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Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM13326);

Taken into State care: 1924 (Guardianship)

Last reviewed: 2019

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

TANTALLON CASTLE



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TANTALLON CASTLE

SYNOPSIS

The spectacular ruins of Tantallon Castle perch precariously atop a high promontory overlooking the Forth Estuary and North Sea, two miles east of North Berwick and directly facing the Bass Rock. The castle was built in the 1350s by William, 1st Earl of Douglas, to announce his arrival at centre-stage of Scottish politics. In the 1380s, the powerful house of Douglas split into two branches – known as the 'Black' and the 'Red'. Tantallon passed to the junior line, the 'Red' Douglas earls of Angus, and remained with them for the next 300 years. The castle is recorded as being besieged three times – in 1491 by James IV, in 1528 by James V and 1651 by Oliver Cromwell. With the last, Tantallon ceased to be a place of lordly residence.

The surviving remains date largely from Earl William's time, though they retain important evidence of change. They comprise the most important castellated architecture surviving from 14th-century Scotland. The great frontal wall of red sandstone, drawn across the neck of the promontory like an enormous stage curtain, has three great towers projecting out from it - one at the centre housing the entrance gate and keeper's lodging, the second (and largest) at the north end, housing the earl's private apartment (hence the name 'Douglas Tower') and the third, at the south end, housing ancillary accommodation. The curtain was badly damaged by gun-powdered artillery during the 1528 siege and repairs were largely carried out using a greenish basalt that is easily distinguished from the original red sandstone.

Behind the curtain, on the north side of the inner close, is a unique survival – a two-storey hall block, with a great hall on the upper floor and a laigh (lower) hall below. This hall-block was subsequently redeveloped to house the family's main lodging. Landward of the curtain, beyond the ditch, sprawls a large outer (service) close, originally formidably defended by earthworks and stone walls, but greatly strengthened during the 16th/early 17th centuries to enable it to resist gun-powdered artillery. A lone 17th-century doocot is all that remains there now; more information on the doocot is given at Appendix 1, with a site plan and illustrations at Appendix 2.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

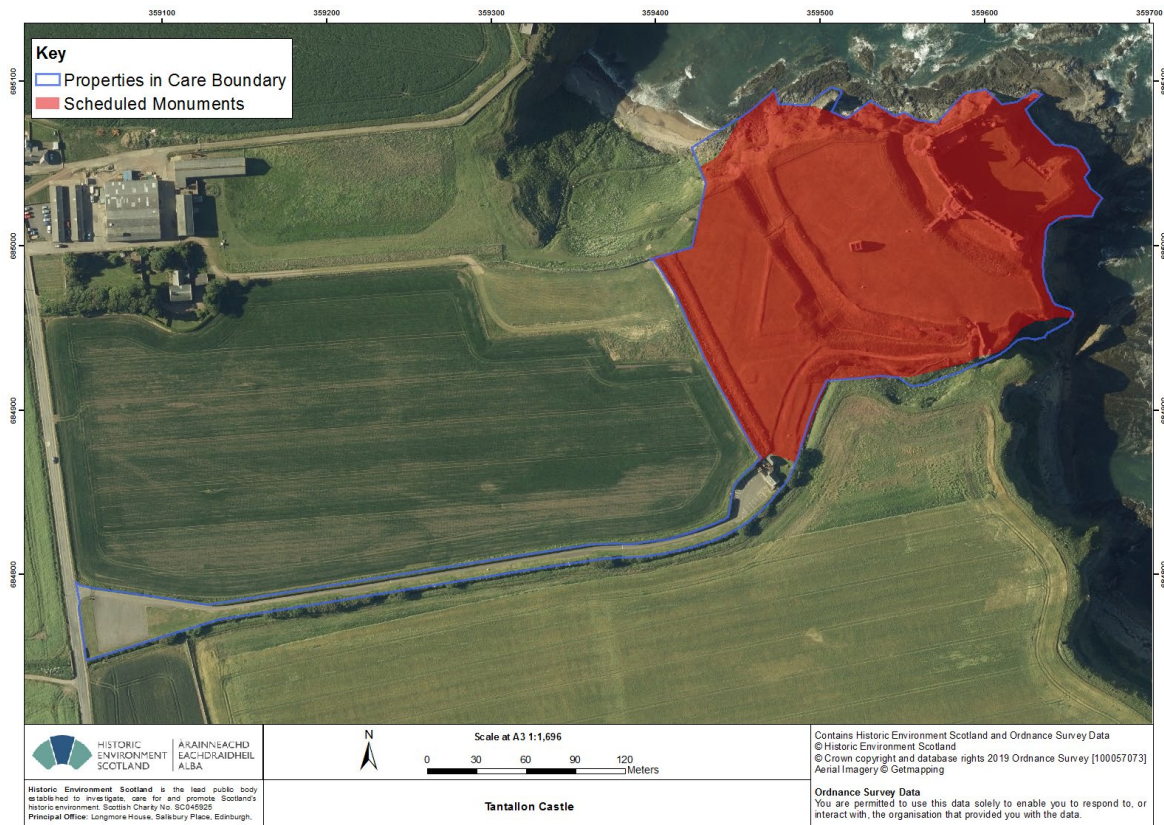
Historical Overview:

- 1320s** 'The Good' Sir James of Douglas is granted the estate of North Berwick by a grateful King Robert I ('the Bruce').
- 1353** Sir James Douglas's nephew, William, murders his godfather, William Douglas, the notorious 'Knight of Liddesdale', and becomes undisputed head of the powerful house of Douglas. He builds mighty Tantallon, in his North Berwick barony - the closest Douglas estate to Scotland's new 'capital', Edinburgh - to announce his new-found status.

- 1358** William Douglas is created 1st Earl of Douglas by David II, only the third earldom established since the 12th century.
- 1374** The first historical reference to Tantallon, in connection with a dangerous sea voyage by Earl William from 'our castle of Temptaloun' to St Andrews.
- 1384** Earl William is succeeded by his son James, 2nd Earl.
- 1388** The untimely death of the 2nd Earl, without an heir, at the battle of Otterburn results in the division of the house of Douglas into two branches - 'Black' and 'Red' - when the 1st Earl's widow, Margaret, Countess of Angus, resigns her lands and titles (1389) in favour of her illegitimate son, George, who becomes 1st Earl of Angus and Lord of Tantallon.
- 1424** William, 2nd Earl of Angus, is among the nobles tasked with escorting James I back to Scotland from long captivity in London.
- 1425** The Duchess of Albany is warded in the castle following the execution of her husband, Duke Murdoch, at **Stirling Castle**.
- 1429** Alexander MacDonald, Lord of the Isles, is warded in the castle at James I's request.
- 1455** George, 4th Earl, leads the royal army at the battle of Arkinholm that effectively brings an end to the house of Black Douglas.
- 1460** The 4th Earl places the Crown on James III's head at his coronation in **Kelso Abbey**.
- 1491** Archibald, 5th Earl, enters into a treasonable pact with Henry VII of England, so bringing the Red Douglasses into conflict with the Crown. Tantallon is besieged by James IV from land and sea, bringing the Earl back into line.
- 1513** Earl Archibald dies peacefully in Tantallon, but his two sons are killed at the battle of Flodden (September). Archibald's grandson, also Archibald, described by his uncle as a 'young, witless fool', becomes the 6th Earl of Angus.
- 1525** The 6th Earl is tasked to care for the 13-year-old James V, but instead effectively holds him prisoner in **Edinburgh Castle** for the next two and a half years.
- 1528** James V escapes to **Stirling Castle** and gathers a great force to besiege Tantallon and bring the 6th Earl to account. A 20-day bombardment fails to wrest the castle, and the king temporarily withdraws. Archibald manages to flee to England early in 1529 and the castle passes into the care of the Crown anyway. A large-scale

rebuilding and strengthening exercise follows.

- 1543/4** The 6th Earl returns from exile but still pursues a pro-English policy. He allows Sir Ralph Sadler, Henry VIII's ambassador, to use Tantallon as a safe house from which to negotiate a settlement between the two nations. When that fails, the English invade, and Sadler returns south.
- 1545** The 6th Earl changes allegiance – arguably because the English had looted graves of the Douglases in **Melrose Abbey** - and leads the Scots to victory over the English at the battle of Ancrum Moor.
- 1548** A naval battle between French and English ships is fought off Tantallon, in which the guns of Tantallon are turned on the English. The 6th Earl is admitted to the Order of St. Michael by the French king for his loyalty.
- 1556** The 6th Earl dies peacefully at Tantallon, followed a year later by the death of the 7th Earl (1557). The Crown takes temporary possession once more, during the minority of David, 8th Earl. A comprehensive inventory of the castle is made.
- 1566** Queen Mary stays at Tantallon (November) at the end of a royal progress through the Borders.
- 1608** The exile of the Catholic William, 10th Earl, to France brings Tantallon's use as the family's main residence to an end. William, 11th Earl and 1st Marquis of Douglas, prefers to reside at his seats at **Bothwell** and Douglas (Lanarkshire).
- 1650/1** The castle is garrisoned by Scottish cavalry (known as 'moss-troopers') following Cromwell's victory at Dunbar (September). In retaliation, General Monck, with over 1000 men, besieges the stronghold. The 91-strong garrison holds out for 12 days before surrendering. The English guns cause huge devastation, still very much evident in the fabric of the castle.
- 1699** The barony of North Berwick, with its ruined castle at Tantallon, is sold to Sir Hew Dalrymple, lord president of the Court of Session.
- 1878** (August) – Queen Victoria visits the castle.
- 1888/
1890** Sir Walter Hamilton-Dalrymple directs David MacGibbon (of MacGibbon and Ross fame) to carry out substantial works of repair.
- 1921** Site first scheduled (amended 2013)
- 1924** The Hamilton-Dalrymples entrust the castle into State care.



Tantallon Castle: Scheduled Area and Property in Care Boundary, for illustrative purposes only. For more images see Appendix 2.

Archaeological Overview

No proper documentation exists for the excavation work carried out either by the Hamilton-Dalrymples in the late 1880s, or by the Ministry of Works after 1924. Quite a number of artefacts were discovered; subsequently reported upon by David Caldwell. Most are unprovenanced since the work was mostly confined to clearing rubble. This included removing some of the post-1528 infill from the small chambers within the curtain wall, and excavating the well in the inner close, but did include the 'reduction by excavation to their original level' of the outer close and outworks, during which two human skeletons were found near the outer gate.

- Archaeological excavation by John Lewis in 1978, in advance of erecting a perimeter fence around the entire site, was very localised and found little of interest. However, the likelihood of substantial archaeology surviving across the entire site - and beyond - must be very high. In 2005, for example, the remains of a church and extensive graveyard, spanning a period of some 1,000 years, were excavated by AOC Ltd., on the headland immediately south of Tantallon Castle.
- A programme of archaeological recording accompanied extensive consolidation works to the castle's foretower in 2010. The archaeological investigations both informed this work and provided additional information to enhance the understanding of the development of this tower and the adjacent defensive features.

- Following a detailed geophysics survey across the site in 2013, archaeological evaluations were undertaken by HES and Kirkdale Archaeology in 2013, 2014 and 2015, closely involving the local community and incorporating a detailed public engagement programme. The results, from a total of 23 small trenches, confirmed the range of features present across the inner and outer close and shed light on the character of the outer defences. In summary, the 2013 excavations revealed the remains of timber structures of medieval date in the outer close, along with eroded and slighted earthworks associated with both defence and siege works in the post-medieval period. In the inner close, robbed structures reflected the division of the courtyard into residential and service areas, and remains of occupation surfaces and industrial activities were revealed. In 2014, further evaluation revealed additional industrial evidence in the inner close, along with structural and pathway remains in the outer close. The outer defences were investigated, shedding considerable light on their character and phasing, along with that of later rig and furrow cultivation. Further work in 2015 confirmed that the outermost ditch represents a siegework used in the 1650/1 siege, and identified remains of gardens in the inner close.

Architectural/Artistic Overview

- Tantallon Castle served as a baronial residence for over 300 years, and during that time changes were made to its walls and towers - some were the result of war damage and the development of gun-powdered artillery, others because of changing fashions and the growing demands for comfort and privacy.
- The original castle comprised the great red sandstone curtain wall running north-south across the neck of the promontory. Tantallon was the last great curtain-walled castle built in Scotland, echoing the marvellous achievements of the nobility of the previous century (e.g., the Stewarts at **Rothsay**, the de Vaux at **Dirleton**, the Morays at **Bothwell**, the Maxwells at **Caerlaverock**, the Macdougalls at **Dunstaffnage**, and the Comyns at **Inverlochy**).
- Three large projecting towers (one at the centre, and one at either end), together with smaller chambers within the thickness of the curtain wall itself, provided the Douglas earls with the accommodation they needed for themselves, their officials and large household. A two-storey hall block and kitchen block in the inner close, adjacent to the north (Douglas) tower, provided two additional public spaces, a great hall above a laigh hall, for their use. The survival of this hall-block, even in its altered state, is one of the outstanding features of Tantallon. The inner close also has a well, over 30m deep. The large outer close on the landward side, now empty except for a 17th-century doocot, gives an indication of the huge entourage required by the earls.
- During the course of the 15th and early 16th centuries, works were carried out to improve the castle, particularly its defensive capability. These included building a barbican (defended forework) in front of the central gatehouse tower (c.1400), and a new gun tower and traverse wall beside the gate into the outer close (c.1520). The latter incorporate 'state-of-the-art' horizontal, wide-mouthed gunholes, then new to Scotland (they first appear c.1520 in the artillery blockhouse at Dunbar Castle).¹

¹ Note: the working replica iron breech-loading gun of c.1500, in the east tower graphically illustrates how these new-fangled guns were to be employed in the defence of castles.

- Further works were carried out by the Crown after the 1528 siege, taking the advantage of war-damage to strengthen the castle's defences still further. The south tower and small chambers in the curtain wall were filled with rubble, to make them better able to withstand incoming artillery shot. The central gatehouse tower and barbican were strengthened by the addition of the fore tower, and the gun tower and traverse wall beside the outer gate were upgraded. Fortunately for us, all these works are easily recognisable because they were carried out using green basalt stone, quarried from the newly-widened ditch fronting the curtain wall, which contrasts with the red sandstone of the original castle. Also perhaps dating from the early 16th century were the lean-to structures erected against the inner face of the curtain wall, probably to house ordnance and military stores; only their roof-raggles and joist-holes in the curtain wall survive.
- At some stage in the first half of the 16th century, major alterations were made to the hall-block and adjacent kitchen, which were converted into a self-contained two-storey house, probably to replace the seven-storey Douglas Tower as the family's residence.
- At some uncertain date, further improvements were made to the outer defences. These included constructing an earthen ravelin (triangular gun defence) immediately beyond the outer defensive line. Such defences are generally believed to date from the first half of the 17th century (a similar example at **Threave Castle** was dated to 1639, during the early Covenanters' Wars), but Tantallon's ravelin may be older.
- The presence in the outer close of a doocot of 'lectern' design (a type dating from c.1600) indicates a lordly presence continuing at the castle into the 17th century. Further information on the doocot is given at Appendix 1.
- Around the castle are important remains pertaining to the castle, though these are NOT in State care. They include evidence for a timber pier on the rocks to the north of the castle, a crane bastion on the cliff to the south of the castle, and beyond, on the next headland, the foundations of a church and graveyard dating back to Anglian times.
- The dramatic, even sublime, setting of the ruinous castle perched on a cliff with thunderous seas below, has provided inspiration for artists, particularly of the 19th century e.g. Alexander Nasmyth²

Social Overview

- Following the evocative description of the castle provided in Walter Scott's epic poem *Marmion* published in 1808³, Tantallon became a 'must see' site on touristic itineraries of Scotland. This interest was revived by the visit of Queen Victoria in 1878, who apparently partook of tea, while seated on a sofa at the edge of the rock⁴. A plaque commemorating the visit can be seen in the Mid Tower.
- Tantallon must be one of Scotland's most powerfully impressive and evocative castles. It is a prominent landmark, and very popular with visitors. However, being distant from a centre of population it has no significant contemporary

² See <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/36355/view-tantallon-castle-bass-rock>

³ Reproduced in Appendix 3

⁴ Ewart and Gallagher, 2019, p69

social presence (unlike **Dirleton Castle**, for example, which stands in the heart of its village).

- In addition to its tourist asset, the awesome castle has been used in the recent past as a backdrop for *son et lumière* shows, and for various Historic Environment Scotland events and re-enactments.
- Tantallon is a valuable learning resource for the local area which can inspire learners of all ages. The site is accessible through the HES Free Education Visits scheme.⁵
- During the archaeological evaluations undertaken at the castle during 2013 – 2015⁶, visitors were given regular and detailed guided tours of the archaeological excavations in progress and were able to view finds-processing and recording work. Volunteers from the community participated directly as volunteers. Re-enactment events were staged at weekends alongside the archaeological work, and several follow-up talks and workshops were delivered.

Spiritual Overview

- As with most major medieval castles, Tantallon would have had a chapel where the family and household could hear mass daily. At Tantallon a floor in the seven-storey Douglas Tower may have provided a private oratory for the earl and countess. Excavations in 2005 on the headland immediately to the south of the castle revealed the foundations of a church building and cemetery that would have been used by the wider castle household whilst alive and as a burial place after death.
- After the Protestant Reformation (1560), the mass was abolished in Scotland. However, William, 10th Earl of Angus (1591-1611), became a devout Catholic, and prior to going into exile in 1608, he would undoubtedly have heard mass in his castle.
- Today, Tantallon has been occasionally used for civil marriages, but otherwise it has no known spiritual associations or uses.

Aesthetic Overview

- Tantallon Castle has to be among the most impressively sited medieval castles in the British Isles, a 'must' for photographers and artists alike. As the visitor approaches, the huge curtain wall and forework become increasingly massive and dominant.
- The red sandstone colour of the castle, especially its massive curtain wall, provides a most agreeable texture, particularly when viewed from outside where it interplays wonderfully with the green sward of the outer close.
- Tantallon's naturally pleasing aesthetic quality also benefits enormously from its setting, directly on the edge of the coast, with steep cliffs plunging down to the rocky beaches, and, rising up from the Firth of Forth beyond, the great island called the Bass Rock.

⁵ For more information, see www.historicenvironment.scot/learn/education-visits/free-education-visits/

⁶ See Archaeological Overview above

- The views from the castle, particularly from the battlements atop the curtain wall and Mid Tower, are also impressive, presenting the viewer with a wide panorama, to the south and west over the fertile East Lothian plain to the Lammermuir Hills, to the north and east out to sea, over the Bass Rock to the Isle of May and the coast of Fife. The tall cone of North Berwick Law looms to the west.

Natural Heritage Overview

- Tantallon Castle has features of considerable natural heritage value both for species and habitats and for its siting on SSSI-designated cliffs and coastline. The majority of the site is grassland and lawns. The main lawns are separated by a large bank and dry moat. The area in front of the castle is lawn and to the west of the dry moat semi-improved neutral grassland. Some of the grassland around the margins of the site can be classed coastal grassland. High sea cliffs form the northern and eastern boundary, these cliffs fall largely within the Forth Coast SSSI. The central banks and dry ditches are the richest grasslands.
- The dry moat and ditches are unimproved neutral grassland, whilst the banks are species rich unimproved calcareous grasslands. The formation of the banks and walls has incorporated more of the underlying calcareous soils increasing the liming effect. A number of Scottish and locally uncommon plant species have been recorded here, including: agrimony, bur chervil, wallflower, field scabious, rough hawkbit, fairy flax, early forget-me-not, early purple orchid, burnet saxifrage, cowslip, false oxlip, meadow saxifrage, field madder, goat's beard, rough clover, golden oat grass, spring vetch, wood vetch, marsh hawksbeard and hairy St. John's wort.
- The unimproved grasslands also support a rich assemblage of invertebrate fauna, notably butterflies (common blue, small tortoiseshell, small copper, meadow brown, small white and green veined white) and many snails. The cliffs support one of the largest colonies of fulmars in the Forth. There is also a colony of cliff-nesting house martins.
- The site also has some geological interest which is relevant to the castle. The structure is built on a hard volcanic intrusion, a volcanic vent, the Tantallon Vent formed during the late Carboniferous or early Permian period. The green tuff is a soft volcanic rock formed from volcanic ash, which covers the front of the castle gatehouse, sandstone for the construction of the castle is found locally.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- What, if anything, existed at the site prior to the 1350s?
- Who lodged/slept where in the castle as first built?
- What form did the lean-to structures against the inner face of the curtain wall take, and what were they used for?
- What else stood in the outer close other than the 17th century doocot?
- When were the various outworks built and what form did they take?

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- Tantallon is one of the most important castle sites surviving in the British Isles. It was effectively the last of the great curtain-walled castles built in Scotland, and is among the most important castellated architecture surviving from 14th-century Scotland.
- Tantallon's remarkable completeness allows the visitor to appreciate how a great Scottish magnate lived. The survival of the two-storey hall block (with a hall on each floor), adjacent to the Douglas Tower, presents a rare opportunity to see how the 'private' and 'public' persona of a great medieval magnate interacted. Most halls were not robustly built and have largely disappeared from castles.
- The early 16th-century artillery defences in the curtain wall and outer gate and traverse wall are among the earliest of their kind to appear in the British Isles.
- The complex of defensive outworks around and beyond the outer close have the potential to cast considerable light on the development of artillery defences and siege warfare.
- The setting of Tantallon is key to its aesthetic effect, with the Bass Rock and the coastal edge adding to its militarism and display of power.
- For visitors, Tantallon offers an exciting and dramatic experience with the cliff-top-setting a key element: the spectacular views combined with the sounds of sea, wind and seabirds are appreciated by many. The wide open spaces of outer and inner closes combined with the climb to the top of the castle add an element of drama and feeling of freedom.

Associated Properties

(other related sites locally) – Auldham old church; Bass Rock Castle; Dunbar Castle; North Berwick Castle.

(some other properties associated with the Douglases) – **Balvenie Castle**; **Bothwell Castle**; Douglas Castle; **Hermitage Castle**; **Lincluden Collegiate Church**; Newark Castle (Selkirkshire); **St. Bride's Church, Douglas**; **Threave Castle**

(some other largely complete medieval great halls) – **Bothwell Castle**; Darnaway Castle; **Doone Castle**.

(some other 'lectern' doocots in the Lothians) – Athelstaneford; East Fortune; Eskgrove House, Inveresk; Inveresk Gate; Pitreavie House; **Westquarter**

Keywords:

curtain wall, tower, great hall, gunhole, ditch, ravelin, siege, Douglas, Angus, Dalrymple

Selected Bibliography:

Canmore ID: 56630
Site Number: NT58NE 5
NGR: NT 59587 85029

Scheduled Monument Description:

<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM13326>

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Appendix 1: The doocot at Tantallon Castle

Description

Tantallon Castle doocot is a lean-to roofed, rectangular-plan, two-cell lectern doocot, apparently of 17th-century date. It is important in being a well-preserved and largely complete example of the type. It is built of roughly-coursed green-grey rubble basalt with red sandstone quoins (corner stones) and door rybats (surrounds). There is evidence, particularly on the north side, that the basalt was once harled.

It largely retains its historic context in relation to the castle, sited on the outer close, which would once have contained a number of other structures such as brewhouses and bakehouses.

Visiting the doocot is an important part of the experience of visiting Tantallon Castle; internally the rows of nestboxes are visually arresting and very photogenic, making it popular with visitors. The following paragraphs set out the context of this building type and identify aspects of its evidential, historical, architectural and aesthetic values.

Freestanding doocots, such as that at Tantallon, are recognised as a specific and characterful building type associated with Scottish estates from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

The doocot faces south-south-east (south for the purposes of this description). The south and north sides are 7.56m long, and the east and west sides are 5.2m in length. There are doorways with wrought-iron yetts (gates) to the two chambers in the south and west elevations. Relieving arches, which distribute weight away from the lintols, are set over both doorways. A projecting sloping course runs around the entire structure, creating two tiers. The slope of the course would make perching for pigeons difficult, so the purpose might be to deter access by predators, or simply to throw water away from the lower walls and reduce damp.

The wallheads on the north, east and west sides have flat projecting coping stones, which provide a surface for perching birds. The sloping roof structure is recessed with three raised and crudely crowstepped walls enclosing the stone-slabbed roof. In view of the exposed coastal location of the doocot, the raised walls undoubtedly served to protect the pigeons from the wind and allow them to carry out their natural tendency to sunbathe in a protected environment. The 'glovers' (structures that provided flight holes and ventilation) are now missing, but were in the positions where the glazed roof openings are located.

Internally the walls of the eastern chamber are lined with 598 flagstone nesting boxes set above a stone 0.73m high 'plinth'. The walls are about 0.7m deep and the nesting boxes are 0.38m deep by 0.2m high and wide. The nesting box uprights are 0.1m in thickness and the shelves are 0.08m in thickness. The roof is constructed of diminishing concentric oval courses of sandstone around an open rectangle (now glazed) where the flight holes were once located in a presumably timber superstructure ('glover'). The floor is of compacted earth and loose stone. At the centre is a single flagstone, which might be the remnant of a potence (ladder) structure. There is no public access to the western chamber, where many of the nesting boxes have collapsed.

The doocot is set in a large, grassed area that once housed the outer close of the castle. The castle stands to the east and the earthwork defences enclose the grassed area to the west.

Evidential Values

Photographs of 1924, 1928 and 1955 in the National Record of the Historic Environment show that the Ministry of Works undertook several repairs and alterations after the building was taken into State care.⁷ Image SC 1127381 of 1924 shows that the doocot had fallen into a state of disrepair, with grass growing on the roof and wallheads. At that time the eastern chamber had a boarded timber door, recessed within the door frame. The evidence of the stonework suggests that both chambers originally had doors, or yetts, flush with the outer wall surface and hinged in the opposite way to the current recessed yetts. It is not clear whether there were originally two doors to reduce light disturbance to the birds, or an inner door and an outer yett to increase security. The glovers, or flight holes, had vanished by the time of the 1924 photographs. A stone or timber structure to prevent access by larger predators must have covered the central roof openings of each chamber originally. The circa 1928 photograph (SC 1164575) shows that while work had begun on removing ivy from the curtain wall of the castle, the doocot remained in a poor state of repair. By 1955 (SC 116973) the doocot is shown clear of weeds and the surrounding lawn is well-manicured.

The doocot is now in good general condition, but over the centuries there has been considerable erosion of the stonework, particularly of the red sandstone elements, and many of the nesting boxes in the western chamber have collapsed.

The materials of the doocot appear to be local. The architect Sir William Bruce recorded the provision of flagstone quarried at Dirleton and lime from the limekilns at Broomhall (Fife) for his repairs to the fortress on the Bass Rock in 1674-9.⁸ It seems possible that the flagstone for the nesting boxes, and perhaps the lime too, was supplied from the same sources. There is no evidence of a potence, or any permanent ladder structure, for accessing the nesting boxes within the doocot. Such a structure would have been made of timber and could have been removed, or perished, over time. The nesting boxes are raised off the floor by 0.73m to allow for the accumulation of dung and ease of cleaning.

An archaeological dig was carried out in the vicinity of the doocot in 1930. A geophysical survey of the outer close was undertaken in 2013 and test trenches were dug in 2014.⁹ No archaeological work has been carried out on the doocot itself. However, terrestrial laser scan data of the doocot was collected as part of the Rae Project, and it is possible that standing building recording of the structure could reveal valuable evidence of missing features.

⁷ Historic Environment Scotland, National Record of the Historic Environment, refs. SC 1127381 [1924:<http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1127381>], SC 1201521 [1924:<http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1201521>], SC 1164575 [c.1928:<http://canmore.org.uk/collection/1164575>], and SC 116973 [1955:<http://canmore.org.uk/collection/116973>].

⁸ National Records of Scotland, ref. E36 (Sir William Bruce of Balcaskie: accounts for Holyrood, Stirling, the Bass, 19 Jan. 1674 - 17 Dec. 1675, 17 Dec. 1675 - 13 Mar. 1679, rendered 13 Mar. 1679).

⁹ *Discovery & Excavation Scotland*, New Series, vol. 14 (Musselburgh, 2013), p.73 and vol. 15, p.67.

Historical Values

The age of the doocot is a matter of conjecture. It seems unlikely that the doocot would have survived the 12-day bombardment of the castle by General Monck in February 1651. Therefore it was probably built after 1651, when parts of the castle were in occasional use by the Marquesses of Douglas and Earls of Angus as a residence, and before the sale of the Tantallon Estate to Sir Hew Dalrymple in 1699.

The earliest known mapping evidence for the doocot dates from William Roy's Military Survey of Scotland of 1747-55, on which it is clearly marked in red.¹⁰ In the modern age, the doocot is marked on all the editions of the Ordnance Survey maps, from the 6-inch edition published in 1854 and onwards.¹¹ The siting and fabric of the doocot provides interesting evidence about the historic practice of breeding pigeons for food. The doocot is located within the outer close, about 60m west of the main castle entrance in the Mid Tower. There were other ancillary structures in the outer close, but by the second half of the 17th century, usage of the outer close had probably reduced and the doocot was located at sufficient distance from human activity to prevent disturbance to the birds, or the occupants of the castle. However, the doocot was close enough to enable maintenance of the birds. Plentiful grain and seeds would have been available for the birds in the surrounding fields.

Architectural and Artistic Values

The doocot has architectural interest as a building of rugged, almost crude, construction, appropriate to its exposed coastal site and context in the shadow of a great medieval fortress. Although the lean-to form is the most widely surviving type of doocot, the Tantallon example is unusual in its recessed roof stage and the stone vaulting of the roof itself. Most lectern doocots have slated roofs with timber substructures. A very similar doocot can be found at Abbey Farm Dovecot in North Berwick.

As part of the Tantallon Castle complex, the doocot has been captured by distinguished artists, such as Paul Sandby (1750) and Joseph Mallord William Turner (1818) and John Thomson of Duddingston.¹² However, with the exception of Sandby, it is noticeable that many artists and photographers angle or edit their views of the castle to remove the doocot. While Turner sketched the doocot from different locations as part of the view of the castle, his finished watercolour omits it. Unlike Dirleton, where the beehive shape of the doocot was suitably antique and picturesque, the more crude construction and later standard lectern design of the Tantallon doocot seem to have been considered distracting from the splendours of the castle.

¹⁰ British Library Board via National Library of Scotland [<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/-zoom=14&lat=56.0665&lon=-2.6516&layers=4&b=1>].

¹¹ National Library of Scotland, ref. OS Haddingtonshire Sheet 3, published 1854 (surveyed 1853) (<https://maps.nls.uk/view/74426936>).

¹² Sandby: [National Galleries of Scotland](#). Turner: [Tate\(a\)](#) and [Tate \(b\)](#). Thomson: [University of Edinburgh](#).

Landscape and Aesthetic Values

The doocot has a very distinctive rugged profile that appears clearly in many views to the castle from the coast and cliffs to the north and south. It is less visible from the western approaches, as it is obscured by the outer defences of the castle. The textures and colours derived from the natural resources of the area are reflected in the construction of the doocot.

Tantallon Castle Doocot Bibliography

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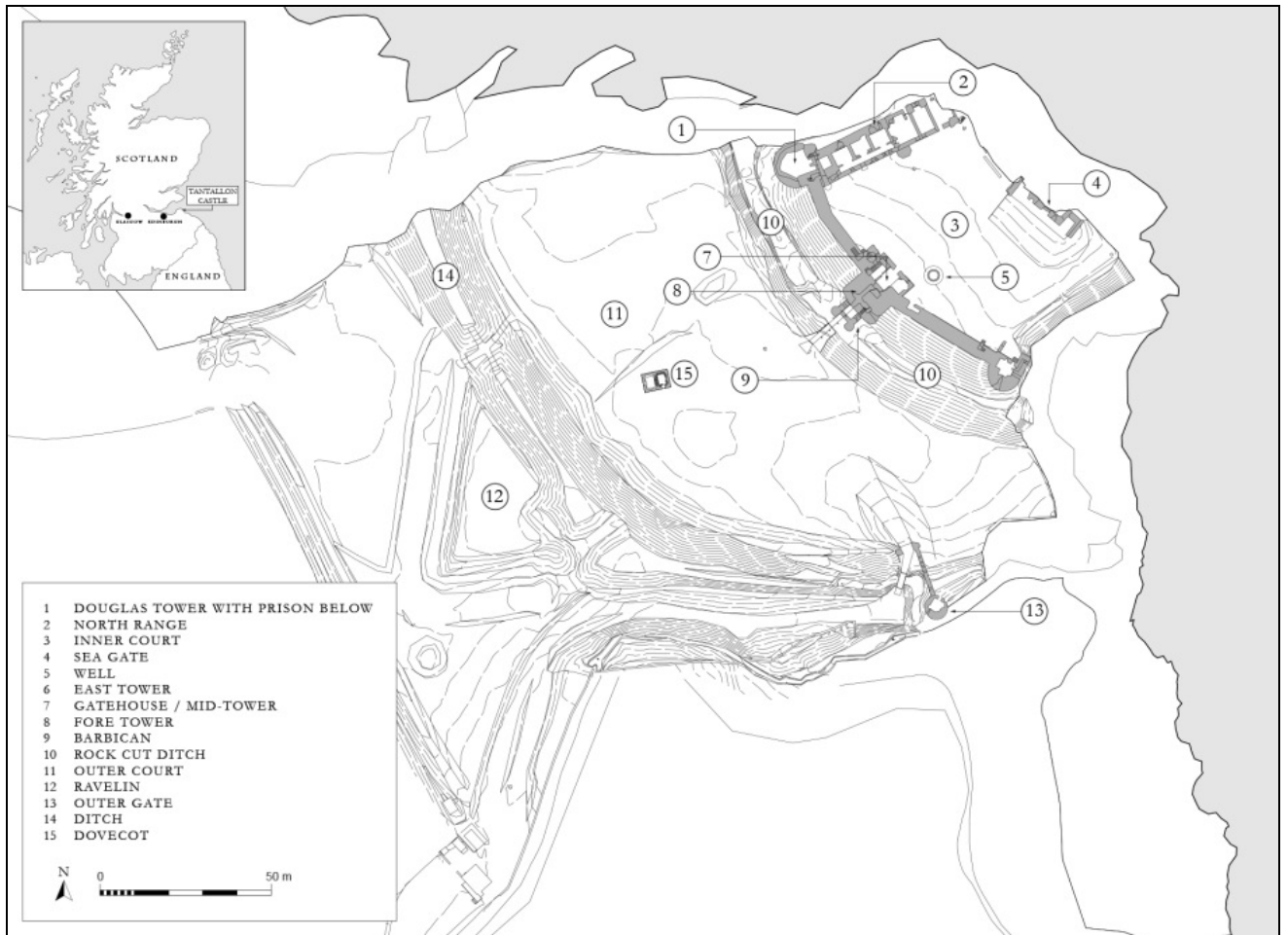
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Appendix 2: Images



Tantallon Castle Site Plan



The doocot



Tantallon Castle with Bass Rock and doocot

Appendix 3: Tantallon Castle

– Extract from *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* by Sir Walter Scott¹³

But scant three miles the band had rode,
When o'er a height they pass'd,
And, sudden, close before them show'd
His towers, Tantallon vast;
Broad, massive, high, and stretching far,
And held impregnable in war.
On a projecting rock they rose,
And round three sides the ocean flows,
The fourth did battled walls enclose,
And double mound and fosse.
By narrow drawbridge, outworks strong,
Through studded gates, an entrance long,
To the main court they cross.
It was a wide and stately square:
Around were lodgings, fit and fair,
And towers of various form,
Which on the court projected far,
And broke its lines quadrangular.
Here was square keep, there turret high,
Or pinnacle that sought the sky,
Whence oft the Warder could descry
The gathering ocean-storm.

¹³ Reproduced as a Project Gutenberg eBook available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4010>