare features from a medieval secular context.

Later Medieval features

Features dating from after the Black Douglas era are worthy of mention. In the great hall the ten slender windows stretching along the upper part of the south wall are not unlike the so-called 'ladder window in the Presence Chamber at **Linlithgow Palace**, whilst in the south curtain wall are fine transomed windows, one of which led to a projecting balcony. The hand of James IV, who visited regularly, is suspected for both.

Social Overview:

In the past Bothwell Castle was subject to vandalism, particularly during the 1970s, but this changed when access was improved with the opening of the Clyde Walkway which was completed in 2005. This long-distance walking route, linking Glasgow with New Lanark, passes right by the castle, thereby encouraging far more people to visit the delightful woodland around the castle, both from the Bothwell end as well as the Uddingston end.

Today the castle and grounds make a valued contribution to the local environmental scene, and have occasional use as a venue for local events and activities.

Spiritual Overview:

The castle in its heyday had its own chapel, where the noble family and household worshipped daily. The survival of the Douglas family's chapel, on the first floor between their great hall and the SE tower, with its surviving liturgical furnishings, is a reminder of the central role played by Christian belief in the daily life of a medieval castle.

Today, the castle appears to play no spiritual role, although it is supposed to be haunted by ghosts (among them 'Bonnie Jean', apparently!).

Aesthetic Overview

Bothwell Castle commands a most attractive setting, overlooking a winding in the River Clyde as it makes its stately progress northward to Glasgow and the sea. That the castle is situated close to intensive urban settlements is scarcely apparent, for the visitor sees only attractive woodland, the occasional clearing and those eye-catching red sandstone castle walls.

Much of this natural environment is man-made, created in the 1700s for the designed landscape enveloping 'new' Bothwell Castle. It was this Picturesque setting that attracted distinguished early visitors, such as the Wordsworths and Coleridge in 1803. (Paul Sandby's wonderful painting of the castle from across the Clyde, executed c.1750, would have helped inspire these Romantics to visit.)

The castle itself is built of warm red sandstone, a colour that provides a nice contrast to the surrounding green of the grass and trees.

The enclosed courtyard, with its green sward, provides a secluded setting in which to admire the impressive architecture, and thus contemplate medieval lordly life. Dominating the eye is the mighty donjon, closed-up and inward-looking, and seemingly entire, evoking imaginings of wars and sieges. Vying for attention is the great hall, with its attractive 'ladder' windows, and the over-sailing SW tower topped by those eye-catching crenellations.

Internally, the donjon again steals the show, with its dark, mysterious spaces, and that exhausting climb up the tight spiral stair to the wall-head high above, with its fine views out over the castle ruins to the parkland and woods around – and to those stately waters of the Clyde.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- What, if anything, stood on the site prior to the Murrays' castle? We presume that the Olifards' residence was beside Bothwell Church, but there is no evidence to confirm the supposition.
- How complete was the Murrays' castle at the outbreak of the Wars of Independence in 1296? Archaeological excavation in the 1930s merely scratched the surface and the results were never published. A comprehensive programme of work should cast more light on the nature of the defences then existing, and the existence of buildings other than the donjon (most crucially the great hall and associated kitchen block).
- What was the detailed form of the 4th Earl's lodging, and was John Morow, the French master mason, involved in any way? A much more detailed standing building survey of the east and south sides of the castle is needed, coupled with excavation of its likely footprint. In addition, a comparison of the surviving architectural features (mouldings, tracery, etc) with proven Morow work elsewhere (certainly **Melrose Abbey** and most probably also **Lincluden Collegiate Church**) might well prove beneficial.
- What lay beyond the curtain wall? The harbour and tunnel certainly merit further detailed study, and the intense sieges the castle was subjected to during the Wars of Independence may well have left archaeological traces.
- What form did the designed landscape around 'new' Bothwell Castle take? A thorough examination of the documentation (family papers, plans, maps etc), coupled with a proper field study, is called for.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- Bothwell Castle is intimately associated with two of the greatest noble dynasties in medieval Scotland – the Murrays (Moray) and Black Douglases.

The upstanding architecture testifies to the grandeur of noble life in medieval times.

- Had the Murrays' 13th-century stronghold been completed, it would have undoubtedly been the mightiest lordly castle in the realm, equalled only perhaps by the Stewarts' seat at **Dundonald** (long demolished but discovered through excavation).
- Bothwell's mighty donjon is by far 'the grandest piece of secular architecture that the Middle Ages has bequeathed to us in Scotland' (Simpson). It is important in informing our understanding of the development of castellated architecture across the realm, both in regard to defensive and residential provision.
- The surviving remains, particularly the half-ruined donjon, are a valuable tangible reminder of the bitter and prolonged Wars of Independence that bedevilled the first half of the 14th century.
- The castle as reconstructed by the Black Douglases after the Wars of Independence is highly instructive of the direction of travel for Scottish secular architecture into the later Middle Ages and beyond. Archibald the Grim's great tower house, although largely reduced to foundations, was among the first of this new type of lordly residence to be built in Scotland, and its 'coat hanger' drawbridge is unique.
- The upstanding masonry associated with Archibald, 4th Earl of Douglas – notably the great hall, chapel, south curtain and SE tower – is of the first order architecturally, indicative of his close links with the French monarchy. The intriguing possibility that John Morow, the Parisian master mason, may have been involved, substantially raises Bothwell's status insofar as Scotland's secular architecture of the later Middle Ages is concerned.
- The entire footprint of the great castle complex offers tremendous potential as an archaeological resource. This includes the grounds beyond the property in care, most particularly down beside the River Clyde to the south where a jetty and tunnel seem to have fortuitously survived.

Associated Properties

(*some other Black Douglas castles*) – Abercorn (site of); **Balvenie**; Newark (Selkirks); **Tantallon**; **Threave**

(*some other extant major 13th-century curtain-walled castle*) – **Caerlaverock**; **Dirleton**; **Kildrummy**

(*other castles with extant great halls*) – Darnaway; **Doune**; **Edinburgh**; **Stirling**; **Tantallon**

Keywords:

donjon (keep); gatehouse; curtain wall; postern; great hall; chapel; latrine; tower house; crenellations; crosslet arrow-slit; drawbridge; well; siege; Murrays (Morays); Black Douglases; Edward I; Edward III; Wars of Independence; John Morow

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