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**Property in Care (PIC) ID:** PIC135

**Designations:** Scheduled Monument (SM13585)

**Taken into State care:** 1926 (Guardianship)

**Last reviewed:** 2018

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# CRICHTON CASTLE



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# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## CRICHTON CASTLE

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# 1 Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Crichton Castle is impressively situated overlooking the upper reaches of the River Tyne 2 miles south-south-west of the village of Pathhead. It was built by the Crichton family and later was held by the Hepburn earls of Bothwell, whose most noted son was James, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl, who married Mary Queen of Scots in 1567. The last noble resident was Francis Stewart, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell, who was forced to flee Scotland in 1595, after failing to kidnap his kinsman, James VI.

Crichton Castle consists of four masonry ranges dating mainly to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries which enclose a courtyard. The castle is roofless with walls largely complete to wallhead and visitor access is mostly restricted to ground and first floor levels. A short distance from the castle are the remains of ancillary buildings, most prominently a substantial two-storey structure known as the Stables. A rampart lies downslope to the west of the castle and a variety of earthworks are visible on the rising ground to the east. The stone for the castle was won from quarries sited to the east-south-east and south-southeast of the main building.

A short distance to the north-east of the castle stands the impressive collegiate church of St. Mary and St. Kentigern, founded by Chancellor Crichton in 1449. This building is not part of the property-in-care and is managed by a private trust.

The castle is staffed (2018) and attracts around 4,000 visitors annually.

## 1.2 Statement of significance

Crichton Castle is an almost unique illustration of the development of Scotland's secular architecture in the period c. 1350-1600. It is a castle which was enlarged throughout the later medieval period in response to changing architectural fashions and social expectations. However, as each successive phase came into being it did so without impacting significantly on our ability to appreciate the building work of the previous generations. The lack of further rebuilding after 1600 means that the plan and details of the building have not been disguised or compromised by later additions or rebuilding. Furthermore, it is closely connected to some of the most important events and individuals in the history of Scotland in this period.

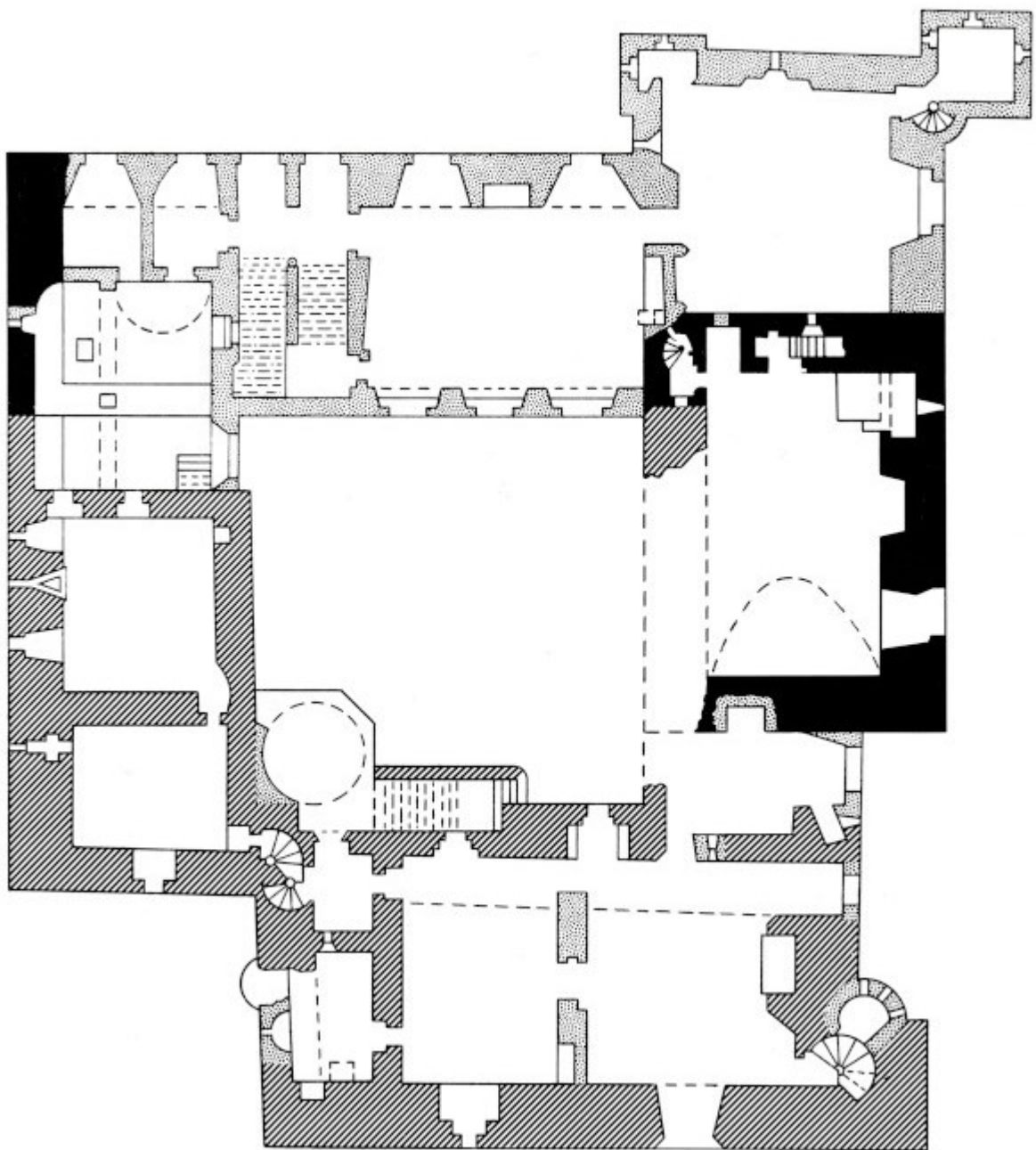
- Crichton is a remarkably well preserved castle complex, with upstanding masonry remains spanning two centuries.
- The castle is intimately associated with one of the towering figures of 15<sup>th</sup> century Scottish politics, Chancellor William Crichton. The juxtaposition of his castle and collegiate church stand as visible and tangible reminders of his power and position in society.
- The revolutionary design of the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell's building works, most particularly the north range, mark Crichton Castle out as a key milestone in the experimentation with Renaissance ideas in Scottish architecture as the 16<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close.

- Crichton Castle has huge archaeological potential as a largely undisturbed late medieval, high-status settlement, with extensive outbuildings and quarries.
- The castle's position within a bucolic landscape setting contributes greatly to its general appeal.

The above bullet points set out the most important aspects of Crichton's significance; a more rounded articulation of the various heritage values ascribed to it is given the following pages.

**Phased Plan of Crichton Castle:**

- Around 1400
- ▨ Around 1440
- ▤ Around 1590



## 2 Assessment of values

### 2.1 Background

This section provides a thumbnail sketch of the site and introduces some of the key figures who have had most impact upon the building. Further detail and a full timeline are given in subsequent sections of this document.

#### Early history

The early history of the site is relatively enigmatic, though there may have been a manor or castle of some sort here by 1315, when Crichton was the scene of the reconciliation between King Robert the Bruce and the Earl of Fife. In this period, the lordship of Crichton gave its name to a family whose members included several men-at-arms, a Berwick merchant, and the local parish priest, but it was not until the second half of the fourteenth century that they stood out from the ranks of local barons and affirmed their membership of an upper stratum in the kingdom's nobility.



14th century tower

#### 14<sup>th</sup> century tower – John Crichton

The earliest discernible portion of the castle is the tower house, built in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. While there is no definitive date which marks its construction, charter evidence indicates that during the 1350s and 1360s William Crichton is styled “lord of that ilk”, implying lordship of the Barony of Crichton; he also gains lands in the Borders and around Edinburgh. This indicates the family is expanding its power and influence and a charter “to John Crichton, of the barony of Crichton” is granted by King Robert III (reigned 1390 – 1406) which confirms their rights to Crichton. The building of the tower is thus usually associated with this time period.

The massive tower sits on the eastern side of the present courtyard and rose to at least three stories with a vaulted basement (horizontally sub-divided by a timber floor) and a lofty stone-vaulted first floor hall, accessed by an external stair. The floor above (only partially surviving) would conventionally house the Lord's chamber/bedchamber. Above this there may have been an attic room surrounded by a wall-walk, but there is scant evidence of the original/early roofline of the tower. Probably there would be outbuildings and possibly a hall set within a barmkin wall, remnants of which can be identified in the current west range.

### **15<sup>th</sup> century – Chancellor Crichton**

Already rising in rank in the late fourteenth century, the Crichtons rose still further after 1400. William Crichton (“Chancellor Crichton”) became one of the most prominent and controversial figures in fifteenth-century Scotland. At Crichton Castle he is credited with formalising the courtyard layout and constructing the south range and much of the west range between c1430 – 1450. The south range houses the hall, Chancellor Crichton's most prestigious apartment, which is set above the entrance pend and entered from the courtyard by a grand forestair. The west range accommodated kitchens, service areas and accommodation. A further indication of Crichton's aspirations was the building of the Collegiate Church, formally founded in 1449.

One unusual feature of the castle is its lack of defensive arrangements – there appears no serious provision for gunloops, which one might expect for a lordly residence at this date, until their insertion as part of Bothwell's work in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Late 16<sup>th</sup> century - 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell**

The most conspicuous feature of the castle is perhaps the north range recast in spectacular style around 1590 by Francis Stewart, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Bothwell, particularly in its internal/courtyard façade. Here a ground floor loggia sees columns support an arcaded façade studded with diamond-rusticated ashlar. The sophisticated planning and execution of the north range is further detailed at 2.4 below.

Set obliquely to the south is a two-storey pitch-roof block with elaborate and unusual horse-shoe shaped doors in either gable – this is interpreted as a stable block with accommodation above and is also ascribed to the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl's patronage.

### **Later history and abandonment**

The final phase which is visible today at Crichton Castle is its abandonment. The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl was attainted in 1593, and the castle and its lordship were a subject of fierce competition between various claimants for over fifty years. When the whole business was finally resolved, it was promptly sold (apparently to pay off the legal fees), returning to the heir-male of the Hepburn earls, Lord Humbie. The latter was then captured by Cromwell's

invading roundheads and imprisoned in the Tower of London. By 1659, Crichton Castle was evidently ruined and abandoned - and apparently disputed between a new set of rivals, Lord Humbie's grandchildren.

The castle was then a ruin from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In 1808 Walter Scott's epic poem Marmion featured Crichton as a key location and it thus became a noted tourist site. In 1926 the castle came into state care. Further research is required to illuminate the story of the castle from the 1650s to the present.

## 2.2 Evidential values

The primary evidential values of the site are inherent in the physical fabric of the structures, the surrounding landscape and buried archaeology. As noted above, the nature of Crichton's development, where major phases of work apparently remain largely intact, gives the castle high evidential value. The surrounding in-care area offers great potential in understanding the immediate setting and ancillary structures associated with the castle, particularly the putative castleton remains around the stable block. Presence of the nearby quarry adds further interest.

### **Archaeological study to date**

Little archaeological work has been undertaken at Crichton Castle itself since its initial clearance by the Ministry of Works in the late 1920s; this found an unremarkable assortment of coins and pottery, together with remains of a timber bed that had been thrown down the well in the north range. Nor has the castle been surveyed according to modern standards of standing building survey.

Small-scale excavations in 1985, in the tower house and the north range, revealed the south-east corner of the late 14<sup>th</sup>-century great hall that was probably built contemporaneously with the tower house; it was separated from the tower by a gap almost 3m wide. The excavation results hinted that the line of the south wall of the hall had been lost before the construction of the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century loggia although this must be questioned given that the two periods of building follow an identical alignment.

### **Potential for research to increase understanding**

As noted above, while the evidential value of the site is very high, particularly in regard to well-preserved and undisturbed remains, there has been little systematic study or survey undertaken to modern standards. Therefore the potential to increase understanding of the development and use of the castle remains very high. In particular, understanding of the complexities of the modifications to the hall and kitchen blocks, and the evolution of the north range would be greatly improved through such a survey.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century phase of Crichton Castle is a rare example of a securely dated and largely unmodified residence built by a leading Scottish nobleman. The great hall, although subdivided and modified, still retains its basic proportions and superb main fireplace, and details such as its doorway and



sculpted cornice. The adjacent suite of service areas is no less important, not least because Lord Crichton played a role in overseeing the public events of the royal household, and his own arrangements are likely to have closely followed those of the court.

The property in care includes not only the courtyard castle itself but also the area under and around the stables to its south, which appears to have comprised the castle adjoining the lordly residence itself, and the stone quarry from which much of the castle was built. If this is indeed the case, then Crichton's archaeological potential is significantly heightened, for the existence of castletons in particular are exceedingly rare; indeed, of all those castles in Historic Environment Scotland's care, only **Hermitage Castle** has an obvious castleton close by.

### 2.3 Historical values

The historical values of Crichton mainly emerge from its association with the successive owners of the castle. The following account highlights, in chronological order, the key figures associated with Crichton and sketches in a little of their lives and interests, in turn this can aid interpretation of the development of the castle and its characteristic features. A fuller timeline for the castle is given at Appendix 1.

#### **William Crichton, “The Chancellor” (d 1454)**

In the words of Sir Walter Scott: *“He was cautious without timidity, and enterprising without rashness, seldom failing in any of his enterprises, and always able to extricate himself from their more perilous consequences. But we are compelled to record, that this sagacious statesman was as destitute of faith, mercy and conscience, as of fear and folly.”*

William Crichton's rapid rise began when King James I returned from his long captivity in England in 1424, and for the next thirty years he would serve the Scottish monarchy as an administrator, advisor, diplomat, financier and master of ceremonies, ultimately gaining promotion to the peerage as the 1st Lord Crichton. As he was one of the leading figures in the turbulent history of fifteenth-century Scotland, his castle is thus closely associated with the events he participated in, and along with **Threave Castle** it is one of the few settings where the physical context of these events can be readily visualised.

The scanty contemporary chronicles make it hard to know for certain what role Crichton Castle played (claims that it was besieged in 1444 seem to be incorrect, for instance), but it figured prominently in stories told about the reign of James II in the sixteenth century, when the political crisis was remembered largely as a feud between the 1st Lord Crichton and the Earls of Douglas. It was said that in 1440, Crichton had lured the 6th Earl of Douglas into a false sense of security with two days of preliminary feasting at Crichton Castle in advance of a state banquet at **Edinburgh Castle** - concealing all the while that the banquet was to finish with the execution of the Earl and his brother. The notorious plot became known as “the Black Dinner”. A decade later, Lord Crichton was supposedly ambushed by the 9th Earl of Douglas while riding

home from Edinburgh to Crichton Castle - injured and riding for his life, he barely escaped back to the safety of his fortress.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Crichton, late 15<sup>th</sup> century**

The heir to these dynastic ambitions was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Crichton, who emerges in the 1480s as a close confederate of King James III's rebellious brother the Duke of Albany, and the lover of their sister, Princess Margaret. When Albany fled from Dunbar Castle to England, Crichton tried to hold the conspiracy together; but he too eventually fled his fortress, heading to the Highlands, and leaving Crichton Castle held by a garrison of forty men commanded by his younger brothers. An act of parliament records the colourful scene on 11th December 1483 when the sheriff of Edinburgh rode up, accompanied by a lawyer in a green tabard, and six medieval "policemen" with hunting horns and red-painted wooden batons. It was hardly an effective siege or blockade force - but it was enough to read out the formal legal document charging the garrison with treason.

It is not entirely clear how control of Crichton Castle passed from the garrison to the government, but the castle was confiscated from the Crichtons, and became a prize to be claimed by powerful associates of the crown. It was first granted by James III to his "favourite" John Ramsay, but with that king's overthrow in 1488, it was taken from Ramsay in turn and used to reward the most important leader of the rebellion, Sir Patrick Hepburn, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Hailes and newly-promoted 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Bothwell.

### **Countess Agnes, early - mid 16<sup>th</sup> century**

In 1511 Earl Patrick's young son and heir gave Crichton Castle to his wife, Agnes Stewart, daughter of the Earl of Buchan. This gift, enshrined in full form in a great seal charter, was perhaps more than a typically generous gesture however - Countess Agnes was a former mistress of James IV and already had a daughter by the king. It looks rather as if Crichton Castle was once again being used as a mark of royal favour.

Countess Agnes remained lady of Crichton Castle in her own right for nearly fifty years. She is not someone whose career has attracted significant scholarly attention, but she was unquestionably one of the remarkably strong women who stepped to the fore after the Battle of Flodden, along with Queen Dowager Margaret Tudor and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Crichton's daughter, Margaret Stewart, Countess of Rothes. Countess Agnes was a businesswoman with interests ranging from the Borders to Buchan, evidently heavily involved in the wool trade - and in sheep-stealing. The garrison commanders and other male retainers who served her at Crichton have names which suggest that they were recruited from outside the local area, through the Countess's family connections.

This independence is all the more remarkable as Countess Agnes was associated with a series of powerful men. As noted above, her first liaison was with King James IV, followed by her marriage to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bothwell - though when both the king and the earl fell on Flodden Field, she soon

remarried; her second husband was Lord Home, then one of the most powerful political figures in the kingdom, but after only a year or two of marriage, he was executed for treason. This time, Countess Agnes waited a few years before she remarried to her third husband, Lord Maxwell - the most powerful man on the Border, who soon emerged as one of the leading figures in the reign of James V. There are grounds to think that the Countess acted as the go-between in the coup by which the teenage king, with Lord Maxwell by his side, threw off the regency of the Earl of Angus in 1528.

Crichton Castle also provided a home for Countess Agnes's three children - Patrick Hepburn, the 3rd Earl of Bothwell, and her daughters by James IV and Lord Home. Later on, her grandchildren are likely to have spent some time there with her - the 3rd Earl's son later became the Lord Bothwell who married Mary Queen of Scots, while her daughter by King James IV later became the lover of King Henri II of France, and bore him a son: known as Harry de Valois or the Bastard of Angoulême, he was brought up in Scotland in the 1550s, but returned to France in 1560 to become the last great military leader of the royal house of Valois.

This period saw no great building work, but it was characterised by a series of subtler changes in the architecture and setting of the castle - by 1511, there were orchards and gardens laid out, and the forest of Crichton had been divided into enclosed woods and deer-parks, all redolent of a greater organisation of the landscape. A local school was established at the collegiate church, with two teachers instructing the boys of the barony in music and Latin grammar. Crichton Castle itself also appears to have been given a modest makeover. The windows in the south range, certainly secondary insertions, are probably of this date, showing traces of the heavy iron grilles set directly into the surrounds which were fashionable in the reign of James V, and can probably be associated with the reconfiguration of the accommodation into two superimposed suites for the lord and lady of the castle, imitating the new fashion set by royal palaces such as Holyrood and Linlithgow.

Countess Agnes died in 1557, and was succeeded by the most famous baron of Crichton Castle - her grandson James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell.

#### **James Hepburn, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell (c1534 – 1578),**

Probably the most well-known figure associated with Crichton is James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, who became the third husband of Mary Queen of Scots in 1567. There is, however, surprisingly little reference to Crichton Castle during their short and turbulent period together and they seem to have had little architectural impact upon the place. Indeed, Mary Queen of Scots' only known visit to Crichton happened in 1561 for the marriage of her half-brother to Bothwell's sister.

#### **Francis Stewart 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Bothwell, (c1562 – 1612)**

Much more closely associated with Crichton Castle is Bothwell's nephew Francis Stewart, who was eventually to succeed him as 5th Earl, and took

possession of the fortress on his return from a “grand tour” of France and Italy in 1582. Sir Walter Scott, saw in him a combination of the character flaws of all the castle’s previous barons: “*as unscrupulously ambitious as Chancellor Crichton, as profligate as his grandson, as treacherous as Ramsay, and as turbulent, traitorous and seditious as all the Hepburns of Bothwell*”.

In keeping with his proud, contradictory character - ultra-presbyterian and pro-Catholic, patriot and traitor, outlaw and royal favourite - Crichton Castle under the 5th Earl was both a feudal fortress and a peaceful retreat, a place for James VI to spend a relaxing long weekend, and a rendezvous for the 5th Earl to muster his private army of Border reivers.

Crichton Castle was clearly one of the 5th Earl’s two favoured residences, along with a mansion at Kelso about which practically nothing now seems to be known; he was responsible for the most striking and unusual aspect of the castle’s architecture, the north wing, with its dramatic renaissance façade which now acts as the focal point of the courtyard. The diamond rustication which covers the facade is a motif more normally associated with Italian *palazzi* and experts have long been puzzled by the question of its inspiration. For further discussion of the architectural achievement of the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl and possible sources of inspiration, see section 2.4 architectural values and appendix 2.

### **Period of abandonment**

Crichton’s ruined state is a testimony to the social shifts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which saw so many of Scotland’s historic baronial fortresses, such as **Bothwell Castle** and **Tantallon Castle**, become roofless and abandoned. A number of stories nonetheless attached themselves to the castle - preserving remarkable details like the unique Arabic loanword “massiomore” as the name of the dungeon - and it caught the attention of Sir Walter Scott, who seems to have acquired a fascination with its history, making it an important location in the development of the romantic movement and the nineteenth-century re-engagement with Scotland’s medieval past.

## **2.4 Architectural and artistic values**

The architectural values of Crichton derive from its embodiment of the aspirations of a great household which developed in response to local conditions but with knowledge of European fashions and precedents. This is most clearly demonstrated in the extraordinary diamond rusticated façade of the north range, but is evident in earlier building phases too. The closeness of several of Crichton’s masters to the royal household and their first-hand experience of European travel made Crichton a high quality and somewhat exotic product.

### **The tower (later 14<sup>th</sup> century)**

The Crichton’s of that ilk were typical of the “new men” of the later 14<sup>th</sup> century: families of established baronial rank who enhanced their status through a combination of military service against the English, advantageous marriages, and careers in the royal administration, and thereby achieved a

level of dynastic eminence previously restricted to a small cadre of earls and provincial lords. The construction of the great rectangular tower which still dominates the architecture of Crichton Castle from many angles was made possible by their increased prestige and economic resources.

Around 1390, a charter “to John Crichton, of the barony of Crichton” is granted by King Robert III (reigned 1390-1406). This grant is often referred to as if it marks the moment when the Crichton family became lords of the barony or the construction of the tower, but it is probably nothing more than a confirmation of their existing rights. There is no precise evidence for the construction of the tower, either, though a late 14<sup>th</sup> century date is probable. The tower house is among the first of the new-style lordly residences to be built in Scotland. It originally stood three storeys high, though most of the topmost storey has long disappeared. Constructed of rough ashlar, it is roughly contemporary with, and comparable to, the tower houses at Threave Castle and Craigmillar Castle in its solidity and arrangement. It was accessed from the north through two entrance doorways, one at ground level into a stone-vaulted basement and the other into the hall on the first floor. The first floor entry indicates there must have been some sort of structure on the north side of the tower to provide access the main entrance at first floor level, and the lower part of the adjacent north range of the courtyard has been identified as the basement of a great hall of approximately the same date, perhaps used for feasting with important guests, or else as a dormitory and refectory for the baron’s retinue. The largely missing south and east walls of the tower house presumably housed internal stairs linking the three storeys.

Beneath the floor of the first-floor hall, in the north-east corner, is an ingeniously arranged two-storey chamber. This has been interpreted either as a kitchen (comparable arrangements at Innerquharity, Whittinghame, Duntottar and Drummond) or a prison and pit (not unlike that in the tower house at Castle Campbell). If the latter is true then presumably the original kitchens were located elsewhere, closer to the great hall which then stood along the north side of the courtyard.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century tower (or more accurately, tower and now-lost hall) contains a hierarchical set of spaces which express the attributes of baronial lordship in both symbolic and practical senses - cellars to store the renders of the lordship, a dungeon for the imposition of feudal justice, a great hall for public occasions, and a private apartment with superb views across the barony of Crichton and beyond.

### **Chancellor Crichton’s work (15<sup>th</sup> century)**

The basic layout of the site as a rectangular courtyard castle centred on a new great hall above the entrance pend in the south range and is understood largely as Chancellor Crichton’s work. The south range comprised at ground level a new entrance into the courtyard flanked by large storage cellars, with a banqueting hall on its upper floor. That hall was approached by a grand forestair, now much decayed but still with a fine arched and heavily moulded doorway at its head. Although the hall itself was later subdivided, both

horizontally and vertically, it is still possible to appreciate the grandeur and opulence of the space, particularly its impressive hooded fireplace at the north end, and the enriched carved stone cornice running around the edges of the ceiling. The stone machicolated (slotted) parapets around the exterior walls are among the best preserved in Scotland of these innovative features newly introduced from France, comparable to that at the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Douglas's hall and towers at **Bothwell Castle**.

This rectangular hall-block has been compared to a number of “gatehouse-keeps” in northern England, which are probably ultimately of French inspiration, deriving from the three great gate-towers at the royal château of Vincennes, completed in 1380 (while the captain of the Vincennes garrison built himself his own gatehouse-keep at Chevenon in the Nivernais, completed in 1402). Within Scotland, a resemblance has been noted to **Dundonald Castle**, though it also has similarities to two fortresses associated with Crichton's cousin the Earl of Caithness, **Blackness Castle** and Dunbeath. It is hard to see it as a complete coincidence that in the 1430s Crichton also supervised the construction of James I's “Great Chamber”, an early phase of the rectangular palace range at **Edinburgh Castle** which embodies a similar concept of lordly accommodation.

As Lord Crichton had also served as an ambassador to Denmark, France and Burgundy, further continental parallels can also be sought. A clear French influence has been seen in the massive corbels built to support the battlements, and the relatively austere plan and chaste decoration is paralleled in some residences of the princely aristocracy such as the Château de Tarascon, though the clear rectilinear layout may owe something to Danish models such as the fifteenth-century phase at Elsinore.

Perhaps just as importantly, this phase of Crichton Castle is an almost unique example of a securely dated and largely unmodified residence built by a leading nobleman in fifteenth-century Scotland. The great hall, although subdivided and modified, still retains its basic proportions and superb main fireplace, and details such as its doorway and sculpted cornice. The adjacent suite of service areas is no less important, not least because Lord Crichton played a role in overseeing the public events of the royal household, and his own arrangements are likely to have closely followed those of the court.

We have the kitchen, unexpectedly located on the first floor rather than in the basement (though this is paralleled at **Doune Castle**), the adjacent pantry where the silverware was kept and where the servers would be marshalled before entering the hall, and the buttery for preparing the beer and wine and ale, with a floor hatch providing access to the cool cellar below where the barrels of beer, ale and wine would have been stored. There is also a stack of four residential chambers in the south-west tower, above the pantry but physically separate from the service spaces, and accessed by a spiral staircase leading directly to the lobby of the great hall - probably guest accommodation, they perhaps include the chamber where the young 6th Earl

of Douglas stayed for two nights before Lord Crichton dispatched him to his execution.

The **west range** is important as a rare survival of practically-unaltered “domestic” end of a fifteenth-century castle. The original plan had a vaulted storage basement, with a kitchen and pantry on the first floor, with access leading directly through to the great hall on the same level (similar in concept to Doune), and a stack of residential chambers in the tower above the pantry (presumably guest accommodation). Combined with the south range’s entrance lobby and buttery, and the wine/beer cellar beneath in the basement, with a roof hatch up to the buttery, we have a complete layout of the “ancillary” areas serving the great hall. It is not clear whether the west range was a slightly later addition to the south range (Simpson 1957) or an integral part of the design (Lewis 1997). A detailed survey may help answer this point.

### **Lack of defensive arrangements**

Crichton stands out as unusual among 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century castles in that it has no obvious provision being made for artillery defences. No defensive positions even for handguns seem to have been added until the 5th Earl’s corner pavilion of c. 1590. The reasons for this decision are unclear, but it had a definite effect - without even so much as a mid-fifteenth-century “crossbow gunloop” to intrude on the purity of its high-walled and battlemented design, Crichton Castle retains an external appearance that is emphatically medieval.

Lord Crichton also expressed another aspect of his aspirations in the collegiate church to the north of the castle (not in care), which was formally founded in 1449, and designed to provide a spiritual focus and dynastic mausoleum for his family.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell (late 16<sup>th</sup> century)**

The undoubted architectural highlight of Crichton is the new lodging created for the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell in the north and west ranges. Adapting and extending the earlier buildings, he introduced an ‘exotic beast’ at Crichton which still has the power to take the breath away. The building is remarkable both for its form and execution and presents a series of innovations which show Crichton to be at the forefront of architectural experimentation at the time. A new L-shaped façade rises off a ground floor completely occupied by a loggia comprising seven arched openings.

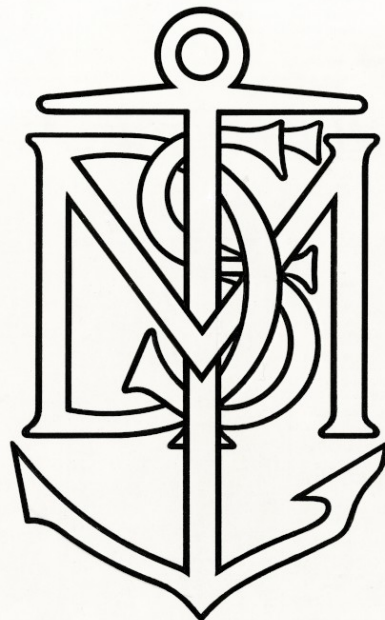


Interior courtyard façade

The courtyard façade comprises bold, diamond-faceted ashlars, creating a grid into which are fitted the window openings. The loggia is carried on multi-faceted columns with sub-Corinthian capitals, two of which are ornamented with the entwined initials of the earl, his wife and an anchor, referring both to his role as Lord High Admiral and the constancy of marriage.



Initials of the Earl, his wife and an anchor





The diamond rustication can distract from other details in the north range. The use of distinctly Scottish corbel-courses in place of Renaissance cornices is surely a visual pun on the ancestral “fess chequy” in the Stewart coat-of-arms, while the interior is perhaps just as important as the courtyard facade – an innovative scale-and-platt staircase rises through the full three storeys of the building, the foot of which projects through one of the openings in the loggia into the courtyard.

The floor above, with its modish dining room oriented towards the courtyard, and private apartments in a pavilion tucked into the corner of the quadrangle, could be based on a scaled-down version of the royal apartments in the Louvre. It seems possible that the confident and coherent overall design was drawn from direct knowledge of the French royal palace, and not just from pattern-books.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl’s travels had taken him to Paris and Angers, but his Italian itinerary is frustratingly vague, and on present evidence, it is not possible to show that he was personally familiar with any specific diamond-rusticated buildings. However, a broad context can be provided. Several of his known travelling companions visited Rome. In addition, two of his most important advisors were well-travelled humanist writers, and he also had a number of shipwrecked officers of the Spanish Armada in his retinue for a time, who would have all seen the similar facade of the Duke of Goa’s mansion on the waterfront in Lisbon.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the wider cultural context is Careston Castle, built by the brother of two of his travelling companions, a very different building which is also distinguished by its remarkably assured use of Renaissance architectural motifs, mediated in no small part through the lavishly-illustrated architectural handbooks of Jacques Androuet du Cerceau. It is unclear how far the conceptual parallel with Careston should be pushed, but it makes one thing abundantly clear: Scottish noblemen of the 1590s were more than capable of building in an uncompromisingly continental Renaissance style.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl contributed more than just the new north range lodging. The 15<sup>th</sup>-century west range was much altered also, to provide better service offices as well as improved horizontal access between the new lodging and Chancellor Crichton’s south range, whose single-height banqueting hall was divided horizontally to create an additional floor; a once fine upper balcony (now largely gone) graced the west elevation at second-floor level. The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl also provided a new entrance into the courtyard at the south-east corner. Generally, his work is characterised by a high standard of design and craftsmanship.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl is also the most likely patron of the remarkable “stables” lying a short distance to the south. This massive two-storey vaulted structure, noted both for its survival and scale, has a window light over the north entrance playfully horseshoe-shaped.

## 2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

### **Historic setting**

Historic maps show the area around the castle as woodland, however it is likely that this would have been an example of “Wood Pasture” a cross between woodland and either grassland, or as in this case, heathland. Such woodland had many uses both functional and recreational. There was ample grazing, whilst the tree cover gave protection to stock. In the winter the trees could be pollarded or coppiced, the young shoots providing fodder, a valuable winter resource, and the stouter branches used for fuel or implements. Open woodland also provided ideal habitat for deer and thus for hunting. Wood Pasture could well have influenced 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century designers of parkland landscapes.

The historic land use and landscape around Crichton is not well researched and further study could improve understanding of the castle, the approaches to it and the intended aesthetic of its landscape setting through time. The dramatic siting of the castle on a ridge is likely to have had both practical and aesthetic intent.

### **Modern day landscape and aesthetic**

Although situated with 12 miles of Edinburgh, Crichton Castle sits in a remarkably secluded valley – the upper reaches of the River Tyne, close to its source - that scarcely has any trace of modern development. The castle's immediate surroundings are rough grazing and naturally generated woodlands which lend the site considerable pastoral charm.

The mass of the building, with its varied skyline, dominates the valley. Key views of it are to be had from the formal visitor approach from the north (via the collegiate church) and from across the Tyne valley to the west, near Loquhariot.

The views out from the castle are equally commanding, though the fact that the wall-head of the tower house is no longer accessible to visitors, for health and safety reasons, rather comprises this potential. Nevertheless, the views are wide-ranging, particularly across the Tyne valley to the west. The collegiate church at Crichton to the north and the roof of Borthwick Castle to the south are among the few buildings that can be seen amid the rolling, tree-dotted landscape.

Internally, the castle's quadrangular courtyard is hemmed in on all sides by impressive buildings, most spectacularly the diamond-faceted façade of the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century north range. Each range holds a fascinating labyrinth of open and enclosed spaces, with stairs and doorways leading in every direction, thus encouraging exploration and bringing with them great variety and vistas.

Sir Walter Scott's epic poem *Marmion* (canto IV) has a particularly evocative description of the ruins of Crichton Castle that is still recognisable today:

*That castle rises on the steep*

*Of the green vale of Tyne;  
And far beneath, where slow they creep  
From pool to eddy, dark and deep,  
Where alders moist and willows weep,  
You hear her streams repine.*

## 2.6 Natural heritage values

The castle is noted as a winter and summer bat roost. The immediate area around the castle is surrounded by semi- and un-improved neutral grassland which contains a remnant of former heath vegetation of the surrounding upland. The site is part of Crichton Glen SSSI which contains rare lowland examples of old oak, ash and hazel woodland. Therefore the site is of considerable natural heritage value and management should plan to support these aspects.

For further information see the SNH SSSI citation [http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=463](http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=463) and the HES Statement of Natural Heritage Significance.

## 2.7 Contemporary/use values

The castle functions mainly as a visitor attraction and as a noted feature on a walking route.

The diamond rusticated façade is probably its most visually distinct feature and the link with Mary Queen of Scots and Bothwell probably the best known historical feature. Online comments generally appreciate the remote feel of the location, the walk up adds to this sense and from reviews people seem to appreciate the time to enjoy the site and read the interpretation at a leisurely pace.

The walking route is noted on the Council website, along with some interpretation and information on geology, history and natural heritage. The walk passes by Bothwell Castle.

The above remarks represent a snapshot of reactions to the place; further research is needed to fully assess the social and community values of the site.

## 3 Major gaps in understanding

- A more precise understanding of the phasing of the structure – a Standing Building Survey would be an important step forward in this.
- A better understanding of the “castleton” area around the Stables, and indeed the stables themselves.
- The wider landscape and its past management including the wider area of ancient woodland
- The relationship with nearby noble houses, such as Borthwick
- What, if anything, stood on the site prior to the building of the first (late 14th-century) castle?

- What form did the first castle complex take, particularly the nature and extent of the courtyard buildings (including the great hall)?
- What was the precise nature of the lodging built for the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell in the late 1500s?
- What form did the ancillary buildings around the stables (most probably the castleton) take, and when were they built/occupied?
- Further study of Countess Agnes and her household, the degree of agency she held, the basis of her influence and power.
- How does the local community view and value the castle, and how is it viewed by wider communities, visitors and those with a special interest - genealogical, historical or architectural, in the place.

#### 4 Associated properties

(*other relevant sites in the area*): Borthwick Castle; Crichton Collegiate Church

(*other PICs linked to the Crichtons*): **Blackness Castle; Edinburgh Castle; Linlithgow Palace**

(*some other places linked to the Hepburns*): **Bothwell Castle; Hailes Castle; Hermitage Castle**

(*some other later 14th-century tower houses*): **Craigmillar Castle; David's Tower, Edinburgh Castle; Doune Castle; Dundonald Castle; Lochleven Castle; Neidpath Castle; Threave Castle**

(*some other castles with loggia*): **Castle Campbell; Huntly Castle; St. Andrews Castle**

#### 5 Keywords

tower house; hall; loggia; rustication; scale-and-platt staircase; stable; quarry; Crichton; Hepburn; Bothwell

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## Appendix 1 – Timeline

**c. 600-1150** - at some point in this long period, the place-name of Crichton is adopted, meaning “the settlement at the rock”, or in a more direct translation, “crag town”. The people who coined the name spoke Anglo-Saxon or Early Middle English, though it is formed on an older Celtic toponym represented by the modern Welsh word *craig* (the Scots word “craig” is also related, though it is usually thought to derive from the parallel Old Irish *carrac*, *crec*). This underlying name, describing a landscape feature rather than a settlement, has been associated with the “outstanding eminence just west of Longfaugh”, apparently meaning Harle Rigging hill (Dixon 1947), but this does not have an appropriately rocky summit, so a large boulder or an outcropping is also a possible source of the name - perhaps the outcrop above the steep river valley just to the south-east of Crichton Castle itself, from which its building stone was quarried

**1140s** - Thurstan of Crichton is named among the witnesses of a charter by King David I to Holyrood Abbey. This is the earliest surviving reference to the place-name of Crichton. Nothing else is known of Thurstan of Crichton, but his forename suggests an Anglo-Norse background, and his presence in a witness-list composed of leading men from southern Scotland indicates that he was a man of some rank - probably a thane or baron, or just possibly the priest of an important church controlled by a local family. There is almost no further evidence for local lordship-patterns until c. 1300, when a family using the surname Crichton comes into view in the sources - its members include several men-at-arms, the parish priest, and a successful merchant in Berwick.

**1207** - Ranulph de Soules, Lord of Liddisdale and cupbearer to King William the Lion, is “killed in his own hall, by his own servants”, according to a contemporary chronicle. Sir Walter Scott, writing some 600 years later, records an oral tradition which avers that this incident took place at Crichton Castle, and was carried out to avenge the unjust execution of the chief of Clan Armstrong, by a kinsman of the victim who had posed as a minstrel to join Soules’ retinue. It is possible, as Scott suggests, that the tradition was originally localised at the Soules family’s former seat at Hermitage in Liddesdale, and only transferred to Crichton because the Earls of Bothwell were lords of both castles in the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, the tradition did contain a basic kernel of fact in perpetuating the memory of Lord Soules’ murder in his own castle by a servant, and as nothing else is known about the lordship of Crichton in the early thirteenth century, it is just possible that it was indeed the site of Lord Soules’ hall.

**1315 (23 August)** - Crichton is the location for an important meeting between King Robert the Bruce and Earl Duncan IV of Fife, who has recently escaped from England. The meeting completes the reconciliation of Earl Duncan with

the Bruce cause, and regulates the succession to his earldom. It is possible that the meeting occurred in a precursor of Crichton Castle, though the parish church is also a credible location.

**1330s** - the “Second War of Independence” is fought by the supporters of King David II against Edward III of England and his Balliol allies. The lordship of Crichton is held by Sir John Graham, the pro-Bruce chief of that family (d. 1337), but Sir John Crichton, a knight serving in the pro-English garrison in Edinburgh Castle, also claims to be “lord of Crichton”.

**1337** - The Battle of Crichton Den is fought near the Castle - it is sometimes associated with the wooded valley of the Tyne Water just to the west, though the modern place-name “Crichton Dean” is associated with the smaller valley of the Salters Burn to the east. In an attempt to break the Scots blockade of an English garrison in Edinburgh Castle, an English army marches up from the Border. The Scots abandon the blockade, and inflict a defeat on the relief army at Crichton - the most detailed narrative states that the mounted Scottish men-at-arms rout their English counterparts but are reluctant to attack the infantry without the support of their own footsoldiers. Rather than renewing the siege or squaring off against the English infantry, the Scots march south in an attempt to outflank their opponents, forcing the English to make a hasty retreat to block the threatened invasion of Northumberland.

**1357** - William Crichton is styled “lord of that ilk”, implying that he is lord of the barony of Crichton. In the 1360s, he also acquires the large Border lordship of Dryfesdale, two parish-sized baronies in Roxburghshire, and a smaller lairdship south of Edinburgh. A man-at-arms named John Crichton, perhaps his brother or eldest son, serves simultaneously as sheriff of Kinross and keeper of Loch Leven Castle. It is clear from these references that the Crichtons are rapidly expanding their power and standing in this period, and the tower-house which forms the oldest architectural component of Crichton Castle probably dates from around this time.

**c. 1400** – a charter “to John Crichton, of the barony of Crichton” is granted by King Robert III (reigned 1390-1406). This grant is often referred to as if it marks the moment when the Crichton family became lords of the barony from which they already take their name, but it is probably nothing more than a confirmation of their existing rights. Sources which date the building of Crichton Castle to “c. 1390” are based on the date of this document, and are thus unreliable.

**1424** – James I returns from exile in England. Soon afterwards, William Crichton of that Ilk is knighted and becomes a very important figure in the royal household and administration. In the words of Sir Walter Scott: “*He was cautious without timidity, and enterprising without rashness, seldom failing in any of his enterprises, and always able to extricate himself from their more perilous consequences. But we are compelled to record, that this sagacious statesman was as destitute of faith, mercy and conscience, as of fear and folly.*”

**1426** - Sir William Crichton of that Ilk leads a successful embassy to conclude a treaty of friendship with King Eric of Denmark-Norway.

**1434** - Sir William Crichton is appointed sheriff of Edinburgh and keeper of **Edinburgh Castle**. By 1435 he is also Master of the Household, in charge of the king's personal servants and apartments and the public ceremonies of the court.

**1439** – Crichton is appointed Chancellor of Scotland by Archibald, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Douglas in his capacity as regent of Scotland during James II's minority. Not only is this the most powerful of all medieval Scottish government posts, with control of royal diplomacy, legal processes and government salaries, it is also the first time that a nobleman has been appointed to a position normally reserved for bishops. Following Earl Archibald's death that summer, a power struggle develops for control of the king, in which Crichton is closely involved.

**1440 (Nov)** – Chancellor Crichton is widely blamed for the sudden arrest and execution of the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Douglas during a royal banquet in **Edinburgh Castle** (the infamous 'Black Dinner'). A sixteenth-century source claims that the Earl of Douglas and his companions were lulled into a false sense of security by two days of preliminary feasting hosted by the Chancellor at Crichton Castle.

**1444** - Crichton is deprived of the chancellorship and declared an outlaw, and is besieged for nine weeks in **Edinburgh Castle**. Many modern sources claim that Crichton Castle is simultaneously besieged and demolished by the Douglas faction, though it seems that the attack actually happens at another Crichton residence at Barnton Castle near Edinburgh, in August 1443.

**1447** – Crichton returns to favour under James II and is raised to the peerage as Lord Crichton. In 1448 he becomes Chancellor once more, remaining so until his death around 1454. In the 1440s he builds the nearby collegiate church of St. Mary and St. Kentigern for his family's religious use (formally founded in 1449).

**1448**, Lord Crichton leads an embassy to the continent, which renews the Auld Alliance with France and then negotiates the marriage of James II to Mary of Gueldres, grand-niece of the powerful Duke of Burgundy, returning in triumph in 1449.

**1450s** - the feud between the Douglas and Crichton factions revives. George Buchanan, writing over a century later, describes an incident where Lord Crichton is ambushed and injured by the 9th Earl of Douglas, but rides to safety in Crichton Castle. Although the civil war ends with the Earl of Douglas being forced into exile, the adult generations of the Crichton family are also obliterated during the conflict, leaving only the Chancellor's pre-teen grandsons. The lordship of Crichton passes under royal control until the eldest grandson, William, 3rd Lord Crichton, comes of age.

**1480s** - William, 3rd Lord Crichton has a liaison (and perhaps a clandestine marriage) with Princess Margaret Stewart, sister of King James III. This relationship results in at least one child, a daughter called Margaret. Later tradition claims that the affair was revenge for the king's seduction of Lord Crichton's wife or mother.

**1483** - the 3rd Lord Crichton supports the Duke of Albany's revolt against James III, and places a garrison in Crichton Castle, consisting of his younger brothers Gavin and George and thirty-eight other men. Some secondary sources claim that James III lays siege to the fortress but (as with the purported siege in 1444) this does not appear to be confirmed by the scanty early chronicles. The garrison is still holding out on 11 December, when the sheriff of Edinburgh visits to formally read out a treason charge against them, accompanied by a lawyer and six "king's serjeants" (a sort of royal policemen whose badges of office were a hunting horn and a red wand over two feet long). The 3rd Lord Crichton contrives to escape before this point, although he does not go to England as sixteenth century historians believed and some secondary sources still claim (e.g. Simpson 1957) - on the day before Hogmanay, another royal official tracks him down in the sanctuary at Tain in Easter Ross.

**1484** - at Parliament in February, the 3rd Lord Crichton is convicted of treason and his estates are forfeited by the crown. It seems that the garrison in Crichton Castle is still holding out at this point, and it is not entirely clear how or when James III regains control (an English garrison in Dunbar holds out from May 1483 until late 1485 or early 1486, though they obviously have the advantage of resupply by sea). Eventually, Lord Crichton's forfeited lands are given to one of King James's favourites, John Ramsay, who is made Lord Bothwell and Treasurer of Scotland (although it seems no formal document granting him Crichton is extant).

**1488** - following James III's death at the battle of Sauchieburn, John Ramsay too is forfeited. James IV grants the lands of Crichton and Bothwell, together with title of Earl of Bothwell, to Sir Patrick Hepburn, 2nd Lord Hailes. Successive charters hint at the development of the landscape around Crichton Castle during his tenure of the lordship: the "forest of Crichton" in 1488 was probably an area of native woodland and upland used primarily as a hunting reserve, but this becomes the "woods and forest" in 1498, suggesting the division of the forest to create areas of managed woodland, and by 1511, there are "woods, deer-parks, orchards, gardens", implying a considerable development of Crichton Castle's grounds.

**1492** – Patrick, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Bothwell, exchanges **Bothwell Castle** for **Hermitage Castle**, but retains the title of Earl of Bothwell.

**1493** - the 3rd Lord Crichton's son James is partially rehabilitated, but he is only allowed to acquire a northern barony belonging to his grandmother,



centred at Fren draught in Aberdeenshire. The Crichton family's connection with the paternal lordship from which they took their surname is not restored.

**1508** - Earl Patrick is succeeded by his son Adam Hepburn, 2nd Earl of Bothwell.

**1511** - Earl Adam marries Agnes Stewart, daughter of the Earl of Buchan, and a former mistress of King James IV, by whom she has a daughter Janet; Earl Adam transfers the ownership of Crichton Castle and its valuable lordship to his new wife (RMS ii. No. 3537). Although such generous transfers of property into the wife's name were not unusual in late-medieval Scottish marriage arrangements, it was perhaps no coincidence that this arrangement also provided a suitable residence and revenues for the king's daughter and her mother.

**1513** – Adam, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bothwell, is killed at the battle of Flodden, leaving a very young son Patrick, now 3rd Earl. Countess Agnes promptly remarries her cousin Lord Home, but retains control of Crichton Castle under the terms of the 1511 charter. She is probably responsible for a modernisation of the south and west ranges, characterised by the insertion of large windows fitted with strong iron grilles, which become fashionable around the second quarter of the sixteenth-century. The “captains of the castle” and other male retainers referred to in the sources often seem to be drawn from her own family's social milieu rather than from local Lothian society, and by the 1520s, her business interests range from Ettrick Forest to Buchan Ness, embracing large-scale sheep-runs and large-scale sheep-rustling.

**1514** - In “the lady's chamber” in Crichton Castle, the marriage of Countess Agnes and Lord Home is declared valid by the Provost of Crichton Collegiate Church. The witnesses include George Robertson, the captain of Crichton Castle, plus two other laymen, David Murray and Fergus Graham, and three chaplains, Mr. James Fogo, William Justice, vicar of the parish, and Philip Poderling. Robertson, Murray and Graham are not common Lothian surnames - Countess Agnes's mother was a Murray, sometimes said to belong to the branch of that family which held Falahill a few miles to the south of Crichton Castle, but all three surnames also recur beyond the Forth in the area around Tullibardine, seat of the most powerful Murray line.

**1515** - Lord Home supports the Queen Dowager Margaret Tudor against the pro-French government of the Duke of Albany, leading to a low-level civil war in Scotland. It is unclear how this affects Countess Agnes, but she accompanies her husband to spend Christmas with the exiled Queen Dowager at Morpeth.

**1516** - Lord Home is executed for treason. Countess Agnes appears to avoid any repercussions. In the early 1520s, she remarries to Lord Maxwell, a young widower who is emerging as the most powerful man in the western Borders.

**1528 (May)** - Lord Maxwell has incurred the disfavour of the pro-English regent, the Earl of Angus. Countess Agnes goes to court to apologise, and it has been suggested that she uses the occasion to help arrange the coup in which the teenage King James V, closely assisted by Lord Maxwell, promptly throws off the regency of Angus.

**1528 (Oct)** - James Guthrie, captain of Crichton Castle, is accused of rustling Lord Hay of Yester's sheep in Berwickshire. Guthrie is a Forfarshire surname, with Guthrie Castle lying a little over ten miles from the seat of Countess Agnes' brother at Auchterhouse, making it likely that James Guthrie was recruited by the Countess through her northern connections. Once again, the wide geographical range of Countess Agnes' interests is evident.

**1529** - King James V contrives to prevent the 3rd Earl of Bothwell from taking control of his feudal inheritance when he comes of age, either in order to divert the revenues to the crown, or else because he believes the young man is incompetent. In response, the 3rd Earl turns to treasonable negotiations with England, for which he is imprisoned and exiled. Crichton Castle, still controlled by Countess Agnes, does not appear to be affected.

**1536** - Lord Maxwell is appointed as a member of the six-man regency council while James V is in France.

**1543** - the 3rd Earl returns from exile, and unsuccessfully attempts to woo the Queen Dowager, Mary of Guise. Frustrated, he withdraws from the court and enters once again into treasonable contact with the English. Although he does not formally control Crichton Castle, he is accused of imprisoning a kidnapped royal courier in the dungeons there. Eventually, he is forced to flee to England, but he is reconciled and allowed to return in the 1550s.

**1546** - Lord Maxwell dies and Countess Agnes is widowed for the third time. By 1549, however, she has remarried to her fourth husband Cuthbert Ramsay, a younger son of the laird of Dalhousie, who serves her as captain of Crichton Castle.

**1557** - Countess Agnes dies after nearly fifty years as lady of Crichton; her twenty-two-year-old grandson James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, who had succeeded to the earldom in 1556, adds the lordship of Crichton to his inheritance.

**1559** – On 31 October, James Hepburn, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell, acting in Queen Mary's interest, seizes a very large sum of cash sent by Elizabeth I to the Protestant Lords of the Congregation. Crichton Castle, described as "Bothwell's chiefest house", is attacked in retaliation by a Congregation army led by the Earl of Arran and the future Regent Moray. The fortress promptly surrenders on 1 November, and a garrison of 50 "gunners" is installed (almost certainly meaning infantry armed with handguns rather than artillerymen). Bothwell refuses to hand over the cash, however, so in response Arran and his men plunder the fortress, though as the Congregation garrison are

continuing to occupy it, the structural damage cannot be particularly severe (John Knox claims that the only things worth stealing were some clothes and legal documents).

**1562** - Crichton Castle is the scene of the marriage of Bothwell's sister, Lady Janet Hepburn, to Lord John Stewart, Queen Mary's half-brother. Mary attends in person along with many in her court.

**1566** - Bothwell marries Lady Jean Gordon - her dowry is used to settle his debts, and in exchange she gains personal control of Crichton Castle and its lordship. We know something of their household - Bothwell's childhood friend George Livingstone occupies a prominent but unspecified position, but Cuthbert Ramsay seems to remain as captain, while Bessie Crawford, the daughter of a blacksmith and a former servant of Lady Jean's mother, is appointed as maid and seamstress (she also has an affair with Bothwell, and has his only known child). David Chalmers, Bothwell's chief political advisor and a prominent lawyer and historian, is appointed as provost of Crichton Collegiate Church.

**1567** – Bothwell is divorced by Lady Jean and almost immediately becomes Queen Mary's third husband but flees into exile following the capture of Queen Mary at Carberry Hill, near Musselburgh. Crichton is declared forfeit and passes into royal control. In 1568, however, the fortress and barony are granted, along with the ancestral Hepburn lordship of Hailes, to Bothwell's five or six year old nephew Francis Stewart, the son of Lady Janet Hepburn and Lord John. It is possible that the real purpose of the grant is to transfer control of these lordships to the powerful Earl of Morton, who at some point becomes Francis Stewart's legal guardian, and who thus controls Crichton Castle until he comes of age.

**1578** - Mary Queen of Scots, now exiled in England, asks her twelve-year-old son James VI to allow her teenage nephew Francis Stewart to inherit the Earldom of Bothwell. The king obliges, and Francis Stewart duly inherits the earldom, and with it his title to the castle and lands of Crichton is reaffirmed. Around the same time he marries his cousin Margaret Douglas, granddaughter of Countess Agnes by the only child of her second marriage, a niece of his guardian the Earl of Morton, and already a wealthy widow in her twenties. Soon afterwards, the new Earl finishes his studies at St Andrews University and departs to tour Europe, traveling incognito through England and being presented at the Tudor court before visiting Paris, studying at the University of Angers, and touring Italy.

**1582** - the 5th Earl returns from his continental travels, and transforms the medieval castle into a Renaissance palace, probably inspired by buildings he has seen during his travels in France and Italy over the previous four years. The new Lord of Crichton soon displays a buccaneering personality - Sir Walter Scott, writing in 1818, describes him as a combination of the character flaws of all the castle's previous barons: "*as unscrupulously ambitious as Chancellor Crichton, as profligate as his grandson, as treacherous as*

*Ramsay, and as turbulent, traitorous and seditious as all the Hepburns of Bothwell*".

**1583** - in November, the 5th Earl abandons his plans to spend the winter at Kelso (and his political flirtation with the exiled "Ruthven raiders"), and moves with his family to Crichton Castle, hoping that his cousin King James VI will attend the baptism of his eldest son there.

**1584** - in September, English intelligence reports that the 5th Earl has been placed under house arrest at Crichton (*CBP* i. No. 258).

**1586** – in January, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl entertains his cousin, James VI, at the castle.

**1587** - in March, after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in England, King James is again at Crichton Castle when English ambassadors come to Edinburgh to claim that the killing was carried out behind the back of Elizabeth I. The 5th Earl responds that if this is the case, the English queen should have no trouble issuing a formal apology and handing over the traitors responsible for Scottish justice. There are reports that the 5th Earl has also mustered at least 500 Border reivers at Crichton in order to attack an English frontier commander. Instead, they ride under King James's personal leadership to Dumfries in an attempt to arrest the anti-English local magnate Lord Maxwell. In November, the 5th Earl dispatches a messenger from Crichton Castle to Lord Hudson, the English commander at Berwick, warning him about attempts to provoke unrest on the Border.

**1588** - in August, during the Spanish Armada campaign, a Spanish agent rides from Edinburgh to seek refuge with the 5th Earl at Crichton Castle, but is nonetheless arrested by the commander of the royal guard. This is the first hint that the 5th Earl, although a Protestant, has secretly aligned himself with the Spaniards and their Scottish allies, the "Catholic earls". In December 1588, the 5th Earl is publicly offered a high command in the Spanish forces in Flanders, an offer he seems to be tempted to accept.

**1589 (January)** - the 5th Earl has four shipwrecked Spanish captains as guests in his household; he holds a dinner party, perhaps at Crichton, with a guest list including the Spanish officers, the Scottish privateer Captain James Halkerstoun, the English agent Thomas Fowler, and Sir John Carmichael, the pro-English captain of James VI's royal guard - the result being a "combat by words" with Fowler and Carmichael ranged against the combined forces of Bothwell, Halkerstoun, and the Spaniards.

**1589 (late March/April)** - the 5th Earl publicly falls out with James VI, and withdraws to Crichton Castle, where he begins gathering his reivers, raising 100 men immediately, and holding a conference of his associates; he tours the Borders raising more men, but returns to base himself at Crichton. This is probably connected to an abortive rebellion by the "Catholic Earls", but after its collapse, he is arrested and placed under house arrest in Tantallon Castle.

**1589 (June)** - the 5th Earl's house-arrest is moved from Tantallon to nearby Borthwick so he can make daily visits to Crichton Castle to supervise his building work there. After his release, he adopts a pro-English, ostentatiously presbyterian stance.

**1590** - in May, the 5th Earl retires from court, pleading the pretext of attending a baptism at Fast Castle, but instead goes to Crichton. In August, Crichton Castle is the setting for a minor legal transaction, when the 5th Earl's illegitimate brother Hercules Stewart and his wife Maria Whitelaw sell her lairdship of Easter Deans to John Murray of Blackbarony.

**1591 (Jan)** - to protect a close associate from accusations of adultery, the 5th Earl abducts a key witness from a divorce trial in the Edinburgh court building - physically removing him from the witness stand in the divorce court with the help of four ruffians, while James VI is presiding a High Court case in the adjacent main courtroom. Imprisoning the witness in the dungeon at Crichton Castle, the Earl threatens to hang him on the gallows for other crimes committed in his jurisdiction.

**1591 (Jul)** - the 5th Earl once again falls from royal favour, and escapes from prison in **Edinburgh Castle**, becoming a fugitive from justice. Although the keys of his strongholds in the Borders are handed over to the king at the start of July, the earl evidently retains control of Crichton Castle, where he passes his days listlessly with little more than a half-dozen companions, and spends his nights camping in the woods or else riding to Leith and Edinburgh, where he apparently retains safe-houses; on one notable occasion, he coolly dismisses the Leith magistrates when they attempt to arrest him, telling them that his dinner takes priority, though when faced with the threat of reinforcements he rides back to Crichton before finishing the meal. In August, however, Bothwell disappears from public view, as the king's pursuit of him grows more effective. The Lordship of Crichton is placed in the hands of the Duke of Lennox.

**1592** – after a year of low-level civil war, characterised by what seem to be a series of failed attempts to kidnap his kinsman, James VI, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl finally flees abroad in December 1592 and is formally forfeited in July 1593.

**1593** - Three days after his sentence of forfeit is passed, the exiled 5th Earl makes a dramatic reappearance in James VI's apartment at Holyrood and throws himself on the king's mercy. Although the forfeiture is not fully reversed, he evidently regains Crichton Castle, and he withdraws there in September, when his position once again become precarious, making plans to garrison and defend the fortress, while appealing to England for support against what he claims are Spanish machinations. In early October, there are rumours that King James VI plans to besiege the castle, hoping to kill the 5th Earl in the process, and the monarch refuses to reassure his cousin with a formal letter of protection or a written licence to go into exile. The English ambassador believes that the 5th Earl plans to withdraw from Crichton towards the Borders, and by December, he has certainly abandoned the

fortress. The castle is ordered to be 'rasit and castin doun' (clearly an instruction not carried out, though it may in fact explain the loss of the roofs and battlements). Although Bothwell continues in active rebellion until March 1595, ranging from the Border to Caithness, allying first with the presbyterians and then the Spaniards, it is unlikely that he returns to Crichton Castle. The Lordship of Crichton is subsequently disputed between various claimants, and ultimately comes into the control of the 5th Earl's stepson from his wife's first marriage, the Border chief Sir Walter Scott, "the bold Buccleuch".

**1618** - Walter, 2nd Lord Scott, son and heir of "the bold Buccleuch", writes a business letter about his plans to live at Crichton Castle, and the repairs and provisioning required; evidently, his family still control the castle at this date, although the 5th Earl's children are attempting to recover it (the NAS index wrongly attributes the letter to "Francis, Earl of Buccleuch", i.e. Francis, 2nd Earl of Buccleuch, b. 1626).

**1634** - after two decades of legal and political manoeuvres, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell's son, also Francis, is formally restored to his father's lands of Hailes and Crichton by Charles I, apparently as a piece of legal chicanery to allow the king to gain control of them himself, but the 2nd Earl of Buccleuch objects to the settlement because it violates an earlier legal contract in which the king pledged never to restore the 5th Earl's heirs, and the dispute continues.

**1647** - a final agreement over the division of the Bothwell estates is reached, as a result of which Francis Stewart's son Charles Stuart regains Hailes and Crichton, but due to his father's debts he promptly passes control to his mother's brother the Earl of Winton and her nephew, Dr. Seton, a Cambridge University academic, who is eventually recognised as owner of Crichton Castle.

**1649** – Dr. Seton sells Crichton Castle to Sir Adam Hepburn of Humbie, laird of a neighbouring barony, heir-male of the first four Earls of Bothwell, titular chief of the Hepburns, and an important member of the Covenanter regime. It is not clear what state of repair the fortress is in at this date, but Lord Humbie is promptly imprisoned by Cromwell, and the castle is evidently abandoned as a residence of nobility by 1659, when a local minister tries to remove a stone arch to build a gateway in front of his manse. Crichton Castle comes to be known locally as "Humbie's Wa's".

**c. 1800** - the local fox-hunt pursues its quarry into the courtyard of Crichton Castle, leading to a comical scene when the fox darts into the ruined buildings and leaps out one of the smaller windows on the western side - the hounds pursue, but come tumbling out in confusion. The young Walter Scott is one of the hunters who witnesses the event.

**1808** - Sir Walter Scott's epic poem *Marmion* is published. One of the most famous set-piece sequences is an extended verse description of Crichton Castle, where the fictional title-character (a double-crossing English ambassador, the villain of the piece) is brought by the herald and poet Sir

David Lindsay, and they are welcomed by Countess Agnes and her son, the future 3rd Earl.

*Crichtoun! though now thy miry court  
But pens the lazy steer and sheep,  
Thy turrets rude, and totter'd Keep,  
Have been the minstrel's loved resort.  
Oft have I traced, within thy fort,  
Of mouldering shields the mystic sense,  
Scutcheons of honour, or pretence,  
Quarter'd in old armorial sort,  
Remains of rude magnificence.  
Nor wholly yet had time defaced  
Thy lordly gallery fair;  
Nor yet the stony cord unbraced,  
Whose twisted knots, with roses laced,  
Adorn thy ruin'd stair.  
Still rises unimpair'd below,  
The court-yard's graceful portico;  
Above its cornice, row and row  
Of fair hewn facets richly show  
Their pointed diamond form,  
Though there but houseless cattle go,  
To shield them from the storm.  
And, shuddering, still may we explore,  
Where oft whilom were captives pent,  
The darkness of thy Massy More;  
Or, from thy grass-grown battlement,  
May trace, in undulating line,  
The sluggish mazes of the Tyne.*

**1818** – the artist, J.M.W. Turner, sketches the castle and collegiate church.

**1926** - the castle comes into state care.

## **Appendix 2 – A note on Diamond Rustication at Crichton**

Diamond Rustication is a motif used in Renaissance Italy, most commonly on the exterior facades of high status palaces during the late 1400s and 1500s. While many of the best known examples are Italian, it was also used in Spain and Portugal. Later, the motif was used as a trompe l'oeil motif as a painted decoration on plastered walls in many European cities.

Famous examples include

- Palazzo del Diamanti, Ferrara
- Palazzo Eliseo Raimondi, Cremona
- Casa de los Picos, Segovia
- Gesu Nuovo, Naples
- Palazzo Ricci, Jesi (nr Urbino)
- Casa Dos Bicos, Lisbon

Though diamond rustication is not unknown, it remains relatively rare and thus rather remarkable. The way the Crichton rustication is executed is somewhat unusual (though not unique) in that the blocks are placed one above the other in-line (much as a giant bar of Dairy Milk) whereas in most diamond rusticated facades the blocks are offset, creating a strong diagonal. Also, at Crichton the blocks are squared-off (again, rather like Dairy Milk) rather than pointed. In examples such as the Ferrara palazzo, the sharp point and diagonal are very much part of the impact of the design.

So far as is known, Crichton is the only example of diamond rustication over an entire facade in Scotland, or indeed in the rest of the UK, at a comparable date.

It has not been possible to pin down an exact source for the Crichton work or the route of its transmission. However, several possible connections by which the motif may have come to 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bothwell's attention are noted below.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl's travels had taken him to Paris and Angers and to Italy. However, his Italian itinerary is frustratingly vague, and on present evidence, it is not possible to show that he was personally familiar with any known specific diamond-rusticated buildings. However, a broad context can be provided. Several of his known travelling companions visited Rome. In addition, two of his most important advisors were well-travelled humanist writers, and he also had a number of shipwrecked officers of the Spanish Armada in his retinue for a time, who would have all seen the similar facade of the Duke of Goa's mansion on the waterfront in Lisbon.

While the diamond rustication is such an eye-catching motif, it is not the only outstanding renaissance element at Crichton: the scale and platt stair, classical ceiling panels and the loggia are equally evidence of Renaissance intent.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the wider cultural context is Careston Castle, built by the brother of two of the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl's travelling companions. While Careston is a very different building (and there is no connection to rustication) it is also distinguished by its remarkably assured use of Renaissance architectural motifs, mediated in no small part through the lavishly-illustrated architectural handbooks of Jacques Androuet du Cerceau. It is unclear how far the conceptual parallel with Careston should be pushed, but it makes one thing abundantly clear: Scottish noblemen of the 1590s were more than capable of making architectural statements in an uncompromisingly continental Renaissance style.