



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC120

Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM90107)

Taken into State care: 1913 (Ownership)

Last reviewed: 2015

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DUMBARTON CASTLE



We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.



© Historic Environment Scotland 2020

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House

Salisbury Place

Edinburgh

EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600

www.historicenvironment.scot

You can download this publication from our website at www.historicenvironment.scot

DUMBARTON CASTLE

SYNOPSIS

Dumbarton Castle overlooks the confluence of the River Leven with the River Clyde, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile South-East of the centre of Dumbarton. The royal fortress has a documented history reaching back to the 13th century, but Dumbarton Rock itself, the volcanic plug of basalt on which it stands, has a history of human occupation reaching back into the mists of antiquity. From at least the 5th century AD until 1018 it was known variously as *Alt Clut*, 'Clyde Rock', and *Dùn Breatann*, 'Fort of the Britons', the centre of the independent British kingdom of Strathclyde which emerged from the ashes of the Roman Empire to control west-central Scotland. (The place-name Dumbarton is derived from Gaelic *Dùn Breatann*). In the later Middle Ages Dumbarton Rock became an important royal castle; Robert the Bruce died within its shadow, and the young sovereigns David II and Queen Mary both sheltered there until ships could take them to France and safety during Scotland's long struggles with England. Thereafter, the Rock became a garrison fortress, its defences bristling with guns. It last saw military action as recently as World War II. Dumbarton Rock thus has a longer documented history as a stronghold than any other place in Scotland.

The twin peaks of Dumbarton Rock (the Beak and White Tower Crag), rising 74m above the surrounding mud flats, bear scarcely any visible trace of Dark Age buildings and defences, though these have been discovered during archaeological excavations. Little of the medieval buildings and defences, other than the Portcullis Arch and Guard House, survives above ground either. Much of what remains standing (notably the Governor's House, 'French Prison', powder magazine and artillery defences) dates from the 17th and 18th centuries, and illustrates a painful struggle by military engineers to adapt a difficult site to contemporary defensive needs.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- **350 million years ago** – Dumbarton Rock, a twin-peaked outcrop of basalt, is formed during a period of intense volcanic activity in the Earth's crust.
- **Iron Age?** – Dumbarton Rock is possibly pressed into use as a hill-fort for the local tribe the Romans called *Damnonii*.
- **c. 450 AD** – St Patrick writes to King Ceretic of Strathclyde reprimanding him for attacking Irish converts to Christianity. Ceretic rules from *Alt Clut* 'Rock of the Clyde'. Strathclyde comprises a huge swathe of territory reaching from north of Loch Lomond to as far south as Cumbria, from the Clach nam Breatann, in Glen Falloch, to the Rere-Cross, in the Stainmore Pass.
- **late-500s** – legend has Merlin visiting King Riderch of Strathclyde at *Alt Clut*.
- **late-600s on** – Adomnan of Iona and Irish annalists record the presence of British kings at *Alt Clut*.
- **731** – one of only two major secular places in Scotland mentioned by the venerable Bede, who describes *Alt Clut* as a 'strongly fortified British capital'.
- **756** – annals record the capture of *Alt Clut* by an army led by the Pictish king Oengus.

- **780** – the Annals of Ulster record the burning of *Alt Clut*.
- **870** – Vikings, led by Olaf ‘the White’, king of Dublin, and Ivar Beinlaus ‘the Crippled’, besiege the Rock for four months, wasting ‘the people who were in it by hunger and thirst’, before carrying off ‘all the riches that were within it and afterwards a great host of prisoners’. This is the last we read of *Alt Clut*.
- **c.10th century** – Christian cross slabs found on the Rock indicate at least ecclesiastical activity at this date.
- **1018** – Malcolm II, King of Scots (1005-34), sets his grandson Duncan on the throne of the client-kingdom of Strathclyde. At Malcolm’s death in 1034 King Duncan succeeds to the Scottish throne, and the ancient British kingdom of Strathclyde is fully incorporated into the realm of Scotland.
- **1098** – King Edgar formally concedes Argyll and the Hebrides to the king of Norway. The border with Norway now lies within 10 miles of Dumbarton Rock.
- **1222** – Alexander II (1214-49) founds a new burgh beside the ‘new castle’ of Dumbarton, then in the hands of the Celtic earl of Lennox. In 1238 the castle becomes a royal castle. By now Scoto-Norwegian relations are becoming increasingly strained as the Scots attempt to wrest back the Hebrides; Alexander’s new royal castle is doubtless part of that strategy.
- **1263** – Haakon IV of Norway leads an armada into the Firth of Clyde, which ends in stalemate at Largs, on the opposite side of the estuary. Haakon dies at **Kirkwall Palace** on his way back to Norway, and his son and successor, King Magnus, subsequently (1266) agrees a peace treaty with Alexander III (1249-86) that returns the Hebrides to Scotland. Dumbarton Castle is no longer a frontier post, more of a postern (back gate) into Scotland.
- **1296** – Edward I of England captures the castle and puts his knight, Sir Alexander of Leeds, in charge. However, after Sir William Wallace’s victory over the English at Stirling Bridge (1297), the Scots wrest the castle back and use it to imprison three English knights – William Fitzwarin, William de Ros and Marmaduke Tweng; freed in 1299, they are the castle’s first named prisoners.
- **1305** – Wallace is captured near Glasgow by Sir John Menteith, ‘the fause [false] Menteith’. Tradition holds that he is briefly imprisoned in the castle prior to being sent south to London and execution.
- **1329** – Robert I (‘the Bruce’) dies peacefully at his manor of Cardross, directly across the River Leven from the castle.
- **1333-4** – following the Scots’ defeat at Halidon Hill (July 1333), young David II and Queen Joan are brought to Dumbarton, then one of only five castles holding out against the English (the others are **Kildrummy**, **Loch Doon**, **Lochleven** and **Urquhart**). They are taken to France in the following spring.
- **later-14th century** – following David II’s return to Scotland from lengthy captivity in England (1346-57), he sets about rebuilding his royal castles, including most probably Dumbarton. The lofty, four-storey Wallace Tower (now a mere stump), located beside the North Entry (then the main access into the castle) probably dates from this time; it resembles **David’s Tower**, in **Edinburgh Castle**. The Portcullis Arch, securing the passage up from the Nether Bailey, is probably also of this date.
- **1420s** – the castle is described by an agent of Henry V of England as ‘a castell stronge and harde for to obtaine’.

- **mid-15th century** – major rebuilding works are recorded at the castle, including the rebuilding of the chapel of St Patrick (1456), long demolished but believed to be on the site of the Governor's House.
- **1489** – James IV, shortly after ascending the throne, twice lays siege to the castle, then held by its rebellious keeper, John Stewart, Earl of Lennox. The first attempt fails but the second succeeds, largely due to the arrival of the royal gun train from **Edinburgh Castle**, including the mighty bombard **Mons Meg**. King James subsequently uses Dumbarton Castle as a springboard from which to launch several expeditions against the rebellious Lords of the Isles. The town of Dumbarton becomes a bustling naval base, with ships being built, repaired and provisioned, presaging Dumbarton's important ship-building role in Victorian times.
- **1515** – in the aftermath of James IV's death at Flodden (1513), his cousin, Regent Albany, wrests the castle from the Earl of Lennox and installs a French garrison. Albany's subsequent journeys to and from France are usually via Dumbarton. In 1523 he arrives with 87 ships, intending to invade England. It never materialises and the last Scotland sees of Albany is when he sails from Dumbarton in May 1524.
- **1531** – James V uses Dumbarton as his naval base for his expedition against the MacDonalDs, deposed Lords of the Isles.
- **1548** – Queen Mary is brought to the castle by her mother Mary of Guise for her safety following the Scottish defeat at Pinkie. Whilst there Mary contracts smallpox and almost dies. After six months four French galleys arrive and take them to France. (When Mary returns in 1561 she sails into Leith; Dumbarton's days as a royal 'gateway' into Scotland are over.)
- **1563** – Queen Mary visits Dumbarton during a royal progress through Lennox and Argyll, and dines on salmon, eggs and white wine.
- **1568-71** – during the civil war that follows Queen Mary's flight to England, the castle is held by the 'Queen's Party', including the Archbishop of **St Andrews**. The castle is retaken for James VI (the 'King's Party') in the early morning of 1 April 1571, in a bold feat of arms involving Capt. Thomas Crawford of Jordanhill and 100 men making a daring ascent of the precipitous NE side. The Archbishop is among those captured and executed.
- **17th century** – the castle continues to serve as a garrison fortress – but only just. Buildings and defences are repaired, but only after much prevarication and cost-cutting - the most conspicuous survivor is the Spur Battery. The main entrance into the castle is by now from the south. The castle's role as a state prison also continues (Patrick Stewart, 2nd earl of Orkney, is imprisoned here 1612-14). In 1652 the castle falls without resistance to Oliver Cromwell.
- **1720s & 30s** – the continuing unrest in the Western Highlands caused by the Jacobite Risings, particularly those in 1715 and 1719, forces the Government of George II to refortify the castle, deemed 'a place of supreme importance'. Lt-Gen. George Wade visits (1724) and recommends major upgrading of the buildings and defences. The north defensive circuit is rebuilt in the late 1720s and the south and west defences, most noticeably the arched main entrance, King George's Battery and the Spanish and Bower batteries, in the 1730s, all under the direction of Capt. John Romer (also responsible for designing much of the artillery defence along the north side of **Edinburgh Castle**). Romer also designs the Governor's House, built in 1735.

- **1746** – in the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden, the castle is used to imprison notable Jacobite leaders, including Aeneas MacDonald, one of the ‘seven men of Moidart’ who had accompanied Prince Charles Edward to Scotland in 1745, and Sir James Campbell of Auchinbreck, who maintains that ‘the air of the place agreed with him and he much preferred it to any other’. A new powder magazine, designed by William Skinner, the Board of Ordnance’s (BO) chief engineer, is built on the Beak in 1748. (In the same year Skinner embarks on designing his greatest achievement – mighty **Fort George**.)
- **late-18th / early-19th century** – during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars further defensive measures are taken. The old North Entry is finally abandoned and blocked, and new artillery emplacements - the Duke of York’s, Duke of Argyll’s and Prince of Wales’s batteries – constructed. Additional buildings include a large barracks behind the Governor’s House (demolished early 20th century) and the ‘French Prison’. In late 1810, at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, General Edouard François Simon, captured at the Battle of Busaco (Spain), is imprisoned in the castle, probably in the Governor’s House and not the ‘French Prison’. By now the castle is something of a visitor attraction, attracting *inter alia* Samuel Johnson and James Boswell (1773) and Dorothy and William Wordsworth with Coleridge (1803); the last-named find a ruined windmill on the White Tower Crag, the so-called ‘Wallace’s Sword’ in the guardroom, and an ancient trout in the well!
- **1843** – Lord Lynedoch, Castle Governor, dies aged 95. He is not replaced. The castle is now manned by volunteers (including the 1st Dunbartonshire Rifle Volunteer Corps).
- **1847** – Queen Victoria visits the castle during her first visit to Scotland; she arrives on the royal yacht *Fairy* at a specially constructed pier on the south side of the castle.
- **1850s/60s** – the River Leven is deepened to enable ship-building to develop. In the 1860s the firm of William Denny & Brothers (builders of the *Cutty Sark*) relocate from the west bank to more capacious premises to the north of the castle. The world’s first steel-hulled ship *Rotomahana* (1879), the world’s first commercial test tank (1882/3), the world’s first turbine-powered passenger liner *King Edward* (1901), and the world’s first all-welded ship *Robert the Bruce* (1934) are all built there.
- **1884** – Dumbarton Bowling Club opens on reclaimed land (Castle Green) just outside the entrance into the castle.
- **1909** – responsibility for Dumbarton Castle is transferred from the War Office to the Office of Works.
- **1932** – a bronze direction indicator is erected on White Tower Crag by the London Dunbartonshire Association.
- **1937** – H M King George VI visits Dumbarton Castle during his coronation visit to Scotland.
- **1938** – the Blackburn Aircraft factory, producing Sunderland Flying Boats, opens on land immediately east of Dumbarton Rock.
- **1939-45** – during World War II Dumbarton Rock is used as an anti-aircraft battery. On the night of 5-6 May 1941 four high explosive bombs land on the Rock, the first enemy attack on the stronghold for nearly 300 years.
- **1953** – H M Queen Elizabeth visits Dumbarton Castle during her coronation visit to Scotland and plants a Japanese Cherry behind the Governor’s House.

- **early 1960s** – the Denny Shipyard and Blackburn Aircraft Factory close, leaving the area north and east of the Rock to become derelict.
- **1974-5** – Professor Leslie Alcock, Glasgow University, directs archaeological excavations at the castle. Valuable evidence for Dumbarton Rock's role as Dark-Age *Alt Clut/Dun Breatann* is discovered.
- **2000** - Dumbarton Football Club (a.k.a. 'Sons of the Rock'), founded 1872, moves from Boghead Park to new premises, the Bet Butler Stadium, on the site of the former Denny Shipyard close by Dumbarton Rock, helping to regenerate the area.

Archaeological Overview:

Professor Alcock's Excavations 1974-5

There have been no recorded archaeological investigations prior to those undertaken by Professor Leslie Alcock, of Glasgow University, in 1974-75. These investigated selected areas on both summits of the Rock with a view to producing further insights into the history of *Alt Clut*, the Dark-Age fortress of the Strathclyde Britons. The excavated areas were small in size, so the Rock's archaeological potential must remain very high.

The excavations unearthed a sizable quantity of ceramic and glassware imported from Gaul, Germany and the Mediterranean area in the 6th and 7th centuries AD, indicating that the Strathclyde Britons were part of a long-distance trading network. Structural evidence for *Alt Clut* was more limited - a timber and rubble rampart immediately outside (ie, NE of) the medieval and later curtain on the Beak; the rampart had been burnt and partly vitrified. Dated by radiocarbon to the 7th century, the rampart produced finds apparently from its destruction - including a Viking-era iron sword pommel and a Norse lead weight decorated with a glass bangle fragment of Lagore type - indicating destruction in either of the two recorded burnings of Dumbarton - 780 or 870.

Alcock's excavations elsewhere on the Rock found some evidence of later medieval and modern usage, including a dispersed hoard of English Edwardian coins on the Beak, and the remains of a WWII sand-bagged gun emplacement on White Tower Crag, thought at first to be a Dark-Age roundhouse!

Other discoveries

The chance discovery of three early Christian stones of 10th-century date during the demolition of a barracks behind the Governor's House is our only evidence for activity on the Rock between the Viking siege of 870 and the building of a new castle in the early 1200s. The fragments, two from cross-slabs and one from a cross, are similar to carved stones from across the Clyde (eg, Inchinnan and Govan).

Masonry from a medieval gatehouse, demolished in advance of the 18th-century fortifications upgrade, was revealed close to the east wall of the Governor's House in 1995 whilst excavating a cable trench; a silver pendant cross of late-13th/14th-century date came from the same trench.

Whilst much of what remains structurally standing dates from no earlier than the 17th century, the 1974-5 excavations and 1995 cable trench demonstrated that the archaeological potential of the Rock remains high. As has been encountered at the castle rocks of **Edinburgh** and **Stirling**, continued military use and remodelling will have resulted in the levelling of certain areas, down to bedrock in some cases, but the infilling of other areas, with the result that important Dark Age and medieval stratified deposits may well survive. The difficulty is assessing where these latter deposits may be, and consequently no ground-breaking should be carried out without an archaeological 'watching brief'.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

Dark-Age *Alt Clut*

Nothing structurally remains visible of early historic *Alt Clut*, physical evidence for which must be left to be discovered by the archaeologist (see *Archaeological Overview*). The only possible legacy is the well in the cleft between the peaks, now known as the Over Bailey. The well was encased in a stone structure in the 1730s.

The medieval royal castle

Precious little remains from the medieval royal castle. The only identifiable standing structure is the Portcullis Arch, of probable 14th-century date; its tall pointed-arched opening has a vertical portcullis slot on either inside elevation.

The only other probable medieval structure is the much-altered 16th-century Guardhouse that may be the 'chalmers between the craigs' mentioned in 1580. Its two original, but now blocked, windows have, above them, two oval gun-ports of 16th/17th-century date. A skew-putt is carved with a human head, said to depict 'the fause Menteith' who captured William Wallace in 1305.

The post-medieval garrison fortress

The major upgrading of the royal castle to garrison fortress in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries has given us most of what we see today.

It is now difficult to disentangle the **17th-century works** from the much-more thorough Georgian works of the following century. Other than the stump of the Wallace Tower (a substantial rebuilding in 1617-18 of its 14th-century predecessor that guarded the Nether Entry on the north side), no standing structures remain other than elements of the encircling fortifications, most obviously the 1680s Spur Battery, built to 'cover' the new main entrance into the castle from the south.

It is the **Georgian buildings and fortifications** that today dominate the Castle Rock and shape its architectural character. These mostly date from the mid-1730s and are chiefly the product of Captain John Romer, military engineer with the Board of Ordnance, the body responsible for all military works in Britain. The major remodelling was prompted by a report presented to George II by Major-General (later Field-Marshal) George Wade that embraced the other major garrison centres in Scotland at the time of the Jacobite troubles – most notably **Edinburgh**, Inverness and **Stirling** Castles.

The artillery fortifications are characterised by (mostly) angled lengths of wall, corbelled at the string-course to separate the whin rubble masonry below from the

coursed rubble parapet above. This is best expressed in the arrow-headed King George's Battery. This incorporates in its east wall the main gate – a Classical portal arch robustly articulated with a heavy keystone and impost blocks and topped by a cornice with ball finials left and right. At the battery's apex is a delightfully sculptural sentry box, pepper-pot shaped and with a domical stone roof topped by a ball finial; another exists on the Beak. The feature was a particular hallmark of Romer's, and it also graces his artillery fortifications at **Edinburgh Castle**.

Romer also designed the Governor's House, a somewhat stern three-storey-and-attic skew-gabled block, with an open pediment at the centre, carried left and right on three-stepped corbels rising from the eaves cornice. The only other gesture to architectural ornament is the round-headed entrance doorway with impost blocks and keystone. The rubble walls relieve the austerity to some degree, but the raised margins around the windows suggest that the mansion was originally harled.

The other structures and artillery fortifications are mainly post-Culloden (1746). The powder magazine (1748), the sole surviving structure on the Beak, is a detached skew-gabled rectangle set within a plain perimeter blast-wall. It may appear an unremarkable structure, but it was designed by a most remarkable military engineer, William Skinner, chief engineer of North Britain, who has also left his mark elsewhere, including at **Edinburgh Castle** (the Ordnance Storehouses) and most memorably mighty **Fort George**. The French Prison in the Over Bailey (built c.1790s either as a barrack or storehouse but seemingly converted to a prison of war c.1810) is a two-storey, five-bay, skew-gabled building with a round-headed entrance doorway below a circular opening (the latter not unlike those Skinner designed for the ordnance storehouses at **Fort George**).

The cannon

The cannon on display at the castle, whilst never part of the original armament, are nevertheless fine examples of their kind – namely, cast-iron muzzle-loaders of various calibres produced c. 1810 in a number of British iron foundries for use in the Napoleonic Wars either as naval or land guns. The pieces include several Carron pieces, produced by the famous Carron Company, Falkirk, established in 1759.

Social Overview:

Dumbarton Castle is a prominent landmark in the townscape of Dumbarton, and has long been seen as an important symbol of civic pride. It has thus figured in important civic occasions (eg, royal visits in 1847, 1937 and 1953) and a tangible manifestation of its civic role is the bronze direction finder on the White Tower Crag, donated by the London Dumbartonshire Association.

In addition, the castle still has a military presence, even though it has been formally defunct as such for well over a century. The Governor's House is still used on occasion by the governor (now a purely ceremonial position) for functions, and important treasures of the various battalions and volunteer corps (eg, the Dumbartonshire Regiment) attached to the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders are on display therein.

The castle is also increasingly used by the schools in the area. The 557 steps up to the White Tower Crag are popular as 'health-enablers' (eg Dumbarton Academy's annual 'sponsored walk' and 'Fit for Life' programme). Since 2000, when Dumbarton FC relocated its stadium to the north side of the Rock, the defences along that side have become informal 'terraces' for fans seeking a wonderful bird's-eye view of the games! The fans nickname, 'The Sons', is taken from the phrase 'Sons of the Rock', in reference to Alt Clut, and the stadium is commonly called the 'the Rock'^[1] rather than its official name – the Bet Butler Stadium

The Rock itself has a particular importance for the climbing and bouldering community and is a celebrated venue for this sport, which has grown significantly importance over recent decades. Dumbarton Rock's significance for this community is two-fold: firstly its contribution to the development of the sport from the 1960s and secondly for the many difficult and challenging routes which many climbers still regard as a 'yardstick', 'a place to push your limits'.^[2] There is a strong sense of community amongst the climbers here which is founded on shared practice and appreciation of place rather than residence. The Dumbly web site and social media create an even greater sense of cohesion among this group which is expressed as deep feelings of attachment and affection for the place in all its moods. A fuller account of these values and relationships is given in Appendix 1 and we are grateful to the climbing community for contributing to this document.

Spiritual Overview:

The castle had a place of worship, St Patrick's Chapel, in former times (believed to have been on or about the site of the Governor's House), which would have played an essential role in the daily lives of the keepers of the castle and the garrison. The existence of three 10th-century cross fragments indicates that Christian worship on the Rock predated the High Middle Ages. Since 2012 the local churches, under the banner 'Dumbarton Churches United', have used the Rock for annual worship, gathering on three saints' days (St Andrew, St Columba and St Patrick).

The character of the place is such that many people may feel a spiritual, if not religious, bond with the Rock both for what it symbolises and for the natural drama of the setting. These values remain to be fully assessed but the work done by the climbing community indicates that feelings of affection and respect for the place are likely to be strong.

Aesthetic Overview

Dumbarton Rock is a striking feature in the landscape of the Clyde estuary. Its twin peaks - the Beak and White Tower Crag - are particularly conspicuous landmarks when viewed from across the river to the south. The view from the north is more of a single formidable mass of black rock.

^[1] Dumbarton F.C.. (2014, April 21). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 10:51, April 23, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dumbarton_F.C.&oldid=605140740

^[2] This statement is informed by two focus groups carried out as part of the ACCORD project. For further information on the project see . A statement of value is archived at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.5284/1030286>

The long straight approach down Castle Road summons great expectations, rewarded when one rounds the bend at the south end and enters Castle Green, an environment almost entirely rural and estuarine, where the forbidding mass of the Rock rises up in stark contrast to the flat, sluggish river waters (and mud-flats when the tide is out) that lap about its base. Unsurprisingly, this south prospect in particular has been captured in innumerable Romantic and bucolic images.

To the north the contrast between urban and natural landscape is a defining feature of the place. Recent demolition and re-development of the former industrial areas around the Rock has changed the dynamic of this relationship with some areas of new housing replacing post-industrial dereliction which formerly characterised the environs.

The character of Dumbarton Rock can depend as much upon the weather as any other factor. It is often blustery, shrouded in mist and dashed by rain, giving the place a wild and melancholic air. Close up the aesthetic experience is dominated by grey-black basalt rock interspersed with the odd gnarled tree, scrub or patch of grass, and where the centuries-old buildings and walls seemingly play only a minor role. Only on King George's Battery does one really get the 'feel' that one is visiting a 'real' castle.

The effort of climbing the 557 steps to White Tower Crag is rewarded with one of the best panoramas in west-central Scotland – a 360° prospect extending eastward up-river to the skyline of Glasgow, southward across the estuary to the green hills of Renfrewshire, westward down-river to the mountains of Cowal and Argyll, and northward over the rooftops of Dumbarton and the towns of the Vale of Leven to the peak of Ben Lomond.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- Was Dumbarton Rock occupied in prehistoric and Roman times, and what was the nature and detailed form of Dark-Age *Alt Clut*? Professor Alcock's 1974-5 excavations merely scratched the surface and much more is likely to be discovered in future work.
- What form did the 13th-century royal castle take, and how did it evolve over the ensuing centuries? Here again archaeological investigation is likely to be the key to our better understanding, but due cognisance should also be taken of the potential from documentary sources and standing building archaeology of the upstanding fortifications.
- What was the function of the structure on the White Tower Crag (a windmill possibly) and what was the original function of the building we call the 'French prison'? Further examination of the surviving remains and associated plans and documentation should reveal more.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points:

- Dumbarton Rock, in its guise as *Alt Clut*, is a striking icon of early historic kingship in what is now Scotland. The capital of the British kingdom of Strathclyde, it figures prominently in contemporary annals and other documentary sources (eg, Bede) and the archaeological excavations of 1974/5

demonstrated that its occupants were part of a long-distance, and high quality, trading network reaching to the Mediterranean.

- As a medieval royal castle, Dumbarton Castle played a highly strategic role in our nation's history. These included initially as a major Border stronghold when the Norwegian border lay only 10 miles away down-river, and later as a vital postern (back gate) into and out of the realm when the 'front gate' (the Firth of Forth) was bearing the brunt of English aggression. Both David II and Queen Mary sought the Rock's protection and used it as a route to safety.
- The use of Dumbarton Castle by James IV and James V in the late-15th/early-16th centuries as a 'springboard' for launching various naval and military expeditions against rebels in Argyll and the Hebrides presaged Dumbarton's later, and hugely important, role in Scotland's 19th- and early 20th-century ship-building industry.
- The Georgian artillery fortifications, associated with such highly regarded names as General Wade and Captain Romer, are an important legacy, graphically illustrating the painful struggle by military engineers to adapt a difficult site to contemporary defensive needs.
- Following its demise as a fortress, Dumbarton Castle Rock has attracted many visitors, drawn there by a combination of its ancient history, its more recent military past and, perhaps above all, by the splendid views from its twin peaks.

Associated Properties:

(other major Dark-Age strongholds in Scotland) – **Burghead Fort; Dunadd;** Dundurn; Dunnottar; Dunollie; **Edinburgh Castle Rock;** Mote of Mark

(other significant Georgian military buildings and artillery defences in Scotland and northern England) – Berwick-upon Tweed; Carlisle; **Edinburgh Castle;** Fort Augustus; **Fort Charlotte; Fort George;** Fort William; **Stirling Castle**

Keywords:

Britons of Strathclyde; Clyde Rock; Vikings; tower house; artillery defences; cannon; powder magazine; well; Mons Meg; David II; Earls of Lennox; James IV; Queen Mary; governor; John Romer; George Wade; World War II

Selected Bibliography:

Alcock, L & E., 'Reconnaissance excavations on Early Historic fortifications and other royal sites in Scotland, 1974-84: Excavations at Alt Clut, Clyde Rock, Strathclyde, 1974-75', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. 120 (Edinburgh, 1990)

Cruden, S., *The Scottish Castle* (London, 1981, 3rd ed.)

Dennison, P & Coleman, R., *Historic Dumbarton* (Edinburgh, 1999)

Grove, D & Tabraham, C., *Fortress Scotland and the Jacobites* (London, 1995)

MacGibbon, D & Ross, T., *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*. vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1887)

MacPhail, I M M., *Dumbarton Castle* (Edinburgh, 1979)

APPENDIX 1: *Dumby: A contribution provided by Dumbarton Rock Climbers.*

Dumbarton Rock's north-west sector is exceptionally popular with climbers, especially boulderers. This is not a recent phenomenon. 'Dumby', as The Rock is known to climbers, has from the 1960s been at the forefront of Scottish rock climbing and has recently commanded much attention from the world climbing media.¹ It has played a large part in the history and development of the sport in and beyond Scotland and thus has great cultural and heritage significance to the climbing community and to the growing 'sport heritage' of Scotland. The seven main boulders are known as Eagle, Home Rule, Pongo, Suckers, B.N.I., Sea and Warm Up. There are also sport and traditional climbing routes up the main rock on three faces known as the Headwall, the Main Wall and the Back Corner.² These boulders and faces, on the north-west side of The Rock, are often patterned with chalk marks left by climbers indicating the various routes or 'problems'.

The values surrounding climbing at 'Dumby' are linked to the volcanic geology and the styles of climbing it necessitates. In particular the way it fractures requires the use of lots of pressure holds. It offers many difficult and challenging routes and climbers regard it as a 'yardstick', 'a place to push your limits'.³ These 'use values' contribute to its social significance amongst the climbing fraternity. It has an intimidating reputation and a mystique surrounding it. However, its significance is also rooted in the unique character and atmosphere that define its sense of place. It is seen as having a gritty character linked to the industrial heritage of Dumbarton, particularly as this recent (but now largely disappeared) industrial infrastructure provided the striking photographic backdrop to many iconic images of significant 'first ascents' in the 1980s. The hard graft of industry offers an analogy for climbing which also 'requires a graft and an industry'. The graffiti that marks the rocks and the detritus left by local revellers (see below) add to this grittiness. At the same time, Dumby is seen as a captivating place of raw beauty informed by the changing the weather and tides.

There is a strong sense of community amongst the climbers who frequent Dumbarton Rock. This is founded on shared practice and appreciation of place rather than residence. The Dumby web site and social media have created more cohesion amongst those who climb there in recent years. Social memory also plays a role in defining a sense of community. Guidebooks, published periodically since the 70s, highlight its significance and there is a strong sense of generations of climbers adding to layers of meaning and sense-of-place, including leading figures in Scottish and world climbing.⁴ There is also a rich tradition of oral history associated with climbing at Dumby. The graffiti adds a further dimension in regard to continuity of place. Ranging in date from at least the nineteenth century to the present day, it intersects with climbing routes becoming part of their characterisation and even naming (as in the case of the Eagle Boulder). The nationalist graffiti is singled out by some as part of the counter-culture of Dumby,

¹ Hutchinson, John. *Physical Graffiti*. Available: <http://www.dumby.info/history.htm>. Last accessed 21 May 2014.

² <http://www.dumby.info/sport.htm>. Last accessed 21 May 2014.

³ This statement is informed by two focus groups carried out as part of the ACCORD project. For further information on the project see . A statement of value is archived at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.5284/1030286>

⁴ Hutchinson, *Physical Graffiti*, op. cit.

with 'Saor Alba' ('Free Scotland') inscriptions appearing at different times, the latest undoubtedly linked to the 2014 Referendum on Independence.

Strong expressions of attachment, loyalty and ownership are also evident amongst the Dumbarton Rock climbing community. These are linked to the sense of community, memory and place described above. However, they were also reinforced by the removal of some of the graffiti in 2012. Some of the climbers voiced concerns over the impact of these actions on the character of the place, and ultimately Scotland's climbing heritage.⁵ At the same time some of the recent 'tagging' of the rocks by graffiti artists is also seen by some of the climbers as invasive. The symbolic importance of the site for Scotland's climbing heritage has now been recognised by the creation of a consultative group (the Dumbarton Rock Liaison Group). However, it is evident that there is still an ongoing desire to assert the rights of climbers and what they see as their fluid 'marginal' heritage in contrast to the 'official' heritage of the castle.⁶

⁵ BBC News online, 16th July 2012.

⁶ ACCORD project focus group, as summarized in the statement of social value archives at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.5284/1030286>